
CENTRAL MINNESOTA OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

DEED Annual Report to the Legislature

As required by 2017 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 94, Article 6,
Section 8, Subd. 5.

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Background

2017 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 94, Article 6, Section 8 authorizes a grant to to Central Minnesota Community Foundation in amount of \$500,000. Grant funds are to be used by Central Minnesota Community Foundation (CMCF) to establish a grant program and award funds through a competitive grant process to community initiatives in the St. Cloud area that will provide services, either alone or in partnership with another nonprofit organization, in one or more of the following areas:

- Economic development, including, but not limited to, programs to foster entrepreneurship or small business development;
- Education, including, but not limited to, programs to encourage civic engagement or provide youth after-school or recreation programs;
- Housing, including, but not limited to, programs to prevent and respond to homelessness or to provide access to loans or grants for housing stability and affordability.

Grant awards were made by CMCF in May, 2018 to 6 organizations that include United Way of Central Minnesota, The Initiative Foundation, Lutheran Social Services, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, the Yes Network, and Promise Neighborhood.

The following report provides details on grant program, descriptions of the projects awarded funding and the interim results of the ongoing projects.

Qualified expenditures

Competitively awarded grant funds may be used by a community initiative for the following purposes: operating costs, including but not limited to staff, office space, computers, software, and Web development and maintenance services; (2) program costs; (3) travel within Minnesota; (4) consultants directly related to and necessary for delivering services listed in paragraph (a); and (5) capacity building.

Eligible Recipients

Eligible recipients include nonprofit organizations in the St. Cloud area that provide services to central Minnesota communities of color in one or more of the following program areas: (1) economic development, including but not limited to programs to foster entrepreneurship or small business development; (2) education, including but not limited to programs to encourage civic engagement or provide youth after-school or recreation programs; or (3) housing, including but not limited to, programs to prevent and respond to homelessness or to provide access to loans or grants for housing stability and affordability.

The service area is defined as the St. Cloud area composed of the counties of Benton, Stearns, and Sherburne.

Reporting Requirements

As required by the authorizing legislation, this report will detail the use of the grants funds including the number of individuals served and, to the extent practical, measures of progress toward achieving the outcomes which include: (1) outcomes in areas including improved job training, (2) workforce development, (3) small business support, (4) early childhood (kindergarten through grade 12) and higher education achievement, and (5) access to housing, including loans; and any additional information requested by the foundation.

Project Overview/Description

The Central Minnesota Opportunity Grant provided grants to nonprofits demonstrating proven success in the areas of education, housing, and increased economic opportunities for people of color through established programs which can, through expansion, benefit a larger segment of the targeted population. The Central Minnesota Community Foundation, after conducting in-depth focus groups to learn about the most pressing needs among people of color including, immigrants, and refugees, granted a total of \$475,000 to six different organizations equipped to address economic opportunities, housing and/or education based on the grantee application process. The selection of the six grantees was conducted by the Central MN Community Foundation's Community Programs Committee which includes 19 community members. These members were trained in the grant review process. In November and December 2018, site visits of each grantee were conducted as part of the interim report process by staff of the Central MN Community Foundation and its Community Programs Committee. In October and November 2019, second interim reports were provided from each grantee illuminating updated information and impact from the grant.

The following (next page) is a brief description of the grant awards, grantees, and projects.

Grantee	Award	Focus Area	Communities Served	Project Description
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid	\$87,000	Housing	East African communities, individuals with limited English proficiency	Project to prevent and end homelessness by providing legal representation, advocacy and advice on behalf of low-income people. This project increases resources to educate both Somali and limited English proficiency tenants through listening sessions, education, and direct representation to identify and address issues
Lutheran Social Services	\$70,000	Housing & Education	East African Communities	Provide additional supportive services to refugee families resettled in the area through an expanded education and housing program currently offered by providing rental assistance in the form of micro-grants and housing education related to tenants' rights. Also, addressed education in partnership with EAGLE (Eradicating Achievement Gap & Learning Empowerment, Inc.) can succeed
United Way of Central Minnesota	\$88,000	Education	Low-income communities	Neighborhood Resource Center – establishing school-based delivery sites for comprehensive sets of services including education, recreational, and social and health services.
The Yes Network	\$30,000	Education	Low-income	Expanding on-site summer school program serving meals to 23 neighborhoods and offering activities to 14 of those in low-income areas.

Promise Neighborhood	\$50,000	Education	Low-income communities	Program to enhance long-term economic self-sufficiency by improving educational and economic outcomes for people of color primarily through leadership training and office functioning for the organization and skill development that could transfer to opportunities in the community.
Initiative Foundation	\$150,000	Economic Development	East African communities	Enterprise Academy Program – support to East African Entrepreneurs with classes, business planning technical assistance, and access to capital assistance.

Project Outcomes or Key Successes for HOUSING

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

Project Description: To prevent and end homelessness by providing legal representation, advocacy, and advice on behalf of low-income people. This project will increase resources to both educate Somali and limited-English proficiency tenants and their communities in Benton and Sherburne County about tenant rights and obligations. It will use a variety of strategies including listening sessions, education, and direct representation to identify and address issues.

