

Contents

Project background	1
About the evaluation	1
Description of the funded projects	3
Summary of key findings	7
Definitions of social connectedness	7
Project reach	7
Project outcomes	9
Common challenges	11
Lessons learned	13
Recommendations	17
Appendix	19
Goal Summary: Increasing bridging social capital among residents	20
Goal Summary: Increasing linking social capital between residents and service providers, key decision-makers	21
Goal Summary: Increase neighborhood involvement	22
Goal Summary: Improve understanding across cultures	23
Other outcomes	24

Figures

1. Location and target populations of the 2012-13 Connect for Health grant recipients	4
2. Brief project descriptions of the 2012-13 Connect for Health grant recipients	5
3. Level of involvement among community residents	8
4. Level of success using specific convening strategies	9
5. Summary of project goals and key outcomes	10

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Project background

In 2012, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation (the Foundation) launched Connect for Health, a grantmaking initiative focused on increasing social connectedness in low-income communities. The Connect for Health initiative is one of multiple strategies used by the Foundation to address the social determinants that influence health outcomes and to help all residents achieve their optimal health.

Social connectedness can influence health outcomes in a number of ways. At an individual level, close friends and family influence values and health behavior, and knowledge about health topics and health care services are shared when residents connect. Having a strong social network can reduce stress and its associated negative health outcomes. In addition, there are health benefits associated with living in areas with high levels of neighborhood cohesion - safe areas where neighbors trust one another and can access needed services and supports. Although there is a growing body of literature available that describes the associations between social connectedness and health, there are fewer resources clearly describing the strategies that communities can use to increase social connectedness among residents, particularly in lower-income communities.

In 2012, the Foundation provided funding to support the work of 22 organizations across Minnesota to build social connectedness between residents of low-income neighborhoods. Although this report will not dive deeply into the grantmaking process, it is worth noting that the Connect for Health challenge used a nontraditional approach. A panel of community members reviewed applications and recommended the organizations that they felt should receive one-year grants. Three applicants were identified as finalists for the larger 2-year grant and the winner was the organization who received the most paper, online, and text message votes from community residents.

About the evaluation

The evaluation for the Connect for Health Challenge was designed to describe the scope of work completed by the grantees and its impact, to consider common implementation challenges and strategies to overcome these barriers, to identify promising implementation models, and to highlight key lessons learned. As the evaluator for the initiative, Wilder Research staff provided consultation and support to the grantees, by helping them refine their evaluation goals, identify appropriate evaluation measures, and establish reporting templates to help them share their lessons learned.

A mixed-method approach, using the following data collection strategies, was used to gather evaluation information:

- **Grantee report form.** Wilder Research worked with each funded organization to develop a project-specific reporting form that described the organization’s target population, key project activities, anticipated reach, and expected outcomes. Near the end of the funding period, the grantees updated the information in the form and used it to report their project-specific outputs and outcome data.
- **Photography activity.** All grantees were asked to take photographs and submit narratives in response to three key questions: 1) Through your work, what have you learned about what works to establish relationships and strengthen connections among community residents?; 2) What changes have occurred as a result of your project’s activities?; and 3) In what ways did your project’s activities help community residents develop new relationships that cross boundaries? Results from the narratives were used to help identify key lessons learned and promising practices used by some initiatives.
- **Key informant interviews.** In later summer 2013, Wilder Research conducted key informant phone interviews with all grantees. The interviews focused on identifying the impact of grantees’ work, implementation challenges, lessons learned, and plans for sustainability.

This report summarizes the results from the evaluations of the one-year grant-funded programs in building social connectedness in lower-income communities.

