

The Initiative Foundation

*Evaluation of services provided
to communities, businesses, and
other organizations*

OCTOBER 2004

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Acknowledgments

Wilder Research Center would like to thank Kathy Gaalswyk, Karl Samp, and John Kaliszewski, from the Initiative Foundation for their support and advice in designing and carrying out this study. We would also like to thank the participants in Initiative Foundation programs that provided feedback through self-administered evaluation forms and through key informant interviews.

The following Wilder Research Center staff contributed to the completion of this project:

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Jacqueline Campeau
Marilyn Conrad
Swati Deo
Louann Graham
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Summary

The Initiative Foundation is an independent, nonprofit, philanthropic organization that is working to make Minnesota's rural communities in the Central Economic Development Region of the state stronger and more prosperous. The Initiative Foundation's programs, which are tailored to the specific social and economic needs of this region, include making grants and loans; establishing partnerships among local governments, businesses, and agencies to address problems cooperatively; and promoting regional leadership and workforce development through workshops and other training. The counties served by the Initiative Foundation include: Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, and Wright.

The Initiative Foundation's Phase V Strategic Plan (2002-2007) focuses on the power of restoring civic engagement. The programmatic elements of the Initiative Foundation's approach consist of: Community Development Initiatives, Economic Development Initiatives, and Organizational Development Initiatives. The community development goals link leadership training, grant-making, technical assistance, and planning to improve the health of communities, the environment, and the nonprofit sector. The economic development goals help these communities achieve their plans through business and grant investments that strengthen the region's economy, job quality, and utilization of technology. The fund development objectives provide an opportunity for Central Minnesota to give back to the Initiative Foundation and to the region through various charitable vehicles. Finally, the communications goals emphasize awareness of the Foundation, usage of the funding programs, and opportunities for donors.

Methods

Wilder Research Center was contracted to conduct evaluation activities for the Initiative Foundation's Phase V Strategic Plan. This report describes evaluation of Foundation activities, programs, and services that occurred between July 2003 and June 2004 (Year 2), including: case studies of Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) communities, including key informant interviews with Foundation grantees and other community leaders; Feedback Survey Forms completed by Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP), Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP), and Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP) participants and other loan and grant recipients immediately after completion of training sessions provided by the Initiative Foundation; and key informant interviews with recipients of Technology Capital Fund or Seed Capital Fund financing through the Initiative Foundation.

Findings

Case studies: Healthy Community Partnership (HCP) program

Each of the following communities was identified as an HCP case study community by Initiative Foundation staff: Wadena (year 1) and Sebeka (year 2); Long Prairie (year 1) and Melrose (year 2); Cass Lake (year 1) and Pequot Lakes (year 2); and East St. Cloud (year 1) and Cambridge (year 2). In part, communities were selected to achieve variation in both the needs and challenges faced by communities within the Initiative Foundation's service area. Communities were also paired (as shown above) to facilitate analysis. Communities were selected for case studies only if the Foundation's work represented a significant investment in that area. The following list shows the amount the Initiative Foundation has contributed in each of these communities and the total amount that has been contributed by the Foundation and other sources, respectively:

- Wadena (\$104,500; \$4,615,700)
- Sebeka (\$23,500; \$23,500)
- Long Prairie (\$54,800; \$833,600+)
- Melrose (\$36,000; \$41,000)
- Cass Lake (\$178,500; \$547,400)
- Pequot Lakes (\$119,000; \$219,000)
- East St. Cloud (\$12,700; \$38,200)
- Cambridge (\$78,500; \$653,500)

Wilder Research Center conducted interviews with HCP participants in each of the communities (Total N=35 from year 1 and N=29 from year 2). The results are summarized here. In addition, HCP participants were asked to complete feedback forms following any Initiative Foundation events. The participant feedback is also summarized here.

In general, HCP participants gave the Foundation staff high ratings in communication and listening skills, the usefulness of their work in the community, and the usefulness of their suggestions or recommendations. In addition, the staff's ability to involve people in planning was also rated highly, which was mentioned by participants as an area that could use improvements during the previous evaluation period.

Key informants across the board felt that the services and resources provided by the Initiative Foundation had an impact on their community. Between 90 and 96 percent of respondents indicate:

- They have observed changes in the overall capacity of their organization to serve their community that might be attributed to the grant, loan, or business investment they received from the Initiative Foundation
- The services or resources they received from the Initiative Foundation had an effect on the impact their organization has in the community
- The services or resources they received from the Initiative Foundation had an effect on their ability to provide community leadership

At the conclusion of the interview, key informants were asked to give the Initiative Foundation a report card grade to rate the Foundation's contributions to Central Minnesota and the people who live in their community. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) gave the Foundation an "A" and nearly one-third (31%) gave the Foundation a "B." Only two respondents gave a grade of "C" and no participants gave the Foundation a "D" or an "F."

Respondents' comments indicate that residents of each community are grateful for the participation of the Initiative Foundation and its services related to training, goal setting, and generally helping residents to envision clear objectives for their community. When asked about areas of Foundation service needing attention, 84 percent of respondents said the Foundation does not have any service areas that need attention. Of the suggestions that were provided by respondents, the most consistent comments across communities encouraged the Initiative Foundation to:

- Provide more funding and other resources for community development
- Provide more training on technology in the workplace
- Motivate more community members and organizations to work with the Foundation
- Teach more people in Central Minnesota how to develop economic opportunities

Finally, respondents were asked to rate the Initiative Foundation's impact in Central Minnesota. Responses indicate that:

- 62% of respondents said the Initiative Foundation’s impact on the social capital of community members has been “significantly beneficial” and 38 percent said it has been “slightly beneficial”
- 89% said the Foundation “definitely” has a reputation for doing good work in Central Minnesota and 11 percent said “for the most part”
- 46% of respondents said the Foundation’s impact on economic development in Central Minnesota has been “significantly beneficial” and 42 percent said it has been “slightly beneficial”
- 28% of respondents said community members’ identification as members of the Central Minnesota region has “significantly increased” and 69 percent said it has “slightly increased” as a result of the services provided by the Initiative Foundation

In general, it appears as if all of the HCP communities have made significant progress in designing asset-based projects, although the projects are in different stages of implementation and completion. The involvement of the Initiative Foundation has contributed to significant financial and non-financial gains in HCP communities, as well as increased sense of community and ability to leverage other resources. Future evaluations of the HCP program should focus on assessing the outcomes of these HCP projects after a sufficient amount of time has passed to allow for post-program impacts to occur.

Community development initiatives

The purpose of the Initiative Foundation’s community development initiatives is to increase the capacity and effectiveness of Central Minnesota’s community organizations, coalitions, and youth and family resources. The programs included in this portion of the evaluation are:

- the Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP),
- Space, Place, and Natural Resources: the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP)
- Children, Youth, and Families: the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) and Youth as Resources (YAR)

Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP)

HOP participants provided feedback after participating in at least one of nine training sessions offered during the current evaluation period. Overall, most participants gave the sessions ratings of “good” (51%) or “great” (39%). The highest rated sessions were: “self-assessment, governance, and planning” and “benchmarking, goal setting, and implementation.” The “managing change and sustaining capacity building” session received somewhat lower ratings, although no participants gave a rating of “below average” or lower for this session. The “evaluation, nonprofit life cycles, and media relations” session received the lowest ratings; nearly half of participants (45%) gave the session an “average” rating and two gave “below average” ratings. When asked about the most helpful or useful components of the HOP process, the most common response given by participants was related to strategic planning.

The HOP training sessions also received high ratings by participants. In fact, 72 percent of participants gave the event an overall rating of “above average” or “excellent.” Furthermore, 93 percent of participants rated the food and facilities “above average” or “excellent.” For the training sessions, between 56 and 88 percent of participants in each session gave ratings of “above average” or “excellent,” as follows:

- Self-assessment, governance, and planning (46% excellent, 50% above average)
- Managing change and sustaining capacity building (45% excellent, 42% above average)
- Benchmarking, goal setting, and implementation (43% excellent, 54% above average)
- Evaluation, nonprofit lifecycles, and media relations (18% excellent, 30% above average)

Space, Place, and Natural Resources: the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP)

Most HLRP participants (89%) who completed feedback forms after participating in trainings said the session was “good” or “great.” No participants said the session they attended was “poor.” (Note: the response rate was 58%.)

Children, Youth, and Families

Participants in the Initiative Foundation’s Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) activities were asked to complete feedback forms about their experiences. Nearly all participants (99% to 100%) said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with six positive statements about the ECI, including how well their ideas were incorporated into the session and how easy it

was for them to speak up, the amount they learned at the session, and the worthiness of the experience.

All participants who completed feedback forms about the Youth as Resources (YAR) program said the program is “good” or “great.” The most frequently mentioned positive aspect of the program was the facilitator. When asked if there is anything they learned at the session that they will be able to use in their YAR projects, the most commonly mentioned response was related to marketing information or public relations ideas.

Economic development initiatives

Since its inception, the Initiative Foundation has made 671 loans totaling \$21.3 million, leveraged more than \$109.2 million in private business investments, and created or helped to retain at least 7,156 jobs in Central Minnesota. To assess the effectiveness of the Foundation’s current business development initiatives, we completed key informant interviews with four recipients of Initiative Foundation loans (Technology Capital Fund or Seed Equity Fund) and analyzed the results of participants’ feedback forms. (Note: Caution should be used when interpreting these results due to the small sample size.)

In general, key informants indicated that the funding they received from the Initiative Foundation was very helpful to their organization and to the economic development goals of their community, specifically because the Initiative Foundation financing filled gaps when more traditional lenders would not have been able or willing to provide resources. Furthermore, the informants reported that the Foundation financing made it possible to hire or retain skilled workers whose jobs would have otherwise been lost.

Foundation staff received very high satisfaction ratings by these informants. In addition, all of the informants said they would use the Initiative Foundation’s financing programs again. Participants’ suggestions for improvement (mentioned by one participant each) were:

- to improve the timeliness with which loans are approved and other paperwork is processed, and
- to get the word out about the availability of these funds to a wider audience.

Two of the informants also indicated a need within their organization for additional financing with which the Foundation might be of assistance. When asked to give the Initiative Foundation’s business financing programs a letter grade, two informants gave it an “A,” one informant gave it between an “A” and a “B,” and the fourth informant gave it a “B.”

Grants and loans

From July 2003 through June 2004, the Initiative Foundation closed 188 grants worth a total of \$646,960 and approved a total of 152 new grants for a value of \$765,650. The largest categories of grants approved during the current evaluation period are: HOP planning and implementation grants (\$78,500 total); Bootstraps Project grants (\$75,000 total); and HCP planning grants (\$70,000 total).

The Initiative Foundation asks all grant recipients and loan recipients to provide feedback on services received from the Foundation. Overall, 68 feedback forms were received. (Note: the response rate was 58%.) In general, respondents' ratings indicate a high level of satisfaction with Foundation services. On average, financial institutions provided the lowest ratings on these items and HCP, HOP, and HLRP participants provided the highest ratings. Most ratings are between "very good" and "outstanding" on a six-point scale that includes the following categories: "terrible," "poor," "OK," "good," "very good," and "outstanding." In fact, the following percentages of respondents gave each item a "very good" or "outstanding" rating:

- Staff's ability to respond to phone or email messages in a timely manner (87%)
- Staff's ability to listen to and understand the needs of your organization (79%)
- Staff's ability to communicate in a clear and understandable fashion (76%)
- Staff's ability to relate to people with different backgrounds and experiences (74%)
- Staff's ability to work with you in developing the objectives for your organization (64%)
- Staff's ability to explain your organization's financial and narrative reporting requirements (59%)

When asked about the overall impact of the Initiative Foundation's services on their organization, 36 percent of respondents said "outstanding," 39 percent said "very good," 23 percent said "good," 3 percent said "OK," and no respondents said "poor" or "terrible." Nearly all respondents (95%) said that, as a granting and training organization, the Initiative Foundation is "somewhat better to deal with" or "much better to deal with" compared to other funding sources.

Feedback from training and workshop participants

The Initiative Foundation requests feedback from participants at the end of all training and workshop sessions. The scale used to rate these experiences is: “poor,” “below average,” “average,” “above average,” and “excellent.” In general, virtually all workshops and training experiences received ratings between “above average” and “excellent.” Evidence suggests that this work is viewed as one of the Foundation’s most powerful tools for engaging citizens and preparing them for planning and service.

It was clear from open-ended comments that participants liked being able to interact with other participants and learn from one another. Networking was one of the most highly valued aspects of these events. Most participants’ suggestions for improvement related to the facilities or food (although just as many, or more, participants gave positive comments about these items), and the length of time for the sessions, although some wanted the sessions to be longer and others wanted them shorter.

In comparison to other training and workshops evaluated by the Wilder Research Center, the Initiative Foundation’s training sessions and workshops have received among the highest ratings in our experience.

Issues to consider

Based on the evaluation results to date, it appears that the Initiative Foundation is on a successful track for its Phase V program goals. Furthermore, the specific programming activities implemented by the Foundation appear to be producing the desired outcomes. For example, participants in the Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) program report increased leadership skills and community involvement. In addition, the Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) program and the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP) program have provided training and resources to organizations within Central Minnesota communities, which has in turn resulted in an increased capacity of these organizations to provide needed services in the region. The Foundation’s business financing programs have contributed to the economic development of Central Minnesota by helping to increase the advancement, integration, and commercialization of technology into the region as well as to help create or retain jobs and to leverage other financial resources. The Foundation’s trainings have provided opportunities for diverse community members to participate in and learn from various experts in the region and to apply this knowledge in asset-based community initiatives.

Overall, there are very few concerns or recommendations based on these findings except that the Initiative Foundation should continue to do what it has already been doing.

However, one possible consideration for how to improve the ways in which the Foundation provides services in Central Minnesota is to examine additional marketing and communications strategies for encouraging individuals and organizations representing more diverse backgrounds to participate. The Foundation may also want to consider some revisions to the forms and methods for collecting participant feedback for future evaluations.

The full evaluation report provides significantly more detailed findings in each of the above areas.

Background

The Initiative Foundation (in Central Minnesota) is one of six Minnesota Initiative Foundations created in 1986 by the McKnight Foundation. The Initiative Foundation is an independent, nonprofit, philanthropic organization that is working to make Minnesota's rural communities in the Central Economic Development Region of the state stronger and more prosperous. The Initiative Foundation's programs, which are tailored to the specific social and economic needs of this region, include making grants and loans; establishing partnerships among local governments, businesses, and agencies to address problems cooperatively; and promoting regional leadership and workforce development through workshops and other training. The counties served by the Initiative Foundation include: Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, and Wright.

The Initiative Foundation's Phase V Strategic Plan (2002-2007) focuses on the power of restoring civic engagement. The programmatic elements of the Initiative Foundation's approach consist of:

- **Community Development Initiatives:** Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP); Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP); Space, Place, and Natural Resources program, including Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP); Children, Youth, and Families Program, including the Youth as Resources (YAR) Program and Early Childhood Initiative (ECI); and Healthy Communities Development and Implementation Grants and specialty workshops
- **Economic Development Initiatives:** Business Investment Program; Technology Development Program; Workforce Development Program; and Economic Development Grants Program and specialty workshops
- **Organizational Development Initiatives – Fund Development:** Endowment Campaign (“Unlock the Potential Campaign”); Program Funding Solicitations; Restricted Endowment Solicitations; Planned and Deferred Gifts Program; and McKnight Foundation Partnership (Program Support and Endowment Match)
- **Organizational Development Initiatives – Communications Plan:** Awareness Campaign; Media Relations; IQ Magazine; Program Usage; Donor Activity; and Participant Recognition Events

The community development goals link leadership training, grant-making, technical assistance, and planning to improve the health of communities, the environment, and the

nonprofit sector. The economic development goals help these communities achieve their plans through business and grant investments that strengthen the region's economy, job quality, and utilization of technology. The fund development objectives provide an opportunity for Central Minnesota to give back to the Initiative Foundation and to the region through various charitable vehicles. Finally, the communications goals emphasize awareness of the Foundation, usage of the funding programs, and opportunities for donors. The Foundation plans to continue to develop its role as a regional, state, and national leader by modeling best practices, sharing information and products, and maintaining visibility on issues and opportunities that can benefit the people of Central Minnesota.

As a result of lessons learned from previous implementation phases, the Initiative Foundation has recognized the following principles and uses them to guide the continuing development of its programs and services:

- Communities will experience effective long-term change resulting from the formation of a shared vision of the future (i.e., inclusive, integrated, and comprehensive community plans)
- Communities will experience the development of community organizations, partnerships with enhanced capacity, and the emergence of community leadership with enhanced skills and the confidence to carry forward the shared vision
- Communities will receive increased grant opportunities and philanthropic investments based on measurable goals identified in their inclusive, integrated, and comprehensive community plans
- Capacity building programs will incorporate the principles of inclusiveness, interconnection, integration, and asset-based community development
- Communities and organizations will be held accountable for the achievement of objectives that increase the likelihood of sustained efforts
- Communities will uphold the model of Servant Leadership; residents will be empowered to serve as volunteer partners in planning and project implementation
- Foundation funding will be used to focus community action and leverage other resources
- Foundation staff will respond effectively, creatively, and flexibly to the needs of community organizations and partners

Methods

Wilder Research Center was contracted to conduct evaluation activities for the Initiative Foundation's Phase V Strategic Plan. This report describes evaluation of Foundation activities, programs, and services that occurred between July 2003 and June 2004 (Year 2), including:

- Case studies of Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) communities, including key informant interviews with Foundation grantees and other community leaders
- Feedback Survey Forms completed by Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP), Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP), and Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP) participants and other loan and grant recipients immediately after completion of training sessions provided by the Initiative Foundation
- Key informant interviews with recipients of Technology Capital Fund or Seed Capital Fund financing through the Initiative Foundation

The case studies of HCP communities were completed by Wilder Research Center, using information provided by Initiative Foundation staff regarding the amount of the grants, the purposes and intended goals of the grants, and the actual outcomes for which the grant money was used. In addition, survey interviewers from Wilder Research Center contacted 30 individuals who participated in HCP, of which 29 completed a key informant interview, for a response rate of 97 percent.

The Feedback Survey Form was filled out by 68 participants who attended at least one of the general training sessions offered by the Initiative Foundation between July 2003 and June 2004. In all, 17 HCP, HOP, and HLRP grantees completed this form, as well as nine individuals from financial institutions, four large loan recipients, four Community Fund Grant recipients, one loan guarantee recipient, and 33 other grantees. These forms ask participants to rate their experiences with the Initiative Foundation, the value of the training they received, the value of other services provided by the Foundation, and any other comments or suggestion for improvement they might have. See the Appendix for the complete Feedback Survey Form. In addition, participants in trainings or workshops specific to the HCP, HOP, HLRP, YAR, early Childhood Initiative, and other Initiative Foundation programs were asked to fill out feedback forms at the end of their session. The participants' feedback is described in the sections of this report that cover individual Foundation programs.

In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with recipients of Technology Capital Fund or Seed Capital Fund financing to gather open-ended feedback regarding the Foundation's role in increasing utilization of technology in the region and to solicit feedback from recipients on ways in which these programs could be improved.

Trainings and workshops

The Initiative Foundation provides trainings and workshops to residents, nonprofit organizations, and locally owned or operated businesses, with the goal of building local capacity, and therefore, increasing social capital¹ throughout the region. During this evaluation period, we have participant feedback from two grantwriting workshops (September 30, 2003, and April 2, 2004), plus an intergovernmental cooperation workshop and an affordable housing workshop, both of which fall under the domain of HCP but were open to participants from all Initiative Foundation programs.

Grantwriting workshops

Overall, 87 participants attended one of the two grantwriting workshops held during this evaluation period and 72 completed feedback forms for a response rate of 83 percent. None of these participants rated the grantwriting workshops as “below average.” When asked to give the session an overall value from “\$” to “\$\$\$\$\$,” 61 percent gave a rating of “\$\$\$\$\$” and 36 percent gave a rating of “\$\$\$\$.” No participants gave a rating of “\$,” one gave a rating of “\$\$,” and one gave a rating of “\$\$\$.” Thus, the vast majority of responses could be considered in the “good” to “very good” range.