Goals: Host meetings with the Somali Elders and leaders to design and obtain feedback on project strategies and outcomes, provide educational presentations about landlord/tenant obligations and rights, and identify three sites with systemic issues to target for additional education. And lastly, to provide advice and representation to 125 Somali and other limited English proficient clients on issues related to obtaining housing or preventing loss of housing.

Outcomes/Outputs: Legal Aid has provided help to over 233 people through housing related assistance and education. The ability to have an experienced housing law attorney partner with a Somali speaking paralegal who has existing strong relationships in the community has helped the project to be trusted in the community and to be successful. Resulting in four listening sessions, the greatest challenge uncovered is that with the housing shortage, tenants are afraid to complain about poor maintenance or request repairs or assert their legal rights for fear that they will be evicted. Two sites have been identified for targeted work – one is an apartment complex where primarily Somali speaking tenants reside and the other is a mobile home park where primarily Spanish-speaking tenants reside. Outcomes of this targeted work resulted in inappropriate charges for repairs to the tenant ending as well as reversed eviction attempts that were unfounded. In the case with the mobile park, the new landlord has placed new rules on tenants that actually violate tenant rights which is now

pending review by with the MN Attorney General’s office. In addition to this work, this project has helped more than 74 households comprised of more than 318 people with direct individual assistance such as stopping evictions, improper charges, and preserving the right to stay in subsidized housing.

Lutheran Social Services

Project Description: The project provides additional supportive services to refugee families resettled in the area through an expanded education and housing program currently offered by rent assistance in the form of micro-grants and housing education related to tenants’ rights and providing education to an additional 50 refugees and immigrants in partnership with EAGLE (Eradicating Achievement Gap & Learning Empowerment, Inc).

Goals: Assist 50 vulnerable refugee and immigrant youth of color in accessing community and school resources and comfortably integrating into the community and schools, and successfully have them participate in after-school tutoring provided by EAGLE with results of improving their academic performance. Also provide training and education to 15 refugee and immigrant families of color to help them understand and access community resources related to public education and/or housing through cultural orientation and provide rental assistance to those who are at-risk of eviction and/or struggling to pay rent or security deposits.

Outcomes/Outputs: 53 youth of color participated in the academic activities at EAGLE scheduled 4 days a week. All participating youth have shown improvement in their academic goals and growth among some students have had as much as 3 levels of improvement in literacy within the school district’s curriculum system. As it pertains to housing support, 17 families (74 individuals) were supported with housing education and coordination assistance to avert a housing crisis situation. Micro-grants to families ranged from \$500 - \$1,500 to support an immediate rent need.

Project Outcomes or Key Successes for EDUCATION

United Way of Central Minnesota

Project Description: Neighborhood Resource Centers are the school-based delivery sites for a comprehensive set of services including educational, recreational, social, and health services. The goal is to foster academic achievement by reducing poverty barriers to educational success by addressing factors outside the classroom that affect the ability to learn. It is a project whereby schools, families, and communities work together and is managed by a Community Resource Navigator who specializes in outreach and community building at Lincoln and Discovery schools.

Goals: Increase target services academic summer school participation to 200 daily at Discovery and 100 at Lincoln to drive academic success, while also increasing student retention at both schools by 10% and parent attendance at conferences by 10% at Discovery and 15% at Lincoln. Also by Spring of 2020, increase the percentage of students in grades 3-5 meeting or exceeding MN Reading performance standards by 15% as measured by the Reading MCA tests.

Outcomes/Outputs: The summer program, once again, doubled summer learning participants from 2017 at each school, resulting in 99 students at Discovery during summer 2019 and 65 at Lincoln Elementary. Results as measured in Spring 2018 and Fall 2018 STAR reading assessments, there was an increase of students “Partially Meeting Standards” from 14.47% to 19.74%; an increase in students “Meeting Standards” from 7.89%-11.84%,

and a very important decrease in students that “Do Not Meet Standards” from 77.63% to 68.42%. One clear outcome of the on-site resource navigators has been the increased retention of students. At Discovery Elementary, in the school year ending 2017, only 32% of students began and ended the year. In 2018, that number increased to 49%.

The Yes Network

Project Description: An opportunity to increase student academic success exists through investing in the neighborhoods in which they live. This project will engage residents in three low-income sites in re-creating themselves into vibrant, loving, prosperous neighborhoods in partnership with the Yes Network staff. Through the process of organizing and implementing a summer meal, recreation, and enrichment program, parents will gain new insights into their own capacity to develop solutions to problems; children and youth will increase their academic and social emotional learning; high school students will develop leadership, work readiness skills, and the social connectedness of the neighborhood will increase.

Goals: Organize work with neighborhood residents to organize 3-8 parents and teens in each of the three sites to understand, organize, implement and evaluate the summer programs. Also, to expand to 3 neighborhoods engaging 150-175 children in outdoor games and enrichment activities by hiring 18 high school students within the neighborhoods to gain leadership skills by assisting the university student activity leaders in serving meals and organizing the activities. Lastly, engage university students and high school students in hosting a monthly family picnic for resident families during the summer months to increase social connections.