Description of the funded projects

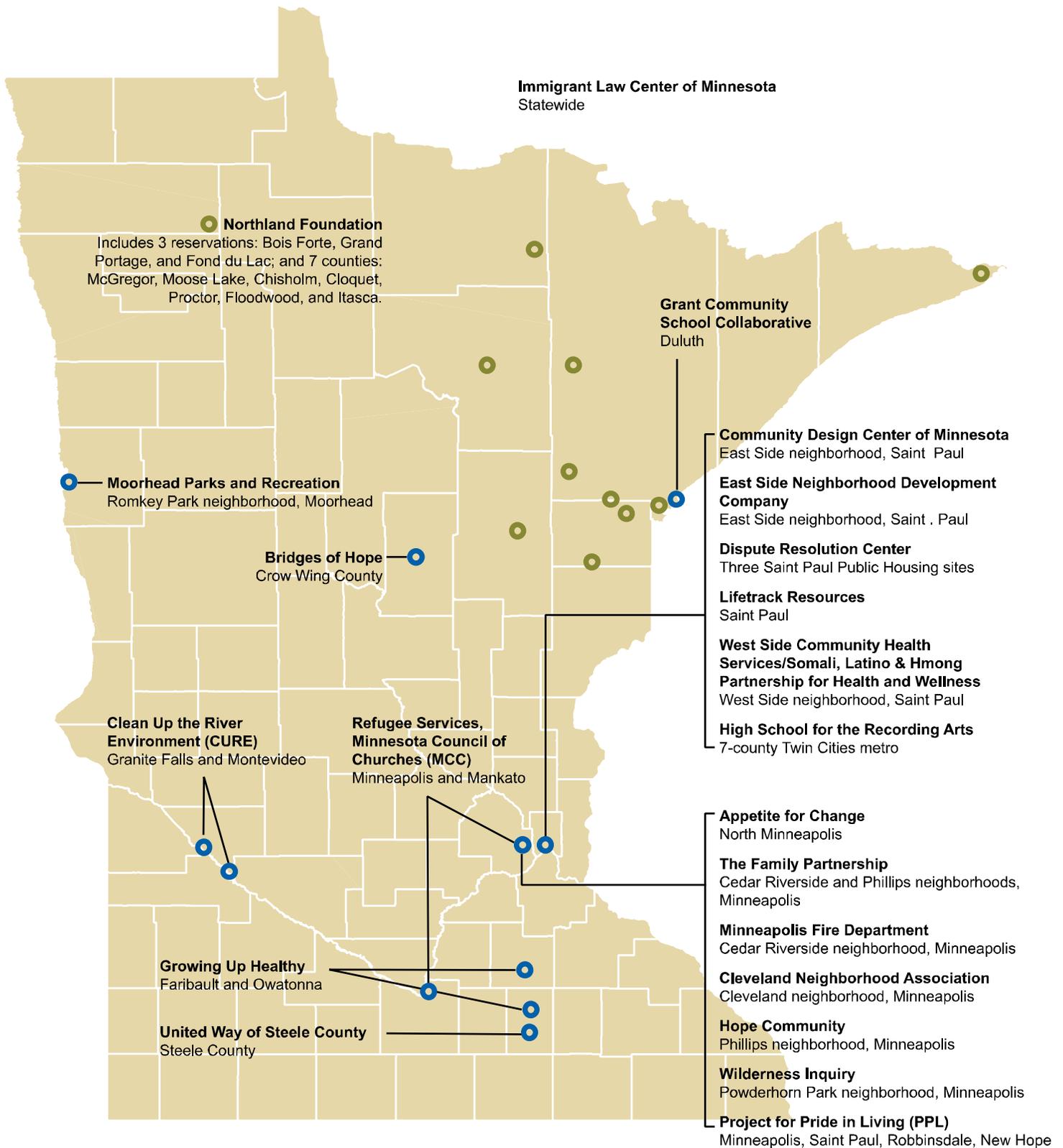
The 22 organizations that received funding through the Connect for Health Challenge all focused their work on increasing social connectedness among low-income residents and/or among residents of color. Some organizations hoped to reach specific populations through their work, including immigrants/refugees (n=9), youth (n=7), and aging residents (n=2).

The funded organizations approached their work in very different ways. Many of the organizations implemented programs or projects intended to increase “bridging social capital” among community residents of different backgrounds. Other organizations attempted to help residents form “linking” relationships with community decision-makers and service providers. Nine organizations focused less on the number of individual relationships established, and more on collective efforts to increase resident involvement in community activities and improve neighborhood cohesion.

The size of the geographic area targeted by the funded organizations also varied widely. Although grants were awarded to organizations throughout the state, most (68%) were awarded to organizations focused on residents living in the Twin Cities metro region (Figure 1). Two projects targeted residents living within multi-unit housing units; others worked to build connections between residents who lived in the same neighborhood, city, county, or multi-county region. One project aimed to reach residents who lived across the state.

Together, the Connect for Health grant recipients implemented a wide variety of program models intended to improve relationships between residents, ensure residents have greater influence in local decision-making efforts, and increase resident involvement in neighborhood activities. The projects that received Connect for Health funding in 2012 are briefly described in Figure 2.

