Greater Minnesota Rising Final Report

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February 2016
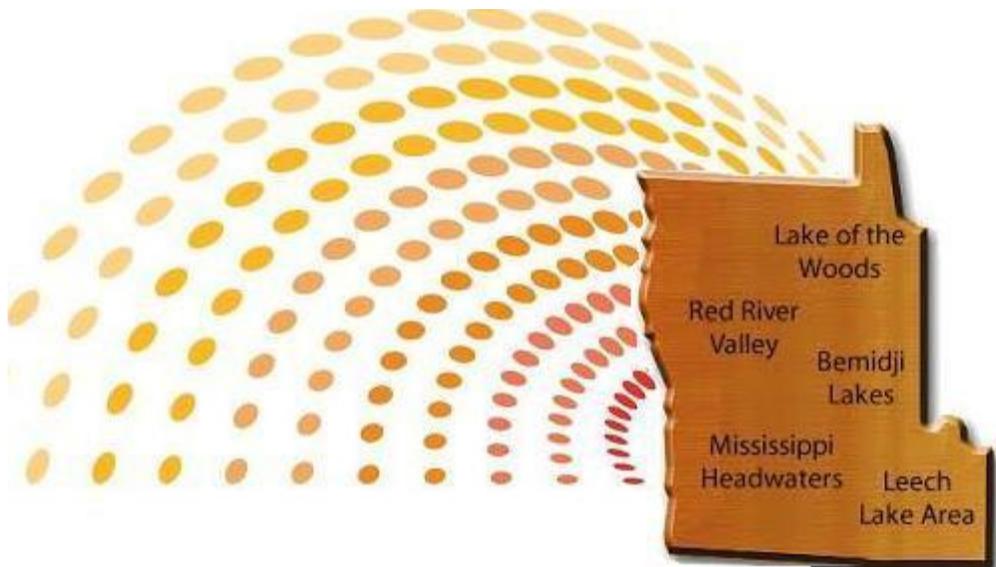
Executive Summary

Greater Minnesota Rising

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Greater Minnesota Rising (GMR) is a project dedicated to learning more about how emerging leaders engage in the communities of the North and West Central regions in Minnesota. Over the last year, The Greater Minnesota Rising project set out to research the community landscape in northwestern Minnesota and outline opportunities and recommendations to connect these emerging leaders within and outside of the region. The project defined emerging leaders as people that possess leadership potential but are 'untested' or lack the years of experience that a 'seasoned' veteran might have (Carucci, 2006).

PHASE ONE: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Greater Minnesota Rising initiated its first phase by conducting a broad review of academic research, interviewing key stakeholders in North and West Central Minnesota, and initiated strategic outreach of connecting with emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota. The research centered on three questions: 1) What is or is not working to attract and retain emerging leaders? 2) How can emerging leaders be better connected to other emerging leaders, young professional groups, and the workforce? and 3) How do emerging leaders envision their lives and the region in thirty years?

PHASE TWO: FOCUS GROUPS

The second phase of research was the focus group discussions in Alexandria, Brainerd, Nisswa, and the Twin Cities. This research generated discussion on the research findings and gave participants the opportunity to generate recommendations that would appeal to emerging leaders. Several key findings of the focus group discussions include that:

o Emerging leaders are more likely to engage with an increased awareness of community events.
o Emerging leaders are more likely to engage in community with improvement in work lifestyle.
o Different elements of life stages serve as supports and/or barriers to engagement.

PHASE THREE: WORLD CAFE

During the World Cafe, participants also explored and discussed recommendation areas with fellow participants during facilitated table conversations. There were three recommendation areas explored:

1) Recommendation 1 - A centralized hub for information and learning about events and groups for emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota.
2) Recommendation 2 - Targeted emerging leader events in the region with a focus on organizations, community groups, and community members.
3) Recommendation 3 - Developing employer awareness and participation in volunteer events and opportunities in the region.

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Project Background

Greater Minnesota Rising Project Background

Greater Minnesota Rising (GMR) was established to learn more about how emerging leaders are engaging in communities of the West Central and North Central regions of Minnesota. As an initiative of Minnesota Rising, GMR also aimed to further develop a collaborative network of emerging leaders that work towards a shared vision of the state's future. Minnesota Rising contracted the services of Raising The Bar, LLC (RTB) to lead the research process, generate ideas, and develop participatory recommendations to support emerging leaders in the region.

The Greater Minnesota Rising leadership team developed the research plan and received support and funding from the West Central and Little Falls Initiative Foundations. The project also received funding from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and through the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnership's (RSDP) Mary Page Community-University Partnership Fund. CURA and the RSDP Mary Page Community-University Partnership Fund, provided funding for a research assistant under the Community Assistantship Program (CAP). The graduate research assistant, Brooke McManigal, had the opportunity to apply her research and technical skills to develop an initial report along with RTB researchers.

This report covers the three phases of research carried out during the Greater Minnesota Rising project. The first phase was an environmental scan. This portion of the research reviewed a broad base of academic research, interviewed key stakeholders in the region, and initiated a strategy of reaching out more broadly to emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota. CAP researcher Brooke McManigal completed and submitted a report on the environmental scan to CURA in October. The second phase was comprised of a set of focus group discussions in four locations, including Alexandria, Brainerd, Nisswa, and the Twin Cities. The goal of the second phase was to generate discussion on environmental scan research findings and form ideas for possible recommendation. The third phase of the study was to facilitate a World Café event to initiate deeper connections between emerging leaders, guide discussion around recommendation ideas, and organize early support for the implementation of the final recommendations.

While the research portion of the project was limited to three phases, a primary goal of the project was to present recommendations for implementation in the regions of study. The GMR team recognizes that more needs to occur in order to successfully effect the change its participants seek, which necessitates a focused and guided implementation phase. We anticipate this will occur best in partnership or with the support of other emerging leader groups or community initiatives, and/or by establishing a staff supported position tasked with implementing the recommendations of this report.

Project Timeline:

Date(s)	Project Event
March 2015	Project Funding Approved
March – September 2015	Phase One: Environmental Scan
September – October 2015	Environmental Scan drafted and submitted
October 2015 – November 2015	Phase Two: Focus Group Discussions
December 2015	Phase Three: World Café Event
February 2016	Final Greater Minnesota Rising Report

Project Limitations

In order to effectively understand and interpret the study's findings, we felt it important to point out potential limitations or barriers in GMR's work. One of the major limitations that we recognize is that the geographic location of a majority of the project team was in the Twin Cities metro area. This presented challenges in hosting focus groups, interviews, and working or collaborating with emerging leaders and groups in North and West Central Minnesota. Because of the geographic distance of the studied area, transportation was also a potential barrier to the project. This distance was likely a barrier to participation for those not able or willing to drive to focus group or World Café locations.

Another perceived limitation is that the GMR team itself is not necessarily representative of the race, class, ethnic, or religious backgrounds present in the region. The GMR project team is largely comprised of members from white, highly educated backgrounds. The perspective through which the work was conducted and analyzed could therefore be informed by, limited to, and reflective of these factors. More about the GMR project team can be found in Appendix 5. The variation in background may have also led to a limitation in the project's ability to reach certain segments of the society in North and West Central Minnesota. While the project team attempted to reach people in various sectors, faiths, and economic backgrounds, we struggled to find and engage emerging leaders from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This could produce challenges to understanding the perspectives of those who did not have the chance to share their opinions and stories.