Outcomes/Outputs: While the Yes Network completed the work of this grant within its March through September timeline, staff continued to build on the successes of the summer program during the succeeding months. Meals and activities continued after school three days per week during September and October in the three expanded sites. The focus on parents has continued and two staff will work to engage parents throughout the summer. The 2019 summer included organized games and enrichment activities in 14 neighborhood sites in conjunction with meals. The activity leaders included 6 experienced teachers from District 742 who have an understanding of the community challenges. During March 2019, the Yes Network hosted a series of three youth leadership development trainings at SCSU (4-hour sessions) with 53 teenagers in attendances including 14 from the 3 expanded sites. Some of the youth that participated in these sessions found summer jobs with Career Services and resulted in increased confidence to step outside their neighborhoods.

Promise Neighborhood

Project Description: Program to enhance long-term, economic self-sufficiency by improving educational and economic outcomes for people of color primarily through leadership training and office functioning for the organization and skill development that could transfer to opportunities in the community.

Goals: Identify and train two community leaders to coordinate leadership development, writing workshops, basic computer skills, and access to networks for ten targeted community adults, provide four newly trained community members with leadership opportunities at Promise Neighborhood to coordinate and implement year-round, quality out of school time for 25 youth.

Outcomes: Twelve new community members or past volunteers are currently employed and/or in leadership positions at Promise Neighborhood and fifteen community members have completed trainings, workshops and experiential learning opportunities for self-improvement. 20 youth have shown improvement and increased commitment in the classroom according to parents and teachers, and the parents have increased involvement in the child's education by attending conferences. A total of 100 youth have participated in year-round quality out of school time activities that included academic support and mentoring.

Grant Funded Project Goals and Outcomes: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Initiative Foundation

Project Description: The Enterprise Academy was created to coordinate existing community assets and the entrepreneurial spirit of East African immigrants and to facilitate the creation and growth of small businesses in the greater St. Cloud area.

Goals: 50 individuals to participate in "Plan-It," a class to perfect their business plans, and East African entrepreneurs will start or expand 24 businesses. To increase success, a new Enterprise Academy program coordinator from the East African community in greater St. Cloud will be hired.

Outcomes: During 2018 and 2019, four Entrepreneur Training Class cohorts have been offered in St. Cloud. Three of these cohorts were entirely comprised of entrepreneurs from the East African New American community. The fourth cohort (currently underway) has one East African-American member with the remainder being drawn from the broader African American community. There were a total of 41 applicants for the cohorts with a total of 35 participating, of which 23 reported having businesses registered with the Secretary of State and 19 reported being in business for more than six months. As was expected, a good number of participants have not yet completed their business plans or applied for financing; however, six have applied for financing or are in consultation toward financing. Challenges have included a wide range of English language abilities and Islamic-acceptable business loan structures. Abdirizak Jama was a great asset serving as the program coordinator from the East African community but has resigned. After an extensive search, the Initiative Foundation has made an offer to a new employee from the East African population.

Project Sources and Uses Budget

Overall Project		
<i>Project Activities</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Community Initiative Grants	\$ 475,000	\$475,000
Administrative	\$ 20,880	\$20,880
Indirect	\$ 4,120	\$4,120
Total Costs	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000

Individual project budgets are available upon request and will be provided in detail for the final report.

Demographic Information

Demographics Reporting Grid

Name of Organization Central MN Community Foundation

Project Name 2018 Opportunity Grant

Total served through (Date) Served March 2018 – December 2019

Grid 1: Race and Age

Race >	Age							Total	
		0-5	Grades K-5	Middle School	High School	Young Adult (19-25)	Adult (25-60)		Older Adult (60+)
Asian Pacific			18	3			5	26	
Black		23	790	162	58	3	251	1	1288
Hispanic		1	99	1			57		158
Indigenous			16				1		17
Subcontinent Asian			2						2
White			161	4			11		176
Other			45	12					57
2 or more races			24				3		27
Total		24	1155	182	58	3	328	1	1751

Grid 2: County

Benton County Residents	84
Stearns County Residents	1445
Sherburne County Residents	164
other	58
Total	1751

Definition of Races

Asian Pacific	Origins in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Japan, China (including Hong Kong), Taiwan, Laos, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines, the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Republic of Palau), Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated states of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Samoa, Macao, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, or Nauru.
Black	Origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa
Hispanic	Origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America, or other Spanish culture, regardless of race.

Indigenous	Eskimos and Aleuts, Native Hawaiian and American Indian; (a) Eskimos and Aleuts having origins in any of the original people of North America who maintain cultural affiliation through tribal or community affiliation; (b) native Hawaiians whose ancestors were natives, prior to 1778, of the area which now comprises the state of Hawaii; and (c) American Indians having origins in any of the original people of North America who are enrolled members of Indian tribes recognized by the governments of the United States and Canada.
Subcontinent Asian	Origins in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives Islands, or Nepal.