1. Location and target populations of the 2012-13 Connect for Health grant recipients



2. Brief project descriptions of the 2012-13 Connect for Health grant recipients

Organization	Project description
Appetite For Change	Community Cooks focused on increasing social connectedness by bringing low-income families and community residents together through small groups and to help them develop the skills to cook healthy meals at home.
Bridges of Hope	Side by Side paired low-income woman with peer mentors to cultivate relationships and provide social and emotional support through weekly check-ins and monthly activities and programs.
Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)	Upstream Downstream concentrated on building social connections between residents of Montevideo and Granite Falls through riverside recreation, exercise, and educational events.
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	Neighborhood Adventure League engaged culturally and economically diverse residents in a series of interactive activities to build social connections.
Dispute Resolution Center	We Can Talk About It focused on building the social connections and conflict resolution skills of diverse, low-income residents of St. Paul public housing through block club socials and community events.
Eastside Neighborhood Development Company	East Side Community of Choice Initiative hosted community events and provided opportunities for residents to have a role in planning and implementing local development activities.
Grant Community School Collaborative	From the Ground Up involved individuals and community organizations in experiential learning activities that supported the development of local, low-income youth's academic, socio-emotional, creative, and life skills.
Growing Up Healthy Rice County	Growing Up Healthy created opportunities for low-income, immigrant residents to build connections with one another, and for neighborhood groups to discuss concerns and identify solutions in partnership with community agencies.
High School for Recording Arts	Check Yo' Self Health and Wellness Center program worked with low-income, African-American students to expand the reach of the Center's mission of developing and delivering peer education materials about HIV/AIDS/STDs and teen pregnancy prevention and awareness.
Hope Community	Intersections engaged people from different cultures in creative practices such as art, music, and storytelling to address what connects people and what keeps them apart.
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	Citizenship Day of Welcome hosted a community gathering that included a swearing-in ceremony and multi-cultural celebration for sworn-in citizens.
Lifetrack Resources	Early Childhood and Family Enrichment activities offered events to culturally diverse, low-income families enrolled in Lifetrack Resources' home visiting program to strengthen their community connections, build their local networks, and share resources.
Minneapolis Fire Department	The Community Firefighter Academy brought together firefighters and high school students from the Cedar-River side neighborhood to develop relationships and expand students' skills in CPR, first aid, and firefighting techniques.
Moorhead Parks and Recreation (Youthworks)	The youth program provided a safe place for youth to access structured activities to interact with other youth of different cultures and to build healthy relationships with adults in the community.

2. Brief project descriptions of the 2012-13 Connect for Health grant recipients (continued)

Northland Foundation	AGE to age invited members of different generations to build relationships, promote community engagement, foster social connections, and improve health and well-being through healthy activities.
Project for Pride in Living, Inc. (PPL)	Creating Social Connections and Community concentrated on developing the leadership, conflict resolution, and social connections of a group of low-income, diverse, affordable housing residents.
Refugee Services, Minnesota Council of Churches	The Craft Collaborative brought refugee and non-refugee women together weekly to practice their crafts, build trusting relationships, and connect refugee women with formal and informal mental health healing resources.
United Way of Steele County	Building Bridges to a Healthy Community engaged low-income community members with local leaders to identify barriers to a healthy community and develop a collaborative approach to reduce disparities through a series of dialogues.
Urban Roots	Growing Healthy Youth and Communities provided elementary school students, youth interns, and adults with opportunities to gain knowledge and social connections through gardening, cooking, and healthy eating activities.
West Side Community Health Services: Somali, Latino, and Hmong Partnership for Health and Wellness Program (SoLaHmo)	This project organized community events that featured traditional arts related to physical activity, healthy diet, and wellness for Latino, Hmong, and Somali families with young children.
Wilderness Inquiry	Outdoor Adventures, Arts, and Community Connections built social connections among low-income youth and families through outdoor recreation and interactive activities in Powderhorn Park and the surrounding area.
The Family Partnership	The Native American Somali Friendship Project worked to increase cultural understanding and trust between Native American and Somali residents living in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis. This project was the recipient of the only 2-year Connect for Health grant.

Summary of key findings

This section of the report summarizes the reach of the 21 organizations that received 1-year Connect for Health Challenge grants, the impact of their work, and challenges the funded organizations faced when implementing their projects. Because of the many differences in the scope of work conducted by each funded organization, common evaluation tools could not be used by all organizations to measure the same outputs and outcomes. Instead, each funded organization identified its own recruitment, implementation, and outcome goals that reflected their project's target population and planned scope of work. As a result, this aggregate report focuses on describing the degree to which the organizations met their respective recruitment targets and project goals, common challenges that they encountered in their work, and the strategies they found to be effective in responding to these challenges and implementing their project.

Definitions of social connectedness

“Social connectedness is when people...have new and different opportunities to interact. It can encompass not only interactions [between residents], but also leads to a sense of place.”

Social connectedness is having feelings of safety, peace, and inclusion in a neighborhood or community. It is the ability to interact with people who you would not commonly interact with; it is a pride that you share with your community.

Near the end of their funding period, the Connect for Health grantees were asked how they now describe social connectedness. Many underlined the importance of building trust among residents and breaking down barriers that keep people from getting to know one another. Many grantees felt that social connectedness gave residents a “sense of place” and pride in their community. The word cloud on the cover of this report depicts the key words and phrases the grantees used in their definitions of social connectedness.

Although grantees didn't feel that their definition of social connectedness had changed over the course of their project, many noted that they had initially underestimated the time and staff resources needed to conduct outreach and build relationships with community residents.

Project reach

Combined, the 21 funded organizations reached over 8,000 community residents through their work. All of the organizations focused their work in low-income

neighborhoods and intended to reach a culturally-diverse group of residents that reflected the neighborhood demographics.

All of the organizations felt they successfully engaged their intended target population in their work and most met their recruitment goals. All of the organizations estimated the number of residents they hoped to reach through their work. Most of the organizations reached (24%) or exceeded¹ (52%) their goals. Four organizations fell short of reaching the anticipated number of residents, often due to difficulty recruiting residents to participate in ongoing classes or to serve in leadership roles.