Participants were asked to describe things they especially liked or learned at the workshop. The most common responses were: the presenter, everything, the process of planning for effective grantwriting, the examples given, and the handouts and information that provided tips for what to include in a proposal. When asked what they will be able to use from the session, the most common responses were: everything, the handouts or materials from the session, and where or how to find funders.

When asked what they would have changed about the session, the most common responses provided by participants related to increasing the length of time of the session. Several participants also would have liked to have more time for discussion among participants or more questions and answer time with the facilitator.

Finally, participants were given the opportunity to provide general comments about the session. Most of these comments related to the facilities (i.e., temperature of the room, food, breaks, etc.). Several participants also suggested future topics for Initiative Foundation workshops, although each topic was suggested by only one participant each.

¹ Social capital refers to the value of social networks embodied in various communities (both geographic and interest-related communities) and the trust and reciprocity that flows from those networks.

Intergovernmental cooperation workshop

On February 10, 2004, the Initiative Foundation held an intergovernmental cooperation workshop, at which 45 people attended and 36 feedback forms were received for a response rate of 80 percent. One-quarter (25%) of participants said the session was “excellent” and 56 percent said it was “above average.” Only four participants said the session was “average” and no participants gave a rating of “below average” or worse.

When asked what they liked or learned from the session, the most common response, given by over half of participants, related to the panel discussion or the opportunity to hear from others who have dealt with these issues. Nearly half of participants said they would be able to use ideas about how to collaborate that they heard at the session in their work efforts or projects. Most participants did not answer the question or said they would not change anything about the session when they were asked what they would change. When given an opportunity to provide general comments, most participants gave favorable comments about the facilities and food.

Affordable housing workshop

Forty-three people attended the affordable housing workshop held by the Initiative Foundation on January 20, 2004, and 24 attendees completed feedback forms for a response rate of 56 percent. Twenty-one percent of participants gave the session a rating of “excellent” and 63 percent gave a rating of “above average.” Two participants said the session was “average” and no participants gave the session a rating of “below average” or worse.

When asked what they liked or learned from the session, the three most common responses related to the presenters, the breakout sessions, and the Hunt Utilities Group model community. Participants were also given the opportunity to describe how they will use the information presented in the workshop in their work or projects; networking, better understanding of programs, and alternative funding ideas were the three most commonly mentioned items. When asked what they would change about the session, most participants did not answer the question or said they would not change anything. The most commonly reported items participants would change were related to the facilities (mainly the climate).

Grants to organizations

The goal of the Initiative Foundation's grant programs is to support the identification and mobilization of local and regional resources to help develop and implement locally shared visions and plans of communities and organizations that build and sustain healthy communities. The Foundation's grant-making is unique because they integrate training, technical assistance, and funding across community and economic development program initiatives. Awards of varying sizes (depending on need) are made through the various program initiatives at different stages of an organization's or community's planning process.

The specific objectives of the Initiative Foundation's grant programs is to support the development and implementation of local plans, healthy family initiatives, and economic development priorities of the Foundation, as outlined in their Phase V Strategic Plan. In addition, the Foundation hopes to provide grants that mobilize, empower, and leverage local human and financial resources to strengthen communities. The Foundation has targets for these grant-making objectives, including the following:

- 14 counties will have interfaith caregiver networks (IVCN),
- five community projects will be funded to engage minority populations,
- 400 community members will be mobilized to action in their communities, and
- 80 percent of grant projects funded will reach successful completion.

During the current evaluation period (July 2003 through June 2004), the Initiative Foundation closed 118 grants that totaled \$646,960 and approved 152 new grants for a total of \$765,650 (not counting the closed grants, which were included in the previous total). The largest categories of approved grants are: HOP planning and implementation (22 grants, \$78,500); Bootstraps Project (3 grants, \$75,000); and HCP planning (7 grants, \$70,000). See Figure 1.

1. Initiative Foundation grants by category*

Grant type	Grant amount
HOP planning and implementation	\$78,500
Bootstraps Project	\$75,000
HCP planning	\$70,000
Community Based Activities	\$69,250
Business Initiatives	\$66,500
Early Childhood Coalition	\$60,000
Workforce development	\$55,000
HCP implementation	\$35,500
HLRP implementation	\$34,500
Children, Youth, and Families	\$24,500
Child care	\$20,000
Greater Pine	\$18,000
HOP discretionary	\$13,000
Three Rivers	\$9,000
Other types of grants**	\$164,400

***Note.** This table includes all grants approved between July 2003 and June 2004, whether they were active or closed at the end of the fiscal year.

****Note.** The grant types included in this category are: business research and development, Diversity as Resource, Faith in Action, Family Farm, HLRP planning, housing, Little Falls Area Foundation, Minnesota Pioneer Park Fund (AACF), Schlagel Endowment, Schlagel Regranting Fund, special projects, Staples Community Fund, and Youth as Resources. These grant types had three or fewer individual grantees each during the reporting period, so items are grouped to preserve confidentiality.

Grantee feedback

This section of the report describes the results of Feedback Survey Forms completed by Initiative Foundation grantees or loan recipients. In all, 68 participants completed these surveys between July 2003 and June 2004. See Figure 2. Participants who completed the Feedback Survey Forms were asked to rate the Initiative Foundation on various aspects of grant-making and training ability, quality of services provided by Foundation staff, and the overall impact of Foundation services.

2. Participants who completed the Feedback Survey Form between July 2003 and June 2004, by program type

	Number	Percent*
Financial Institutions	9	13%
Large loan recipients	4	6%
Loan guarantees	1	2%
Community Fund grants	4	6%
HCP, HOP, HLRP awards	17	25%
All other grants	33	49%
Total	68	101%

**Note.* Column totals do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Ratings of Initiative Foundation staff

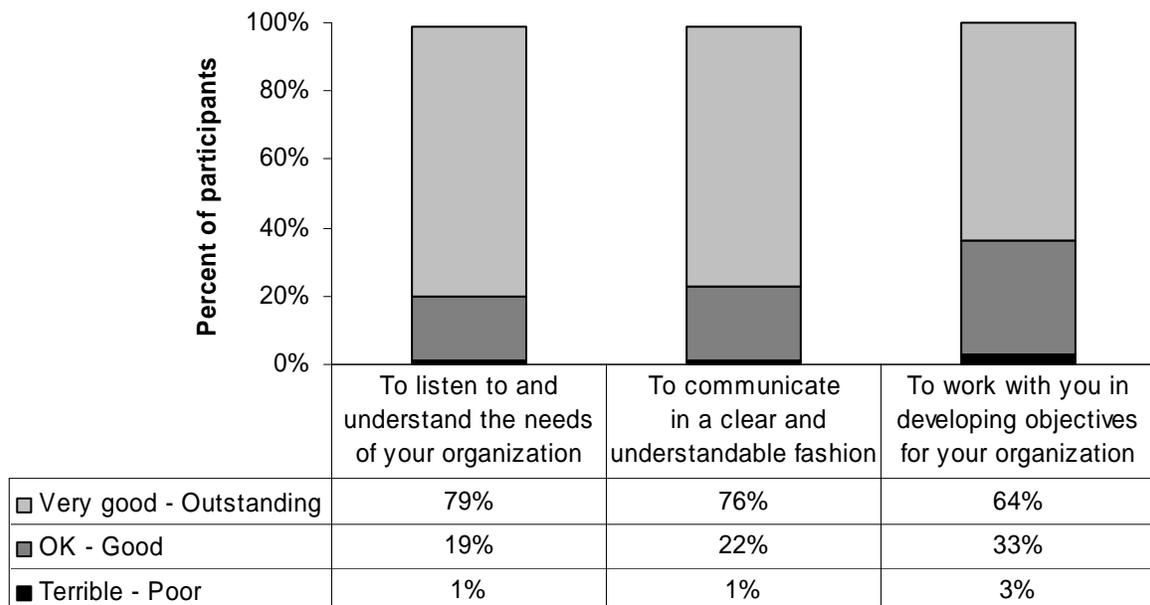
Participants were asked to rate the Initiative Foundation's staff on their ability to listen to and understand the needs of the participants' organizations, their ability to communicate in a clear and understandable fashion, their ability to work with participants to develop objectives for their organizations, their ability to relate to people with different backgrounds and experiences, their ability to respond to phone and email messages in a timely manner, and the explanation they provided about their organization's financial and narrative reporting requirements. Participants were allowed to give ratings of "terrible," "poor," "OK," "good," "very good," and "outstanding."

In general, a majority of participants gave very positive ratings. For example, 87 percent of participants said the Initiative Foundation staff is "very good" or "outstanding" at responding to phone or email messages in a timely manner and 79 percent said the Initiative Foundation staff is "very good" or "outstanding" at listening to and

understanding the needs of their organizations. On the other hand, only 59 percent of participants gave ratings of “very good” or “outstanding” when asked about how their organization’s financial and narrative reporting requirements were explained to them by the Initiative Foundation.

Financial institutions typically provided the lowest ratings on these items and Healthy Communities Partnership, Healthy Organizations Partnership, and Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership awardees provided higher than average ratings of satisfaction with Initiative Foundation staff on these items. (Note: Due to the small number of participants who are large loan recipients, loan guarantee recipients, or Community Fund grantees, the ratings are not reported by group, to ensure confidentiality.) See Figure 3.

3. Participants’ ratings of Initiative Foundation staff (How would you rate the Initiative Foundation staff on their ability... ?)*



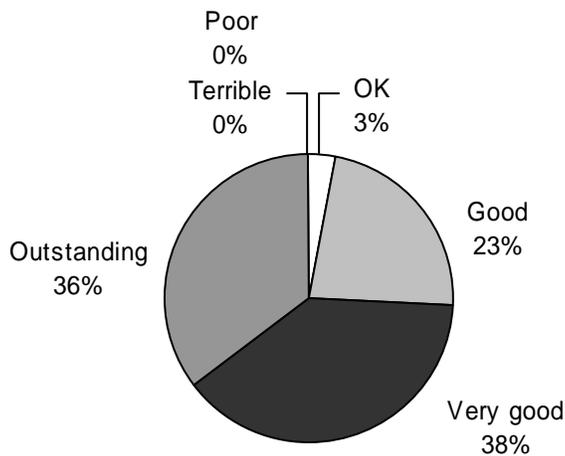
**Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.*

Ratings of overall impact

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on their organization, using the same rating scale as above. None of the participants rated the overall impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on their organization as “terrible” or “poor.” One-quarter (26%) of participants said the overall impact on their organization was “OK” or “good” and three-quarters (74%) said the impact was “very good” or “outstanding.”

Furthermore, all of the participants who received loan guarantees and Community Fund grants, in addition to 92 percent of participants who received Healthy Communities Partnership, Healthy Organizations Partnership, or Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership awards said the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on their organization was “very good” or “outstanding.” On the other hand, only 44 percent of participants from financial institutions and only 50 percent of participants who received large loans said the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on their organization was “very good” or “outstanding”). See Figure 4.

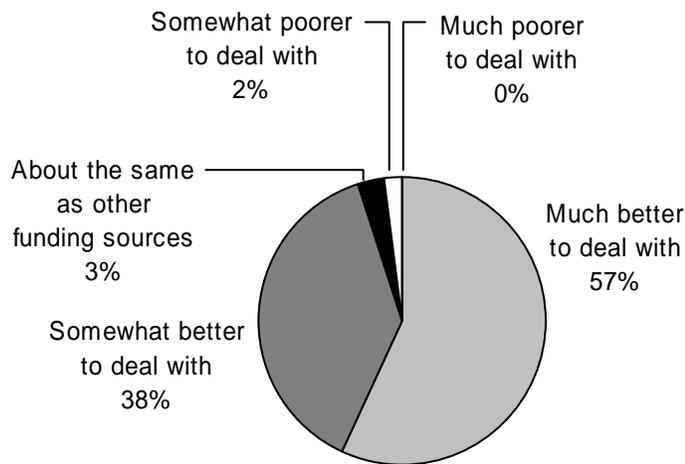
4. Participants’ ratings of the overall impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on their organization



**Note.* Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

In addition, participants were asked to rate the Initiative Foundation, compared to other funding sources, as a granting and training organization. Participants were allowed to rate the Foundation as “much poorer to deal with,” “somewhat poorer to deal with,” “about the same as other funding sources,” “somewhat better to deal with,” and “much better to deal with.” Overall, 95 percent of participants said the Foundation is “better” (either “somewhat better” or “much better”) compared to other funding sources. All of the participants from financial institutions, those who received loan guarantees, and those who received Community Fund grants said the Initiative Foundation is “better” to deal with compared to other funding sources. See Figure 5.

5. Participants’ ratings of the Initiative Foundation as a granting and training organization, compared to other funding sources



Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) program

The Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) program is the primary mechanism with which the Initiative Foundation integrates their community development initiatives and their economic development initiatives. The goal of the HCP program is to develop the capacity of citizens to create a locally shared vision and plan and to mobilize local and regional resources to implement that plan. To date, 11 rounds of HCP training have been completed with three more rounds active in the process. There are usually three or four communities in each round. Each community received an initial grant award of \$10,000 to \$12,500 to cover program participation costs. In addition, the Initiative Foundation provides on-going technical support and assistance, as well as specialized trainings, HCP reunions, and mini-trainings to all participating communities. Field consultants, chosen from former HCP graduates, are trained and connected to current HCP teams to ensure on-going support and communication.

This section of the report describes participants' experiences and satisfaction with the HCP program as reported on the *Participant Feedback Form*. The Initiative Foundation held 17 training sessions and other events for HCP participants between July 2003 and June 2004. Overall, approximately 625 participants attended at least one of these sessions and 468 feedback forms were received for a response rate of 75 percent. In addition, 15 participants from Round 10 and 15 participants from Round 11 completed final evaluation forms.

In addition, this section of the report describes the results of key informant interviews with participants in eight HCP communities and case studies of the same communities. Overall, 35 participants from Year 1 and 29 participants from Year 2 completed key informant interviews with Wilder Research Center about their experiences with the HCP program and many offered suggestions for improving the program. See Figure 6.

6. Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) communities: case studies and key informant interviews

Year 1 HCP communities	Year 2 HCP communities
Wadena, N=8	Sebeka, N=5
Long Prairie, N=9	Melrose, N=9
Cass Lake, N=9	Pequot Lakes, N=7
East St. Cloud, N=9	Cambridge, N=8
Total N=35 key informant interviews	Total N=29 key informant interviews

General participant feedback

Relationship to the Initiative Foundation

In Year 1 and Year 2, HCP key informants were asked about their relationship and involvement with the Initiative Foundation. All Year 2 key informants and 83 percent of Year 1 key informants participated in a training session or conference sponsored by the Initiative Foundation. Most of the informants (86%) had received a grant from the Initiative Foundation and 7 percent had received a loan or business investment. In addition, 95 percent have been involved in face-to-face meetings with Foundation members, 89 percent know a staff member, 40 percent of participants report knowing a board member of the Initiative Foundation, and 30 percent report having any other involvement or experience with the Foundation.

Year 2 key informants were also asked about their participation in follow-up training sessions offered by the Foundation as well as their participation in the following programs:

- Healthy Communities Partnerships
- Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnerships
- Healthy Organizations Partnerships
- Early Childhood Initiative Program

A majority of Year 2 informants report that they have participated in all of these five areas with the exception of the Healthy Organizations Partnerships program in which 25 percent of respondents report participation. All Year 2 informants report participation in the Healthy Communities Partnerships program and the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnerships program, 86 percent report participation in follow-up training sessions, and 56 percent report participation in the Early Childhood Initiative program.

Ratings of Initiative Foundation's goals and abilities

Key informants were asked to respond to eight questions about the Initiative Foundation's ability to promote certain goals as well as areas of service that need attention. (Note: In Year 1, participants were given the response categories: "terrible," "poor," "OK," "good," "very good," and "outstanding." In Year 2, the categories were the same except "outstanding" was changed to "excellent." Furthermore, wording was changed on two of the items between Year 1 and Year 2.) Nearly all of the informants rated the Foundation's work on these goals as "good," "very good," or "excellent," indicating very positive experiences with the Foundation in working toward these goals. See Figure 7.

7. Ratings of the Initiative Foundation's ability to achieve its goals (Year 1)

How would you rate...	Cass Lake		Long Prairie		East St. Cloud		Wadena		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The Foundation's ability to function as a catalyst in the region										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	3	33%	2	22%	1	11%	1	13%	7	20%
Very Good – Outstanding	6	67%	7	78%	8	89%	7	88%	28	80%
Its work in facilitating economic growth										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	4	44%	5	63%	2	33%	7	88%	18	58%
Very Good – Outstanding	5	56%	3	38%	4	67%	1	13%	13	42%
Its work in facilitating social and cultural growth										
Terrible – Poor	1	17%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3%
OK – Good	1	17%	4	44%	1	14%	3	38%	9	30%
Very Good – Outstanding	4	67%	5	56%	6	86%	5	63%	20	67%
Its ability to promote philanthropy in the region										
Terrible – Poor	1	13%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3%
OK – Good	4	50%	2	29%	4	44%	2	29%	12	39%
Very Good – Outstanding	3	38%	5	71%	5	56%	5	71%	18	58%
Its ability to promote leadership										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	2	22%	3	33%	2	22%	1	13%	8	23%
Very Good – Outstanding	7	78%	6	67%	7	78%	7	88%	27	77%
Its ability to encourage innovation										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	3	33%	5	56%	2	22%	3	38%	13	37%
Very Good – Outstanding	6	67%	4	44%	7	78%	5	63%	22	63%
Its ability to promote collaboration										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	1	11%	-	-	-	-	1	3%
OK – Good	4	44%	2	22%	1	11%	1	13%	8	23%
Very Good – Outstanding	5	56%	7	78%	8	89%	7	88%	26	74%
Its ability to convene and promote discussion about regional issues										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	1	11%	-	-	-	-	1	3%
OK – Good	4	50%	4	44%	1	11%	4	50%	11	32%
Very Good – Outstanding	4	50%	5	56%	8	89%	4	50%	20	59%

7. Ratings of the Initiative Foundation's ability to achieve its goals (Year 2) (continued)

How would you rate...	Pequot Lakes		Melrose		Cambridge		Sebeka		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The Foundation's ability to function as a catalyst in the region										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	-	-	2	22%	1	13%	-	-	3	10%
Very Good – Excellent	7	100%	7	78%	7	88%	5	100%	26	90%
Its work in facilitating economic growth										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	1	13%	-	-	1	4%
OK – Good	2	29%	5	63%	2	25%	1	20%	10	36%
Very Good – Excellent	5	71%	3	38%	5	63%	4	80%	17	61%
Its work in facilitating greater community connectedness in the region*										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	-	-	2	22%	1	13%	1	20%	4	14%
Very Good – Excellent	7	100%	7	78%	7	88%	4	80%	25	86%
Its ability to promote philanthropy in the region										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	1	14%	-	-	1	4%
OK – Good	4	57%	2	29%	1	14%	2	40%	9	35%
Very Good – Excellent	3	43%	5	71%	5	71%	3	60%	16	62%
Its ability to build leadership capacity*										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	2	29%	5	56%	1	14%	1	20%	9	32%
Very Good – Excellent	5	71%	4	44%	6	86%	4	80%	19	68%
Its ability to encourage innovation										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	1	11%	-	-	-	-	1	4%
OK – Good	2	33%	1	11%	2	25%	1	20%	6	21%
Very Good – Excellent	4	67%	7	78%	6	75%	4	80%	21	75%
Its ability to promote collaboration										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	1	11%	-	-	-	-	1	4%
OK – Good	-	-	3	33%	2	29%	-	-	5	19%
Very Good – Excellent	6	100%	5	56%	5	71%	5	100%	21	78%
Its ability to convene and promote discussion about regional issues										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	14%	4	44%	2	29%	1	20%	8	29%
Very Good – Excellent	6	86%	5	56%	5	71%	4	80%	20	71%

*Note. There are some slight wording changes for the items in Year 1 to the items in Year 2.

