



January 4, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

In 2013, GHR Foundation made a grant to Wilder Research to undertake a study of the inter-religious landscape of the Twin Cities, focusing specifically on existing inter-religious activities and organizations working in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. This research sought to provide new insights to stakeholders by (1) describing the extent to which an effective infrastructure to do inter-religious work exists locally and (2) providing a map of current and potential capacity, opportunities, strengths, and barriers within the inter-religious landscape in the Twin Cities.

This grant was made as part of GHR Foundation's Inter-Religious Action initiative, which makes grants around the world to advance inter-religious collaboration on issues of common concern to solve those difficult problems, build trusting relationships, strengthen social cohesion and advance peace. Our hope was to support a participatory process that would allow GHR and others interested in inter-religious relations and collaboration in the Twin Cities to gain a strong sense of what is already happening, who the key actors are, and what questions to ask in assessing future opportunities to act.

The foundation wishes to thank the Wilder Research team and the project's volunteer advisory council, whose insights and advice – and generosity with their time – we greatly appreciate.

The need for investment in strengthening inter-religious action and relations has become increasingly urgent since 2013. We hope that the present report will stimulate new thinking about what more can and should be done, and how to ensure that inter-religious action is advanced in an inclusive manner with diverse local leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Andreas Hipple'.

J. Andreas Hipple
Senior Program Advisor



A Study of the Landscape of Inter-Religious Work in the Twin Cities

*Prepared by Wilder Research for
The GHR Foundation*

N O V E M B E R 2 0 1 4

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Executive summary

Study background

In early 2013, the GHR Foundation requested that Wilder Research conduct an exploration of the *inter-religious work* occurring in the Twin Cities region. “Inter-religious” refers to two or more religious or spiritual groups from different belief systems. “Work” refers to social action activities, that is, efforts to promote community welfare or meet human needs, other than purely religious services or education about religious beliefs and practices. Our hope is that this study provides, for those who do inter-religious work, a jumping-off point for reflection and dialogue concerning the assets, needs, and opportunities of the Twin Cities inter-religious community.

Wilder Research performed a number of preliminary research activities that culminated in a survey of representatives from organizations in the Twin Cities region that do inter-religious work. Wilder Research collected quantitative information about organizations (such as staff capacity and annual budget) as well as qualitative information about doing inter-religious work (such as barriers and successes experienced by the organization representatives) from respondents in 53 organizations. Findings from these interviews provided a basis for Wilder Research to report characteristics of the Twin Cities inter-religious landscape.

An overview of the landscape

The Twin Cities region has a long history of inter-religious work. Organizations reported starting inter-religious work as early as 1920 and as recently as 2013. More than half of the organizations identified through this research began doing inter-religious work after 1999.

Inter-religious work in the Twin Cities occurs in organizations which vary in staff and financial capacity. Organizations reported a range of zero to 16 *full-time* staff members, and zero to 42 *part-time* staff members. In addition, more than one-third of the organizations reported an annual budget for inter-religious work of less than \$10,000, while more than one-tenth of the organizations reported an annual budget for inter-religious work of more than \$200,000.

Organizations doing inter-religious work self-identify predominantly with Christianity (42%), but also with Islam (25%) and Judaism (23%).

Organizations tend to do multiple types of inter-religious work and address similar issues in their work. For example, more than 70% of the organizations in this study do

education-focused work and promote dialogue regarding religious beliefs and social issues. 70% advocate for public policy change. About half provide direct social services.

Organizations work together. The overwhelming majority of organizations were involved in an on-going partnership at the time of the survey, as opposed to doing inter-religious work on their own.

Challenges of doing inter-religious work

Lack of understanding of other faith traditions and cultures was identified as a major barrier to doing inter-religious work. Respondents noted that increased religious and cultural understanding is integral for successful inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region.

A majority/minority dynamic probably constitutes a barrier to doing inter-religious work. Two respondents mentioned Christian privilege as a barrier to doing inter-religious work. In addition, Jewish and Muslim organizations were less likely than Christian organizations to report that members of each faith tradition have equal say in the planning and decision-making processes of inter-religious work. Half of the survey respondents see the Muslim community as underrepresented in their organizations' inter-religious work.

Opportunities for growth

More work with a greater variety of people, and predisposition to expand programming. Despite challenges with respect to funding, staffing, and a lack of understanding of other faith and cultural groups, respondents displayed a predisposition to expanding their current programming as well as working with more groups of people.

Relationship-building and deepening existing relationships. While organizations facilitate many relationship-building opportunities for people of different faiths, respondents noted that more opportunities would be beneficial. In addition, respondents want to deepen already existing relationship between people of different faiths.

Potential implications

Expansion of inter-religious work, if sought for this region, might benefit from several actions. Increasing relationship-building opportunities, investing in inter-religious and inter-cultural training, proactively engaging laypeople, and developing measures to document activities and outcomes of inter-religious work might facilitate the growth of such efforts.