Many of the participants were reached through one-time events or separate activities. As described in the project descriptions, the types of social connectedness activities used by the funded organizations varied considerably. Some organizations used structured groups where the same group of residents was asked to participate in a series of classes or other structured activities. It was more common for the organizations to host multiple events that were open to all residents, but that did not require ongoing participation. Over 7,500 residents were reached through these discrete one-time events (Figure 3). A smaller number of residents (n=221) were involved in planning activities or other leadership roles.

3. Level of involvement among community residents

Level of involvement	Number of residents
Participated in one-time events, separate activities	7,557 (93%)
Participated in ongoing activities (e.g., classes, groups)	278 (3%)
Participated in planning activities or other leadership role	221 (3%)
Level of involvement unspecified	105 (1%)

Note: Although most organizations could gather counts of the number of residents who participated in various events, it was difficult for some organizations to track how often each resident participated in a series of stand-alone events. Therefore, we cannot determine how many of the 7,557 residents who attended at least one event had regularly participated in multiple activities or events offered by the organization.

A number of organizations had difficulty creating and maintaining new committees or groups. All organizations also set goals specifying the number and types of events that they planned to hold. A majority of the organizations met or exceeded their goals in the number of small group (79%) and community-level (77%) events that they held (Figure 4). When organizations fell short of meeting their goals, it was often because they had a change in their scope of work, they did not have the staff time available to

¹ The following goal ratings were used: “Exceeded” = the total number of residents reached exceeded their estimate by more than 10%; “Fell short” = the organization reached fewer than 90% of the total number of residents anticipated

effectively recruit participants, or they encountered weather and other logistical challenges. Fewer organizations (56%) successfully established new groups or committees through their work. Organizations that fell short of their goal of establishing new groups or committees often had challenges finding residents who were interested in participating regularly.

4. Level of success using specific convening strategies

	Number or organizations that used the strategy	Percentage of organizations that:		
		Exceeded their goal	Met their goal	Fell short of meeting their goal
Hosted small group events ^a	14	43%	36%	21%
Hosted community-level events ^a	16	44%	38%	19%
Established new groups/committees ^b	16	31%	25%	44%

^a The goal focused on the number of events held

^b The goal focused on the number of new groups/committees formed

Project outcomes

All organizations also identified project-specific key goals or outcomes that they hoped to achieve through their work. The organizations were encouraged to identify goals that were achievable within the one-year funding period, but some also identified long-term goals in their individual evaluation plans. The funded organizations used project-specific participant surveys, information gathered through the photography activity, and/or staff observations to report their key outcomes.

Each organization established their own project-specific goals that were then categorized by Wilder Research staff. Over half of the funded organizations had goals that focused on increasing bridging social capital and improving resident health outcomes. A number of organizations also identified goals in the areas of increasing neighborhood cohesion; increasing cross-cultural knowledge; building linking relationships between residents and service providers/decision makers; developing community leaders; and improving neighborhood safety.

In Figure 5, a brief description of data reported by the grantees and/or challenges in gathering and reporting data are listed. The appendix includes a more detailed summary of individual project goals and the related evaluation data submitted by each funded organization.

5. Summary of project goals and key outcomes

Type of goal	Description
Increase bridging social capital	<p>15 organizations aimed to help residents build relationships with others who are different in age, cultural background, or socioeconomic standing.</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> Overall, the projects reported success in bringing groups of residents together. Some promising evidence of increased connections was demonstrated through participant surveys and staff observation, but in most cases, it is not known whether the project activities led to the formation of long-term relationships between residents.</p>
Improve health outcomes	<p>14 organizations had program goals focused on increasing knowledge around health, improving health behaviors, and/or improving resident quality of life</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> Promising changes were reported by nine organizations that used participant surveys to measure changes in individual health and well-being. Other organizations collected anecdotal information suggesting some evidence of change. The funding period was too short to consider which program model may be most effective at increasing social connectedness and improving health outcomes.</p>
Increase neighborhood/ social cohesion	<p>9 organizations had goals focused on increasing resident involvement in community activities , increasing trust among neighbors, and/or creating a greater sense of community</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> Some organizations demonstrated a growing number of residents participating in neighborhood events and activities. Long-term changes in trust or collective sense of community among community residents were not measured during the funding period.</p>
Increase cross-cultural knowledge/ understanding	<p>8 organizations focused directly on increasing knowledge and understanding across cultures.</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> These organizations noted promising changes through increased participation in cultural events, observed interactions between residents, and results from participant surveys.</p>
Increase linking social capital	<p>4 organizations worked to help residents develop relationships with service providers or decision makers</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> The projects were successful in creating opportunities for residents and service providers/decision-makers to interact. There was some evidence of these relationships leading to changes in local policies.</p>

5. Summary of project goals and key outcomes (continued)

Type of goal	Description
Develop community leaders	<p>4 organizations had explicit goals focused on helping residents take on new leadership roles; others created opportunities for leadership development in their project activities but did not identify this as a goal area</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> Organizations implemented promising strategies to provide training and support to community leaders; turnover among resident leaders was a challenge for multiple programs.</p>
Increase neighborhood safety	<p>4 organizations hoped to increase neighborhood safety and reduce neighborhood crime through their work</p> <p><u>Key findings:</u> Two organizations reported anecdotal evidence of reduced neighborhood crime; long-term changes in crime rates must be considered in the context of other community safety interventions or changes in policing efforts</p>

Note: A number of organizations identified other project goals that did not fall into one of the goal categories. These goals included: reducing isolation among residents, increasing resident skills in specific topics, and working toward long-term individual and social change (i.e., increasing housing stability).