Phase One: Environmental Scan

Environmental Scan Background, Findings, and Methods

The Greater Minnesota Rising project set out to research the community landscape in northwestern Minnesota and outline opportunities and recommendations in order to connect emerging leaders within and outside of the region. The project defined emerging leaders as *people that possess leadership potential but are 'untested' or lack the years of experience that a 'seasoned' veteran might have* (Carucci, 2006[1]). During stakeholder interviews[2] it became clear that emerging leaders were not necessarily Millennials or those new to the workforce, but may also include those who are emerging into a new field.

The research is centered on three fundamental questions:

1. What is or is not working to attract and retain emerging leaders?
2. How can emerging leaders be better connected to other emerging leaders, young professional groups, and the workforce?
3. How do emerging leaders envision their lives and the region in thirty years?

In particular, the Greater Minnesota Rising Project team hypothesized that the research on these three questions would help emerging leaders become more engaged in workforce development, increase attraction to North and West Central Minnesota, and create a more connected network of emerging leaders across the state.

Before speaking with emerging leaders themselves, the research team identified a need for more context on how emerging leaders are perceived in the region. This included an exploration of existing engagement efforts and a multi-faceted research investigation on the issues in question. During the environmental scan, RTB reviewed effective practices in emerging leader engagement, regional demographic trends, and conducted interviews with local stakeholders in workforce development including hiring managers, recruiters, community leaders, and elected officials.

Important learning from the research includes:
- Leadership is modeling the way, inspiring others, and enabling others to act.[3]
- Community engagement is successful when community members are personally empowered.
- Demographic studies indicate that there will be a gap in the labor force.[4][5]
- Community is a sense of membership and a shared emotional connection.[6]

Key findings from the environmental scan interviews include:

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[1] Carucci, R. A. (2006). *Leadership Divided: What Emerging Leaders Need and What You Might Be Missing*. Jossey-Bass.

[2] Focus group discussions in the next phase of the project would also make clear that emerging leaders are not solely comprised of millennials.

[3] Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge (4th edition)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

[4] Senf, D. (2014). *Ready or Not, Baby Boomer Retirement Wave is Here*. Minnesota Economic Trends.

[5] Gillaspy, T. & Mcmurry, M. (2010). *The Long Run Has Become the Short Run: Budget Implications of Demographic Change*. Retrieved from: www.demography.state.mn.us

[6] Bruhn, J.G. (2011). *Sociology of Community Connections*. Springer: New York.

- Interviewees were attracted to the region because of family, jobs, rural values, and economic opportunities.
- Interviewees were engaged and stayed in the region because of positive leadership, safety, and the small town atmosphere.
- Interviewees indicated that the reasons they may leave the region include new job opportunities, worries about their community, population loss, and potentially large travel distances.

Other important findings that were present in both the research and stakeholder interviews include:
- Millennials may not identify with a traditional understanding of 'seasoned.' Many Millennials do not stay with the same business.
- Interviewees felt that young professional and emerging leader groups were critical to creating connections in northwestern Minnesota.
- Interviewees felt that it was important to keep local businesses in order to retain younger generations and keep dollars working in their communities.

More detailed information on the methods used and results of the environmental scan are available in Appendix 1 and online.

Phase 2: Focus Group Discussions

Methods

Greater Minnesota Rising's next step was to facilitate discussion and feedback on the environmental scan research and to develop a broad-based framework for developing recommendations. The project team decided the most effective way of doing this was through focus group discussions with emerging leaders in the region. The project team focused recruitment on young professional group members and emerging leaders from various sectors and backgrounds. While GMR's initial hope was to have a representative sample, the project team quickly realized it was not feasible and not necessarily the best choice for the developing project. Instead, GMR focused on giving voice to emerging leaders who were able and interested in attending these discussions and generating ideas for the region.

Focus groups were held in four locations to obtain information about emerging leaders, how they are engaged or were attracted to their community, why they might leave, and to generate ideas for how emerging leader engagement in the region could be improved. These discussions hosted between 5 and 8 people each, with 19 participating individuals overall.

Participants came from a variety of professional sectors including business, hospitality, sales, media, state and local government, politics, and law. Participants also ranged in life stage from just out of school to mid-career professionals. Each focus group was conducted with the same script (see Appendix 2) and were facilitated by David Milavetz (the project's research lead), Brooke McManigal (the CURA Research Assistant), and Andrea Nadel (a research consultant to the project).

It was critical to the research that discussions represented viewpoints from individuals in both North and West Central Minnesota. The project team also decided that holding a focus group in the Twin Cities would offer a necessary perspective and benefit the project's goal to connect with those outside of the region. As stated previously, focus groups were held in Alexandria, Brainerd, Nisswa, and St. Paul.

The focus group discussions were audio recorded with the permission of participants, transcribed, and the key conversations were documented using flipchart paper during the meeting. In Appendix 2, please review the narratives of each focus group discussion. These give more in-depth descriptions of the dialogue and exchange of ideas that occurred at the focus group discussions.

Focus Group Findings

During these discussions the research team noted a number of ideas and patterns that came across in all four discussions. The key ideas shared by participants in our focus groups include:

- **Engagement barriers occur due to certain topics and elements related to the different life stages of emerging leaders**
    - Cost of events, atmosphere of exclusivity, and amount of free time can present barriers to participation in communities.
    - Networking events should be facilitated in order to effectively engage emerging leaders.
    - Having children can be a common life experience that brings emerging leaders together. It can also present a barrier for those without children.
    - New residents often come to the region because of family or a spouse.

- **Emerging leaders will be engaged through increased connection and awareness of community events.**
    - A centralized location for information would be crucial to improving awareness of the community and engagement events.
    - Idea generation and creativity could be used to bridge communities.

- **Engaged workforce happens with the improvement of several factors affecting a person's life.**
    - Balanced lifestyle.
    - Flexibility in the workplace.
    - Frontloading PTO and benefits.
    - Mentorship.
    - No micromanagement.
    - Words of affirmation.

The focus group discussions clarified the utility of engagement methods deployed by communities and organizations in the region when targeting emerging leaders. The research team gathered, organized, and analyzed the conversations and developed principles that were prominent in the thoughts and ideas shared during the meetings. These 'connection principles' are helpful when evaluating whether community initiatives (implemented in regard to the recommendations offered) successfully incorporate key engagement ideas. In other words, if the final recommendations are implemented, these principles can and should be used to determine if efforts to engage and attract emerging leaders reflect regional input. Project leaders can use them as a measure the success for their work and to show their attunement to community input and needs.

1) **Relationship-focused interaction.** Communities are made up of the people that live there, not the geographic location. It is crucial that face-to-face interaction occur when attempting to engage or attract people.

2) **Intentional welcoming is an important component of engagement.** Newcomers should be welcomed by other newcomers and long-time residents. People need to be recruited and the participation by long-term residents or established leaders in this recruitment is crucial.

3) **Shared experiences and values.** As people share experiences, values, and support they will demonstrate more openness and loyalty to each other and their community.

4) **Cause and issue oriented events.** Participants from each focus group discussion indicated that for them to be interested in going out of their way to attend an event, there needed to be a cause or purpose to an event. Networking with other professionals was an important reason, but not enough on its own.

5) **Diverse opportunities.** Participants believed that it was important to provide a "menu" of different options to engage emerging leaders. There should be groups or avenues of entry that cater to different demographic groups and interests.

Participants also generated action ideas that Greater Minnesota Rising and its project partners could focus on. The following examples are broad areas that funders and community organizations may decide to support based on the discussions at the focus group meetings. These recommendations were explored further during the World Café event in Fergus Falls. They will be explained further in that portion of the report.