About the study

In early 2013, the GHR Foundation requested that Wilder Research conduct an exploration of the *inter-religious work* occurring in the Twin Cities region. The purpose of the study was to learn which organizations in the Twin Cities were involved in inter-religious work, what types of work were being performed by involved organizations, and perceptions of those doing inter-religious work in the Twin Cities regarding aspects of their work and inter-religious work in the Twin Cities overall. Advisory board members have described the study as a snapshot of a fluid and dynamic community. Our hope is that this study provides, for those who do inter-religious work, a jumping-off point for reflection and dialogue concerning the assets, needs, and opportunities of the Twin Cities inter-religious community.

“Inter-religious” refers to two or more religious or spiritual groups from different belief systems. The definition of “inter-religious” for this study does not refer to two or more different sects within a belief system (such as Catholicism and Protestantism within Christianity), but rather to religious or spiritual systems with more pronounced belief differences (such as Islam and Judaism).

“Work” refers to social action activities, that is, efforts to promote community welfare or meet human needs, other than solely religious services or education about religious beliefs and practices.

Research tasks

To learn the landscape of the Twin Cities inter-religious community, Wilder Research staff engaged in four phases of research:

- 1. Secondary data collection and analysis.** A literature review of scholarly articles and publications focused on inter-religious work was conducted in order to identify the key elements of such work. In addition, a preliminary inventory of Twin Cities based inter-religious organizations was compiled using online inventories and web searches.
- 2. Preliminary exploratory interviews.** Key informant interviews were conducted with 11 inter-religious leaders in the Twin Cities region. These interviews guided research efforts in phase 3.
- 3. Survey of representatives from organizations in the Twin Cities region that do inter-religious work.** Wilder Research collected quantitative information about organizations (such as staff capacity and annual budget) as well as qualitative information about doing inter-religious work (such as barriers and successes experienced by the organization representatives).

4. Production of a report. This report describes the findings from the study, with principal emphasis on the findings produced by the survey in phase 3.

An inter-religious advisory committee provided advice and suggestions to the research staff during each research phase.

For the detailed methodology, please see page 24 of this report.

What is the landscape?

The quantitative survey results offer a detailed description of inter-religious work in the Twin Cities – what types of organizations engage in it, what they do, and the level of inter-religious effort they put forth. This section of the report describes inter-religious organizations in the Twin Cities, including organization history, staff and volunteer capacity, budget, and religions or belief systems with which organizations identify. In addition, this section describes the types of work carried out by the organizations.

Volume of inter-religious work

Based on our review of literature, scan of websites, and interviews with experts and practitioners involved in inter-religious work, we identified and interviewed 53 organizations in the Twin Cities region that were actively involved in efforts that met our definition of inter-religious work.¹ This includes organizations engaged continuously in such efforts as well as organizations involved on a regular but sporadic basis.

Organizations that have done inter-religious work in the past but were not doing such work at the time of the survey were not included. Likewise, some current work probably eluded our triangulated search. Nonetheless, based on the feedback from the advisory committee regarding the search results, Wilder Research feels confident that the organizations identified through this research constitute the bulk of the entities involved in inter-religious work at the time of the survey. Wilder Research feels as well that the respondents interviewed for this research represent very well the network of inter-religious practitioners.

Characteristics of organizations involved in inter-religious work

History of organizations

The oldest organization included in the survey was formed in 1850, and the newest in 2011. The median formation year was 1987.²

The first organization to start doing inter-religious work did so in 1920, and some organizations started as recently as 2013. The median year organizations began doing

¹ In three instances, Wilder Research interviewed multiple representatives from the same organization. For quantitative analysis, these duplicate cases were removed, resulting in 53 organizations included in this section of the report (for more detailed information regarding survey methods, please see page 24). In all tables and graphs, the base number is 53. If a table or graph refers to less than 53 organizations, that number appears.

² Median = the mid-point. Half of the organizations fall above the median; half fall below.

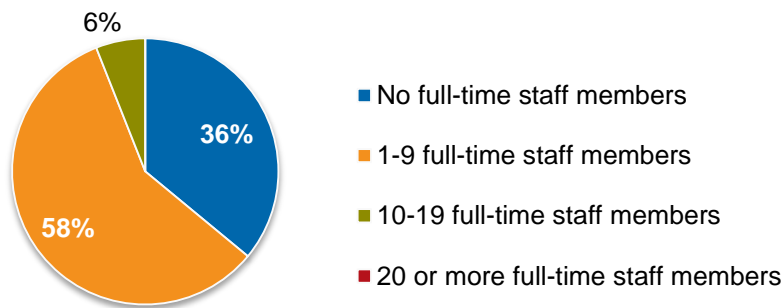
inter-religious work was 1999, meaning that half of surveyed organizations began doing inter-religious work in the past 15 years (since 1999), and the other half began doing inter-religious in the 79-year period from 1920 to 1999. These findings indicate that while inter-religious work occurred to some degree as early as 1920, the amount of inter-religious work occurring in the Twin Cities region has increased substantially since 1999.