In addition, informants were asked to state in their own words what they think the Initiative Foundation hopes to accomplish in the region. Overall, most respondents indicate a fairly thorough and in-depth understanding of at least some of the Foundation's areas of focus. The most commonly mentioned general goals are: viability of communities (mainly in terms of economic development) (N=24), quality of life (N=15), and community ownership of the projects (N=9). In addition, several participants mentioned funding (N=10), support of organizations (N=9), and education (N=9). Other Foundation goals described by participants related to specific focus areas, such as youth and families (N=14), business development and entrepreneurship activities (N=7), and leadership (N=4). Other goals mentioned by fewer than five respondents each include: community involvement, diversity, policy reform and other issues of working with government, regional issues, support of underprivileged in the community, environmental issues, and philanthropy. Some respondents' comments follow, to illustrate the main themes from this item:

I believe that they have an active interest in creating an environment in which all persons and all communities and agencies are able to maximize their potential... Specifically, they have a strong focus on working to ensure that children of early childhood ages are provided opportunities and their parents are provided opportunities, so that they are able to reach their maximum potential.

Overall, community development. I really respect the Initiative Foundation because they are not one-sided in their approach. They consider all facets of community development. They are good at the technical side; giving people the skills they need. Also, they are good at leadership; giving people strategies they need to grow and succeed.

I think they do a great job of promoting the region. They are looking at the strengths of the region and trying to capitalize on them.

To better the area economically and also to do professional training to give people guidance. For example, when our Economic Development Authority was just getting established, the Foundation had a conference to educate people working in this type of effort to educate them about the field and just to help them get their feet wet.

Increasing the economic viability of rural communities. Involving youth in decision-making processes and giving them opportunities to do meaningful activities in their local areas. Celebrating and supporting volunteerism. Supporting entrepreneurship. They are the "go to" people for money and ideas for businesses and community groups. If they cannot help, they will steer you in the right direction for help.

I think that they hope to accomplish having communities assess their own strengths and help them mobilize on those strengths. We have looked to them to see how we can move to an assets [based] approach. Their approach is to have the ideas and direction come from the community...

Ratings of Initiative Foundation staff

Key informants were also asked to rate Initiative Foundation staff in eight areas using the following response categories: “terrible,” “poor,” “OK,” “good,” “very good,” or “outstanding/excellent.” In addition, Year 2 informants were asked to rate the staff on a ninth dimension, cultural competency. (Note: In Year 1, participants were given the response categories: “terrible,” “poor,” “OK,” “good,” “very good,” and “outstanding.” In Year 2, the categories were the same except “outstanding” was changed to “excellent.”) Most of the key informants rated staff ability as “very good” or “outstanding/excellent” in each of the areas. See Figure 8.

8. Ratings of Initiative Foundation staff (Year 1)

How would you rate...	Cass Lake		Long Prairie		East St. Cloud		Wadena		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The staff’s ability to listen to and understand any concerns or issues you have discussed										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	-	-	2	22%	2	22%	3	38%	7	20%
Very Good – Outstanding	9	100%	7	78%	7	78%	5	63%	28	80%
The staff’s ability to communicate in a clear and understandable fashion										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	11%	-	-	1	11%	4	50%	6	17%
Very Good – Outstanding	8	89%	9	100%	8	89%	4	50%	29	83%
The usefulness of the staff’s work in your community or organization										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	1	11%	-	-	-	-	1	3%
OK – Good	2	22%	1	11%	2	22%	2	25%	7	20%
Very Good – Outstanding	7	78%	7	78%	7	78%	6	75%	27	77%
The staff’s knowledge and skills in grantmaking										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	2	29%	-	-	1	14%	3	38%	6	20%
Very Good – Outstanding	5	71%	8	100%	6	86%	5	63%	24	80%

8. Ratings of Initiative Foundation staff (Year 2) (continued)

How would you rate...	Pequot Lakes		Melrose		Cambridge		Sebeka		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The usefulness of the staff's work in your community or organization										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	14%	3	38%	-	-	-	-	4	15%
Very Good – Excellent	6	86%	5	63%	7	100%	4	100%	22	85%
The staff's knowledge and skills in grantmaking										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	17%	1	14%	-	-	1	50%	3	14%
Very Good – Excellent	5	83%	6	86%	6	100%	1	50%	18	86%
The staff's knowledge and skills in donor services										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	25%	3	50%	1	20%	-	-	5	28%
Very Good – Excellent	3	75%	3	50%	4	80%	3	100%	13	72%
The staff's knowledge and skills in loan making										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	-	-	2	67%	-	-	1	33%	3	25%
Very Good – Excellent	2	100%	1	33%	4	100%	2	67%	9	75%
The usefulness of the staff's suggestions and recommendations										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	14%	3	38%	1	14%	-	-	5	19%
Very Good – Excellent	6	86%	5	63%	6	86%	4	100%	21	81%
The staff's ability to involve people in planning										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	14%	3	38%	1	14%	1	25%	6	23%
Very Good – Excellent	6	86%	5	63%	6	86%	3	75%	20	77%
The staff's ability to work with different racial and ethnic communities in the region										
Terrible – Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OK – Good	1	33%	1	13%	-	-	-	-	2	11%
Very Good – Excellent	2	67%	7	88%	4	100%	3	100%	16	89%

Ratings of Foundation trainings and events

Initiative Foundation Year 2 HCP training session participants were asked to rate the session they attended. They were given the response options: “1 = poor,” “2 = below average,” “3 = average,” “4 = above average,” and “5 = excellent.” They were also asked to rate the overall value of the session from “\$” to “\$\$\$\$\$.” Overall, participants gave an average rating of “above average” to “excellent” and rated the overall value of the session between “\$\$\$\$” and “\$\$\$\$\$.” In fact, none of the participants who completed feedback forms gave ratings of “below average” or “poor.” Ninety percent of participants gave ratings of “\$\$\$\$” or “\$\$\$\$\$” and 93 percent said the session was “above average” or “excellent.”

Using the same rating scale of “1 = poor” to “5 = excellent,” Round 10 and Round 11 HCP participants were asked to rate the participatory activities provided by the Initiative Foundation. Round 10 grantees gave an average rating of 4.5 (“above average” to “excellent”) and Round 11 grantees gave an average rating of 4.13 (“above average” to “excellent”). The “team building” session was rated highest of all the sessions by Round 10 participants (average score: 4.92) and the “visioning” session was given the highest ratings by Round 11 participants (average score: 4.60). All of the sessions were given average ratings between “above average” and “excellent” by both Round 10 and Round 11 participants. None of these participants gave ratings for any of the sessions of “below average” or “poor” and only one Round 10 participant and three Round 11 participants gave any sessions a rating of “average.”

Training session participants were asked in an open-ended format to describe: one thing they especially liked or learned from the training, the things they will use from the training in their work or project efforts, and the one thing they would change about the session. Participants were also given an opportunity to provide additional comments at the end of the feedback form. Things participants especially liked or learned included: focusing on assets, tips on funding resources, active participation and representativeness of attendees, learning about leadership styles and listening skills, action planning, and hearing success stories from other groups.

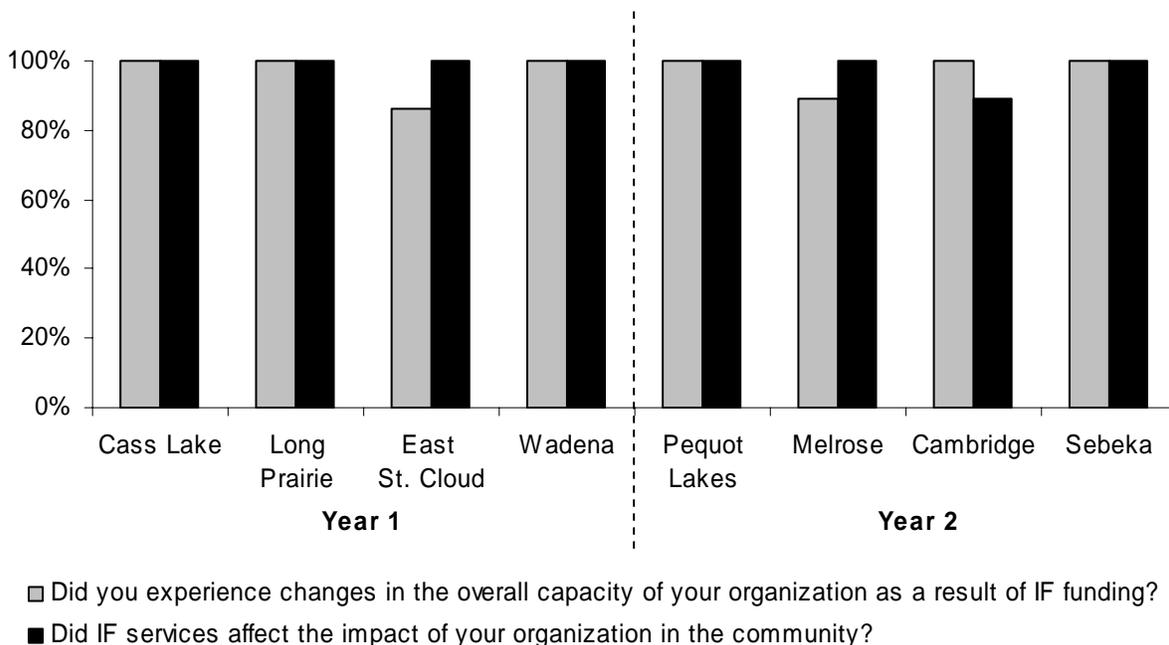
The items participants said they would use in their work or project efforts include: general resource information, contacts and networking within the group, focusing on assets, communication skills and being more open-minded and inclusive, ideas for getting more and a wider variety of people involved, additional Initiative Foundation funding resources, and planning and marketing of the visioning session.

Although most participants did not answer this question or said they would not change anything, the most commonly mentioned things participants would change about the HCP training sessions are: the length of the session (some wanted it longer, others wanted it shorter); the number and types of people involved (should be increased); and the logistics of the small group sessions, break times, and so on.

The impact of Initiative Foundation services on participants' organizational capacity

Nearly all of the key informants reported that they had observed changes in the overall capacity of their organization to serve their community that might have been attributed to the grant, loan, or business investment they received from the Initiative Foundation and that the services or resources they received from the Initiative Foundation had an effect on the impact their organization has in the community. See Figure 9.

9. Ratings of the impact of Initiative Foundation services on organizational capacity



Participants were asked to describe any changes in the overall capacity of their organization to serve their community that might be attributed to the grant, loan, or business investment they received from the Initiative Foundation. The two most common responses to this question were more cooperation in the need to improve early childhood education and an increased ability to work with other organizations and citizens within

the community. Several participants attributed greater collaboration and cooperation between their organization and other community organizations and citizens in attaining common goals to the assistance they received from the Initiative Foundation. Specifically, participants pointed out that the Foundation educated them on how to increase awareness of community meetings, facilitate dialogue between parties at meetings, identify community needs, and work toward resolution of community needs. Specific tangible and intangible changes identified by respondents as possibly being attributed to Initiative Foundation assistance are described in more detail in the *Case studies* section of this report.

Participants were also asked to identify which, if any, services that their organization received from the Initiative Foundation were of the greatest value to their organization. These services included training, loans, grants, support, and other services. Training was the most frequently cited service. Specific examples of training include the leadership training, Healthy Communities training, Early Childhood Development, and leadership training. Grants were the next most frequently cited service. Specific examples include grant writing assistance, understanding the need to work together to build a more effective grant proposal, and an increased awareness of the different organizations and governmental units that offer grants. Other services identified as being of greatest value include the development of team building skills, understanding the importance of networking, enhanced understanding of cultural diversity, and development of a more positive organizational attitude.

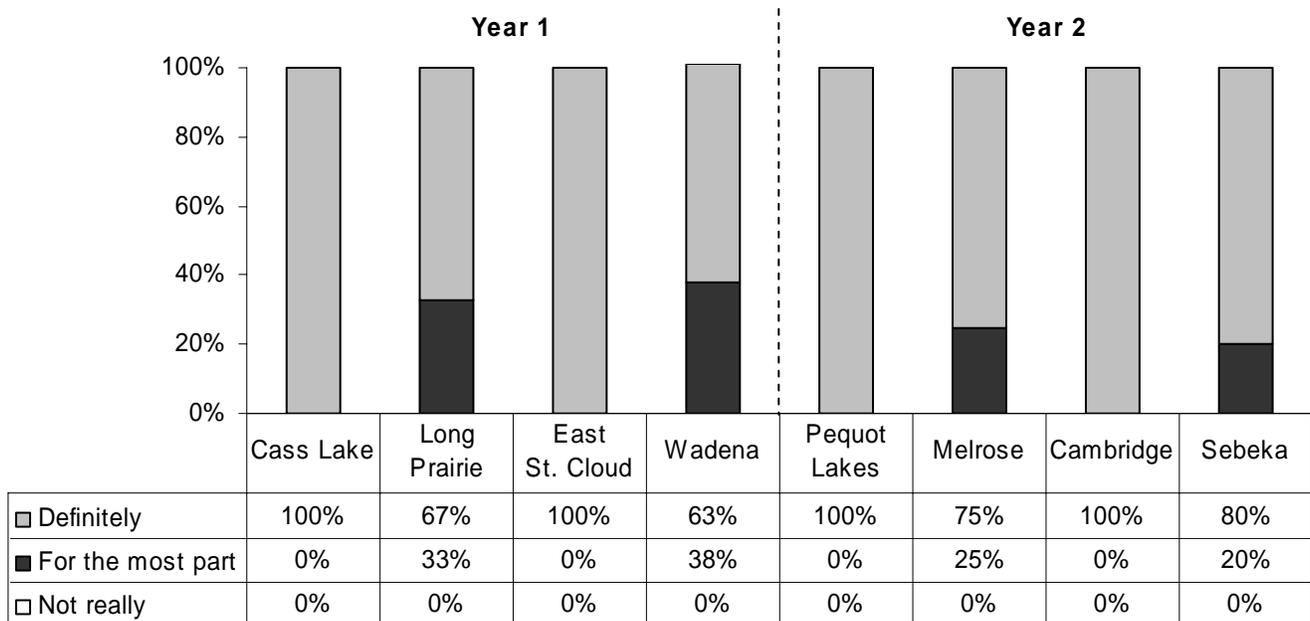
Finally, participants were asked to describe how the services or resources they received from the Initiative Foundation affected their ability to provide community leadership. The most common response given was enabling organizational members to serve as leaders in various community capacities. Credit for developing community leaders was primarily given to the Healthy Communities Partnership trainings. Other responses provided include teaching organizations how to network their various groups together in order to attain common goals, providing background on how community development works, teaching specific skills related to community leadership, and putting people in touch with other community leaders they may not have previously known. An example of the general feeling put forward by many participants to this question is conveyed well in the following response:

The Initiative Foundation causes a group of people to volunteer for a project. You go to the meetings, but at the same time we build social capital with each other. These relationships are the key. You can then move mountains.

Ratings of the Initiative Foundation’s work in Central Minnesota

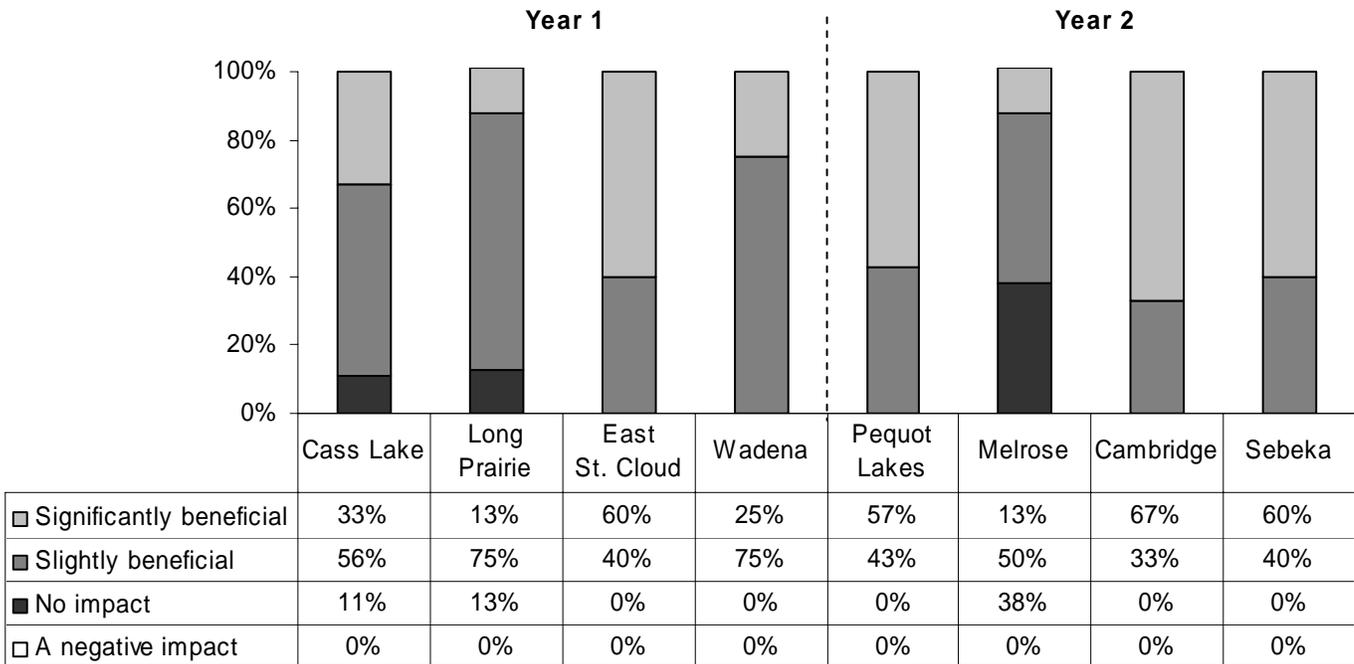
HCP key informants were asked if the Initiative Foundation has a reputation for doing good work in Central Minnesota communities. Response options for this question were: “definitely,” “for the most part,” or “not really.” Most participants (86%) said “definitely” that the Foundation has a reputation for doing good work in Central Minnesota, 14 percent said “for the most part,” and no participants said of “not really.” See Figure 10.

10. Ratings of the Initiative Foundation’s work in Central Minnesota: “Do you think the Initiative Foundation has a reputation for doing good work in Central Minnesota?”

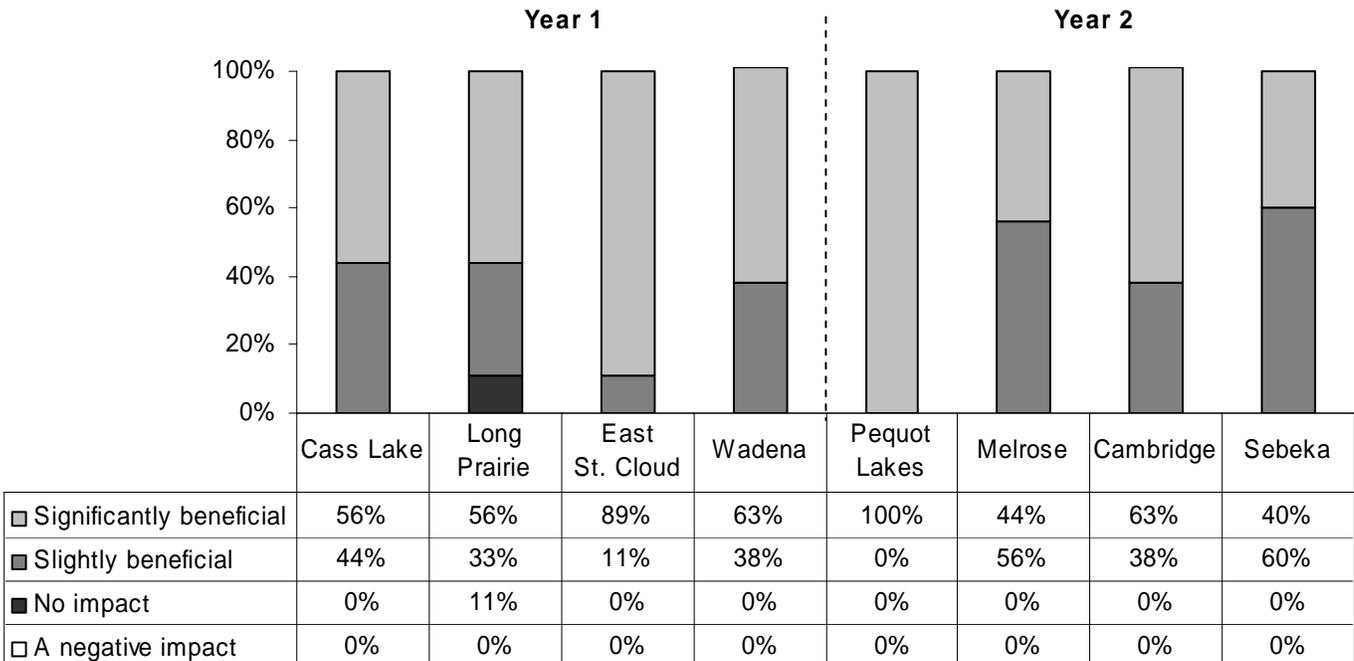


Key informants were also asked to rate the Initiative Foundation on economic development in their region and the influence the Foundation has had on community members’ social capital. Response options for this question were: “significantly beneficial,” “slightly beneficial,” “there has been no impact on social capital in your region,” and “there has been a negative impact.” Nearly all key informants reported a “slightly beneficial” or “significantly beneficial” impact in these two areas. See Figure 11.