Common challenges

The grantees reported a number of common challenges that impacted the implementation of their projects and their overall success in helping residents increase social connectedness. Poor weather and unexpected staff turnover did impact the implementation timeline and overall success of a few projects. In addition, the project coordinators identified a number of additional challenges they faced in their work:

- **Some organizations needed more staff hours and/or a longer timeline to achieve their goals.** Some grantees noted that their activities only offered participants an initial opportunity to meet others; additional time and/or staff support was needed to more fully engage residents and support long-term changes in social connectedness.
- **Multiple environmental and individual barriers make it difficult for some lower-income residents to participate in planning and implementation events.** A number of grantees observed that lower-income residents face barriers that make it difficult for them to participate in ongoing activities. For example, some residents worked multiple jobs and did not have the flexibility in their schedules to attend events; others faced issues around housing or lacked a reliable transportation option.
- **Time and staff resources were needed to establish organizational partnerships.** Some grantees developed strategic partnerships with other organizations to help them

conduct outreach activities and engage residents in their planned activities. While these partnerships were beneficial, some grantees noted challenges in establishing and defining these organizational relationships. Examples of these challenges included: defining the roles of each organization, determining how to distribute funds, and reaching consensus on program goals and expectations.

- **There were challenges getting feedback from participants to assess changes in social connectedness.** Many grantees found it relatively easy to track and measure their programmatic outputs, such as the number of participants at social events, or short-term outcomes, like the knowledge gained after taking part in a community gardening class. However, it was more difficult to determine whether their work had a long-lasting impact on social connectedness. Although some grantees asked their participants whether they had met new people as a result of their involvement in the program, long-term change could not be assessed during the funding period.

Lessons learned

The following set of key lessons learned was developed using information from the interviews conducted with the grantees and a review of the submitted photographs and narratives. Project-specific examples follow many of the lessons learned to further illustrate a noted challenge or to describe a promising strategy to increase social connectedness.

Overall, most organizations were successful in reaching their target population and implementing their proposed activities. However, not all models used by the funded organizations provided residents with the same opportunities to build relationships with others and become engaged in their community. Some of the programs that reported promising evidence of improved social connectedness between residents or higher levels of involvement in neighborhood activities included models that: 1) used “mentor-mentee” cohorts, 2) engaged residents in a series of resident meetings or regularly meeting workgroups, 3) developed community leaders who acted as “liaisons” to community residents and planned activities; and/or 4) created resident advisory committees that were empowered to discuss issues and recommend actions. Models that were less successful in building social connectedness among residents were one-time or periodic events that were unsupported by other activities.

Organizations with a strong infrastructure and existing relationships with community residents were more successful in building social connectedness. Grantees that were more successful at building relationships had an established program or project with a well-defined theory of change. These grantees also had connections to the participants they engaged and resources to support their work. In contrast, grantees with new programs and activities, coupled with limited resources and organizational capacity experienced more challenges.

- Prior to receiving the Connect for Health grant, the Northland Foundation’s AGE to age program was already operating in 10 communities. The project coordinator commented that the existing infrastructure allowed communities to move quickly into planning and implementing events that attracted participants familiar with the program’s work, increasing the success of their efforts.

One-time events were not a successful strategy for building social connectedness. To build and maintain lasting social connections, residents need repeated opportunities to become involved in their community and build trusting relationships with others. Grantees’ whose activities were made up of single events reported that they offered an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and begin to meet other people. However, the

projects that were more successful at cultivating stronger connections focused on repeatedly engaging participants over a series of related events.

- Bridges of Hope's Side by Side program focused on cultivating relationships between low-income women who were actively working to develop economic stability and peer mentors who provided social and emotional support. Mentors and participants connected weekly and attended monthly meetings that incorporated activities and programs focused on income management, stability, and education. Participants indicated that they forged long-term relationships with their mentors and had an overall improved quality of life in terms of increased happiness and economic stability.

By building the leadership capacity of community residents, grantees were able to engage more residents in their activities. A number of grantees felt it was important to foster leadership capacity in residents and community members to aid in the work of building and sustaining social connectedness. A few grantees offered specific leadership training to community residents so that they could more effectively implement activities and engage additional residents in their work. Other grantees provided informal support to help community residents have meaningful roles in planning conversations and other work. Growing the leadership capacity of community participants helped establish a sense of ownership and buy-in that solidified the work of grantees and strengthened social connectedness.