Staff and volunteer capacity of organizations

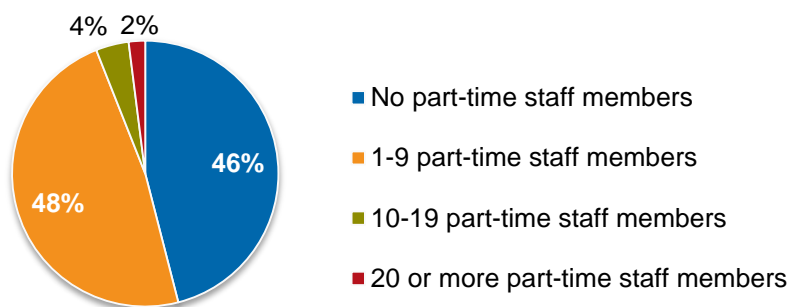
Organizations reported a range of zero to 16 *full-time* staff members that work on inter-religious work every week, and zero to 42 *part-time* staff members that work on inter-religious work every week (Figure 1).

1. Staff capacity of surveyed organizations

Full-time staff members (n=53)



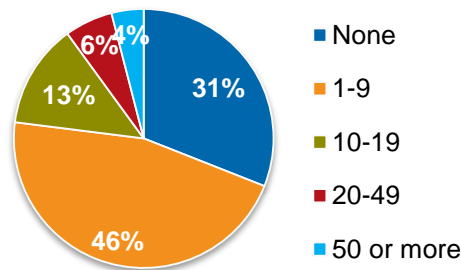
Part-time staff members (n=52)



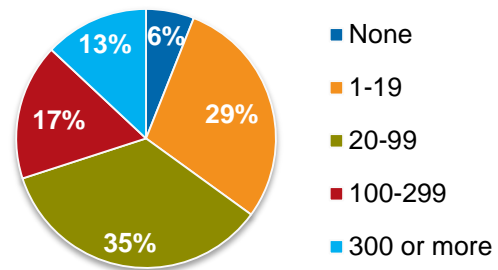
Additionally, organizations reported a range of zero to 60 *regular weekly* volunteers, and zero to 1,751 *annual unduplicated* volunteers (Figure 2). “Unduplicated volunteers” refers to a count of total annual volunteers, regardless of frequency of volunteering; those that volunteered multiple times were only counted once.

2. Volunteer capacity of surveyed organizations

Regular weekly volunteers (n=48)



Annual unduplicated volunteers (n=48)



Annual budgets of organizations

Organizations reported annual budgets ranging from \$500 to more than \$33 million for their *entire organization*, and annual budgets ranging from \$0 to \$540,000 for *inter-religious work* (Figure 3). It should be noted that Wilder Research interviewed representatives from various inter-religious organizations, some of which were the “inter-religious division” of larger organizations, and others that operated independently.

3. Annual budgets of surveyed organizations

	% of organizations
Annual budget of entire organizations (n=43)	
\$500 - \$49,999	14%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	5%
\$100,000 - \$499,999	35%
\$500,000 - \$1,499,999	14%
\$1.5 million - \$9,999,999	28%
\$10 million or more	5%
Annual budget for inter-religious work (n=45)	
\$0	4%
\$500 - \$4,999	18%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	16%
\$10,000 - \$49,999	24%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	9%
\$100,000 - \$199,999	18%
\$200,000 or more	11%

Religious and spiritual identities of organizations

Organizations indicated the one or more religions and belief systems that comprise their inter-religious identities (Figure 4).

4. Religions with which surveyed organizations identify

	% of organizations
Christianity	42%
Islam	25%
Judaism	23%
Inter-religious	21%
Non-religious or secular	9%
American Indian spirituality	6%
Unitarian Universalist	4%
Buddhist	2%
Hindu	2%

The percentages equal more than 100 percent because organizations could indicate more than one affiliation. However, with few exceptions, groups which identified themselves within Christianity, Islam, or Judaism identified with no other religious tradition. Groups which chose to identify as “inter-religious” selected multiple other affiliations.

Types of inter-religious work

Organizations indicated engagement in a variety of inter-religious work (Figure 5).

5. Types of work in which surveyed organizations engage

	% of organizations
Dialogue focused on theology or belief systems	79%
Dialogue focused on social issues	75%
Educate groups of people about a particular religion or belief system	72%
Organize for public policy change	70%
Organize community members	68%
Use the arts to facilitate inter-religious interactions	67%
Provide or organize direct social services	51%
Dialogue as a means of conflict resolution	51%

Note: Percentages equal more than 100 because respondents indicated engagement in more than one type of inter-religious work.

While many organizations engage in multiple types of work, organizations also identified the type of work *to which they devote the most time* (Figure 6).

6. Type of work to which each surveyed organization devotes the most time

	% of organizations
Provide or organize direct social services	24%
Dialogue focused on theology or belief systems	22%
Organize for public policy change	18%
Dialogue focused on social issues	16%
Educate groups of people about a particular religion or belief system	10%
Organize community members	8%
Use the arts to facilitate inter-religious interaction	2%
Dialogue as a means of conflict resolution	--

Issues addressed

The inter-religious work performed by organizations included in this survey addresses a variety of social issues. In particular, organizations that were engaged in *direct service work and public policy change* addressed the issues listed in Figure 7. Respondents could indicate more than one option; as a result, percentages equal more than 100.