11. Ratings of the Initiative Foundation’s impact on economic development and social capital: “Overall, how would you rate the impact of the Initiative Foundation on economic development in your region?”



“Overall, how would you rate the influence the Initiative Foundation has had on community members' social capital?*



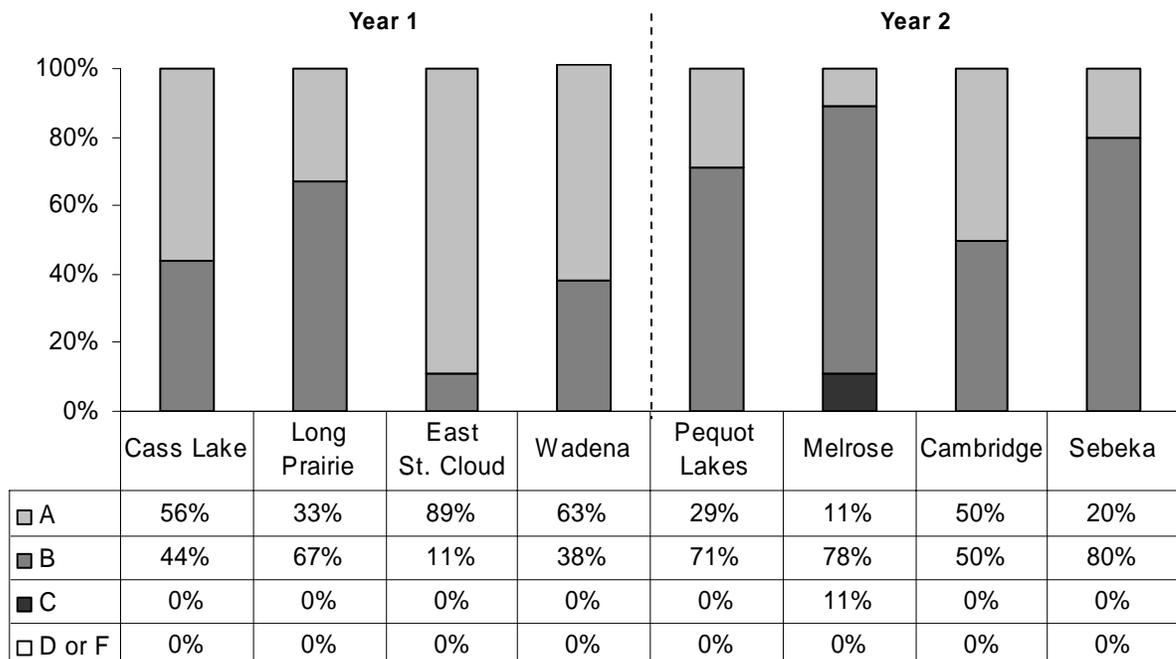
**Note. In Year 1, the question was worded: “Overall, how would you rate the influence the Initiative Foundation has had on people’s connections to their communities and to their networks of support?”*

In addition, Year 2 key informants were asked to rate the impact of the Foundation’s services on community members’ identification as members of the Central Minnesota region. Response options for this question were: “significantly increased regional identification,” “slightly increased regional identification,” “there has been no impact on regional identification,” and “there has been a decrease in regional identification.” Nearly all Year 2 key informants reported that identification had “slightly” (69%) or “significantly increased regional identification” (28%) while no participants reported a “decrease” in regional identification.

Overall ratings of the Initiative Foundation

Participants were asked to give the Initiative Foundation a report card grade based on their view of what the Foundation has contributed to Central Minnesota and the people who live there. Response options for this question were: “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” or “F.” Most participants gave the Foundation a grade of A or B, a small proportion gave a grade of C, and no participants gave a grade of D or F. See Figure 12.

12. Letter grades given to the Initiative Foundation by HCP key informants: Initiative Foundation report card grade



A follow-up open ended question was also asked to find out why participants gave these grades. The most common reasons given were the high quality of the training that the Initiative Foundation provides, the increased awareness of community needs that takes place as a result of the Foundation's work, positive support and guidance provided to the organizations, good staffing and availability of staff to answer questions, and suggestions on what can be done to make a community healthier through identifying needs, establishing goals, and educating individuals on grant-writing and financing community goals.

General suggestions for improvement and ideas for future Initiative Foundation programming efforts

Participants were asked to describe service areas, if any, within the Initiative Foundation that need attention. A majority of the informants said they do not think the Foundation has any areas of service that need attention. Of the informants that said there are services areas in need of attention, the most common response was related to providing more money for community development. Other responses include providing more training on technology in the workplace, motivating more community members and organizations to work with the Foundation, and teaching more people in communities how to develop economic opportunity.

When participants were asked what kind of help, support, or resources the Foundation might offer that would be of most value to the participant or their organization in the next few years, the most common category of response was related to financial assistance. These responses include providing money for additional leadership training, providing direct grants to communities, assistance with grant writing, increasing the awareness of grants and frequent sponsors of grants, and providing money for workshops on various topics. Other responses include providing brochures for advertising and promoting the community, facilitating follow-up meetings, providing more opportunities for community members to reach out to one another, additional trainings, assistance with diversity issues, education on how to make communities more friendly to youth, continued assistance in developing leaders within the community, training on bringing new businesses into the community, and assistance in improving economic opportunity in communities.

Finally, participants were asked what kind of help, support, or resources might the Initiative Foundation offer that would be of *most* value to the people in the communities they live in. The most common category of response was related to economic development. These responses include developing more jobs, increasing the number of livable wage jobs, assisting with small business start-up, direct grant assistance, and revitalizing downtown districts through business development. Other responses reported

at least two times include affordable housing development and investment in early childhood education. Participants were also asked to recommend *one thing* that the Initiative Foundation should invest in that they feel would make the biggest difference in supporting people in their region. The most common category of response again was related economic development. These responses included workforce and skill training for people seeking work and those who are currently employed, more job development, loans for businesses, grants to assist business, and training in seeking out grants.

Case studies

Four HCP communities from the previous evaluation period and four HCP communities from the current evaluation period have been studied in depth to determine how external and internal factors may contribute to or hinder progress of the communities in achieving the goals they initially established for the HCP program. External factors relate to the economic, political, demographic, and other characteristics of the region. Internal factors that were considered when selecting HCP communities for case study was the length and intensity of the Initiative Foundation's contact with the community and the variety of Foundation program activities available to community members (including HCP, HLRP, HOP, Business Loans and Guarantee Program, and Donor Services).

The Initiative Foundation operates in a region composed of four unique geographical zones: Central Lakes, Countryside, St. Cloud Area, and the Metro Ring. The economic infrastructure, resources, and level of prosperity are highly variable across the region, and the region includes areas of high, medium, and low population growth as well as some areas of population decline. In addition, the Initiative Foundation has identified several themes that it supports with its grant and loan programs. These themes, and the similarity in types of projects identified among the local planning groups, were also considered when selecting communities for case study. See the Appendix for the key informant interview questions.

Case study pair 1: Wadena & Sebeka

Wadena

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,² the population of Wadena, Minnesota, is 4,294 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (47%) of Wadena residents are male and slightly over half (52%) are female. Their average age is 40.8 years. Three-quarters (77%) of the population is 18 years or older. Most residents (98%) are White and nearly all (99%) were born in the United States. Seventy-nine percent have a high school diploma or more education and 16 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Over half (52%) of Wadena residents over the age of 15 are married and 10 percent are divorced or separated. One-quarter (25%) have a disability. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the housing in Wadena is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Wadena has a lower labor force participation rate compared to the national average (57% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Wadena residents is \$26,947, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Sixteen percent of individuals and 10 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 63 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Wadena are: education, health, and social services (28% of workforce), manufacturing (17% of workforce), and retail trade (16% of workforce). Over three-quarters (77%) of the workforce in Wadena is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through April 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 73 grants to Wadena County businesses, organization, or other community groups. The value of these grants totals \$553, 345. In addition, since 2001 the Initiative Foundation has funded 32 multi-county projects including Wadena County, with a total contribution of \$365,600.

In April 1999, the City of Wadena received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a revitalization project. The focus of the project was "downtown revitalization addressing community development and economic development through central business district revitalization" (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated April 10, 2003). The priorities set for the project were to establish a design for the central business district revitalization; to obtain other grants and resources from the Initiative Foundation and other sources; to purchase, renovate, and utilize a railroad depot in Wadena to enhance

² U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Wadena city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

the revitalization; to establish a “Healthy Youth Development” program; and to establish a Wadena Revitalization Steering Committee representative of all cultures, generations, and interests.

In addition to the Wadena Revitalization grant, the City of Wadena also received \$94,500 in other Initiative Foundation funding, a \$923,800 Small Cities Grant for Downtown Revitalization,³ and approximately \$100,000 in grants and matching funds from other organizations such as the McKnight Foundation, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Browne Family Foundation, and Faith in Action. See Figure 13 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by the City of Wadena to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 55 loans in Wadena County for \$1.45 million, leveraging a total of \$6.5 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 632 jobs. This results in a grand total of nearly \$2 million that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in Wadena County since 1987.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, Wadena was able to create a community vision through public meetings that solicited broad-based citizen input. They also developed a downtown “Streetscape Master Plan” through citizen input and consulting support from the Hoisington Koegler Group and purchased the railroad depot. An association called Wadena Improving Now (WIN) Partnership was established to coordinate revitalization efforts. The Cyber Café was opened in May 2002. The Youth as Resources (YAR) board was established and a project coordinator was hired. A Partners’ Resource Center was opened. Both organizations that received grants from the initiative Foundation for the Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) program – Partners for a Healthy Wadena and the Cloverleaf Youth Partnership – established strategic plans and participated in training provided by the initiative Foundation. Finally, the county-wide transit project started in April 2003.

³ This grant is from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

13. Funding received by the City of Wadena and Wadena community groups since 1999, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for revitalization project	\$10,000
IF grant for Cyber Café planning	\$5,000
IF grant for Youth Employment service	\$10,000
IF grant to establish and operate the Healthy Youth Development program	\$30,000
IF grant to support downtown revitalization marketing efforts	\$10,000
IF Awards Event winner	\$1,000
IF grant for staffing Wadena Improving Now (WIN) Partnership	\$7,500
IF grant for Youth as Resources (YAR) start-up	\$15,000
IF grant for county-wide transit planning	\$5,000
IF Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) grant to Partners for a Healthy Wadena for strategic planning and capacity building	\$5,000
IF Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) grant to Cloverleaf Youth Partnership for strategic planning and capacity building	\$5,000
IF grant to Wadena EDA (Economic Development Authority) to support the downtown business marketing program	\$1,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$104,500
DTED Small Cities Grant for Downtown Rev. (\$790K) + local owner match	\$1,110,000
McKnight Foundation matching grant for Cyber Café project	\$57,000
Additional Cyber café cash donations or in-kind support	\$243,000
Faith in Action** (serving Wadena and Todd Counties) grant to help volunteers from faith communities to provide individual support to elderly, chronically ill, and disabled adults (Robert Woods Johnson Foundation)	\$35,000
Browne Family Foundation grant for establishing Partners office	\$4,000
Federal transportation grant (TEA-21) to address historic railroad depot revitalization and reuse + 70,000 private contributions	\$554,200
Secured financial commitments from County and City government, private citizens, business community for main street renovation project	\$1,600,000
Minnesota Department of Transportation grant to assist with downtown street lighting, curb and gutter, etc.	\$908,000
Total grants /funds received from other sources	\$4,511,200
Total grants/funds received from IF and other sources	\$4,615,700

*Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.

**Note. The Faith in Action grant was county-wide and was not specifically for downtown revitalization.

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation's activities and funding in their community, key informants from Wadena mentioned increased organizational capacity they have experienced as a result of the Foundation's funding and training, increased support from local and state government as a result of the planning and prioritization they participated in for HCP, increased opportunities for funding from other sources, and increased volunteerism in their community. Specific aspects of the HCP program that respondents found to be especially useful include the Foundation's requirements for collaboration and evaluation (both which increased their project's efficiency), pairing of grants with training, organized community planning, leadership development, youth involvement, and the increased risks they could take with their project because of the flexibility and nature of Foundation funding. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Wadena follow:

Training, the Healthy Communities Partnership training, has been the real spur to activity and has worked for more than just getting the grants. It brought a number of people together who were not previously connected. And the quality of the training – it was good community planning and it brought four different communities together for the training. The impetus that the training created allowed us to do \$200,000 of fundraising. Second, the grants from the Foundation were important. Not otherwise having access to capital, we wouldn't otherwise have gotten off the ground. It shows how it takes money to make money. When they [the Foundation] provides money to start-ups, it builds momentum and people see it and see that they can get things done. Without the grant maybe thing would have got done, but probably not.

Planning, helping the community to plan. The Foundation gives an organized forum for ideas to come out that wouldn't come out otherwise. We have applied to have the County be a part of the Foundation planning program for long-range planning. The Foundation would facilitate with all the commissioners and County heads together and look at how to do change. They are really a catalyst in getting organizations to talk about their hopes and dreams in a useful way. For the County we really need this, otherwise we just deal with the typical zoning and planning and “seat-of-the-pants, putting out fires” things.

The Foundation staff [was the best thing about working with the Foundation]. I can't say enough about the high quality people. By being involved with them and learning asset-based development. And they communicate respectfully with all. They are such good examples and this comes through to the community. They are good mentors and are good at communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. They have so much expertise to share. Plus the staff have inspired a lot more volunteer work in Wadena. This is good for the person [volunteer] and for the community. Since we've been involved with the Foundation, our city staff and elected officials are more cooperative, more positive, and less cynical. And this leads to more positive changes with other people in the community. The grants have also affected the lives of a lot of

youth, and this impacts the other community members. For example, to see what happened with the Cyber Cafe - where they never had imagined it could happen.

Sebeka

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁴ the population of Sebeka, Minnesota, is 710 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (47%) of Wadena residents are male and slightly over half (53%) are female. Their average age is 41.1 years. Three-quarters (76%) of the population is 18 years or older. A vast majority of residents (99%) are White and nearly all (98%) were born in the United States. Seventy-seven percent have a high school diploma or more education and 14 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Over half (57%) of Sebeka residents over the age of 15 are married and 11 percent are divorced or separated. One-fifth (19%) have a disability. Over three-quarters (76%) of the housing in Sebeka is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Sebeka has a lower labor force participation rate compared to the national average (57% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Sebeka residents is \$23,693, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Eighteen percent of individuals and 12 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 56 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Sebeka are: education, health, and social services (31% of workforce), manufacturing (16% of workforce), and retail trade (11% of workforce). Over two-thirds (68%) of the workforce in Sebeka is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through June 30, 2004, the Initiative Foundation has given five grants to Sebeka/Nimrod nonprofit organizations, local units of government, and public school districts. The value of these grants totals \$23,500 (including the \$10,000 grant described in the next paragraph). In addition, since 2001 the Initiative Foundation has funded two multi-county projects including Sebeka/Nimrod, with a total contribution of \$26,500.

In February 2003, an organization called Partners in Planning (PIP) from the community of Sebeka/Nimrod received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a project related to future planning, economic development, and the natural environment. The priorities set for the project were to create a community center and other recreational facilities to serve the needs of community members of all ages; to spur economic development and livable

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Sebeka city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

wage job creation; and to bring the community into the schools and take students out into the community in order to foster improved relations and understanding between the school and the community as a whole.

In terms of the economic development priority area, the specific goals were to redo the comprehensive city plan because the old plan was 10 years old and had no implementation strategy. In addition, PIP developed a goal to promote tourism in order to maintain or grow local businesses.

Specific to the third priority area (to enhance the community/school relationship), PIP organized a school lunch for parents and grandparents to eat with their child/grandchild. The purpose of this event was to foster intergenerational communication and to get community members into the school so that they could become aware of needed changes. The group also worked to improve the school stage so theater and musical productions would be more inviting and encourage community support and rapport.

In addition to the Healthy Communities Partnership grant, the Sebeka/Nimrod community also received \$13,500 in other Initiative Foundation funding, and \$611,000 in loan funds. This results in a grand total of over \$634,000 that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in the Sebeka/Nimrod area since 1987. See Figure 14 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by the Sebeka/Nimrod area to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 16 loans in Sebeka for \$611,000, leveraging a total of nearly \$3.3 million in business investments and creating or retaining a total of 113 jobs.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, Sebeka/Nimrod was able to create a community vision through a visioning session attended by 111 community members. They also conducted a survey of over 350 citizens on their opinions of what should happen in the future in their community. Finally, PIP recruited, formed, and trained 20 task force members to work on the group's priority areas.

14. Funding received by the Sebeka/Nimrod community since 2003, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for HCP project	\$10,000
Other IF grants	\$13,500
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$23,500
Total grants received from other sources	\$??
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$23,500

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s activities and funding in their community, key informants from Sebeka mainly focused on processes, due to the fact that their project is fairly new. The main HCP processes that were mentioned include the training, especially when paired with funding, help with prioritization and taking action on a plan, and the collaboration aspects and learning how to work as a group. Respondents commented on the usefulness of the HCP trainings and other Foundation assistance in terms of helping their organizations grow and succeed. In addition, several participants mentioned that the involvement of the Mayor and local business leaders in the process was appreciated. Specific outcomes that participants have experienced as a result of their participation include increased leadership skills and increased involvement of youth in the community. Furthermore, respondents indicated several new community features including walking trails and beautification of the area. When asked what would be most useful for the Initiative Foundation to provide for their community in the future, economic development activities and publicity of the HCP program and other Foundation activities were the most prominent items mentioned. Some respondents’ comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants’ experiences in Sebeka follow:

We’re still pretty early on in the program, so we haven’t used much. A lot of it has been the training aspect, bringing somebody in who knows how to conduct the visioning session. We had a community visioning session and we had a facilitator [from the Initiative Foundation] come in who was in charge of the event. It’s someone who’s knowledgeable and has been through the situation before and knows how it should go and knows the right questions to ask to get people to talk and for just starting this, you need someone who knows, some leadership in it.

Getting the group of us to work as a team and getting others involved in the community on our projects. It’s given us a focus. We have a goal in mind, whereas before we were just thinking we should make things better, not how.

Now we know where we're going. We just need to keep people involved and get more people involved, which will be a project.

Without us having gone through this [HCP] process, I don't think we'd be doing what we're doing. Everyone would just be sitting around, figuratively speaking, not sure what to do. They trained us. Then they connected us with resource people to help us with our projects. They also helped us design. We had a big luncheon and invited the community in and came up with some goals on how to improve our community. And they helped us with that and helped us find resources to help us attain those goals that we had. They're also helping us stay on track so we don't lose steam. Keeping us going I guess is what you'd want to call it.