- Project for Pride (PPL) in Living created a leadership training program for a group of low-income, diverse residents at PPL's affordable housing sites. Members of these resident councils organized programs for their housing site, which resulted in opportunities for residents to build new relationships with one another. At one housing site, linking connections were established when a council worked with the city of Minneapolis to post parking signs, making a nearby intersection safer for the community. In addition, the council secured a permanent seat for one member of its housing site on the board of the Southeast Como Improvement Association.
- The Growing up Healthy Coalition in Rice County organized community leadership teams composed of local residents that met with the coalition's advisory board, which includes representatives from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other local stakeholders. Several issues identified by the community leadership teams were addressed with the support of the advisory board, such as advocating for new driver's license legislation or connecting residents to ESL services. In addition, the advisory board sought residents' input regarding local public issues. Ultimately, the leadership teams facilitated linking relationships between local residents and community leaders. Residents also strengthened bridging relationships with one another while serving on the leadership teams.

- The East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC) hosted Community Leadership Circles (CLC) composed of local residents who attended a national conference to increase their capacity to lead and implement neighborhood improvement efforts. After receiving training, these neighborhood residents developed a plan to transform an abandoned lot into a small “pocket park” with a walking path and community garden. They encouraged other residents to be involved in the planning and development of the park and ultimately created a space that is now a safe and welcoming gathering place for residents.

Community residents acted as liaisons to community groups and increased the capacity of the organization. Some of the grantees with a limited number of staff enlisted the help of community members as volunteers; stipends were offered by some organizations. Often, the volunteers were liaisons to the community and not only helped plan activities, but also publicized the activities and invited residents to participate. Two grantees discovered that local youth were important volunteers, as they had connections to a group of residents that the organization had not reached before. There were also challenges in using volunteers to serve as liaisons to community residents. Some grantees shared that volunteers did not always have adequate time to devote to program planning or publicity. In addition, some organizations also experienced problems when the roles of volunteers were not well defined.

- Appetite for Change’s Community Cooks program paid stipends to local residents who acted as group mentors and did outreach to encourage community residents to participate in the program. Several group mentors were residents who participated in the first year of the program and were excited about what they learned and the relationships they formed. Program staff noted that it is important for group mentors to share the same culture and live in the same neighborhood as the residents who they are inviting to participate in Community Cooks. In the future, program staff would like to have a stronger infrastructure in place to support the work of the mentors.

By building relationships with other organizations, some grantees were able to better leverage existing resources and create opportunities to involve more residents in ongoing activities and events. Multiple grantees collaborated with other community-based organizations to share knowledge and co-create program activities. These collaborative efforts helped increase the organizations’ capacity to reach more people and offer a wider array of activities. In addition, each organization was able to reach out to invite the residents they serve to the events, ultimately increasing the diversity of residents who attended. The involvement of multiple organizations also allowed individuals to begin establishing new connections with community resources that they may not otherwise be aware of.

- Wilderness Inquiry collaborated with multiple community nonprofits to offer participants a variety of activities, increase the ability to promote the program, and introduce participants to various opportunities to engage with the community. The partner organizations found that collaborating increased their exposure to residents, while Wilderness Inquiry appreciated having the assistance of other nonprofits for planning and creating activities, bringing different perspective to the project, and helping to promote the activities through their individual networks.

Recommendations

Using information gathered through the first year of the Connect for Health Challenge grant evaluation, Wilder Research developed a set of recommendations that can be used by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation to enhance its future grantmaking efforts. Some of the recommendations have already been adopted by the Foundation, but are still noted to fully reflect the key findings that came out of the evaluation.

- **Refine the scope of future grantmaking and evaluation efforts.** In its first round of Connect for Health funding, the Foundation was very intentional in not excluding potential strategies for increasing social connectedness. However, the evaluation results show that while one-time events can increase awareness and interest among a broad group of residents and stakeholders, they alone do not provide enough opportunities for residents to build relationships with one another. In addition, the evaluation results demonstrate that the grantees defined social connectedness differently and were working to achieve different long-term goals. It will be helpful for the Foundation to clarify whether their work will focus exclusively on strategies to increase social connectedness among individuals or include efforts that aim to increase neighborhood cohesion. Refining the initiative goals will also allow the Foundation to narrow the focus of the evaluation and develop more consistent measures of implementation progress and overall project success.
- **Consider extending the length of the funding period.** Many grantees, particularly those working to establish new resident groups and those whose activities were seasonal and implemented in the summer months, felt that their work would have been more successful if they had more time to engage residents and implement their planned activities. In addition, this would also allow grantees to not only determine whether their work is engaging their target population and creating opportunities for new connections, but to also conduct follow-up evaluation activities to determine whether their work is resulting in long-term relationships.
- **Provide guidance to grantees on fostering the leadership capacity of their program participants.** The more successful grantees integrated elements of leadership development as part of their program activities to help strengthen social connections and establish a foundation to support and sustain the work of building social connectedness. Future grantees could benefit from technical assistance or training that helps them construct opportunities or activities for participants to cultivate and hone their leadership capacity. In addition, some organizations may

benefit from guidance on how to modify their organizational infrastructure to support volunteers and community leaders in their work.