7. Issues addressed by surveyed organizations that provide or organize direct social services or organize for public policy change

	% of organizations
Homelessness or affordable housing (n=40)	88%
Hunger or accessibility to healthy food, including food pantries (n=41)	83%
Education, including early childhood or other investment in youth (n=41)	81%
Public health or medical care (n=39)	77%
Racial discrimination or race conflict issues (n=41)	71%
Immigrant or refugee issues (n=40)	70%
Employment issues, including job training or workers' rights (n=40)	68%
Sexuality rights or gender rights (n=41)	61%
Environmental or land issues, including sustainability and zoning issues (n=41)	56%
Criminal justice issues, including reentry services, prisoner services, or prisoner rights (n=41)	54%
Transportation or transit issues (n=40)	45%
Other issues (religious discrimination, older adults, and other areas) (n=41)	32%

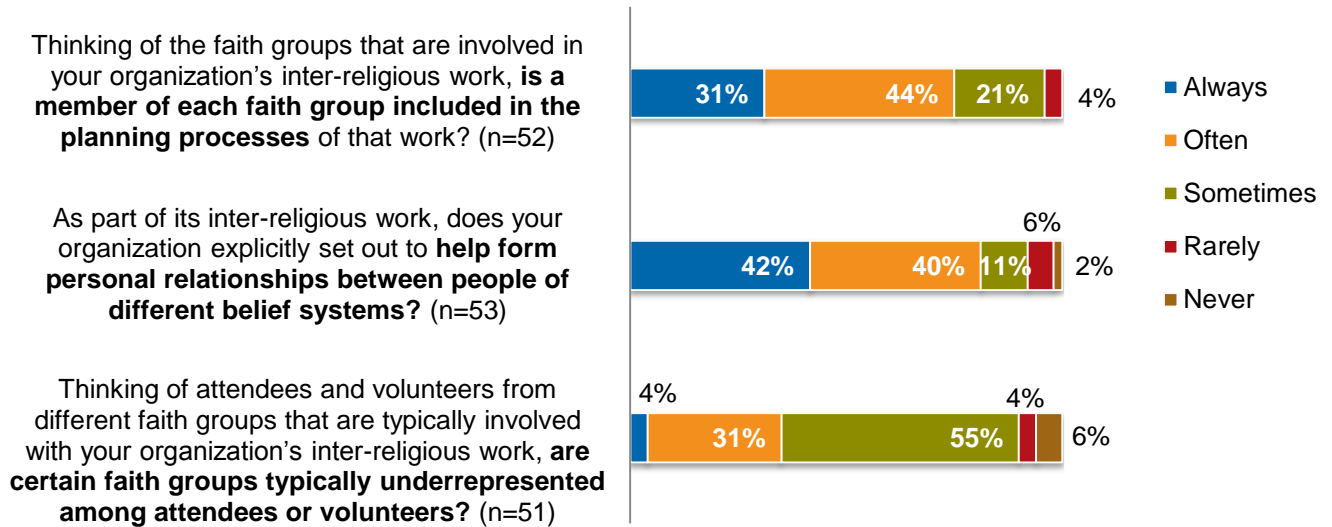
Measures of “inter-religiosity”

The survey results offer insights regarding the extent to which inter-religious work in the Twin Cities at the time of the survey truly adapts to and accommodates a mixture of religious traditions (which we refer to as “inter-religiosity”). Respondents indicated their perceptions of efforts at relationship building among faiths, decision making for inter-religious activities and events, and representation of different faith groups, as well as their perceptions of other organizations’ inter-religious efforts.

Organizations’ self-reported measures of inter-religiosity

Organizations involve members of different faith groups in their work in differing ways. Specifically, organizations report differing levels of “inter-religiosity” (or how inter-religious an organization is) regarding those involved in the planning processes of their work, the level of importance placed on developing personal relationships among people of different faiths, and representation of faith groups among attendees or volunteers at inter-religious events and other efforts (Figure 9).

9. Inter-religious efforts of surveyed organizations



Respondents most often mentioned the Muslim community as being underrepresented in their organization’s inter-religious efforts. Other groups noted as underrepresented included: Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, Christian, Baha’i, Sikh, Unitarian Universalist, Wiccan, Shamanist, and Zoroastrian. Also, some respondents referred specifically to Evangelical Christians as being under-represented.

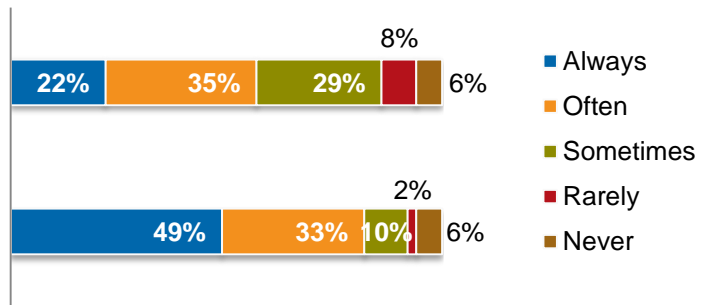
Perceptions of working with other organizations

Respondents noted varying degrees of religious knowledge among representatives from other organizations, as well as differing degrees of accommodation experienced when working with other organizations that do inter-religious work (Figure 8). More than half of the respondents (57%) felt that representatives from other organizations always or often know the day-to-day aspects of their religious beliefs, while more than 8 in 10 (82%) noted that meetings or events are always or often scheduled at times that respect religious holidays or other important times of year.