Recommendation Ideas:

1) A centralized hub for information and learning about events and groups for emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota.

2) Targeted emerging leader events in the region with a focus on organizations and community groups.

3) Developing awareness and participation in volunteer events and opportunities in the region.

Phase Three: World Café Event

Background and Methods

Throughout the Greater Minnesota Rising project the research team strove to ensure that the project was conducted in a participatory manner and that the research findings reflected the experiential knowledge of those living in the community. The GMR team felt that the developmental and growing nature of this project indicated a less structured and more flexible approach. Using participatory research methods, GMR allowed participants to become co-researchers and co-generators in the impact of the project's processes and outcomes.

These values and project goals informed the creation and development of the GMR World Café at the West Central Initiative Foundation. As such, the World Café was informed by participants who reflected the characterization of "emerging leaders" developed during the previous phases. The working definition was circulated to regional organizations and employers who in turn identified participants to assess and modify the recommendation ideas developed during the initial two phases. Essentially, the recommendations were refined by participants who came to be seen by the community as having the qualities of emerging leaders. This concurrent process allowed the research team to balance the experience of various (and often established) community stakeholders with the foresight of those needed to validate the potential of recommendation ideas – namely emerging leaders themselves.

The CURA CAP research assistant, Brooke McManigal, developed the World Café protocol (as seen in the first environmental scan report) based on research of the World Café method and its ability to engage people on important community discussions. The recommended model was based partly on the importance of developing ideas using participatory methods. Effectively, it engaged participants from a vast cross-section of experiences in strategic dialogue around potential methods of engaging emerging leaders and attracting a new workforce.

The World Café method allowed Greater Minnesota Rising to achieve several project goals. The primary goal of the World Café session was the development of recommendation ideas connecting previous and ongoing community input. The session involved a dialogue through table conversations of five to ten participants on issues in the workplace and workforce gaps. The process engaged emerging leaders in the evaluation of stakeholder driven recommendations based on research conducted during the environmental scan and focus group discussions.

This method had another, no less relevant outcome in that it empowered emerging leaders and community stakeholders to engage in idea generation for recommendations based upon the emergent themes and research discovered in the previous phases. This included developing relationships and strengthening the affiliation of emerging leaders to each other and their communities. Participants in the World Café traveled from over 100 square miles to take part in the event. The meaningful conversations assisted participants in meeting others and expanding their networks in various communities. By accomplishing this, the World Café provided a space for community stakeholders to discuss critical issues for the future of northwestern Minnesota, and allowed stakeholders to share vital information that may not be shared in other contexts.

Findings

During the World Café participants engaged in two types of discussions. The first reviewed several of the GMR research questions. These questions included a focus on what drew the participants to their communities, what they felt would engage emerging leaders, and how local organizations could participate in these engagement efforts. The second period of discussion focused on refining the recommendation areas developed during the focus group discussions, specifically, the opportunities, barriers, and methods that would help make them more realistic.

World Café Research Questions

Question 1 – Why did you come to northwestern Minnesota?

Participants broke into four separate groups to discuss this question. Each table was made up of individuals from varying backgrounds. Some of the common themes heard across the entire group, from most often heard to less often heard, include:

- Participants that came to northwestern Minnesota did so for a good job opportunity.
- Participants came to be near family.
- Participants moved back to the community that they grew up in.
- Other reasons participants might move to northwestern Minnesota include the quality of life, cost of living, small town life, and area offerings.

Question 2 – Do you believe emerging leaders are currently engaged in your areas?

Participants responded across several of the groups that they felt the practices of the "old guard," or existing leadership, sometimes made it more challenging for younger people to become involved. Groups, according to participants, need to actively encourage and support emerging leader involvement and engagement. Another barrier to emerging leader engagement was that there were an overwhelming number of opportunities to get involved with and/or other personal or professional needs more urgently requiring emerging leaders' attention.

Based on the discussion it did appear that there are concerted efforts underway to engage emerging leaders and that communities were trying to find unique ways to attract people to their area. For example, Fergus Falls approved a new sports complex, and brought in new restaurants and new businesses. These are initiatives that can help to raise awareness of their community, attract new residents seeking robust local amenities, and provide ways to engage in their community.

Question 3 – What about an area engages emerging leaders? Can any of this be done in your region?

The next discussion centered on how an area generally does successfully engage emerging leaders. Discussions largely centered around employment and community. In order for emerging leaders to be successfully engaged there must be work that is in their field, flexibility within the workplace, momentum in their community, cause-driven events, and intentional welcoming. That is, long-time community members need to actively and directly invite new members to attend events and participate in community programs.

Question 4 – How could local organizations, community groups, or young professionals participate in these efforts?

Several participants indicated that they believed that organizations may need to evolve or change their outreach efforts in order to effectively reach new members of the community who likely have different values, priorities, or beliefs than older generations. Several things were listed as items for organizations and groups to improve:

- Use social media effectively.
- Maintain open lines of communication.
- Highlight success stories.
- Reach out earlier and to newer members of the communities.
- Engage emerging leaders around a passion or a cause.
- Continue extending invitations.

Recommendations

During the World Café, participants also explored and discussed the recommendation areas generated through the GMR focus group discussions. These conversations centered on three recommendations and a brainstorming session and are outlined in more detail over the following pages.

Participants in the World Café were placed at a table while facilitators switched tables every 15 minutes or so to discuss the recommendation assigned to them. At the end of the event each facilitator gave a brief summary on the discussions of each of their groups and broad themes they heard, documented in the facilitator narratives in the below recommendations.

Regional Recommendation – A centralized hub for information and learning about events and groups for emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota.

Facilitator Narrative:

> *My groups likened this recommendation to a Craigslist for communities. There needs to be an organization to do it. One idea my group suggested was to utilize technology through the use of apps. There has to be employer buy-in so that the emerging leaders are encouraged and welcomed to seek out and pursue their interests. A tailored connection software to put in interest and software to link up opportunities to meet your parameters. That shows the value of emerging leaders' time. They have interests they'd like to focus on. It is important to be mindful of multi-cultural engagement and new Americans and new community members throughout this process.*

One theme that is consistent in research of emerging leaders, and in particular, the Millennial generation, is the need for feeling a sense of membership and connection to their community (John Bruhn, 2011[7]). Building off of this finding, we asked participants in our focus groups how they might feel more engaged with the community. A pattern across the groups indicated that the primary factor in how much people engage or feel connected to their community is dependent on exposure to the organization or event. Several participants suggested that a centralized hub listing events, groups, jobs, and other available opportunities in North and West Central Minnesota would be an effective model for attracting, engaging, and recruiting emerging leaders in the community.

We would recommend that this be implemented through several channels in order to incur the greatest reach and impact. A website would be needed to host and share information about emerging leader events, job, and workplace culture, peer mentorship opportunities, and volunteer opportunities. Of course, this should be reinforced by an email list-serv and social media (Facebook and Twitter) pages. The GMR project team believes a staff position would be necessary to develop, design, and update the central hub, particularly encouraging communication between emerging leaders who do not necessarily live in the same community.

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[7] Bruhn, J.G. (2011). *Sociology of Community Connections*. Springer: New York.