I think it makes you realize as a business that you have a responsibility in the community, and that people like that you're supportive of community, that you're not just getting the money and not contributing or being active in the area.

Every community has a vision and it takes a team to make it complete. The Initiative Foundation is there to support and help as a team with implementation of plans or projects that you would like to see develop or be a success. They're there in support of you and allow you to create or have this vision so your community can do and come together and build. (What should they invest in?) I don't know, because they do everything. I don't know, if they want to give out more funding, not that that's the main thing, because it takes the community and everyone to pull together. I don't know.

Case study pair 2: Long Prairie & Melrose

Long Prairie

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁵ the population of Long Prairie, Minnesota, is 3,040 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (47%) of Long Prairie residents are male and slightly over half (53%) are female. Their average age is 38.1 years. Three-quarters (75%) of the population is 18 years or older. Most residents (93%) are White and most (93%) were born in the United States. Seventy-four percent have a high school diploma or more education and 15 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Over half (55%) of Long Prairie residents over the age of 15 are married and 10 percent are divorced or separated. Nearly one-quarter (23%) have a disability. Two-thirds (66%) of the housing in Long Prairie is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Long Prairie has a lower labor force participation rate compared to the national average (55% versus 64% nationally). The median household

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Long Prairie city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

income of Long Prairie residents is \$28,237, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Sixteen percent of individuals and 14 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 64 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Long Prairie are: manufacturing (28% of workforce), education, health, and social services (25% of workforce), and retail trade (11% of workforce). Nearly four-fifths (79%) of the workforce in Long Prairie is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the “Comparisons across case study communities” section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through June 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 108 grants to Todd County businesses, organization, or other community groups. The value of these grants totals \$850,512. In addition, since 2001 the Initiative Foundation has funded 38 multi-county projects including Todd County, with a total contribution of \$402,100.

In 1998, the City of Long Prairie received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a community revitalization project. The purpose of the project was “to promote and assist in the development and enhancement of the Long Prairie Community” (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated September 18, 2002). The priorities set for the project were to revitalize the Reichert Hotel and downtown area; to develop and promote a community theater; and to plan and initiate tourism in Long Prairie.

In addition to the Long Prairie Revitalization grant, the City of Long Prairie also received \$43,800 in other Initiative Foundation funding, a \$100,000 Small Cities Grant for Downtown Revitalization,⁶ and \$440,000+ in grants and matching funds from other organizations. See Figure 15 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by the City of Long Prairie to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 56 loans in Todd County for \$935,716, leveraging a total of nearly \$5.1 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 590 jobs. This results in a grand total of just over \$1.8 million that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in Todd County since 1987.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, Long Prairie was able to renovate and re-open the Reichert Hotel in October 2001. This renovation includes 17 housing units. In addition, a community theater was opened and had completed three productions as of September 2002. Downtown enhancements include a Veterans’ Memorial Park, tree plantings, street lights, an historic clock, benches, and a boulevard. Furthermore, 10 store fronts were improved

⁶ This grant is from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

and four homes were renovated with Community Revitalization (CRV) funds. A housing study was completed with Central Minnesota Housing Partnership (CHMP) that resulted in recommendations that are being implemented.

15. Funding received by the City of Long Prairie and Long Prairie community groups since 1998, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for revitalization project	\$10,000
IF grant for community theater	\$2,400
IF grant for Lake Charlotte Youth Run Concessions	\$3,900
IF grant for Prairie Community Network Safe Exchange & Visitation Center	\$25,000
IF grant for Summer Reading Program with Hispanic Liaison Office	\$2,500
IF grant for the Multi-Cultural Community Liaison Office of Todd County	\$10,000
IF Community Initiatives Award	\$1,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$54,800
CRV funds to purchase and renovate four homes	\$402,000
Federal Home Funds and Private Federal Home Loan Bank for Reichert Hotel renovation	\$338,000
Valspar Picture it Painted grant for Veterans' Memorial Park	\$800 (40+ gallons of paint)
Department of Natural Resources grant for tree planting	Unknown amount
Secured local contributions for downtown enhancements	\$38,000
Total grants received from other sources	\$778,800+
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$833,600+

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation's activities and funding in their community, key informants from Long Prairie mainly focused on the financial contributions the Foundation has made in the community and how this has helped their organizations to gain credibility in the community and increased organizational capacity. In addition, renovation of the Reichert building, which created affordable housing, as well as creation of the theater are the two projects in which respondents seemed to feel the most pride. Participants mentioned appreciation for the Initiative Foundation's ability to help them take action and use the enthusiasm of community members toward real progress. The support of local businesses, connection to networks for potential additional funding opportunities, and the staff support they received from the Foundation were frequently mentioned benefits of participation in HCP. Participants also spoke of

increased community volunteerism and increased collaboration and cooperation among government and nonprofit agencies in their community. When asked what would be of most value for the Initiative Foundation to provide in their community in the future, the most prominent responses were related to economic development, funding opportunities, and retention of youth in the community. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Long Prairie follow:

We were trying to find a focus so we could move forward and implement something. It took money (a grant). The grant was the catalyst to move from planning (a two-year process) to action. The grants got various organizations in this community going. The Initiative Foundation continued through these two years with training and helping with the process. We got a lot going then (about four years ago) and a lot since then. Most things have come to fruition and are ongoing. The Reichert Hotel restoration, the Long Prairie Tourism Board, the Economic Development Authority staff person in Long Prairie, the Prairie Players Theatre, the Veteran's Memorial Park, downtown beautification, flower boxes, and street lights. All this came out of the original grant to the revitalization group for training.

The grant writing workshop. They shared many sources for getting grants and taught us to use the vocabulary of grant writing and how to research grant money on our own. Also, the site visits by the Foundation staff. The personal touch of staff. People like it and can see where they are coming from. The Initiative Foundation staff is then able to see our enthusiasm and where we are coming from and see us as we are.

The old Reichert building is an example [of the impact of the Foundation's activities]. An eyesore was turned into a beautiful building that benefits the entire community. This would not have happened unless the Initiative Foundation had helped with planning and initiating action. Then, this effort grew into others: other committees and organizations. We got an EDA office here and a tourism organization, too.

[When asked what the Foundation could do to continue to support the community,] I would suggest either each county having a commissioner on their board or incorporate the economic development people into their board. There's a disconnect there that needs to be addressed.

Melrose

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁷ the population of Melrose, Minnesota, is 3,091 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (49%) of Melrose residents are male and slightly over half (51%) are female. Their average age is 35.5 years. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the population is 18 years or older. Most residents (96%) are White and most (91%) were born in the United States. Seventy-one percent have a high school diploma or more education and 14 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Nearly three-fifths (59%) of Melrose residents over the age of 15 are married and only 4 percent are divorced or separated. One-fifth (20%) have a disability. Over three-quarters (78%) of the housing in Melrose is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Melrose has a slightly higher labor force participation rate compared to the national average (67% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Melrose residents is \$34,432, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Only 8 percent of individuals and 5 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. On the other hand, one-third (33%) of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Melrose are: manufacturing (26% of workforce), education, health, and social services (20% of workforce), and retail trade (13% of workforce). Four-fifths (80%) of the workforce in Melrose is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through June 2004, the Initiative Foundation has given seven grants to Melrose nonprofit organizations, local units of government, and public school districts. The value of these grants totals \$44,000. In addition, since 1987 the Initiative Foundation has funded two multi-county projects including Melrose, with a total contribution of \$51,500.

In March 2000, a Melrose community group, Partners in Action, received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a community development project. The priorities set for the project were to embrace all generations and cultures; to respect all beliefs; to invite all ideas and opinions; to encourage the growth of business, housing, and education; and to promote the safety of residents. In addition to the HCP grant, the City of Melrose also received \$11,000 in other Initiative Foundation funding, and a \$5,000 Communities Connecting Cultures grant from the Central Minnesota Community Foundation (CMCF).

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Melrose city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

See Figure 16 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by Melrose to support their *Healthy Community Plan*.

16. Funding received by the City of Melrose and Melrose community groups since 2000, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for HCP project	\$10,000
IF grant for Communities Connecting Cultures	\$10,000
IF grant for an Early Childhood Coalition	\$15,000
IF Awards Event winner	\$1,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$36,000
CMCF grant for Communities Connecting Cultures	\$5,000
Total grants received from other sources	\$5,000
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$41,000

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, Melrose Partners in Action sponsored many activities in support of their HCP project including: a Mexican Independence Day celebration in 2000 and 2001, started Annual Neighborhood Community Policing meetings in 2001, and started a Youth Soccer League in 2002. A community visioning session held in April 2001 had 145 attendees including 27 Latino community members. The group developed an informational bi-lingual “Welcome Packet” for new residents, supported the start-up of a Mexican restaurant and store in their downtown area, and hired a Spanish-speaking police officer. Project HEAL, a free medical clinic for people with little or no health insurance, was held in January 2004 with plans to have this service available on a regular basis. Outdoor lighting was installed in the trailer park (a result of a survey of Latino residents), the industrial park was expanded, and a crime-free multi-housing ordinance was passed. Melrose’s park expansion included building of regulation soccer fields. Finally, Communities Connecting Cultures formed an independent nonprofit (501c3) organization in July 2003.

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s activities and funding in their community, key informants from Melrose mainly focused on activities and projects that encouraged increased participation from the Hispanic community. The training and staff support were consistently mentioned as the most useful things the Foundation provided. Respondents also mentioned increased youth involvement and several specific community

improvements that resulted from the HCP grant. Interestingly, several participants referred to the election of a new mayor in Melrose and how the HCP processes impacted candidate selection and the outcome of the election, as well as participation from city council and other government officials in the HCP process. Networking, both within the community and outside the community, were seen as benefits of participation. When asked what additional services the Initiative Foundation could provide in support of their community, economic development was again the most prominent response, although diversity efforts and conducting a community needs assessment were also mentioned. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Melrose follow:

The one grant is fairly new, but will allow us to do many things. We are still working on how we will use the money to work on child development. As for the other grant, it has really given us access to the Hispanic population and has made it possible for us to engage in many activities with that community. The person we have hired has helped the Hispanic population with many programs to help them in their ability to function as part of our community and not as a separate group.

Support and training. They have always been there for any questions we might have, helping us with the grant writing, helping us with meetings to bring people together. The training helped us to manage that, too. The staff has always been in touch with us and helpful in any way. They get back to you right away and are a real source of information and guidance. Without the training, we wouldn't have even known how to begin. We got to know people of different areas of our community we wouldn't have otherwise known. We became better listeners. I have been in the community a long time, and it was valuable to get to know people better through the training. They offer a lot of different trainings that many different people in the community can go to, including the youth. They offer many different training programs for us to meet our needs.

I think it has taught the city, probably myself as well, the importance of when you want to do things, you have to sell it to the community, not have it shoved down their throat. There's more ownership to getting people involved. It's easier to say if we want something done, let's just do it. But that's not a good idea because, maybe, that's not what's wanted, and maybe someone has a much better idea than we have... It's [the HCP grant that has] kept people involved that may not have kept involved had we not gone through that program.

So many things are coming together now, and there are so many people out there now who are willingly doing things that weren't being done before. And these are people who are not employees of the city. They're just doing things because it's the right thing to do. Using the example of the Hispanics: a man and his wife in town set up an ESL school with 45 instructors. Those people are working with a judge in town on a mobile home park problem in town. They are working on cultural and community issues. There really are people coming out of the woodwork saying "how can I help with things?" It's this type of thing that's

happening. When the Hispanics first started moving into town in numbers that was not happening. These things are just happening now.

I think it [the HCP program] has helped them get more focused as to how they want to be organized and what they want to get done.

Case study pair 3: Cass Lake & Pequot Lakes

Cass Lake

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁸ the population of Cass Lake, Minnesota, is 860 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (46%) of Cass Lake residents are male and slightly over half (54%) are female. Their average age is 28.4 years. Less than two-thirds (64%) of the population in Cass Lake is 18 years or older. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of residents are American Indian and 30 percent are White. Nearly all Cass Lake residents (98%) were born in the United States. Seventy-one percent have a high school diploma or more education and only 7 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Under one-third (30%) of Cass Lake residents over the age of 15 are married and 19 percent are divorced or separated. Nearly two-fifths (39%) have a disability. Only 54 percent of the housing in Cass Lake is owner-occupied. The demographic characteristic of Cass Lake residents is significantly different from the other case study cities in many important ways, including age, race, disability status, home ownership, marital status, and living in poverty.

In terms of the local economy, Cass Lake has a lower labor force participation rate compared to the national average (56% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Cass Lake residents is \$20,538, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Twenty-nine percent of individuals and 25 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 44 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Cass Lake are: arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service (39% of workforce); education, health, and social services (19% of workforce); and retail trade (10% of workforce). Less than half (48%) of the workforce in Cass Lake is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). This is likely due to the fact that Tribal casino operations employ a substantial proportion of Cass Lake workers. (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Cass Lake city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

From 1987 through 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 127 grants to Cass County businesses, organization, or other community groups. The value of these grants totals \$967,732. In addition, since 2001 the Initiative Foundation has funded 40 multi-county projects including Cass County, with a total contribution of \$418,425.

In September 1998, the Cass Lake Miracle Group received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for their HCP project. The purpose of the project was “moving ideas and relationships for the advancement of Cass Lake’s economy” (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated September 24, 2002). The priorities set for the project were to participate in community leadership training; to conduct a community clean-up and paint-up; to establish a Boys and Girls Club; to plant flowers in common areas; to establish a Parks and Recreation board; to conduct an inventory of existing recreation facilities; to develop neighborhood parks; to determine Cass Lake market factors; to establish an Economic Development Plan and an agency to carry out the plan; to develop a joint cooperative staffing plan for the Cass Lake Visitor Center; to complete housing studies; to attract specific businesses (eco/cultural tourism, utilizing natural and social resources, value-added); to see the community by emphasizing its assets; and to create a vibrant Town Center.

In addition to the HCP grant, Cass Lake also received \$113,500 in other Initiative Foundation funding, and approximately \$368,900 in grants from other organizations such as the U.S. Department of Justice, the Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute, the city, and private foundations. See Figure 17 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by Cass Lake to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 27 loans in Cass County for \$477,300, leveraging a total of \$1.9 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 136 jobs. This results in a grand total of over \$1.4 million that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in Cass County since 1987.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, the Cass Lake Miracle Group completed a Comprehensive Plan in 1998 and a Market Study Plan in 1999. A Community Celebration was held in 2000 and the Visitor Center was established. In addition, four annual community festivals were planned and conducted: Chain Reaction New Winter Festival (January), Migizi (Eagle) Festival (June), Rib Fest (August), and Call of the Fall (September). The housing study was completed in 2001, the streetscaping project was underway, and the Boys and Girls Club raised over \$6,000 in a local fund drive and received a house for their Teen Center. As a result of their efforts, the Cass Lake Miracle Group was awarded the Community Initiatives Award from the Initiative Foundation and the Community Voices Against Violence (CVAV) State Peace award.

17. Funding received by the Cass Lake since 1998, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for HCP project	\$10,000
IF grant for Boys and Girls Club start-up	\$40,000
IF grant to Boys and Girls Club for YAR start-up and service programs	\$28,000
IF grant to Visitor Center Partnership for festival start-up funds	\$10,000
IF grant for Boys and Girls Club Fund Development	\$500
IF grant for Boys and Girls Club to continue Teen Service	\$15,000
IF HOP grant for Boys and Girls Club strategic planning	\$5,000
IF grant to Cass Lake Tourism Center to promote tourism	\$10,000
IF grant to support Streetscape Master Plan for downtown revitalization	\$5,000
IF loan guarantee for start-up of Cass Lake Movie Theater	\$25,000
IF grant to Cass Lake Family Center for strategic planning	\$5,000
IF grant for Bootstraps program	\$25,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$178,500
Weed and Seed grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (5 yrs.)	\$225,000
Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute Domestic Violence Reduction grant to Cass Lake Police	\$100,000
Geo. Neilson Family Foundation grant for renovation of the Boys and Girls Club	\$23,900
Grotto Foundation grant for community festivals	\$10,000
City grant for streetscaping	\$10,000
Total grants received from other sources	\$368,900
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$574,400

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s activities and funding in their community, key informants from Cass Lake mainly focused on how the Foundation grants increased organizational capacity, helped create new businesses, and improved efficiency among existing organizations. One participant also mentioned increased opportunity for state and federal funding as a result of their participation in HCP. Another important aspect of the Cass Lake HCP project was the increased collaboration in the community and increase involvement of American Indian organizations. Several participants commented on the respect shown to them by the Initiative Foundation staff, and their appreciation of letting American Indian groups set their own plans while

working with them to ensure success. Efforts to reduce crime and violence in the community resulted in better relationships with local law enforcement and also enhanced town beautification projects. One respondent mentioned how the HCP grant allowed them to conduct a study that has shed new light on the importance of the tourism industry for economic stability, which has changed the focus of some planning efforts. When asked what additional services the Initiative Foundation could provide in support of their community, funding was the most frequent response given. In addition, participants mentioned the need for continued support of youth programs and family support services as well as more general economic development activities. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Cass Lake follow:

Our organization wouldn't be here without their grants. The Foundation gave a \$25,000 start-up grant to create the Cass Lake Partnership. And they have established a revolving loan fund to help get the local festival to the point where it can sustain itself. One of the goals in Cass Lake is to eliminate racism and the festival is a wonderful forum for this. The first year of the festival, there were only two Native American entries and now, in the third year, there are about 20. Some examples: First, one of the Native American groups in the festival, a dance group, has gone on to create an actual company through the Cass Lake Partnership, which helped them set up the company legally. There has been such a good response to the company from the public and they have had such good exposure that they now get contracts to dance at other festivals and events. Second, the tribe has three casinos on the reservation, one of which is the Palace. The first year of the festival the Palace had only a tent. Now they help underwrite the ads and hire big name music and they see the advantages of partnerships and are one of the biggest festival supporters.

Financial support; the grants. We wouldn't be able to start new organizations and projects without them. Another is just their willingness to work with you. If you come to them with a proposal, they will work with you to improve it. They are easy to work with. Their mission is aligned with what we are trying to do here.

The services have helped give people vision and hope. The community dynamic here was terrible. Kids were dying, not finishing school, having babies. It was more common to be delinquent than to be normal. People needed to come together for the community. The Foundation's help was a vehicle for bringing something together – the Boys and Girls Club – for the benefit of the whole community, not just for an individual.

[The Foundation should continue to focus on] economic development, building income capacity, jobs and work, and a community that has money to grow. The poverty here is huge. You can't just give people money; you need to help people help themselves because self-sufficiency is the answer and also helps build self-confidence. The vision that they can do it is still needed. I think there is still a feeling of hopelessness here. Being able to provide a lifestyle for a child so that child can see another way, other than drugs and alcohol; getting parents to where they can guide their children on their own...

Pequot Lakes

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁹ the population of Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, is 947 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (44%) of Pequot Lakes residents are male and slightly over half (56%) are female. Their average age is 38.6 years. Three-quarters (76%) of the population is 18 years or older. Most residents (98%) are White and nearly all (99%) were born in the United States. Over four-fifths (82%) have a high school diploma or more education and 18 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Nearly half (49%) of Pequot Lakes residents over the age of 15 are married and 15 percent are divorced or separated. Sixteen percent have a disability. Slightly over half (52%) of the housing in Pequot Lakes is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Pequot Lakes has a similar labor force participation rate compared to the national average (62% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Pequot Lakes residents is \$23,813, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Fifteen percent of individuals and 12 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 64 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in Pequot Lakes are: education, health, and social services (23% of workforce); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service (17% of workforce); and retail trade (16% of workforce). Four-fifths (80%) of the workforce in Pequot Lakes is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 19 grants to Pequot Lakes area nonprofit organizations, local units of government, and public school districts. The value of these grants totals \$136,118. In addition, since 1987 the Initiative Foundation has funded one multi-county project including the Pequot Lakes area, with a total contribution of \$20,000.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Pequot Lakes city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

In March 1999, the Partners 56472 group from the Pequot Lakes area received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for an HCP project. The vision of the project was: “Partners 56472 envisions a community where people believe in a strong sense of community; people can become involved as stakeholders in their future; the environment is preserved for future generations; the economy provides adequate opportunities for all; and all generations of residents have personal education growth potential” (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated May 19, 2004). The priorities set for the project were to create livable wage jobs; to create opportunities and activities for youth; to develop more affordable housing; to support intergovernmental cooperation, including with planning and zoning; and to create more parks and recreation.