8. Perceptions of inter-religious knowledge and accommodation received from other organizations

Do representatives from other organizations **know the day-to-day aspects of the religious beliefs of members of your organization**, such as prayer schedules or permissible foods to eat? (n=49)

Do representatives from other organizations **schedule meetings or events at times that respect religious holidays or other important times of year** for members of your organization? (n=51)



Differences among organizations with different affiliations³

Differences in type of work performed

Organizations across religious affiliations look similar regarding the types of inter-religious work performed as well as regarding issues addressed by inter-religious work.

Organizations of all affiliations seem equally likely to facilitate inter-religious dialogue, to provide direct social services, to organize for public policy change (though Jewish and Christian organizations were slightly more likely to be involved in public policy change than Muslim or inter-religious organizations), and to do community organizing to address social issues. In addition, organizations that engage in dialogue, provide direct social services, organize for policy change, or do community organizing tend to address similar issues in this work.

With respect to a primary focus, that is, the inter-religious work to which an organization devotes the most time, some mild differences emerge. **Christian organizations seem slightly more likely to provide direct services; Islamic organizations seem slightly more likely to organize dialogues around social issues; Jewish groups seem to do more public policy organizing.**

³ Only four affiliation groups have sufficient numbers for inclusion in this part of the report: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and inter-religious.

Differences in perceptions and behavior

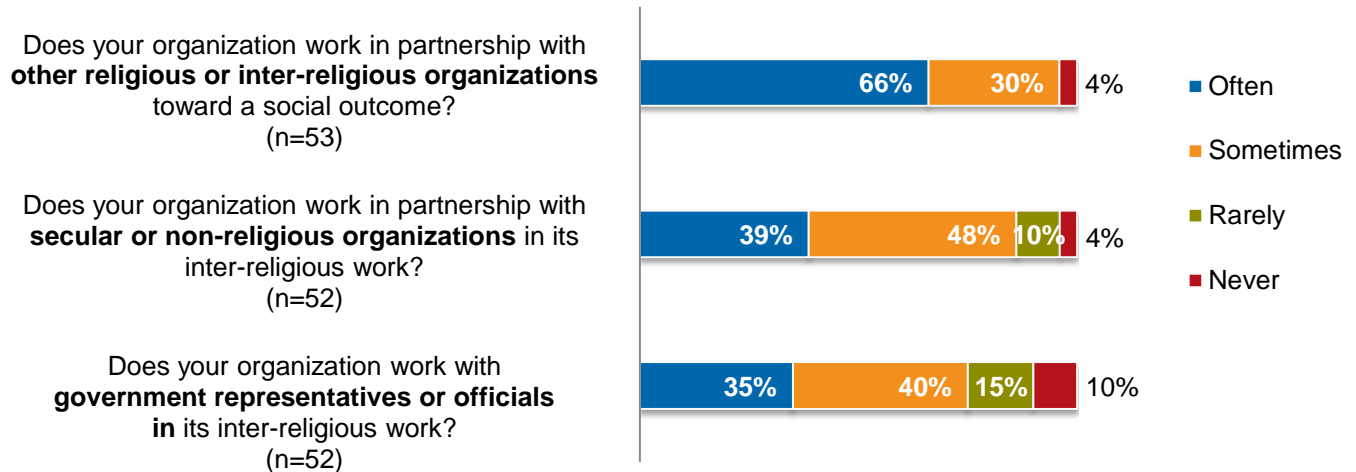
Differences in perceptions among respondents from organizations with different religious affiliations did appear with respect to some questions in the survey.

- **Jewish organizations were less likely to report that meetings or events are scheduled at times that respect their religious beliefs.** Nine in ten or more (90 to 95%) of respondents from Christian and Islamic organizations reported that organizations from other affiliations always or often “schedule meetings or events at times that respect religious holidays...”. Among Jewish respondents, only 43% responded similarly.
- **Jewish organizations were also less likely to report that other organizations know the day-to-day aspects of their beliefs.** More than three-fourths (76%) of Christian respondents – compared with 60% of Muslim respondents, compared with 33% of Jewish respondents – reported that organizations from other affiliations always or often “know the day-to-day aspects of the religious beliefs” of the respondent’s organization.
- **Christian organizations were more likely than their Muslim or Jewish counterparts to note that members of each faith tradition have equal say in planning or decision-making processes of inter-religious work.** When inter-religious work occurs, 94% of Christian respondents felt that always or often “representatives from each faith tradition have an equal say in the planning or decision-making processes.” About 70% of Muslim and Jewish respondents felt that way.
- **Jewish organizations represented in this survey appear to have entered into inter-religious work earlier than other organizations.** Half of the Jewish organizations had been doing their inter-religious work since at least 1981, compared with 1990 for Christian organizations, 1991 for inter-religious organizations, and 2004 for Islamic organizations.

Connectedness of organizations' work

Respondents indicated how often they partner with other organizations, as well as how often they work with government officials or representatives. For the purposes of this study, “partnership” referred to interaction between organizations, which includes regular communication, shared decision-making responsibilities, and shared investment. A partnership may be of any duration, from a one-time event to a long-standing relationship. Keep in mind that, although inter-religious activity by definition requires interaction with someone from a different faith tradition, it does not require interaction between organizations. See Figure 10 for findings regarding partnering with other organizations.