- **Offer grantees opportunities to meet with one another.** During our interviews with representatives from each funded organization, many expressed interest in having more opportunities to meet with one another, share lessons learned, and problem-solve with the other funded organizations.

Appendix

The appendix offers a more detailed summary of the progress made by each grantee in achieving their project specific goals. An individualized goal-setting process was used for this evaluation. After reviewing each project's workplan, Wilder Research staff identified goal areas that were common across grantees and related to the broader goals for the Connect for Health initiative. These common goal areas included: 1) increasing bridging social capital; 2) improving health outcomes; 3) increasing neighborhood cohesion; 4) increasing cross-cultural understanding or knowledge; 5) increasing linking social capital; and 6) developing community leaders. Wilder Research then worked with each grantee to identify their unique project goals and consider their alignment with the common goals for the initiative. Although it was outside of the scope of this project to create project-specific evaluation tools for each grantee, Wilder Research staff provided limited technical assistance to grantees who requested support developing survey instruments, tracking program data, or discussing their data collection results. The projects were not required to collect quantitative data for each of their goals; some relied on staff observation to describe the impact of their work.

The following series of tables lists the specific goals that each grantee was working to achieve within each of the initiative's six common goal areas. A brief summary of the data they presented in their grantee report form as evidence of the progress they made toward achieving their identified goals is also included.

Summary of project-specific goals: Increasing bridging social capital

Project Name	Project goal
	<i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
Bridges of Hope	Establish relationships between residents that cross class lines <i>Participant survey results: 100% of participants reported they developed respectful mentor-mentee relationships; 86% of participants reported they developed positive long-term relationships with one another.</i>
Clean Up the River Environment	Increase interactions between Granite Falls and Montevideo residents <i>Staff observation: The "disc golf community" has come together; residents of the two communities played in the same tournament.</i>
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	Increase connections between residents of diverse backgrounds through neighborhood activities. <i>Participant survey results: 90% of the participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they made new connections with their neighbors.</i>
East Side Neighborhood Development Company	Residents, particularly residents from different cultural communities, will get to know one another <i>Community survey results not yet available.</i>
Grant Community School Collaborative	Participating youth will develop relationships with caring adults <i>Participant survey results: 93% of students reported meeting adults who cared about them through the program.</i>
Growing Up Healthy	Participants will develop new relationships with other residents <i>Staff observed anecdotal evidence of new relationships forming.</i>
High School for Recording Arts	Participants will build more connections with other residents <i>Staff shared observations of greater connections through their photography activity.</i>
Moorhead Parks and Recreation	Youth will be able to identify people they can turn to for help and neighbors they trust <i>Participant survey results suggest connections were formed through the program.</i>
Northland Foundation	Residents of different age and cultural groups will report improved understanding and greater interaction <i>Participant survey results: On average, both youth and older adults reported being more comfortable with residents of the other age group. All participants reported developing new friendships through the program.</i>
Refugee Services, Minneapolis Council of Churches	Collaboration between refugee and non-refugee women in the community will increase <i>Staff observed relationships forming between residents at the Mankato site; similar changes were not observed at the Minneapolis site.</i>
Urban Roots	New social connections are established among East Side neighborhood residents. <i>Staff observed new relationships forming; received positive feedback from residents.</i>

Summary of project-specific goals: Increasing bridging social capital (continued)

Project Name	Project goal
	<i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
West Side Community Health Services	Increased connectedness across cultural communities <i>Participant survey results: 40% of respondents reported that they made new connections with residents from different communities.</i>
Wilderness Inquiry	Positive interactions among neighborhood residents will increase <i>Participant survey results: 91% of event attendees said they met new people from the Powderhorn Park neighborhood.</i>

Summary of project-specific goals: Increasing linking social capital between residents and service providers, key decision-makers

Project Name	Project goal
	<i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
Growing Up Healthy	Conversations between Advisory Committee and residents will lead to changes in community <i>Staff have observed residents working with local government agencies and elected officials on multiple initiatives.</i>
Minneapolis Fire Department	Increase connections and trust among youth, community, and emergency response teams <i>Participant survey results: Youth participants expressed that they were more comfortable with firefighters at the end of the program.</i>
Steele County	Low-income participants will have connections to organizations and systems that help them gain resources, expand opportunities and bring about change <i>Too early to tell.</i>
Wilderness Inquiry	Increase residents' connection with neighborhood organizations <i>Participant survey results: 26% of respondents said this was the first event they attended at Powderhorn Park; 54% said they would like to learn more about the organizations participating in the events.</i>