This recommendation could start from one of the above mentioned suggestions (website, email, social media) and adapt over time. Establishing a central hub produces an opportunity to develop a more well connected region. Participants in the GMR research process indicated that a central hub of information would not only increase their awareness of regional events and professional opportunities but their attention to volunteering needs in the communities they live in. Finally, a centralized hub would be an innovative method to streamline the information received by emerging leaders, reducing the amount of information that emerging leaders have to view and filter on a regular basis. This model could be replicated, shared, and expanded in other greater Minnesota communities. This would achieve one of GMR's larger goals of connecting emerging leaders in North and West Central Minnesota to others in the state. By making the region more accessible and transparent to other Minnesotans who want to learn about the region, a central website hub also accomplished this goal.

A primary barrier in the implementation of this recommendation could be generating organizational support. While there needs to be at least one organization, group, or staff member that spearheads this initiative, it will be equally important to engage additional supporters or "backers" of the hub. These backers will be critical to marketing the central hub to its intended audiences and to ensure that emerging leaders are aware of and utilizing the central hub.

Steps to Implementation:

1) Identify a diverse set of organizations that would provide input and support.
2) Identify user organizations or consumer groups.
3) Raise funds and generate interest from local communities and emerging leaders.
4) Hire or re-assign staff and/or partner with organization and groups in the region.
5) Develop Website, email list, and social media pages.
6) Launch Website.

Measures of Success

1) Focus Group Principles – That is, this recommendation should aim to promote diverse opportunities, cause and issue oriented events, create relationships, and intentional welcoming.

2) Website Analytics:
   a. Unique views.
   b. Location of views.
   c. Bounce rate.
   d. Duration of visit.

3) Audience Engagement:
   a. How many people attend events because of the information hub?
   b. How many people heard about something because of the hub?
   c. How many people submit opportunities to the hub for sharing?

Local Recommendation – Targeted emerging leader events in the region with a focus on organizations, community groups, and community members.

Facilitator Narrative

> *One idea across my groups was to do a job or community service fair. We felt it was important to bring that opportunity for groups to talk about who they are and what they are about. Part of that is to do some training for those groups so that can be implemented quickly. They can always model what their organization is about and talk about if they are aligned like some of what they talked about i.e. work being meaningful. A few groups talked about their employees supporting them through this. A leadership training program and cohort and using that exposure to continue that leadership and giving in the community.*

> *The ability to make the connection to opportunities is important. Talking to employers about having days of service. Not just the event but that people are feeling empowered to do that. Understanding the time and cost of doing this. More of an education to the organizations what it is that they do so that people can feel like they can participate based on their time and ability to do that. Outreach and social media is changing. This could present ways to reach out to people and build mentor programs to expose people to those opportunities and build leadership.*

GMR's environmental scan revealed that successful engagement programs require efforts to engage community members be conducted on a personal basis and in the context of a compelling, shared mission that empowers community members, and provides ample opportunity for emerging leaders to practice leadership skills in real-life situations (Schusterman, 2013[8]; Lee, 2013[9]; Wagner, 2006[10]; Dugan and Komives, 2007[11]). Developing events focused on emerging leaders in the room with a connection to community organizations and groups has the potential to hit each of these key aspects of engagement.

While many community involvement opportunities for emerging leaders already exist, this recommendation provides an opportunity for engagement across a diverse array of issues and sectors. GMR would recommend that a central group potentially consisting of the West Central Initiative Foundation, Little Falls Initiative Foundation, and University of Minnesota organize and sponsor an annual event in the community that brings together organizations, community groups, and young professional groups that emerging leaders can participate in or take leadership in planning. This type of event can expand upon and enrich current opportunities for emerging leaders to engage in their communities.

A barrier that GMR anticipates is the facilitation and implementation of these events. While, we encourage many parties to work together, we would recommend that one group take the lead in coordinating the event each year. This could be a continually alternating role.

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[8] Schusterman, L.A. (2013). *A Virtuous Cycle of Vibrant Jewish Life. The Peoplehood Papers.* Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education. Retrieved from: http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=18473
[9] Lee, A. (2013) *Lessons on Engaging Young People.* Leading Ideas: Lewis Center for Church Leadership. Retrieved from: http://www.churchleadership.com/leadingideas/leaddocs/2013/131023_article.html
[10] Wagner, W. (2006). *The Social Change Model of Leadership: A Brief Overview.* Concepts and Connections, 15 (1) 9.
[11] Dugan, J.P., & Komives, S.R. (2007). *Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students.* College, Park, M.D.: National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Retrieved from:
http://mslreviewteam.wiki.usfca.edu/file/view/MSLReport+06.pdf

Steps to implementation
1) Identify local group of emerging leaders to champion and coordinate event.
2) Engage community groups, organizations, and schools in partnership efforts.
3) Organize meetings to strategically plan and coordinate the event, identifying possible action steps for networking and engagement following the event to take place throughout the remainder of the year prior to the next annual event.
4) Develop recruitment and engagement strategy:
    a. Outreach to emerging leader and young professional groups.
    b. Identifying key stakeholders and members of the "emerging leader" community.
    c. Invite these stakeholders and members to planning meetings.
5) Host event.
6) Evaluate event outcomes for participants as well as host organizations.
7) Implement follow-up communications and action steps.

Measures of Success

1) Principles from the focus group – Specifically shared experiences and values, cause oriented events, and diverse opportunities.

2) Detailed analytics
    a. # of emerging leaders engaged.
    b. # of organizations involved.
    c. # of community groups involved.

3) Follow-up Indicators
    a. # of follow-up contacts by organization.
    b. % of follow-ups responded to positively.

Employer Recommendation – Developing employer awareness and participation in volunteer events and opportunities in the region.

Facilitator Narrative:

> *One of the things, is that we all have limited time and we want to invest in meaningful things. When we're deciding what's meaningful it's an intersection about what's meaningful, to us personally, volunteer opportunities, or through work. You're most likely to remain engaged when there is an intersection between the three areas. There is importance of having an employer that is supportive of the volunteer experience. It is sometimes easier to be part of a group volunteering rather than an individual. If an employer can let multiple employees volunteer at a time that would encourage volunteering. Sometimes people are reticent to volunteer when asked because they are not sure of the expectation. They don't want to have the organization to expect them to volunteer over and over and over again. Important to be recognized for what you're doing in the community.*

One of the key findings of the GMR focus group discussions and World Café was the vital importance of employer encouragement and support in attending volunteer events, emerging leader events, and professional development opportunities. Several participants engaged in the World Café because of encouragement from their employer and others noted that support or positive encouragement would increase the likelihood that they would attend an event.

As stated in recommendation one, Bruhn indicates that communities are defined by a sense of membership, influence over the outcomes of community activities, and a feeling that a person's personal needs are fulfilled through membership. Employers' support of their employees' engagement could create more cohesion and higher attendance of community events. Over time this could lead to a community that is attractive to emerging professionals seeking opportunities and direction in their lives.

This recommendation presents the opportunity to create a more engaged workforce as employees feel empowered to participate in events and opportunities of interest. There are certainly barriers to implementation. First is the potential pressure that participants might receive to attend events. Participants in our discussions indicated that they have limited time and can only attend a certain amount of events. Participants also worried that once they attended an organization's event they would be expected to do so more often than they would like to. We believe this can be resolved through providing meaningful events and opportunities that help an attendee in their personal and professional lives, and by being clear regarding expectations about timing and level of commitment on the front end.

Steps to Implementation

1) Share report with employers in the region to generate support and awareness of volunteer events and opportunities. This recommendation would be effective in succession with the website or social media pages developed in recommendation one.
2) Encourage collaboration between employers and emerging leader groups or young professional groups that are hosting events in the region.
3) Support the development of emerging leaders program(s) that will be attractive to employers i.e. workforce development, professional development, welcoming events.