10. Partnerships with other organizations and entities



In addition, almost all organizations (98%) were involved, to some extent, with an on-going partnership when surveyed.

Perceptions about inter-religious work

In addition to collecting quantitative data regarding organization characteristics and levels of inter-religiosity, Wilder Research also collected respondents' perceptions regarding barriers to doing inter-religious work, factors that contribute to successful inter-religious work, motivations for beginning inter-religious work, and areas and opportunities for growth or expansion for inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region.

Barriers to doing inter-religious work

Lack of capacity (funding, staff, time)

Many respondents noted lack of capacity as a barrier to doing inter-religious work, specifically citing:

- Lack of funding for inter-religious work
- Lack of time among faith leaders and others doing inter-religious work
- Lack of staff with appropriate skill set for inter-religious work
- Dependence on volunteers

Regarding lack of capacity, some respondents offered the following:

"It is not unusual to have different faith communities competing for the same grants, so looking for ways to work together instead of everybody working to do their own thing, without talking with each other."

"It is mainly me [doing inter-religious work], but I also have great volunteers – [but] they have jobs and families. That is a barrier. It is hard for me to be able to make all the things I should be going to and participating in. I would love to go to everything. But I do miss sometimes, and that can cause setbacks."

Working with varied and diverse groups of people

Respondents also identified a number of barriers regarding working with varied and diverse groups of people, a necessary component of inter-religious work. Some respondents identified the following barriers:

- Lack of understanding about faith groups different from their own
- Lack of interest among certain faith groups or sects of faith groups

Respondents offered the following comments regarding these barriers:

“There’s fear. Fear of the other. In some ways with this inter-religious stuff, [members of my congregation] really can’t see the benefit until the program is there, and then when they participate in it they see this incredible benefit. People can’t imagine what it would be.”

“As a minority community, a small community in Minnesota, we have to put a lot of effort into building allegiance to our own vibrancy. That may mean we don’t have as much time to develop relationships with other faiths.”

“In my experience, regardless of religious affiliation or whether liberal or conservative, there is a lack of general interest in this from the majority of the general population. ... They are reluctant to engage people on religious grounds. That may be fear that they would be viewed as embracing other traditions, that they be viewed as giving up some of their religious tradition.”

Two respondents noted barriers regarding how the Christian majority works with non-Christian groups or organizations.

“Christian privilege is a barrier – living in a culture that is Christian-oriented, organizations don’t see that [they are] privileging Christianity ... because we are so immersed in that privilege.”

“Sometimes, the community that is more dominant doesn’t always make the effort to get to know the people they don’t know, so people get excluded by not being in the loop. There needs to be greater effort on the part of those who are better connected.”

In addition, some respondents also noted barriers that stem from political differences, noting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or same-sex marriage.

“For the Abrahamic traditions, the question of the Palestinian-Israeli debate, and the GLBT issues between Christians and Muslims. Those issues often prevent us from having the kinds of dialogues we should have.”

“It all has to do with Israel, when the Protestant community does BDS (Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel). Mainline Protestants, the Presbyterian and Methodist church, they often have strong affiliations with the Palestinian community and [that can be a barrier].”

A few respondents also mentioned cultural differences as a barrier to doing inter-religious work. The following comment specifically touches on cultural differences *within* religious groups.

“If you are used to dealing with leadership from the Pakistani [Muslim] community, then there is a huge jump [to working with] the Somali Muslim community.”

Factors contributing to successful inter-religious work

Focused on relationships

Many respondents noted relationship-based factors that contribute to successful inter-religious efforts, with respondents citing:

- Understanding and trust among partners
- Overcoming fear and distrust of other faith groups
- Younger generations who are more open to inter-religious relationships

Respondents offered the following comments regarding these factors that contributed to successful inter-religious efforts:

“The time spent building the relationships. I think that is number one. What we do is the service and the education. You can’t just walk into another community and say we will do this or that. You have to first build the relationships. That is key, before you go in to do anything.”

“An already existing deep spirit of cooperation among senior clergy of different groups. There is a long-standing sense of cooperation and friendship among the senior clergy. Those personal connections are hugely important – we have a basis of mutual understanding.”

“A lot of the questions the younger generation asks are not the questions the older generation asks. A lot of young Christians have grown up with Muslims, with atheist friends. They have grown up with this. They are naturally more open to inter-religious friendship, because that is what they have grown up with.”

Shared goals among partners

Some respondents noted that shared goals among partners contributed to the success of many inter-religious efforts, with some respondents mentioning specific catalysts that brought partners together, such as 9/11, as well as racial violence and other hate crimes.

“Folks were going in the same direction, the same self-interests were at work, and leaders emerged to make it happen.”

“Before 9/11, there wasn’t a need to do events. But after 9/11, there was a lot of incorrect portrayal of what Islam was, and we thought we should build trust with other faith communities, and provide opportunities for educating people about the beliefs of Islam.”

“With the growth of the Muslim population in the Twin Cities, the effect of 9/11 made it clear that we had to seek mutual understanding.”