In addition to the HCP grant, the Partners 56472 group also received \$109,000 in other Initiative Foundation funding and a \$100,000 grant from the McKnight Foundation. See Figure 18 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by the Pequot Lakes area to support their *Healthy Community Plan*.

Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 30 loans in the Pequot Lakes area for \$386,000, leveraging a total of over \$1.5 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 93 jobs. This results in a grand total of over \$500,000 that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in the Pequot Lakes area since 1987.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, the Pequot Lakes area was able to hold two “Gatherings” (i.e., post-tourist season community celebrations) with over 500 people in attendance at each session. The McKnight grant helped with the purchase and renovation of a Family Center, within which the Eclipse Teen Center was created in 2000. Other programs and activities for youth included youth-run concessions at the Teen Center, a Youth as Resources program, and a Youth Improv Troupe. There has been a Public Officials Dinner annually since 2001 and a semi-annual Meet the Candidate Dinner since 2000. An e-commerce training was held and 18 businesspeople and students attended. A Parks and Recreation board is being formed. They completed orderly annexation of Sibley Township into Pequot Lakes. Finally, a Bootstraps program was started in 2002, which is a program to help move low-income families out of poverty in the Pequot Lakes area through the support of mentors, and an Early Childhood Coalition was formed in 2003.

18. Funding received by the Pequot Lakes area since 1999, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for HCP project	\$10,000
IF grant for Youth as Resources Eclipse Teen Center	\$35,000
IF grant for Youth Entrepreneurship at Eclipse Teen Center	\$7,500
IF grant for Community Development at Eclipse Teen Center	\$10,000
IF grant for E-commerce training	\$4,000
IF Bootstraps Pilot Project planning grant	\$5,000
IF Bootstraps Pilot Project implementation grant	\$25,000
IF grant for Youth as Resources (YAR) on-going	\$7,500
IF grant for Early Childhood Coalition	\$15,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$119,000
McKnight Foundation capital grant for Family Center	\$100,000
Total grants received from other sources	\$100,000
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$219,000

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation's activities and funding in their community, key informants from Pequot Lakes mainly focused on the combination of training and funding that the HCP program provided for their community. The result of the HCP grant include increased community leadership, opportunities for other funding, increased business capacity (including purchasing properties), better government cooperation and collaboration, cleaner lakes, and an increased awareness of community issues and a better understanding of community development needs. Respondents also reported increased parental and youth involvement in community activities. When asked what additional services the Initiative Foundation could provide in support of their community, participants mentioned additional HCP activities, infrastructure support, housing development, community planning, and providing more local Foundation staff. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Pequot Lakes follow:

As an organization [the HCP grant] helped us develop leadership because it helped us develop a process to use. Individually it has helped me develop my leadership skills to use the process to proceed. I'm thinking of the things that were most prominent: the healthy community and organizations and the early childhood programs. People begin to develop an interest in particular areas and they look to people in leadership roles to set the logistics of it, like places to meet and times, and secondly, individuals to set an agenda and move the group forward. We received help from the Initiative Foundation in setting that process in a continuum.

We used the grant to help us purchase a building that was used for early childhood education, and also as a youth center, and also for all of our community education. So it affected the community in many different ways. Just seeing people there, parents and children, benefiting from the things that were offered there. Another grant we got was from the Bootstrap Foundation, and that is helping some individuals to improve their economic situation.

[This community has a need for] community planners and facilitators. In our area, our towns are growing and fast; and how to handle that stress. So community facilitators and planners.

Well, although the money is helpful, the training has probably been the key factor. I think the staff people truly understand the community and the organization. They relate the training specifically to the organization or community need. And that's where the value comes from. They understand the communities they're working with.

I think the Initiative Foundation should invest in a representative who is local to the area. Have their staff live and work in the community or communities, to live there and work there to be visible and be active. Then that person has a better sense of what the community or area needs and can direct things to be more focused. If you are an outsider, you can't really know what is going on.

The things we saw change, that I felt as a community leader, were the attitudes of inter-governmental cooperation. There had been issues between the then township and the city. At that time, it was considered impossible that they would cooperate. I can't say that the Foundation was responsible for that change. It wasn't the single thing responsible, but it did begin the dialogue that led to the change. It got people talking to each other. Another change was the attitude of people in the community toward youth. What the process led to, and much more directly, was that the Family Center contained a teen center. It got youth participating and people in the community listening to the youth. It got the youth involved along with the older community members in actually working to get this done. It brought about cooperation and an opportunity for youth leadership in the community that wasn't there before. This is leadership that wasn't the kids who were normally the leaders in the youth activities in the community. It got youth I would describe as "at risk" involved in projects and activities in the community. Other examples would be that there was also a skate board park that came out of this work together, and the Youth as Resources program, involving a group of young people that actually gives grants to other youth for projects. This was as an outgrowth of this project. The other thing was the collaboration that happened around the Family Center project. There were the early childhood programs, the ECFE and related programs, as well as a collaboration with Head Start, the Teen Center, and the Community Education offices from the school district. It also included Youth Sports, a program for Junior High and younger youth to become involved in sports, which worked with the school but was not part of the school. There was a Public Health office, and also the Kinship Partners organization. This brought about a collaboration of all these organizations in the one building, working together to serve the whole community. The bottom line was cooperation of many different organizations working together with many different people from within one building.

Case study pair 4: East St. Cloud & Cambridge

East St. Cloud

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,¹⁰ the population of St. Cloud, Minnesota, is 59,107 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Half (50%) of St. Cloud residents are male and half (50%) are female. Their average age is 28.2 years, which is significantly younger than the other case study communities. Over three-quarters (79%) of the population is 18 years or older. A majority of residents (92%) are White and most (96%) were born in the United States. Eighty-nine percent have a high school diploma or more education and 30 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more, which is a much higher level of education compared to the other case study communities. Over two-fifths (42%) of St. Cloud residents over the age of 15 are married and 9 percent are divorced or separated. Twelve percent have a disability. Over half (56%) of the housing in St. Cloud is owner-occupied.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: St. Cloud city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

In terms of the local economy, St. Cloud has a higher labor force participation rate compared to the national average (72% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of St. Cloud residents is \$37,346, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Thirteen percent of individuals and 5 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Furthermore, 48 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level. The largest industries in St. Cloud are: education, health, and social services (24% of workforce); retail trade (19% of workforce); and manufacturing (14% of workforce). Over four-fifths (82%) of the workforce in St. Cloud is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the “Comparisons across case study communities” section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1989 through 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 56 grants to Benton County businesses, organization, or other community groups. The value of these grants totals \$183,640. From 1987 through 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 328 grants to Stearns County businesses, organization, or other community groups. The value of these grants totals over \$2.2 million. In addition, since 2001 the Initiative Foundation has funded 50 multi-county projects including either Benton County and/or Stearns County, with a total contribution of \$410,800.

In March 2000, the East Side Boosters of East St. Cloud received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a community revitalization project. The purpose of the project was “to become the East Side’s community voice for issues affecting East St. Cloud. To develop a broad-based, creative vision for East St. Cloud that is the result of citizen assessment and participation. To create a working plan to implement the goals identified in the East Side Vision” (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated May 21, 2002). The priorities set for the project were to preserve neighborhood elementary schools; to clean up, beautify, and renovate the East Side, starting with East St. Germaine; to develop a traffic flow plan for the East Side; and to create a sense of belonging for neighborhood residents.

In addition to the HCP grant, the East Side Boosters also received \$2,700 in other Initiative Foundation funding. See Figure 19 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding received by the East Side Boosters to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making 22 loans in Benton County and 72 loans in Stearns County for nearly \$3.9 million, leveraging a total of over \$24.6 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 626 jobs in Stearns County and 718 jobs in Benton County. This results in a grand total of nearly \$1.7 million that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in Benton County and nearly \$4.6 million in Stearns County since 1987.

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, East St. Cloud was able to hold a public visioning session with about 70 participants that resulted in several activities. An annual neighborhood clean up was initiated, as well as neighborhood watch programs. A new office building development was started on East St. Germaine in 2001, which is the first new development on that street in 30 years. This group won school board approval to save neighborhood schools. They were able to hire a new project director, develop an organizational strategic plan, and provide input and citizen task force participation on the new City Comprehensive Plan.

19. Funding received by East St. Cloud community groups since 1999, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for community revitalization project	\$10,000
IF grant to Jefferson for community artist mentoring program-Kaleidoscope	\$500
IF grant for community newsletter	\$1,200
IF Awards Event winner	\$1,000
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$12,700
Total grants received from other sources (for Kaleidoscope Playground)	\$25,500
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$38,200

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s activities and funding in their community, key informants from East St. Cloud mainly focused on the increased ability of their organization to provide services and participate in advocacy activities. This increased organizational capacity also resulted in more government support and collaboration with various government agencies and St. Cloud State University. Respondents also commented on the usefulness of the trainings provided through the HCP program, and especially use of asset-based approaches. Overall, respondents reported an increase in the open-mindedness of participants and an increase in the attention given to issues of diversity, although there is still a need for more diversity-related programs. Several comments indicate that participants see their community as changing rapidly (specifically in terms of demographics of community members) and they felt that the HCP grant allowed their organization to change with the community. When asked what additional services the Initiative Foundation could provide in support

of their community, participants mentioned a need for more community education that leads to empowerment, programs that focus on intergenerational efforts, funding for existing programs, and increasing emphasis on civics and voting. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in East St. Cloud follow:

The East Side Boosters had tried over the years to organize as a business community group and it would flounder. Now, with the Initiative Foundation help, it's a solid and growing organization. It has a newsletter and does worthwhile community service projects that have been well received, and they advocate in the City Council now and have credibility. Government is listening to them. The Initiative Foundation has raised up really good leaders and this is the key to the East Side Boosters effectiveness.

It helps us do a spring cleanup. It has made a visible effect, allowed us to get publicity, hold neighborhood meetings. Overall impact is nothing short of phenomenal.

It wasn't the grant as much as the Healthy Communities Partnership training that increased the capacity of the organization, although the grant was helpful. The HCP training changed people's ideas about the community and what their role in it was and about how to communicate with others, especially for the business people. It opened their eyes and they became less judgmental about others. The grants for the newsletter and for the trash pick-up project provided the seed money that freed up volunteer time, so the organization became more professional and stable and could do more in the community.

The grants. They provide the necessary funds that all organizations need to be creative and successful. And the grant process forces people to be clear thinkers in setting goals and planning. And, then the funding comes with an accountability feature that requires organizations to account for what they do with the funds. These three components of the grants are very valuable. When the Initiative Foundation gives a grant, it's like giving a stamp of approval. It's like the organization can borrow the good reputation of the Foundation while it works on developing its own good reputation while it's getting going with its project. So, during this start-up phase others take the organization more seriously, which helps it move forward.

We exist to enhance the quality of life for all businesses and people and the east side of St. Cloud. We took key stakeholders and residents in general for the community visioning and those priorities that were identified in the visioning affect every individual who in this area. We have taken steps to meet our goals because of the Initiative Foundation's training and so there is more community pride. People invest in their houses more now. We see new roofs, landscaping, etc. People are choosing to stay. Businesses are now willing to invest in property and expand their operations on the East Side.

[We need more] education for communities, training for communities, helping communities solve problems. For example, in the schools, how can we tap into the PTA and site councils? How can we empower people to take action, to contact decision-makers.

I would just say [that the Initiative Foundation should try] to be more in tune with the needs of the organizations and not making them create new and different things all the time when what they're doing works, but they just need the resources to do it. This is a classic year with all the funding cuts, people are in need of operational support.

Cambridge

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,¹¹ the population of Cambridge, Minnesota, is 5,520 (at the time of the 2000 Census). Slightly under half (45%) of Cambridge residents are male and slightly over half (55%) are female. Their average age is 38.5 years. Three-quarters (75%) of the population is 18 years or older. Most residents (97%) are White and nearly all (98%) were born in the United States. Eighty-three percent have a high school diploma or more education and 19 percent have a Bachelor's degree or more. Nearly half (48%) of Cambridge residents over the age of 15 are married and 11 percent are divorced or separated. Sixteen percent have a disability. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the housing in Cambridge is owner-occupied.

In terms of the local economy, Cambridge has a similar labor force participation rate compared to the national average (62% versus 64% nationally). The median household income of Cambridge residents is \$35,313, compared to the statewide median of \$47,111. Eleven percent of individuals and 6 percent of families had incomes below the poverty level in 2000. Only 11 percent of female-headed families with children under age 5 had incomes below the poverty level, which is significantly lower than the other case study communities. The largest industries in Cambridge are: education, health, and social services (28% of workforce); manufacturing (19% of workforce); and retail trade (11% of workforce). Nearly four-fifths (79%) of the workforce in Cambridge is private wage or salary workers (as opposed to government workers and self-employed). (See Figures 21 and 22, in the "Comparisons across case study communities" section of the report for graphical representation of this information.)

From 1987 through 2003, the Initiative Foundation has given 27 grants to Cambridge area nonprofit organizations, local units of government, and public school districts. The value of these grants totals \$155,725.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, American FactFinder, www.factfinder.census.gov, "Fact Sheet: Cambridge city, Minnesota" downloaded August 13, 2004.

In September 1998, Leaders for a Positive Cambridge received \$10,000 from the Initiative Foundation for a community development project. The purpose of the project was “to encourage Cambridge area residents to take active, individual responsibility toward positive involvement and leadership in the future of Cambridge” (from their *Healthy Community Plan*, updated May 19, 2004). The priorities set for the project were to realize a community center that will serve all citizens; to become a community of respect (Respect for property, peers, public, and parents); to create a paved area for skateboarders; to bring Independent School District #911 into the top 5 percent in academics and intramural and extramural activities; to attract new businesses; to achieve respectful, progressive, and trustworthy local government; to realize community support for all youth; and to encourage positive involvement and leadership from all residents.

In addition to the Community Development Plan grant, the Leaders for a Positive Cambridge group also received \$73,000 in other Initiative Foundation funding and a \$375,000 grant from the Blandin Regional Human Service Center. See Figure 20 for an illustration of all the Initiative Foundation funding and other funding received by the City of Wadena to support their *Healthy Community Plan*. Furthermore, the Initiative Foundation reports making eight loans in the Cambridge area for \$224,500, leveraging a total of \$1.9 million in business investments, and creating or retaining a total of 20 jobs. This results in a grand total of nearly \$390,000 that the Initiative Foundation has made in grants or loans in the Cambridge area since 1987.

20. Funding received by the Cambridge area since 1998, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan*

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
IF* grant for Community Development Plan	\$10,000
IF grant for economic development planning	\$3,500
IF grant for business park land planning and environmental review	\$10,000
IF grant to Cambridge Healthy Seniors for a community senior care program	\$4,000
IF grant for the Ambassador Program	\$1,000
IF grant to Cambridge Healthy Seniors for HOP strategic planning	\$2,000
IF grant for Youth as Resources (YAR) start-up	\$13,000
IF grant for multi-jurisdictional growth planning	\$4,500
IF grant for Early Childhood Coalition	\$15,000
IF grant for industrial park marketing	\$5,000
IF grant for HOP Isanti County Historical Society project	\$5,000
IF grant for HOP Pregnancy Resource Center of Cambridge project	\$5,000
IF grant for HOP strategic plan follow-up for New Pathways, Inc.	\$500

20. Funding received by the Cambridge area since 1998, in support of their *Healthy Community Plan* (continued)

Funding source & purpose	Grant amount
Total Initiative Foundation grants received	\$78,500
Blandin Foundation- Regional Human Services Center site redevelopment	\$375,000
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – Trails for healthy living	\$200,000
Total grants received from other sources	\$575,000
Total grants received from IF and other sources	\$653,500

**Note. IF stands for Initiative Foundation.*

As a result of the grants and other support received from the Initiative Foundation and other funders, Cambridge was able to hold an economic development strategic planning session and a community visioning session in 1999. In addition, over 1,400 youth and 200 seniors responded to community surveys. In 2001, 24 community members attended the Blandin Leadership Training. The Blandin Community Investment Partnership (CIP) visioning session held in 2001 resulted in the top three priorities of a community center, preserved and enhanced green spaces, and affordable housing. A downtown revitalization and streetscaping project was completed in 2001. A respect Retreat was held in both 2000 and 2002 in addition to numerous other respect activities during 1999 to 2002. A community center task force was formed. In 2002 the Youth as Resource program was started and in 2003 an Early Childhood Coalition was formed. In 2003, the Cambridge group also completed a growth plan in cooperation with Isanti, Braham, and other surrounding townships and began planning for the Regional Human Service Center redevelopment. Finally, this group completed a plan for the development of a Cambridge Community Park and Trail.

When asked about the impact of the Initiative Foundation’s activities and funding in their community, key informants from Cambridge focused on the increased effectiveness and capacity they have experienced as a result of the collaboration created from the HCP grant. In addition, the HCP collaboration was seen as helping to delineate roles of individual organizations in the overall scheme of providing early childhood care and to increase the diversity of partners. In addition, respondents reported increased business capacity, housing developments, and business developments, all of which have supported existing jobs and helped to create new jobs in their community. The helpfulness of Foundation staff has led to a change in the attitudes of community members and has

provided increased credibility to participants' efforts. Community leaders have gotten involved and new leadership has been developed. One respondent commented on their own personal growth in terms of reduced introversion as a result of participation in the HCP program. Other respondents commented on the effective use of public participation to take action. When asked what additional services the Initiative Foundation could provide in support of their community, participants mentioned a need for more follow-up from Foundation staff after the initial phases of the HCP project are completed, a need for a market or employment study in the community, more workforce training and training for elected officials, and a need for more early childhood education programs. Some respondents' comments that illustrate general themes from HCP participants' experiences in Cambridge follow:

Because of helping the businesses to grow and maintain themselves, it has provided a little bit of fodder for the community to grow. Some of the people who have gone through the training have developed more leadership skills and are more outspoken and active. The downfall of that is that the groundswell of energy in the program has diminished, because those people are so busy. But those people are better at what they do now.

[We need more] follow-up support, because the Healthy Communities partnerships require an awful lot of initial participation and after you get through the initial phase, things seem to flounder...

The provision of the grants, being selected as one of the first in the state, has given us opportunities to provide leadership, and employ a leadership person to direct the whole initiative in terms of the development of early childhood children. The training is very important, too, and has helped the representatives of various organizations to have some common definitions and common goals. It's also provided opportunities for members of different organizations to come together and get to know each other. That's been important, too. So the grant and the trainings have been very important aspects. Also, I would have to say that the ongoing connection between the Initiative Foundation's staff lead person and our coordinator working together on the grant, as well as with staff members, has been very helpful for receiving guidance, support and direction. That's been important, too. We'd have been much less successful without that regular connection with the staff member from the Initiative Foundation.

I would say it has strengthened our organization's ability to meet the needs of pre-school-aged children. It has augmented this and helped us to fund a whole effort with other organizations...

We took the lead in applying for the Healthy Community Initiative, which brought up our credibility in the community a lot, because we have taken a leading role since then on many things in the community. Now people come to us first when they are looking for how to get things done because of our work in the community.