Measures of Success

1) Analytics
   a. % of employers that encourage volunteer events or opportunities.
   b. % of employees aware of identified volunteer events and opportunities.
   c. Attendance of emerging leaders at volunteer events.
   d. % of attendees that return for future events.

2) Principles – The principles that relate to this recommendation are intentional welcoming, cause and issue oriented events, and diverse opportunities.

Other Recommendation Ideas

A portion of the World Café was dedicated to giving participants an opportunity to brainstorm and generate new recommendation ideas. This section will review these ideas as well as present other new recommendation ideas that the Greater Minnesota Rising team feels are important.

Facilitator Narrative:

> *My area was open brainstorming. A lot of the things talked about at my tables were also brought up at the other tables. Where there is overlap in my daily life and what we can do for the community. Time is a factor especially for young families. Employer endorsement and support was really important. People commit a lot of time and energy for their employers. If they're doing something for themselves and their employer supports it, it gives them a purpose when they go to these meetings. Mentoring also came up but in a lot of different forms. There's workplace mentoring, but then also community mentor. Somebody that lives in the community and can push you to go and get more involved in other events. Finally, a peer mentorship. Someone you can relate to more as people.*

Recommendation Ideas and Suggestions

- **Full or Part-Time Staff position**. The Greater Minnesota Rising team recommends that a full or part-time staff position is created to coordinate and implement these recommendations.

- **Peer mentorship programs and opportunities**. Recommendation two should incorporate facilitated peer mentorship. Participants in the Greater Minnesota Rising project made it clear that they wanted the opportunity to learn from other emerging leaders in their professional field. Adding such an opportunity would allow emerging leaders to build social capital, offer relevant and helpful insights, and develop their cultural purviews. In particular participants suggested more space was needed to discuss work culture and other areas of community interest.

- **Newcomers club**. Participants in the World Café suggested that there be a club or group for new people that moved to the region. This could be facilitated by the staff person or one of the collaborating organizations referencedin recommendation two.

- **Events focused on philanthropy**. Participants in the discussion group indicated that another aspect of events that was important to them was that they have a cause or an issue to support.

Conclusion

The Greater Minnesota Rising ten-month research project revealed not only the key wisdom and insights shared above, but also a great deal of enthusiasm and energy among emerging leaders for improving and connecting communities in northwestern Minnesota. The project team would be pleased to provide any further background and support in order to assist with implementation of the recommendations found in this report. Thank you to the funders, supporters, and participants for their ongoing contributions to Central and West Central Minnesota.

Finally, we invite you to read the appendices or the previous environmental scan report to learn more about the work we did and the conversations hosted during the project. Feel free to reach out to any one on the project leadership team through the Greater Minnesota Rising tab on minnesotarising.com.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Environmental Scan Documents

Research Summary 1

What is working to attract and engage emerging leaders and what needs still need to be met or expanded upon?
To answer this question, the research time outlined several other variables that needed to be addressed including:
- Who and what are emerging leaders;
- What efforts occur locally and nationally to attract and engage emerging leaders; and
- What of those efforts are the most effective?

The research indicated that an emerging leader is generally an individual who possesses leadership potential but is 'untested' or lacks the years of experience that a 'seasoned' veteran might have (Carucci, 2006[12]). While leadership may be applied differently in different sectors, many of the behaviors and qualities have similarities. Kouzes and Posner (2007[13]) offer a helpful conceptualization of leadership as a set of qualities and abilities that can be applied in any situation and rests on certain practices, including:

- Modeling the way
- Inspiring a shared vision
- Challenging the process
- Enabling others to act
- Encouraging the heart

Regional efforts focused on attraction and engagement is taking place in many communities such as Bemidji, St. Cloud, Duluth and the Twin Cities. These efforts take place on many different levels within a community including at the city, young professional groups and within ethno-religious communities. The efforts are distinguished by the focus on creating a pipeline to expand the existing talent base, empower the voices of young professionals and utilize taskforces to engage local businesses, cultural and political leaders in strategic development efforts.

Research (Schusterman, 2013[14]; Lee, 2013[15]; Wagner, 2006[16]; Dugan and Komives, 2007[17]) on engagement efforts indicate that the following are key ways to be successful:

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[12] Carucci, R. A. (2006). *Leadership Divided: What Emerging Leaders Need and What You Might Be Missing*. Jossey-Bass.
[13] Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge (4th edition).* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
[14] Schusterman, L.A. (2013). *A Virtuous Cycle of Vibrant Jewish Life. The Peoplehood Papers*. Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education. Retrieved from: http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=18473
[15] Lee, A. (2013) *Lessons on Engaging Young People.* Leading Ideas: Lewis Center for Church Leadership. Retrieved from: http://www.churchleadership.com/leadingideas/leaddocs/2013/131023_article.html
[16] Wagner, W. (2006). *The Social Change Model of Leadership: A Brief Overview.* Concepts and Connections, 15 (1) 9.

- Successful efforts engage community members on a personal basis and in the context of a compelling shared mission.
- Successful efforts empower community members to take ownership on issues about which they are passionate.
- Emerging leadership can be effectively developed and engaged through empowerment, mentorship, and by being provided ample opportunity to learn leadership by acting on it in real-life situations.

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[17] Dugan, J.P., & Komives, S.R. (2007). *Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students.* College, Park, M.D.: National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Retrieved from: http://mslreviewteam.wiki.usfca.edu/file/view/MSLReport+06.pdf

Research Summary 2

How might we connect other emerging leaders to northwestern Minnesota? How might we connect to existing young professional groups? How might we connect to regional workforce?

To answer this question the research team spent time exploring:
- What young professional groups exist in the region;
- What workforce means;
- What it means to connect;
- What defines community; and
- Effective practices or methods of connection in other rural or out-state areas

There are a number of young professional groups in northwestern Minnesota. These groups are active in areas including Bemidji, Fargo-Moorhead, Warroad, Little Falls, Brainerd, Alexandria, and Morris (Bodin, 2015[18]). Interviews with stakeholders from the North and West Central regions will hopefully shed further light on which young professional groups exist and are active.

Workforce generally refers to those employed in paid labor. Rural Minnesota communities have invested in financial incentives to attract young talent however current infrastructure limits make scaling these incentives difficult (Nash, 2010[19]). Universities such as the University of Minnesota Extension or the University of Nebraska's Rural Futures Institute are providing leadership development training opportunities to help strengthen the network of local emerging leaders in rural communities (University of Nebraska, 2015[20]; Schnuelle, 2015[21]). Connecting emerging leaders in rural areas means to enhance the network of and resources for existing emerging leaders and young professional groups.

Finally, according to sociologist John Bruhn (2011[22]), communities can be defined by several characteristics:[23]
- A sense of membership
- Influence over the outcome of community activities
- A feeling by members that their personal needs are fulfilled through membership
- A shared emotional connection

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[18] From a conversation with Chet Bodin, April 14, 2015

[19] Nash, A. (2010). *Resident Recruiting in Northwestern Minnesota.* University of Minnesota Extension. Retrieved from: http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/brain-gain/resident-recruiting/

[20] University of Minnesota Extension. (2015). *Emerging Leadership Program: About ELP.* Retrieved from: http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/leadership/emerging-leadership-program/about/

[21] Schnuelle, K. (2015). Rural Futures Institute, Conversation on April 9th, 2015. Retrieved from: http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/connecting-young-nebraskans/

[22] Bruhn, J.G. (2011). *Sociology of Community Connections.* Springer: New York.