Motivations to begin doing inter-religious work

Meeting the needs of their community

Many respondents mentioned reacting to the community needs and to social change in their community as a reason that their organization started doing inter-religious work, with some noting a specific need their organization sought to address in their community and others noting changing demographics in their community (i.e., new religious or spiritual groups) as a reason for beginning to do inter-religious work.

“We came together and developed a community needs list. We got some help to do that, to identify those needs. We quickly realized we were not just talking about Christians here, but about the whole community. ... We are doing that again now, because the community has changed.”

“For example the Jewish community, they’ve gone through what the Muslim community is currently going through – hate speech, civil rights violations. We can learn how they as a community dealt with it.”

“The main thing was the population changed, the landscape of faith groups changing. We were doing something with Christians, but there was growing interest from the Jewish community, and a growing Muslim community. It is primarily the growth of other faith groups in the community.”

Theology-based motives

Some respondents noted theology-based reasons when asked why their organization began doing inter-religious work.

“We have an obligation as a religious institution to understand each other religiously. It is about creating a civil society.”

“It is in the teaching of Islam that we are not living in a vacuum but are part of the fabric of the community and should contribute as much as we can to the well-being of the community. You are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Eliminating that ignorance about you as a religious group, educating the community about who you are and what you are doing [contributes to the community].”

Opportunities for growth or expansion of inter-religious work

More work with a greater variety of people

The large majority of respondents noted increasing involvement with specific groups of people (usually another specific religious group) as a way for their organization’s inter-religious work to grow or expand. Specifically, respondents mentioned working more with the following groups: youth, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Jewish.

Predisposition to expanding current programming and activities

Many respondents indicated a desire to expand their organization's current programming and activities, which suggests an opportunity for growth or expansion among the Twin Cities inter-religious community.

Relationship-building and deepening existing relationships

More than half of respondents mentioned increased relationship-building efforts as a growth opportunity for their organization's inter-religious work, with some suggesting opportunities to deepen existing relationships among laypeople and eight percent mentioning opportunities to deepen relationships among religious leaders.

"An opportunity for growth would be in relationships that are more developed. Our congregants meet each other but there isn't a sustained relationship beyond a quick meeting. If only we could figure out how to do relationships in a sustained way."

"Continuing to work with clergy, to help them communicate more effectively to their people that [inter-religious work] is good for our community and our world, and that our children will not be hurt."

Changing the institutional landscape

A few respondents also mentioned ways that the overall inter-religious landscape in the Twin Cities might grow or change on an institutional level. Two respondents mentioned creating more religion-specific organizations, such as the Muslim equivalent of Jewish Community Action. In addition, two respondents also mentioned increasing the diversity of those involved in inter-religious work in the Twin Cities.

"A counterpart to JCA to represent the Muslim community. It's good that there are distinct organizations doing this in these communities, they create spaces for clergy leaders to relate to each other outside of a certain campaign."

"Work hard to get racial diversity and income diversity [among those doing inter-religious work in the Twin Cities]."

Wilder Research's observations

Characteristics of the landscape

The survey results clearly indicate some distinct aspects of the inter-religious landscape in the Twin Cities region:

- **The Twin Cities region has a long history of inter-religious work, and has seen a growth in inter-religious work in recent years.** While half of surveyed organizations started doing inter-religious work in the past 15 years, the first organization to start doing inter-religious work did so in 1920. This finding indicates a long history of inter-religious work in the Twin Cities, as well as a rapid growth of such work in more recent past. This rapid growth may be due in part to recent demographic changes in the Twin Cities region as well as national tragedies such as 9/11 (both of which were mentioned by respondents as reasons for beginning inter-religious work). No comparative database exists to document the extent of inter-religious activity in urban regions of the United States.
- **Organizations frequently work in partnership, and do similar types of work that address similar issues.** Almost all organizations were in an on-going partnership when they completed the survey. In addition, findings indicate that many organizations were involved in numerous types of inter-religious work – with many organizations indicating that they do similar types of work focusing on the similar issues. This finding may indicate an opportunity for larger scale coordination of inter-religious work among many organizations.
- **Organizations want to expand their inter-religious efforts, but they feel they do not have sufficient funding or staffing to accomplish all of their inter-religious goals.** Despite a long history and recent boom in inter-religious activity, organizations in the Twin Cities feel they do not possess sufficient funding or staffing to accomplish all of their inter-religious goals. More than one-third of organizations had no full-time staff members, and more than one-fifth of organizations reported an annual operating budget of less than \$5,000 devoted to inter-religious work. One respondent noted that funders often value the social outcome associated with their work, but not the inter-religious aspects. Despite funding and staffing difficulties, findings clearly indicate that representatives desire to do more inter-religious work – specifically expanding their current programming and working with more diverse groups of people.

Implications based on survey results

If an appetite exists to promote inter-religious work in this region, the results of this study suggest some steps which could support such effort.