The Initiative Foundation funded a multi-jurisdictional planning process for Cambridge, Isanti, Braham, and Isanti County. They did a cooperative, extraterritorial planning, working outside the borders of their own cities. They also did transportation planning, as collaborative effort. They all put matching money into it. They hired a consultant planner, and they got a great product out of it. That product was good for them, especially in the long-term, in and of itself, but that product also helped those same communities get a much larger grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for \$200,000 to promote healthy communities, addressing obesity issues, etc. They would not have gotten it, in my opinion, without the Initiative Foundation grant and their experience from that. It's a national model of healthy communities, including city design and planning for healthy living. Part of the plan is to create a non-motorized trail connecting the three communities. Those communities are not connected now. Part of the reason that idea gained momentum was because of the Initiative Foundation's efforts. And that project went on to win a national award. They've done so many things. I don't know if they are even fully aware of their impact in that region. They've funded so many community development projects, I don't even know where to begin. They provided funds to city of Ogilvie to redo a number of houses. When you talked about lakefront and lake quality, they funded a project over at Rush Lake. Initiative Foundation funded some of the initial water quality studies. Those studies helped get state and national funds.

They've had tremendous impacts and broad impacts, not just on economic development. They've positively impacted business development, leadership capacity, education, programs for youth, city planning, and advocates for transportation planning.

From a personal standpoint rather than the view of all organizations, the Healthy Communities leadership training has had the most impact on me personally. I'm a very introverted person. It has helped me to challenge myself more and also helped me to be more aware of trying to build on what assets myself and my community already have, rather than look at negative things. I would say the grant for the early childhood coalition in our area is really serving as a catalyst for bringing together a diverse group that's really committed to early childhood programs.

Comparisons across case study communities

21. Characteristics of Year 1 case study communities*

	Year 1 Cities			
	Wadena	Long Prairie	Cass Lake	East St. Cloud**
Demographic characteristics				
Total population	4,294	3,040	860	59,107
Percent female	52%	53%	54%	50%
Median age	40.8	38.1	28.4	28.2
Percent age 18 or older	77%	75%	64%	79%
Percent White	98%	93%	30%	92%
Percent born in the U.S.	99%	93%	98%	96%
Percent of housing units that are owner-occupied	66%	66%	54%	56%
Percent of population over age 25 who are high school graduates	79%	74%	71%	89%
Percent of population over age 25 who have a Bachelor's degree or more education	24%	15%	7%	30%
Percent of population over age 15 who are married	52%	55%	30%	42%
Percent who have a disability	25%	23%	39%	12%
Economic characteristics				
Percent of population age 16 and older in labor force	57%	55%	56%	72%
Median household income	\$26,947	\$28,237	\$20,583	\$37,346
Percent of individuals below poverty level	16%	16%	29%	13%
Percent of female-headed households with children under age 5 below poverty level	63%	64%	44%	48%
Percent of workforce that is private wage and salary workers (i.e., non-government employees who are not self-employed)	77%	79%	48%	82%

***Note.** This data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, downloaded from <http://factfinder.census.gov>, "Fact sheet." The data for East St. Cloud is actually from the U.S. Census Bureau fact sheet on "St. Cloud city, Minnesota" so it contains the entire population of the City of St. Cloud rather than just the East St. Cloud area.

22. Characteristics of Year 2 case study communities*

	Year 2 Cities			
	Sebeka	Melrose	Pequot Lakes	Cambridge
Demographic characteristics				
Total population	710	3,091	947	5,520
Percent female	53%	51%	56%	55%
Median age	41.1	35.5	38.6	38.5
Percent age 18 or older	76%	72%	76%	75%
Percent White	99%	96%	98%	97%
Percent born in the U.S.	98%	91%	99%	98%
Percent of housing units that are owner-occupied	76%	78%	52%	63%
Percent of population over age 25 who are high school graduates	77%	71%	82%	83%
Percent of population over age 25 who have a Bachelor's degree or more education	14%	14%	18%	19%
Percent of population over age 15 who are married	57%	59%	49%	48%
Percent who have a disability	19%	20%	16%	16%
Economic characteristics				
Percent of population age 16 and older in labor force	57%	67%	62%	62%
Median household income	\$23,693	\$34,432	\$23,813	\$35,313
Percent of individuals below poverty level	18%	8%	15%	11%
Percent of female-headed households with children under age 5 below poverty level	56%	33%	64%	11%
Percent of workforce that is private wage and salary workers (i.e., non-government employees who are not self-employed)	68%	80%	80%	79%

**Note.* This data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, downloaded from <http://factfinder.census.gov>, "Fact sheet."

Community development initiatives

Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) program

The Healthy Organizations Partnership (HOP) program is designed to increase the capacity and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations in Central Minnesota so they can better carry out their respective missions. The Initiative Foundation assists organizations in providing essential services, offering volunteer opportunities, and generating local philanthropic activity. The HOP program is funded through grants from the Otto Bremer Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, and other donors.

Each spring, the HOP program begins its season with a “Kick Off” session. The Initiative Foundation invites key staff and board members from all nonprofit organizations within the Foundation’s 14-county service area. At the event, participants hear about emerging issues and opportunities nonprofits face, discuss the stages of nonprofit organizational development, and conduct a preliminary self-assessment. Based on the results of the self-assessment, the Initiative Foundation works with each organization individually to determine the level and types of support they need to build a healthier, stronger organization.

The Initiative Foundation provides both “discretionary training and assistance” and “multi-year training and assistance” depending on the level of the organization’s need. Specifically, organizations that already have effective strategic plans are typically given discretionary assistance, in the form of: technical assistance, elective workshops, promising practices information, and/or up to \$2,000 in grants for organizational development planning and implementation. Organizations indicating a greater need for strategic planning and advanced support are invited to apply for multi-year assistance. Five to eight organizations with similar focus areas are involved in each program round. During the two-year period of involvement with the HOP multi-year assistance program, teams of five to seven board members and staff attend multiple sessions that include: extensive self-assessments, governance and policy training, a local strategic planning session, elective workshops, peer mentoring, on-going consultation and evaluation, and up to \$5,000 for organizational development planning and implementation. The elective workshops available to all HOP participants include: grant writing and fundraising, governance, fiscal management, legal requirements, diversity, personnel issues, asset mapping, and effective meetings.

The desired outcomes for organizations participating in the HOP process include:

- Reduced turnover
- Increased volunteerism
- Expanded funding opportunities
- Increased community support

This section of the report describes participants' feedback on the processes and outcomes of the HOP program. First, participant feedback forms from individual HOP training sessions are described. Then, participants' feedback from the annual conference and final HOP evaluation form are discussed.

Participant feedback on individual training sessions

Overall, we received participant feedback from 230 participants out of a total of 290 attendees for a 79 percent response rate. These participants attended at least one of nine sessions during the evaluation period (July 2003 through June 2004). (Note: Participants were asked to fill out evaluation forms at each training session so some participants may be represented more than once in the combined results.)

Participants were asked to rate the training session on the following scale: 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = OK, 4 = good, or 5 = great. None of the participants gave ratings of "fair" or "poor." Twenty-one participants did not answer this question. Of those who answered the question, 39 percent said "great," 51 percent said "good," and 11 said "OK." The average rating on this item is 4.3, or between "good" and "great."

Participants were also asked to rate the overall value of the training from "\$" to "\$\$\$\$\$." Similarly, no participants gave a rating of "\$" and only two participants gave a rating of "\$\$." Fourteen participants did not answer this question. Of those who answered the question, 38 percent said "\$\$\$\$\$," 49 percent said "\$\$\$\$," and 11 percent said "\$\$\$." The average rating on this item was 4.2.

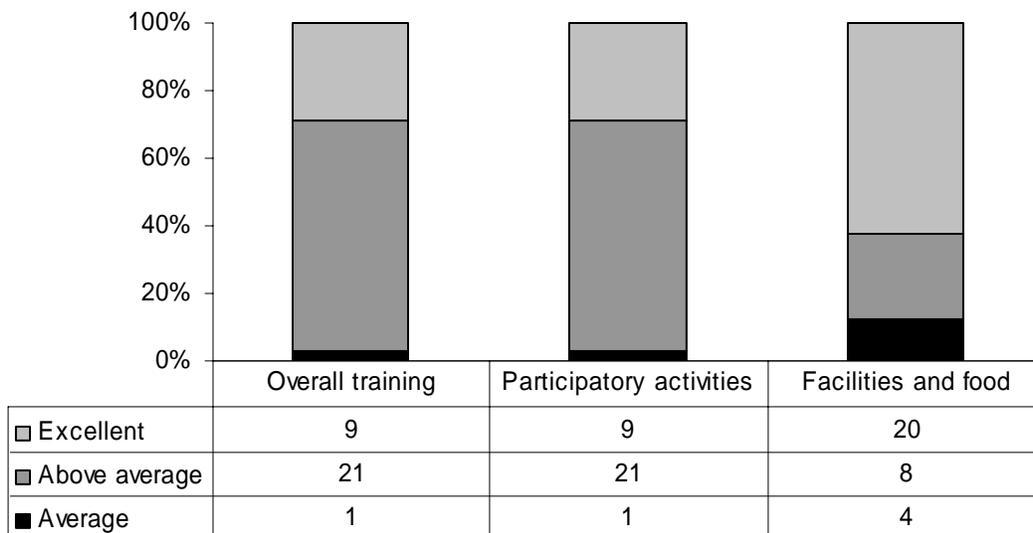
HOP final evaluation and summary

HOP participants were asked to rate four sessions that were provided by the Initiative Foundation, including: self-assessment, governance, and planning; benchmarking, goal setting, and implementation; evaluation, nonprofit lifecycles, and medial relations; and menacing change and sustaining capacity building. They were also asked which sessions they found most useful, both for their HOP team efforts and personally or professionally,

and which session they found least useful. They were also asked to rate the participatory activities overall, the facilities and food, and the overall quality of the training. They were given the opportunity to provide comments about each of these items and were asked to comment on things that could have made the training better. In addition, participants were asked to comment on the usefulness of technical assistance provided by Initiative Foundation staff or consultants, the usefulness of the HOP timelines, and other aspects of the HOP processes. All ratings were on the following scale: 1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, and 5 = excellent. Thirty-two HOP participants completed this evaluation form.

No participants gave ratings of “below average” or lower. Overall the training sessions were given an average rating of 4.1. In addition, the average rating of the participatory activities was 4.1 and the average rating of the facilities and food was 4.5. See Figure 23.

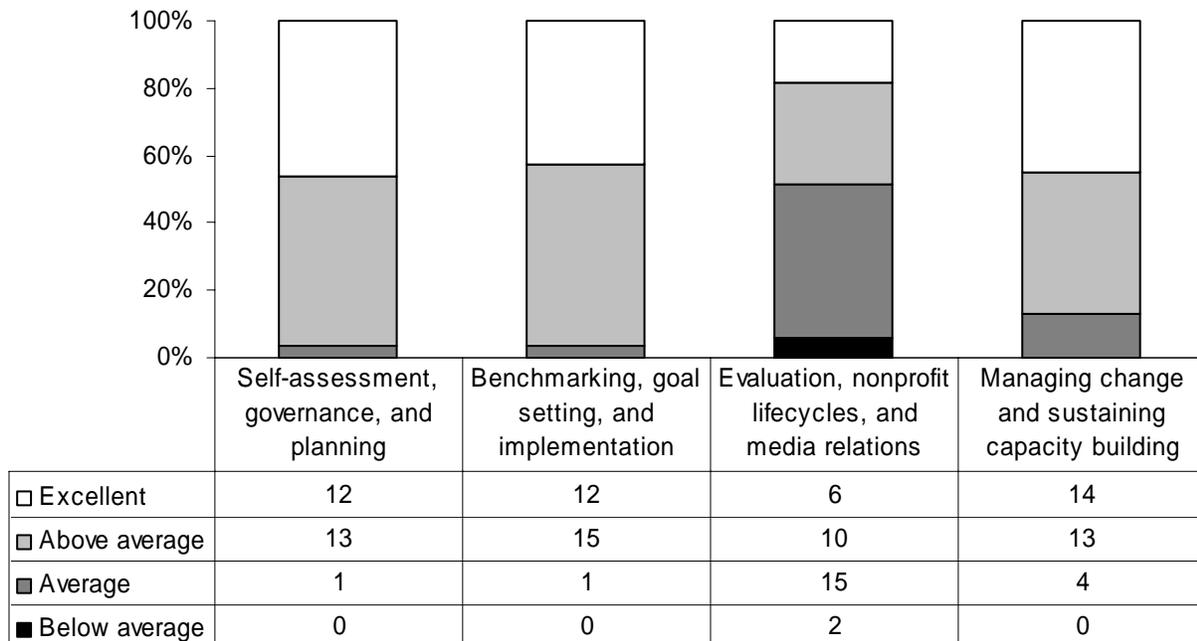
23. HOP participants’ final overall evaluation



Similarly, participants gave high ratings to the individual training sessions, although the evaluation, nonprofit lifecycles, and media relations session did receive two “below average” ratings from Round 2 HOP participants. The average rating of the self-assessment, governance, and planning session was 4.4. The average rating of the benchmarking, goal setting, and implementation session was 4.1. The average rating of the evaluation, nonprofit lifecycles, and media relations session was 3.8. The average rating of the managing change and sustaining capacity building session was 4.3. See Figure 24. The assessment, governance, and planning session (N=11) and the

benchmarking, goal setting, and implementation session (N=10) were rated as the most useful sessions in terms of the team efforts. The managing change and sustaining capacity building session (N=11) was rated as most useful in terms of personal or professional needs. The evaluation, nonprofit lifecycles, and media relations session (N=11) was rated as the least useful session, although five participants said they felt all the sessions were useful.

24. HOP participants' ratings of specific training sessions



When asked if they would have preferred a shorter overall duration for the HOP project, most participants said they current two-year time frame is just right, although seven participants indicated that an 18-month time frame might have been more appropriate for their organization. Furthermore, only one participant who wanted a shorter time frame indicated a desire for fewer training sessions whereas three participants specifically said they wanted a shorter time frame with all four of the training sessions.

Finally, when participants were asked to describe the most significant difference in their organization, if any, as a result of their participation in the HOP program, they gave the following responses. These answers indicate that the strategic planning components of the HOP program have had the most impact for participating organizations.

Definitive strategic plan.

We got support in implementing our goals, giving us confidence by having definite steps in planning.

Helped us learn how to focus on what is most important. The result was a useful and relevant strategic plan.

We put together professional marketing materials and [the HOP program] gave us excellent resources in completing this.

We now do a better job with strategic planning and evaluation activities.

Better handle on planning, individual input.

Specific goals and objectives for strategic plan, relationship building between board and staff, and leadership development.

Giving us confidence in our ability to make decisions. Giving us a tool for planning and communicating.

A direction set with strategic plan. Unity among our organization.

We are more focused. Mission is understood by all staff and board members.

Adoption of policy governance has been great. Now we need board recruitment and training.

Growth in board members. We valued the addition of the mentor.

Awareness that we will continue to cycle.

Strategic planning is not a dirty word.

More focused, more useful data, more programs, more ideas.

Developing a strategic plan and following it.

New life!

Increased strategic planning skills and understanding of board members and staff.

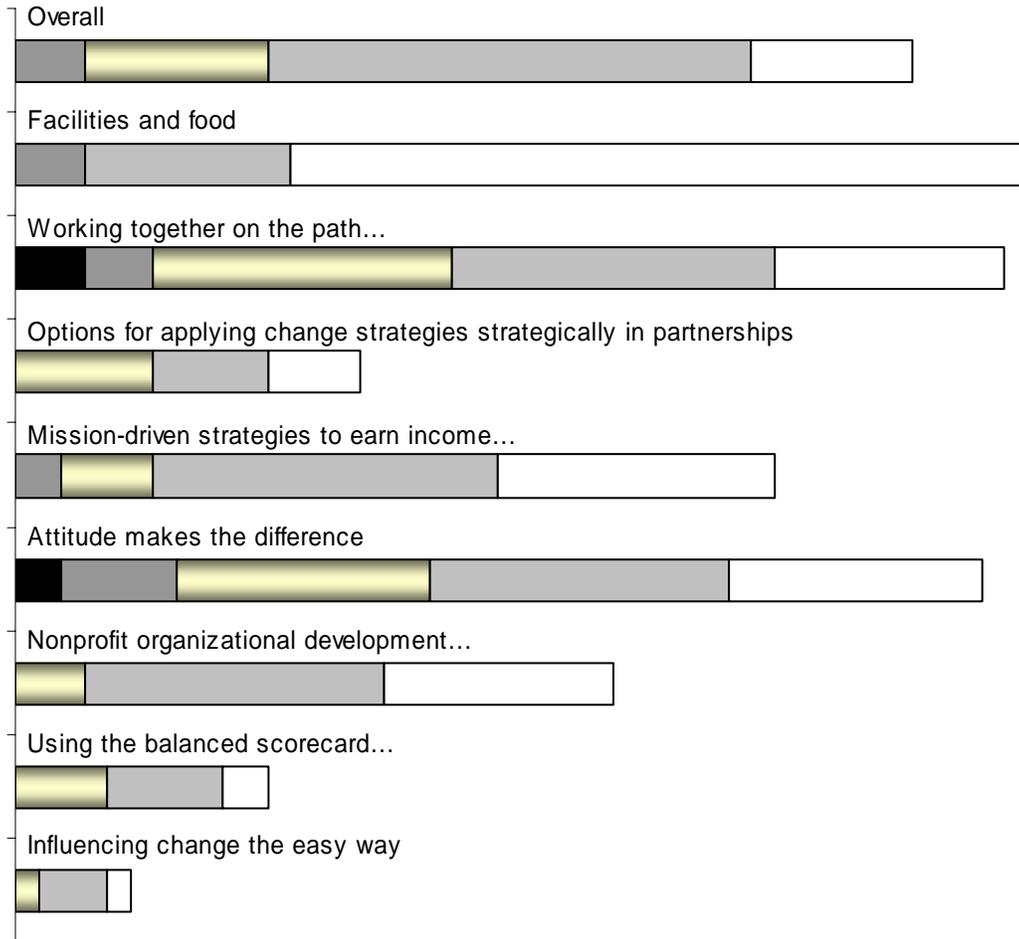
Program improvement and expansion.

A written plan.
New fire.
Strategic planning, marketing plan, staff reorganization.
Board start-up went much better than expected.
Organization.
A functioning board.
Organization and governance.
Growth in number of youth served.
Kept focused.

2004 HOP conference evaluation

The 2004 HOP annual conference was attended by 65 participants. Participants rated the conference sessions on the following scale: 1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, and 5 = excellent. The average rating given by participants for the overall level of the workshops was 3.8, or “average” to “above average.” The facilities and food received “above average” to “excellent” ratings; the average was 4.6. In addition, the seven individual workshops within the HOP conference were rated by participants. The two lowest rated sessions were the morning plenary session with Art Himmelman called “working together on the path from service to justice” (average rating 3.6) and the lunch session with Dan Hegstad called “attitude makes the difference” (average rating 3.6). The “nonprofit organizational development process and challenges” session with Jeanne Murphy was the highest rated session (average rating 4.3) and the “mission-driven strategies to ear income for your organization” session with Kate Barr was a close second (average rating 4.1). See Figure 25.

25. HOP conference evaluation ratings



■ Poor ■ Below average ■ Average ■ Above average □ Excellent

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent
Overall	0	3	8	21	7
Facilities and food	0	3	0	9	32
Working together on the path...	3	3	13	14	10
Options for applying change strategies in partnership	0	0	6	5	4
Mission-driven strategies to earn income....	0	2	4	15	12
Attitude makes the difference	2	5	11	13	11
Nonprofit organizational development...	0	0	3	13	10
Using the balanced scorecard...	0	0	4	5	2
Influencing change the easy way	0	0	1	3	1

Space, Place, and Natural Resources: Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP) program

The purpose of the Initiative Foundation's Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership (HLRP) program is to assist communities and lake or river associations in preserving open space, a sense of place, and natural resources. To this end, the Initiative Foundation provides training and assistance to organizations in nine counties or watersheds to help them inventory resources, identify assets or problems within the organization's control, and develop and implement sustainable development action plans to protect or restore water bodies or river segments. An Environmental Specialist reviews all lake management plans. The Initiative Foundation also provides networking opportunities and technical assistance to ensure that final plans are practical and to facilitate completion of the plan. The Initiative Foundation holds an annual HLRP reunion for graduates to share their accomplishments, learn about new resources, and strengthen their network with other lake associations. This section of the report describes the results of participant feedback provided via self-administered questionnaires at HLRP training sessions.