[23] Further information on communities and how people define their own community can be found in the interview analysis memo.

It is important to keep in mind that membership often transcends physical geography and that it is important to consider the boundaries of community membership when devising strategies to engage diverse emerging leaders (University of Kansas Workgroup for Community Health and Development, 2014).

Research Summary 3

How do emerging leaders envision their lives in 30 years? How do they envision the region in 30 years? What next steps can help bring the best of what they imagine to life in northwestern Minnesota?

While researching this question the research team focused on:
- What population trend studies exist that focus on our target populations;
- What conversations have occurred about the topic in the region;
- How we might effectively collect data from emerging leader population groups; and
- What visions exist in the region to attract and engage emerging leaders

Existing demographic studies (Helmstetter, C. & Tigan, J., 2014[24]; Senf, D., 2014[25]; Gillaspy, T & Mcmurry, M., 2010[26]) indicate that over the next 15 years, people in the baby boomer generation will be retiring leading to a large decline in population in northwestern Minnesota. A major concern as a result is that companies will decide to relocate rather than hiring younger workers as replacements. Another concern in the region is that young people are moving out to live in larger cities. While 20-34 year olds are currently moving out of the region, there is growth among the 35-49 year old cohort.

There have been rich conversations in many diverse contexts in local chambers of commerce as well as in academic reports. These conversations have largely focused on community planning efforts, immigration, and job creation. Other research conducted by Ben Winchester[27] demonstrates that people come to the region due to their families, new opportunities, and rural values and stay because they enjoy the work-life balance and friendly communities. People leave because of large travel distances, unstable employment, and population decline.

There are several tools that can be used to collect information from emerging leaders including:
- Semi-Structured interviews
- Cascading Conversations
- Focus Groups
- Surveys

Each of these tools has advantages and disadvantages regarding the amount of people they can engage, the quality of the data and the purpose of the information gathering.

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[24] Helmstetter, C. & Tigan, J. (2014). *6 Surprising Trends About Minnesota's Millennials*. Retrieved from: http://www.mncompass.org/trends/insights/2014-03-01-minnesota-millenial-trends
[25] Senf, D. (2014). *Ready or Not, Baby Boomer Retirement Wave is Here.* Minnesota Economic Trends.
[26] Gillaspy, T. & Mcmurry, M. (2010). *The Long Run Has Become the Short Run: Budget Implications of Demographic Change*. Retrieved from: www.demography.state.mn.us
[27] Winchester, B. (2010). *Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers*. The EDA Center at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.

Stakeholder Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1) Can you tell me a little more about yourself?
    Prompts
    - o *How long have you lived in the region?*
    - o *Can you tell me a little more about what you do for a living?*

2) How would you define and/or describe your current community?
    Prompts
    - o *How do you engage with this community?*
    - o *What groups or organizations are you engaging or participating in? What is or is not working well in these groups or organizations?*

3) What drew you to move to or stay in your town, community or region (Broad or specific)?
    Prompts
    - o *What are your favorite things about this area?*
    - o *Is this different among other people that you are connected with?*

4) What do you hope your community looks like in 5 years? What would help keep you here in this region?
    Prompts
    - o *How about in 10 years?*
    - o *How do you think your community will reach those goals?*

5) You've heard our definition of emerging leader, what does emerging leader mean to you?

6) How do you engage with people you identify as emerging leaders at work or in the community?
    Prompts
    - o *Are there any methods that have been effective?*
    - o *Any ideas that you haven't tried yet?*

7) Are you aware of any emerging leader or young professional groups in the region? Are you involved with any of them?
    Prompts
    - o *What do you think about these groups?*
    - o *What do you think is working well with these groups? What is not working so well?*
    - o *What do you think might be ways to engage the "less engaged"?*
    - o *What challenges do you see for Young Professional groups?*

Stakeholder Interview Findings

The Greater Minnesota Rising research team conducted eight stakeholder interviews with community members from the West Central and North Central regions of Minnesota. The interviews were conducted in May and June and encompassed seven different stakeholder categories: Hiring manager, long-term resident, city council member, graduate student, community/religious organizations, trade student and community member. Interviewees live in the cities of Brainerd, Perham, Morris and Fargo.

Demographics

All eight of the stakeholders discussed the importance of demographics in their communities. Conversations centered on income disparities, wages, and diversity in several cities in the targeted regions. Other key themes learned were potential silos between various segments of populations within a city. Finally, an interviewee highlighted some of the significant populations in their town including students, local businesses, farmers, and faith communities.

Emerging Leaders

All eight of the interviewees were given our Greater Minnesota Rising definition of an "emerging leader as individuals that possess leadership potential, but are not yet "seasoned" in their field or lack the years of experience that a veteran might have". We then asked them what they thought of this definition and how they would amend it based on their experiences. Five of the eight indicated that this was an accurate description of an emerging leader. One interviewee asked for more time to think about the definition.

Interviewee Additions
- One of the interviewees would have added that an emerging leader means someone who you can recognize as having a kind of gift that benefits the people around them or helps the community.
- Another interviewee suggested that millennials especially don't really stay in a particular field, they switch careers so becoming seasoned looks different than what a veteran seasoned in their field looks like. Looking like a veteran might not be the goal for an emerging leader, but rather learning several different trades and growing their experiences and not just climbing the corporate ladder.

Interviewees suggested several ways to engage emerging leaders:
- There needs to be more basic skills training that prepare young people to build more advanced skills, but they need basic skills first. Communities should implement a training model for youth, which works with local businesses to create internships for unemployed youth to gain skills and even certifications.
- Listening and helping young leaders realize their potential is important.
- Giving staff and young professionals development goals and opportunities is important in their development as emerging leaders.

Stakeholder Interviews

Following the completion of the research, Greater Minnesota Rising developed an interview protocol to learn from key stakeholders that were already engaged or engaging other emerging leaders in the North and West Central regions of Minnesota. The interview process focused on interviewing a cross-section of emerging leader group coordinators, hiring managers, persons who are currently less civically engaged, college or trade students, community or religious group members who are not as connected to the economic discussion, newcomers to the region, and city council members or city planners.

The interviews centered on participant experiences in engaging within their communities and their perceptions of emerging leaders. The interviews generally lasted 30 to 45 minutes and interviews were kept confidential. To see the Stakeholder interview protocol see Appendix 3: Interview Script.
Researchers analyzed interviews by identifying cross cutting themes across the interviews and identifying emerging patterns in interviewee responses.

Major Themes

Why are people migrating, staying and leaving communities in North Central & West Central Minnesota?