- **Increasing relationship-building opportunities.** Survey results clearly indicate that representative of organizations doing inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region value and engage often in relationship-building. However, lack of understanding between faith groups was the most commonly identified barrier to doing inter-religious work. Increasing the amount of relationship-building among those doing inter-religious work (and those not currently involved in inter-religious work) may serve to address this barrier.
- **Investing in inter-religious and inter-cultural training for staff.** In addition to not having enough staff to accomplish all their inter-religious goals, respondents also noted that inter-religious work requires a specific set of skills – particularly, the ability to navigate dense inter-cultural interactions as well as practical knowledge regarding many religions and belief systems. Investment in adequate inter-religious and inter-cultural training for staff may increase the effectiveness of staff members, however limited in numbers.
- **Proactively engaging laypeople in inter-religious work.** Respondents pointed to reluctance among laypeople to become involved in inter-religious work, noting a variety of reasons for this disinclination. Proactive outreach strategies geared for layperson engagement might serve as a catalyst for inter-religious involvement, in contrast to reactive engagement (i.e., because of events like 9/11 or other negative events that highlight religious or belief differences).
- **Developing measures to assess the outcomes of inter-religious efforts and the volume of inter-religious work occurring, as well as tools to promote and support inter-religious connections and activities.** While this survey provides one form of baseline data regarding the inter-religious landscape in the Twin Cities, further study could provide a more comprehensive depiction of inter-religious capacities, barriers, successes, connectedness, and levels of inter-religiosity among organizations doing this work in the Twin Cities region. Measures of activities and outcomes of inter-religious events and efforts, as well as tools to help support inter-religious work, such as tools that focus on inter-religious facilitation or other skills necessary for inter-religious work, could support strategic planning for individual organizations and/or for the Twin Cities inter-religious network as a whole.

Methods

From October 2013 through April 2014, Wilder Research conducted 56 telephone surveys with representatives from organizations that perform inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region. The survey utilized referral sampling, asking for up to three potential respondents upon survey completion. This resulted in an overall sample size of 71 cases, and a sample rate of 80 percent. Wilder Research attempted to contact all referrals.

Two survey instrument forms were used: a long form and a short form. The instrument forms collected the same quantitative data; the long form collected more in-depth qualitative data. In total, 39 respondents completed the long form survey and 17 completed the short form survey. In three instances, Wilder Research interviewed two representatives from the same organization. For quantitative analysis, Wilder Research excluded the three duplicate cases. This resulted in a sample size of 53 for quantitative analysis, and a sample size of 39 for qualitative analysis.

Figure 11 shows Wilder Research’s classification of survey organizations’ religious affiliation. Wilder Research classified an organization’s religious affiliation through contextual means, such as scanning an organization’s website. This informal classification was used only during our data collection phase to track the number of interviews completed with organizations of various religious affiliations. For organizations’ self-identified religious affiliations, please see Figure 4 on page 11.

11. Wilder Research’s classification of surveyed organizations’ religious affiliation

<i>Religious affiliation</i>	Long form (n=39)		Short form (n=17)		Total (N=56)	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Christian	13	33%	5	29%	18	32%
Jewish	4	10%	3	18%	7	12%
Muslim	9	23%	2	12%	11	19%
Inter-religious	9	23%	6	35%	15	26%
Secular/non-religious	3	1%	--	--	3	5%
Native American spirituality	1	<1%	--	--	1	<1%
Unitarian Universalist	--	--	1	1%	1	<1%

Notes: These percentages are different than those reported in Figure 4 on page 11 due to duplicate interviews with multiple representatives from the same organization. This table depicts all interviews conducted, including duplicate interviews; Figure 4 depicts findings with duplicate interviews removed. Additionally, this figure represents Wilder Research’s classification of surveyed organizations’ religious affiliations; it does not match Figure 4, which depicts organizations’ self-identified religious affiliations.

Limitations

Limitations for this study relate primarily to its exploratory nature. Wilder Research used referral sampling to obtain contacts for interviews, and as such advises caution when interpreting some results of this survey – the sample may not be completely representative of all organizations performing inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region. As noted previously, however, Wilder Research is confident, due to conversations with the advisory board, that the survey captures fairly accurately the organizations doing inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region. Additionally, towards the end of the data collection period, Wilder Research received many duplicate referrals to already-interviewed organizations. Wilder Research is confident that the study included the major and dedicated players of the Twin Cities inter-religious landscape, as of the time of the research.

The study focused on a broad sketch of the landscape, not on in-depth documentation of the volume and types of inter-religious activities in the Twin Cities. Due to the study's exploratory nature, Wilder Research collected a little bit of data relating to each of many topic areas, rather than in-depth data relating to one or a few topic areas. The survey results offer an overview of the Twin Cities inter-religious landscape, but more in-depth study will be useful if more detailed information is desired regarding any of the focus areas (organization history, organization capacity, type of work performed and issues addressed, level of inter-religiosity, and perceptions regarding inter-religious work in the Twin Cities, for example).

This study focused on *organizations* that do inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region. Inter-religious work performed by individuals not affiliated with an organization or institution does not appear in this research; discovering that work would require a separate study.

Lastly, Wilder Research initially designed the survey instruments with the intent of learning about inter-religious efforts among Abrahamic religious traditions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism). After completing an analysis of the initial 11 exploratory interviews and after conversations with the advisory board, however, it became clear that inter-religious work in the Twin Cities region includes non-Abrahamic religious and spiritual belief systems (such as Native American spirituality, Buddhism, Hinduism, and others). Wilder Research adjusted the survey somewhat to accommodate, but the survey may have been more suited to a broader population if the research had begun with the intention to include them.