Summary of project-specific goals: Increase neighborhood involvement

Project Name	Project goal <i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	Increase participation in block club, neighborhood activities <i>Program outputs: Over 80 residents became new members of the block club; increased participation in community events was noted by staff.</i>
East Side Neighborhood Development Company	Residents report increased communication and trust among neighbors <i>Too early to tell.</i>
Grant Community School Collaborative	Students feel more connected to the community <i>Participant survey results: 64% of students felt more connected to the community.</i>
Growing Up Healthy	Increase attendance at community gathering <i>Program tracking: Over 100 residents attended the community gathering.</i>
Moorhead Parks and Recreation	Increase youth participation in community events, including efforts to clean parks <i>Program tracking: Attendance was higher than anticipated for community events.</i>
Northland Foundation	Residents are more motivated to serve their communities <i>Participant survey results: 94% of the youth reported that participating in AGE to age has increased their motivation to serve their community.</i>
Refugee Services, Minneapolis Council of Churches (MCC)	Increase participation in the community through activities offered by the collective <i>Staff observation: In Mankato, participants have been engaged in additional social and community events and planning meetings. This did not occur in Minneapolis.</i>
Somali, Latino & Hmong Partnership for Health and Wellness (SoLaHmo)/West Side Community Health Services	Increase participation in community activities <i>Program tracking: The number of community members and organizations participating in planning increased for each event.</i>
Wilderness Inquiry	Increase resident involvement with community organizations, increase resident use of community organization services <i>Too early to tell.</i>

Summary of project-specific goals: Improve understanding across cultures

Project Name	Project goal
	<i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	<p>Promote a better cultural understanding between residents of diverse backgrounds through community events</p> <p><i>Participant survey: 90% of participants agreed they have a better understanding of neighbors' diverse ethnic backgrounds.</i></p>
Dispute Resolution Center	<p>Increase cross-cultural participation at events and meetings</p> <p><i>Project tracking: Each block club included community residents of at least three, and up to seven, different cultural communities.</i></p>
Grant Community School Collaborative	<p>Participating youth will increase cross-cultural knowledge in neighborhood and community</p> <p><i>Participant survey results: Participating youth reported learning more about the people and places in Duluth and making friends outside of their immediate friend circle</i></p>
HOPE Community	<p>People will increase cross cultural knowledge in neighborhood/community.</p> <p><i>The project's photography activity narrative described positive changes and new cross-cultural connections among residents.</i></p>
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	<p>Promote a better cultural understanding between residents of diverse backgrounds and among professionals working with immigrants</p> <p><i>Program tracking: 50 people that originated from 30 different countries became citizens at the Citizenship Day of Welcome event; 73 professionals were reached through citizen outreach, 276 citizens were reached through other educational sessions.</i></p>
Moorhead Parks and Recreation	<p>Youth will increase familiarity with cultures in their neighborhood.</p> <p><i>Participant surveys: Cross-cultural knowledge increased after participation in the program.</i></p>
Refugee Services, Minneapolis Council of Churches	<p>Increased cross-cultural knowledge between refugee and non-refugee women in the community</p> <p><i>Staff observation: Participants, both refugee and non-refugee consistently reported increased cross cultural knowledge as a result of increased interaction with other groups through participation in the group.</i></p>
Somali, Latino & Hmong Partnership for Health and Wellness (SoLaHmo)/West Side Community Health Services	<p>Somali, Latino, and Hmong families will have the opportunity to prepare and taste healthy traditional foods and engage in physical activity from each other's traditions</p> <p><i>Program tracking: Families of all communities participated in events featuring traditional physical activities, foods, and arts from multiple cultures.</i></p>

Summary of project-specific goals: Other outcomes

Project Name	Project goal
	<i>Project's self-reported outcomes/progress made toward goal</i>
Dispute Resolution Center	Residents report reduced isolation; greater connections and respect for other residents <i>Residents surveys: Positive changes reported.</i>
East Side Neighborhood Development Company	Increase housing stability, improve school performance, and reduce school mobility for residents living in the East Side neighborhood <i>Too early to tell.</i>
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	Residents learn about the importance of citizenship, civic engagement <i>Program tracking: Close to 3,500 residents received information about the Citizenship Day event.</i>
LifeTrack Resources	Staff will report a higher level of family engagement <i>Staff observation: Positive changes were reported by staff.</i>
Project for Pride in Living	Increase resident ability to resolve neighbor disputes and misunderstandings <i>Staff observations: Staff report that residents found the training to be useful and appreciated getting tips on how to handle neighbor conflict.</i>
Refugee Services, Minneapolis Council of Churches	Increase connections for women in the community, thus leading to decreased isolation <i>Staff observations: In Mankato, participants have been engaged in additional social and community events together through the relationships they have built in the collective. In Mankato participants have also increased participation in community planning meetings around other issues impacting refugees. This has not been the case in Minneapolis.</i>
United Way of Steele County	Increased self-efficacy among participants <i>Participant survey: 65% participants responded they strongly agreed with the statement, "I was able to talk about the problems and issues my family and I have to deal with."</i>