Using Ben Winchester's framework for retention and population loss in the targeted communities of Brainerd, Morris, Perham and Fargo we analyzed the interviewee's responses for why they migrated to the community, why they stayed in the community and why people left their communities. [28]

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[28] Ben Winchester's research (Winchester, B. Research Fellow, University of Minnesota Extension. (2010). "Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers". *The EDA Center at the University of Minnesota, Crookston*.)
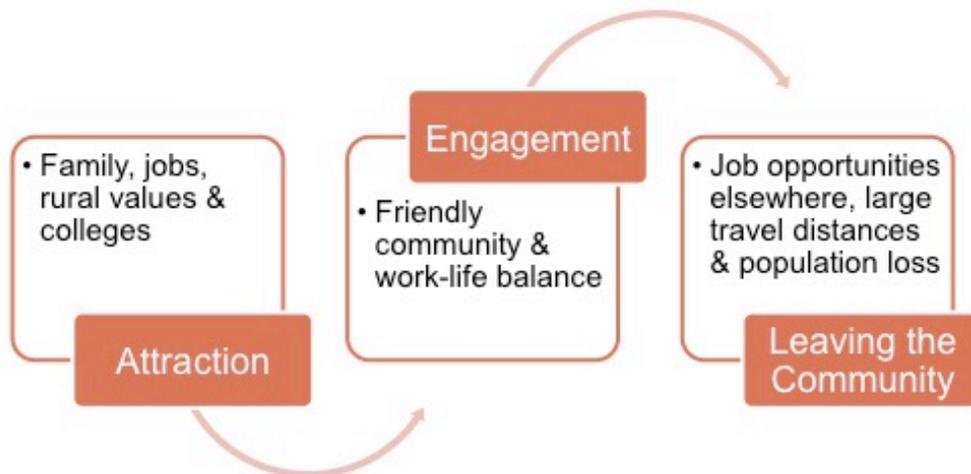
Attraction

Interviewees indicated they were attracted to the region because of:
- Interviewees have family in the area or wanted to raise a family in the area
- Economic opportunities brought the interviewees to the region
- Rural values (4 of the interviewees)
- College (2 of the interviewees)

Engagement

Interviewees indicated that they stay in the region because of:
- Interviewees identified positive leadership, safety, and a small town atmosphere where everyone knows everyone were key in their decisions to stay.
- Interviewees identified having the ability to work as well as engage in outdoor activities like biking, hunting, and fishing were a lure to staying.

Leaving the community

Interviewees indicated that reasons for leaving the community might include:
- Job opportunities (2 of the interviewees)
- Large travel distances
- Worries about their communities transforming into ghost towns

How people engage in their community

The interview also explored which groups and events stakeholders participated in their communities. These questions targeted general groups or ones with a focus on young professionals and emerging leaders. From this conversation, we heard about their work with charities, education, faith, family, jobs, location, mentoring, volunteering and young professional and emerging leader groups. Below are the various areas discussed during the interview along with key points on each.

Ways people engage the community
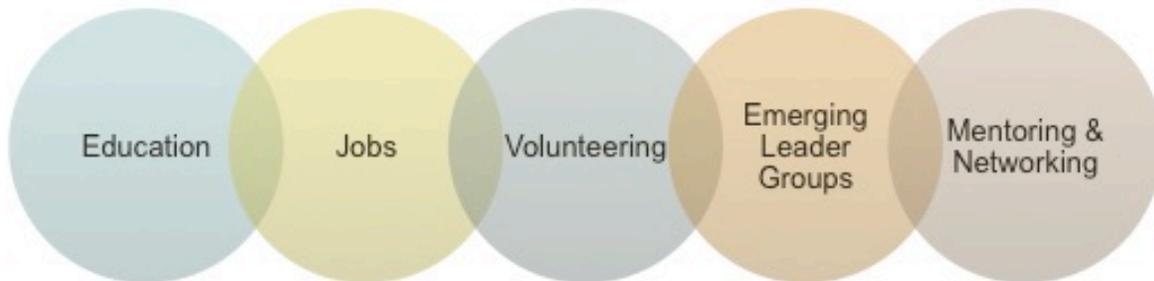
Education
- Colleges like the University of Minnesota-Morris, Concordia-Moorehead, and the Central Lakes College bring jobs, students, education and economic prosperity to their towns
- The University of Minnesota-Morris is important for bringing a liberal perspective to a rural conservative community

Jobs
- An interviewee mentioned that keeping young people employed was the best way to keep the economy thriving and young families out of poverty
- Creating more student-business interaction is the best way to keep small local businesses in business

Volunteering
- A respondent mentioned that they never thought of themselves as an emerging leader until many years of volunteering in the community.
- Some of the specific organizations are Coalition to End Hunger and Morris Theater Cooperative.

Young Professional and Emerging Leader Groups
- Respondents discussed the Young Professionals Network (YPN) in Fargo that meets monthly and the establishment of a Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN).
- Another interviewee described a Community Conversation event in Brainerd sponsored by Brainerd/Baxter Blandin A.C.E Alum which brought together leaders in the community to discuss community problems like transportation and youth unemployment.

Mentoring and Networking
- Interviewees shared about the United Way mentorship program for young adults and discussed an all women-mentoring group called Morris Area Women of Today.
- Furthermore, the email distribution list called the "Fargo Beat" is a networking tool used to connect young people in the Fargo area and keep them informed of the latest happenings.

Research and Interview Conclusions

This memo addresses the key similarities and emerging themes of the Greater Minnesota Rising stakeholder interviews and a scan of available research on emerging leaders and workforce development in the North and West Central regions of Minnesota. The themes highlight a wide variety of information from academic articles, engagement efforts in other states, and journals on leadership and community engagement. Interviewees were made up of a diverse cross-section including hiring managers, individuals with community or religious affiliations, and students.

Interviewees and the research had similar understandings of or agreement on:
- The definition of Emerging Leader
- The importance of mentorship
- Leadership being embodied by effective modeling, enabling others to act, and encouraging people's heart and passions
- Engaging emerging leaders through empowerment on community issues, mentorship, and providing real life learning opportunities
- Communities are defined through a shared emotional connection
- Concern on upcoming baby boomer retirements and potential gaps in employment and skilled labor
- People are attracted to the region and stay because of family, new opportunities, and rural values; people leave the region because of the travel, unstable employment, and population decline

Emergent Interview Themes
- Millennials may not identify with a traditional understanding of 'seasoned'. Many millennials do not stay with the same business, but rather jump from career to career and learn many different skills. This could be an addition to our current definition and warrants further conversation.
- Interviewees felt that young professional and emerging leader groups were critical in connecting millennials throughout small rural communities.
- The interviews brought out a significant demographic difference in income inside of and outside of Brainerd. Interviewees felt it was important to engage all segments of the population whether the conservative farming population, student population, Latino population, aging population, or apostolic religious population.

- Interviewees demonstrated the importance of keeping local businesses focused on retail and entertainment alive in order to retain younger generations and keep dollars working in their communities.

Appendix 2 – Focus Group Documents

Focus Group Protocol

I. Introduction of Moderator and Ground Rules (5 minutes)
      A. Independent, no vested interest
      B. Range of ideas desired, minority views important
      C. Confidentiality and remind people of the audio recorder
      D. Explain the purpose and how it's beneficial to the Community

2. Introduction of Participants (10 minutes)
      A. Name
      B. Neighborhood of residence?
      C. Length of residence?
      E. What you do?

3. Projective technique: Word Association (Written) (10 minutes)
      A. Emerging Leader
      B. Connection
      C. Community
      D. Collaboration
      E. Nonprofits
      F. Belonging
      G. Community
      H. Neighborhood
      I. Diversity
      J. Social Network

4. Warm-Up Story (10 minutes)
      A. Briefly share a story about when you relied on someone non-familial in the community for help, or conversely tell us a short story about when you helped someone unrelated to you in the neighborhood. How did you initially meet?

5. Can you talk about a Young Professional or Community event have you gone to lately? (15 minutes)
      A. What particularly caught your interest about that event?
      B. Where was this event?
      C. How did you connect with neighbors or new people at the event?
      D. How were these people different from you?
      E. Would you go to another similar event?
      F. Did it cause you to think or act differently toward others? Your community?

6. How would you describe an emerging leader? (10 minutes)
      A. Do you like having targeted events toward this group in your community? Why or why not?
      B. Why do you think emerging leaders come to your community? Why do you think they stay? Why do they leave?