During this evaluation period (July 2003 through June 2004), the Initiative Foundation held six HLRP training sessions with a total of 299 attendees. In all, 173 feedback forms were received for a response rate of 58 percent. Participants were asked to rate the training session on the following scale: 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = OK, 4 = good, and 5 = great. They were also asked to give the session an overall value from "\$" to "\$\$\$\$\$." On average, participants gave a rating of 4.4, or "good" to "great" and an average value of 4.3, or between "\$\$\$\$" and "\$\$\$\$\$." In fact, 89 percent of participants said the sessions were "good" or "great" and gave the session a value of "\$\$\$\$" or "\$\$\$\$\$." No participants said the session was "poor" and none gave a value of "\$."

Children, Youth, and Families

Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative

The Initiative Foundation's Children, Youth, and Families programs and intended to initiate, identify, and support efforts that encourage the healthy emotional, physical, moral, and intellectual development of children, youth, and families in Central Minnesota. The objective of the Early Childhood Initiative is to increase community input and participation in early childhood or learning readiness opportunities through community awareness and funding efforts. Through this program, Initiative Foundation staff coordinate community assessments that utilize existing information on early

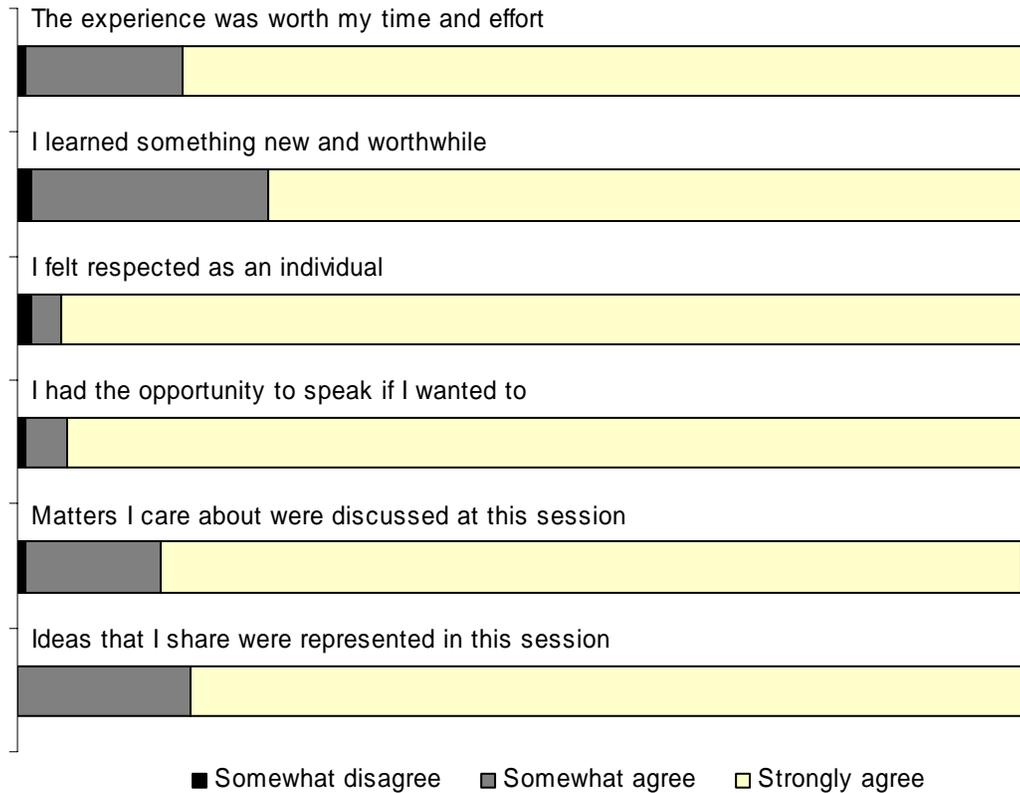
childhood needs and opportunities. Based on the results of the assessment, the Initiative Foundation provides grants and other assistance to participating communities.

During this evaluation period (July 2003 through June 2004), the Initiative Foundation held 12 Early Childhood Initiative sessions, including community coalition building sessions and trainings. The total attendance at the first seven sessions was not tracked, so therefore, we cannot report response rates or total number of attendees. However, there were a total of 141 feedback survey forms completed by participants at all 12 sessions. In the last five sessions of the evaluation period, the response rate was 79 percent.

Participants were asked what perspectives they bring to the Early Childhood Coalition and also their primary affiliation or identification. The most common perspectives were parents (N=102), Early Childhood Education and Care (N=66), and nonprofits and service agencies (N=37). There was also significant representation from people with businesses perspectives (N=28), K-12 education (N=23), and health care or public health perspectives (N=21). Fewer participants reported having perspectives from: faith communities (N=11), elected officials (N=7), higher education (N=5), news media (N=5), and law enforcement (N=2). (Note: Participants were allowed to provide multiple responses.) In terms of their primary affiliation or identification, by far the most common was Early Childhood Education or Care (N=24). There were also six participants who identified K-12 education as their primary affiliation, six who are from nonprofits or service organizations, four who said they are parents, four who identified as business people, three who are elected officials, one from higher education, and one from law enforcement.

These participants were asked to respond to six statements about the training session, including: ideas that I share were represented in this session, matters I care about were discussed at this session, I had the opportunity to speak if I wanted to, I felt respected as an individual, I learned something new and worthwhile, and the experience was worth my time and effort. The response options for each item are: “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Overall, no participants said “strongly disagree” for any of these statements and between zero and two participants said they “somewhat disagree” for each item. Furthermore, between 75 percent and 96 percent of participants “strongly agree” with each of the six statements. These results indicate very positive experiences for participants at these Early Childhood Initiative training and community coalition building sessions. See Figure 26.

26. Participants' ratings of Early Childhood Initiative sessions



	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The experience was worth my time and effort	1	22	118
I learned something new and worthwhile	2	33	106
I felt respected as an individual	2	4	135
I had the opportunity to speak if I wanted to	1	6	134
Matters I care about were discussed at this session	1	19	120
Ideas that I share were represented in this session	0	24	117

The Early Childhood Initiative involves the collaboration of all six Initiative Foundations in Minnesota and is being evaluated separately under a joint project contracted with Wilder Research Center.

Youth as Resources (YAR)

The purpose of the Initiative Foundation's Youth as Resources (YAR) program is to increase youth presence and youth leadership in Central Minnesota communities. YAR is a national model that supports the development of youth-driven, youth-run community service activities. The Initiative Foundation provides annual training opportunities and funding to support existing YAR sites and to expand the number of sites throughout the region. The Initiative Foundation also provides on-going technical assistance and resource or referral support to YAR communities.

In April 2004, the Initiative Foundation held its annual training and celebration for the YAR program. Overall, there were 58 attendees, 51 of whom filled out feedback forms for a response rate of 88 percent. Participants were asked to rate the session on a five-point scale from "poor" to "great" and to give the session a value rating from "\$" to "\$\$\$\$\$." All participants who answered the question said the session was either "good" (21%) or "great" (79%). The average rating was 4.8. In addition, half of participants (50%) said the value of the session was "\$\$\$\$\$" and 44 percent said it was "\$\$\$\$." Only 6 percent of participants said the value of the sessions was "\$\$\$" and no participants gave ratings under "\$\$\$." The average rating on this item was 4.4.

When participants were asked to describe something they especially liked or learned at the session, the most common response was related to the facilitator (N=34 responses), especially his ability to use humor to educate and motivate participants. Sixteen participants also mentioned that they enjoyed or learned from the games and interactive activities at the session.

Participants were also asked if there was anything from the session that they plan to use in their YAR project. The most common response was related to the marketing information or public relations ideas (N=16 responses), nine participants mentioned the fundraising ideas, and eight referred to the Team Dynamics Model.

Economic development initiatives

The Initiative Foundation addresses barriers to economic development through programs that address unique economic conditions in Central Minnesota, including workforce development programs and business investments, based on their belief that all citizens and communities deserve the opportunity to prosper economically. According to the Foundation's Phase V Strategic Plan, the key tools to economic prosperity include: access to capital, strategic planning, basic technology infrastructure, and active community leadership.

Providing risk capital for sound business projects is the key economic development tool utilized by the Initiative Foundation. The Foundation has established a role as "gap lender" and focuses on the social benefits of business investments. Business investments made by the Initiative Foundation focus on opportunities that create quality, livable wage jobs, result in diversification of the economic base, follow community economic development plans, and have the greatest potential for raising the quality of life and increasing economic security for the bottom 20 percent of the economic ladder in the region. The Foundation has committed approximately \$8.5 million in assets to facilitating and encouraging investment of private funds through their Business Investment Program. The Initiative Foundation also provides economic development assistance through its Technology Development Program, which supports technology-based businesses through partnerships with St. Cloud State University and Minnesota Technology, Inc., and the Workforce Development Program, which works to increase income levels of individuals (especially those who are disabled or who are in the bottom 20 percent of wage earners). Finally, the Foundation's Economic Development Grants program addresses individuals' barriers to economic development, such as transportation, child care, and affordable housing.

Since inception, the Initiative Foundation:

- Made 671 loans totaling \$21.3 million
- Leveraged more than \$109.2 million in private business investments
- Created or retained more than 7,156 jobs

Participant feedback

Two Foundation programs within the Technology Development goal area, the Technology Capital Fund and the Seed Capital Fund, help Central Minnesota entrepreneurs launch emerging technology ventures and help established companies integrate proven productivity applications into their business operations and processes. The Technology Capital Fund was designed based on the knowledge that conventional lending practices may be too inflexible for technology-based businesses; therefore, the Initiative Foundation may choose to waive certain collateral requirements. Loans under this program range from \$50,000 to \$1 million. The Seed Capital Fund is designed to further emerging entrepreneurial ventures by financing product concept, development, and market research. In return for Seed Capital Fund investments, the Initiative Foundation may negotiate company equity or royalties that reflect incurred risk. The loan amount under this program is up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Wilder Research Center completed four key informant interviews with the CEOs of organizations that have received Seed Capital Fund or Technology Capital Fund loans from the Initiative Foundation to determine what impact this funding has had on their organization and on the broader issue of regional economic development. See the Appendix for the Technology Capital Fund/Seed Equity Fund key informant interview questions. All of these informants indicated that their previous relationship with the Initiative Foundation led them to seek these funds. Two said they had attempted to seek funds through more traditional lenders before approaching the Initiative Foundation and two said they did not seek more traditional lending first, because they knew they would not be approved due to the high risk of their ventures.

First, the informants were asked why they sought funding from the Initiative Foundation and what they hoped to accomplish with the funding. Two of the informants said the main purpose was new product design and two said it was to acquire assets from other companies, in order to preserve jobs in the area.

When asked about the main benefits of the Initiative Foundation funding to their organization, two informants indicated that it helped them to be able to preserve jobs that would have been lost otherwise, one informant indicated that their organization was able to release a new product, and one informant said that the Technology Capital Fund financing helped them to stay six months to one year ahead of where they would be now without it.

Informants were also asked if the funding they received from the Initiative Foundation put their organization in a better place for future expansion. One informant indicated that this was not the case due to external market circumstances that were beyond the control of the Foundation or their organization. The other participants indicated that the financing from the Initiative Foundation definitely put their organization in a place for future financing, in terms of higher sales and profitability, ability to conduct more research and development, and just the basic flexibility of the Foundation's financing which allowed them to continue their growth plans. One informant said:

Without this loan, we wouldn't have a future...With our financial position, we would not have been able to go out to other conventional funding sources for this additional funding, so the Foundation is what has made it possible for us to even survive and have a future.

Three of the four informants indicated that the Initiative Foundation financing has allowed them to both retain skilled workers and hire new workers, due to increased demand for their product and new product development projects that have been made possible with the financing. The fourth informant again indicated that, while they were able to retain jobs for a short while due to the Foundation's financing, eventually those jobs may also be lost due to unforeseen market conditions and their inability to stay in business.

Informants were asked to rate the Initiative Foundation's ability to promote the advancement of technology in the region, to promote the integration of technology in the region, to promote the commercialization of technology in the region, and to help their organizations create quality jobs. Three of the four informants gave all ratings of "good," "very good," and "excellent" to these items; the fourth informant gave mostly ratings of "OK" plus one rating of "very good." When asked to give an overall letter grade to the Initiative Foundation's business financing programs, two informants gave an "A," one gave a rating between "A" and "B," and the fourth informant gave the Foundation a letter grade of "B."

When asked who they had mainly worked with at the Foundation, three of the four informants mentioned John Kalizewski, one mentioned Kathy Gaalswyk, and one mentioned Sandy Voight. (Note: Participants were allowed to mention multiple staff contacts.) Three of the four informants said the Foundation staff are "excellent" at listening to and understanding their concerns and one informant said the staff is "very good." Similarly, three of the four informants said the staff's ability to communicate in an understandable fashion is "excellent" and one informant said it is "very good."

All four informants said that they would use the Initiative Foundation's financing programs again and that they would recommend the Foundation's business financing programs to other organizations. All four informants also indicated that the Foundation's Business financing programs could be improved. Two of these informants said that everything worked out for them, but in general, there is always room for improvement. The suggestions given by the other two informants are: doing a better job of getting the word out about the availability of funds to a wider audience and improving the timeliness of loan approvals.

When asked what types of additional community support would have been useful to their organization, one informant said there was no other support needed and another said they received substantial support from local economic development agencies and state government. On the other hand, one informant said it would be useful if the government was better informed about the uses and potential applications of high tech businesses and products and one informant indicated a need for better information about the private funding sources available in various communities.

In addition, when asked specifically what kinds of support the Initiative Foundation might provide that would be of the most value to their organization, two of the informants indicated a need for more financing. Specifically, one informant expressed a need for purchasing more equipment and the other indicated a need for gap financing in areas in which more traditional funders avoid (i.e., intellectual property is not recognized as an asset).

Appendix

Feedback survey form

HCP case study key informant interview

Technology capital fund/seed capital fund key informant interview

Feedback survey form

INITIATIVE FOUNDATION FEEDBACK FORM

Rate the overall quality of the session by circling one of the following:

5 – Excellent 4 – Above Average 3 – Average 2 – Below Average 1 - Poor



I especially liked or learned:

Something I will use in my/our work efforts or project:

One thing about this presentation/session I would change...

Overall value of the information (circle one): \$\$\$\$\$ \$\$\$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$ \$

General Comments (food, facilities, other)

HCP case study key informant interview

WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK! Initiative Foundation Grant Recipients

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and returning it to the Wilder Research Center in the envelope we have provided. Your feedback is important to us. Your candid comments will assist the Initiative Foundation in improving its services. All responses will remain anonymous.

Compared to other funding sources (foundations, government, private sources, etc.) how would you rate the Initiative Foundation as a granting and training organization?

How would you rate the ability of the Initiative Foundation's staff to

[] Much better to deal with	[] Somewhat better to deal with	[] About the same as other funding sources	[] Somewhat poorer to deal with	[] Much poorer to deal with
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Listen to and understand the needs of your organization?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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Communicate in a clear and understandable fashion?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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Work with you in developing a plan and objectives for your organization?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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Relate to people of different backgrounds and experiences?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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Respond to phone calls or email messages in a timely manner?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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Questionnaire  continues on back

How would you rate the way your organization’s financial and narrative reporting requirements were explained to you by the Initiative Foundation?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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How would you rate the overall impact of the Initiative Foundation’s services on your organization?

[] Outstanding	[] Very Good	[] Good	[] OK	[] Poor	[] Terrible	[] No Opinion
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In what ways could the Initiative Foundation staff or programs have been more helpful to you? What would you like to see changed?

Please assist the Initiative Foundation in planning for the future by listing below what you think will be the *key issues, opportunities* and *challenges* in Central Minnesota over the next five years.

For additional information about other programs and funding opportunities, please visit the Initiative Foundation’s website at: www.ifound.org Thanks!

Technology capital fund/seed capital fund key informant interview

CASE ID: _____

Time: _____
(24 hour clock)

**Initiative Foundation (Central Minnesota)
Technology Capital Fund Key Informant Survey**

Organization Code: 70384

Introduction

Hi, this is _____ and I'm calling from Wilder Research Center. I am calling on behalf of the Initiative Foundation regarding their annual evaluation. Your name was recommended by a staff member of the Foundation as someone who can provide candid feedback regarding the Technology Capital Fund or Seed Equity Fund programs. The interview is voluntary and confidential. Your answers will not be linked to your name or your organization. It will take about 20 minutes. Do you have time to speak with me now?

IF YES: PROCEED

IF NO: What would be a better time? RECORD APPOINTMENT INFORMATION ON FACESHEET.

Date Time

IF NO: ASK R IF THERE IS ANY PARTICULAR REASON HE/SHE DOESN'T WISH TO PARTICIPATE. RECORD RESPONSE BELOW.

1A. We understand that your organization received a (Technology Capital Fund/Seed Equity Fund) loan from the Initiative Foundation. Is this correct? (INTERVIEWER: USE FACESHEET TO DETERMINE WHICH TYPE OF LOAN WAS RECEIVED.)

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 8

1B. Why did you seek this loan? What did you hope to accomplish with it?

1C. How did you find out about the (Technology Capital Fund/Seed Equity Fund)?

1D. Did your organization try to get funding from other sources for this purpose before you went to the Initiative Foundation? (PROBE: Such as traditional loans from a bank, or other more traditional funding sources.)

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 8

2C. Did the (Technology Capital Fund/Seed Equity Fund) financing help you hire new skilled workers? If so, how?

3. The next questions relate to the business support goals of the Initiative Foundation. The goals of the Initiative Foundation’s business financing programs are to advance technology, integrate technology, and commercialize technology. Let’s take those one at a time.

How would you rate...	Would you say...						
	Terrible,	Poor,	OK,	Good,	Very good, or	Excellent ?	DK
A. the Initiative Foundation’s financing programs on their ability to promote the <u>advancement of technology</u> in the region?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
B. the Initiative Foundation’s financing programs on their ability to promote the <u>integration of technology</u> in the region?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
C. the Initiative Foundation’s financing programs on their ability to promote the <u>commercialization of technology</u> in the region?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
D. the Initiative Foundation’s financing programs on their ability to help your organization <u>create quality jobs</u> ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about the Initiative Foundation’s staff.

4A. First, who have you worked at the Initiative Foundation?

4B. How would you rate...

	Would you say...						
	Terrible,	Poor,	OK,	Good,	Very good, or	Excellent?	Can't rate/DK
1. [name from Q.4A]'s <u>ability to listen to and understand any concerns or issues</u> you have discussed with them?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
2. [name from Q.4A]'s <u>ability to communicate</u> in a clear and understandable fashion?	1	2	3	4	5	6	8

5A. Would you use the Initiative Foundation's business financing programs again?

Yes 1
 No 2
 Don't know 8

5B. Would you recommend the Initiative Foundation's business financing programs to other organizations?

Yes 1
 No 2
 Don't know 8

5C. Do you think the Initiative Foundation's business financing programs could be improved?

Yes 1
 No(GO TO Q. 6A)..... 2
 Don't know.....(GO TO Q. 6A)..... 8

5D. What could be done to improve these programs?

6A. What additional kinds of community support would have been useful to your organization? (PROBE: Did your organization need any other assistance from local economic development organizations?)

6B. When you think of your organization's future in the next few years, what kind of help, support, or resources might the Initiative Foundation offer that would be of most value to you or your organization?

7A. If you were giving the Initiative Foundation's (Technology Capital Fund/Seed Equity Fund) program a report card grade, based on your view of what they have contributed to Central Minnesota, would you give it an...

- A, 1
- B,..... 2
- C,..... 3
- D, or 4
- F? 5
- Refused(GO TO Q. 8)..... 7
- Don't know(GO TO Q. 8)..... 8

7B. Why would you give that grade?
