

Foundations that fund Regional Government Groups

Workforce and Welcoming Communities: The RDCs and the Initiative Foundations have been strengthening the capacities of rural communities **to address local resistance to changing race, ethnicity, and culture**. This work is **often conducted under the rubric of “Welcoming Communities”** – events, programs, and outreach to help communities understand and accept these new residents. Workforce shortages have often led the business community to participate in the broader Welcoming Community efforts. (MN Equity Plan, p. 5)

McKnight Foundation: [Launched the Initiative Foundations](#) (1986)

- [Using the state’s Regional Development Commission regions as a road map](#)
- Referred to collectively as the “MIFs,” the Initiative Foundation, serving Central Minnesota, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, West Central Initiative, the Northland Foundation, Southwest Initiative Foundation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation together have awarded nearly 32,000 grants in Greater Minnesota, leveraging nearly \$190 million for everything from innovations in early childhood education, to building the capacity of regional nonprofits, to coordinating disaster relief for small towns devastated by tornados and floods.

Blandin Foundation

- Our sense is that the more progressive foundations have been influential in moving regional development organizations towards equity. Blandin has a training program called “Leadership in Ethnically Diverse Communities” to increase the capacity of rural leaders to develop inclusive communities and reduce systemic racial and cultural barriers. It has funded innovative programs such as Region 5 Development Commission’s pioneering Welcoming Communities work. More generally, as a funder of development organizations in Greater Minnesota, it can communicate its perspective and help them learn cultural competence skills.

Wilder Foundation

- Research by Minnesota Compass, a project of the Wilder Foundation, shows that access to prenatal care for mothers of color is 12 to 37 percentage points lower than for white mothers. Children from lower-income families, Latino children, and American Indian children have significantly lower rates of kindergarten readiness than white children. Further along the pipeline, tests of math and reading proficiency, as well as high-school graduation and post-secondary enrollment rates, show that low-income students and students of color lag far behind their higher-income and white counterparts. These education gaps also impact low-income white children, and children living in rural regions. About 20 percent of the population in Minnesota’s rural counties holds bachelor’s degrees or higher, compared to about 40 percent of the population in Twin Cities and other metropolitan areas. ([Minnesota Equity Blueprint](#), p. B-14)

- Rockefeller Foundation
- Kellogg Foundation
- Bush Foundation
- Hormel Foundation