C. What conversations have you had with others about engaging emerging leaders or young professionals? Where did these conversations happen?   At Young Professional events? At home? At the local store?

D. Who have you met in your community because of an event? Where is that relationship today?

7. What sort of emerging leader or community events would you like to see in the neighborhood that are not currently happening? (20 minutes)

A. Who would be the person(s) or organization(s) to put it on or plan it?

B. What challenges would you foresee?

C. How could you be involved in creating this event? What would you do?

D. How would you recruit or conduct outreach for the event?

8. What in your opinion are ways in which organizations/communities can effectively collaborate with each other? (20 minutes)

A. Have there been any previous collaborations? What are they?

B. What do you think are some of the existing silo's or issues in your community?

C. What are some advantages to collaborating and working together in your community?

D. What are ways that we can help facilitate this groups continued interactions?

9. Final comments and thoughts?

A. Explanation of next steps

      i.   Focus Groups remain involved

      ii.   Brainstorm recommendations based off of analysis

      iii.   Report gets written and recommendations get implemented

10. Wrap-up and thank you's

Focus Group Narratives

Alexandria Narrative

Location: Alexandria
Facilitator(s): F1 – Brooke McManigal; F2 – Chet Bodin
Number of Participants: 7
Time: 11am – 1pm
Length of Transcript: 92:38 minutes

Focus Group Composition

The focus group began with introductions of the facilitators and participants. Members of the group were living in Alexandria, but had lived in many different places in Minnesota over the course of their lives including Bemidji, Bentsen, Marshall, Minneapolis, and Morris. Each individual in the focus group briefly described his or her life and work experience. The composition of the group included workers in mortgage lending, a financial coordinator, a wealth advisor, and a business banker.

Word Association Activity

The facilitator brought up several key words in the study and asked participants to state the first words that emerged in their thoughts. This focus group used the words _emerging leader_, _collaboration_, _belonging_, and _connection_. The following demonstrates the responses and discussion about the words.

**Emerging Leader** – politics, growth, straight out of college, young, power, young go-getter, and innovation.

Emerging means they haven't been in business a long time. But it could be someone who has been in one and moving to a different one emerging in a new field. So, technically it's somebody that's newer, younger, fresh into the gate.

I think it has to do with potential and you see that with a lot of younger people. With an older audience, they might already be set in their ways and so that's what I think of I guess, when you see emerging.

**Collaboration** – Work together, partnerships, positive support, generations, teamwork, teamwork, teamwork, and communication.

When I think of collaboration, when I think of in the workplace, I think there's a lot of different ideas of how things should go and how things should function and I think that there's a huge gap in the workplace with millennials and baby boomers and how they're designed and I think that that can have a big impact on collaboration and whether or not that is a positive collaboration or negative.

**Belonging** – acceptance, a part of the welcoming, accepted, together, community focus, and relationships.

I think we're open to accepting new people to our lives. If they're part of the community it's oh yeah, why don't you come on over, we're having a BBQ.

That was a huge difference between living in the cities and here. You know, I just wanted to have a bonfire with people but you know we went to church 45 minutes away from where we lived and you know I worked a half hour away and so when we were getting together with people it was a lot of social meeting.

**Connection** – Being a part of, open minded, like-minded, bonds, and being able to relate to.

Connection to Community

The focus group spent the next portion of the meeting discussing what community meant and how it differed in different places.

Do you feel the same sense of community in other places like the Twin Cities that you do here?

I think it's hard because of the lifestyle is so much more fast paced because people are so tired after work and they know they've got to sit in the car for an hour to get back home. It's just a

different lifestyle completely. [...] it's hard to be involved and to really surround yourself unless you're into meeting younger people. It was really difficult at least from what I found.

It's just easier here because you meet someone at a party and all of a sudden you run into them at swimming lessons at the YMCA. You just keep running into people. The same people over and over again in a row because you do do the same things. It's a lot easier to build a connection and a community because of it.

Would you say that most people in this community want to and are willing to be involved in a part of the community?

I think that people are hungry to be involved.

I actually feel like the demographic of people that don't care are what us Detroit Lakes people call "Townies". People who came, stayed, never left, ever, and aren't interested in branching out to other people.

I think there's been so many people who have relocated here too and it's like you almost have to rebuild your whole life when you come here and we're all on the same boat. So it's really easy to connect with people that way.

What community or young professional events do you go to in your community?

Well I just had community night out. I thought that was great.

I think Art in the Park is a good example too. I mean I haven't gone to it in a few years but everyone talks about it when it's in town.

And you've got Lakes to Lakes, we do a huge fireworks thing. I mean there's a lot of different things. I do think that at least from my perspective, I think our generation too, is looking for more stuff. Instead of just being traditionalist, to kind of bring in some of the things that at least from my experience in the Twin Cities, let's get a rooftop bar and grill type thing. Let's look over the lakes. [...] I do think there's some room for change and just a desire and like a hunger and I think our generation has a lot of great ideas but we don't have the capital to do anything, to make any huge changes.

How is community in the Twin Cities different from the sense of community up here?

I think, at least I feel a lot of responsibility to be part of movements here or groups here because you know it is a smaller town and there's a small amount of people that help it grow and make it what we want it to be.

Well I think as we get people to have that community feeling, then you feel a vested interest in the community itself.

I think it's easier to see a change too. [...] Everyone knows everybody here, so it's like you make a difference, so that's what I like about it.

I think it was harder to justify and sacrifice time as a volunteer in the cities because of the additional time whether it be commuting or whatever the reason is.

Why did you join this young professional group?

I thought it was really important just to meet other people of like mind that kinda had the same purpose.

It's a true networking group just getting to know people and young professionals in the community.

Just makes people feel so welcome. Like I brought one of our brand new sales person there two months ago and right away he bee-lined it for blue anchors guy because he's all about baseball and he had been there a total of two days.

Do you have events in your community targeted at the young professional, emerging leader population?

I don't know if there are a lot of events that are targeted at one demographic in general.

But on the other end of the spectrum, there isn't anything in town that says oh, you have to be this age or demographic. Everything is kind of everybody.

Why emerging leaders come or leave the community

Why do emerging leaders come to this community?

There's so much opportunity.

I think family too. I couldn't imagine raising my kids somewhere else because of the feeling I get. Like you know they're going to be a part of something and not going to be just another number.

Why do emerging leaders leave the community?

I feel like people are looking for more and that they feel like they can get that somewhere else.

Some people feel like they've fallen into a rut in this type of area once they feel like they do know everybody. Once they feel like they've got as high as they can and maybe they lose a little perspective on what it's going to take to get them to the next level.

I think you know, a lot of why people leave could be you know, wanting to climb the ladder, the corporate ladder. You know how many corporate offices we have now in Alexandria. You know, I'm guessing just three.

The cost of living isn't less up here either. Everybody thinks it is, but houses are just as expensive, groceries are more expensive because we don't have the big discount stores.

Renting is expensive in town.

Generational Struggles and Workplace Environment

What does the generational struggle look like?

Like a silver tsunami versus the millennials. It's going to be a battle for a while.

That's the problem. There's going to be that time in the future that when the rubber meets the road, you know we're going to have all of our ideas shot down for the next fifteen years and then we're going to come in and now we have to make the decisions and there's going to be people […] I think it's hard to tee us up to be good leaders if we don't have support from older generations.

And it feels like they really want to support us though. I don't feel like I go into work and the older generation doesn't support us. It's like they want to support us but keep a harness on us at the same time.

And I think it's because they're our parents age and they look at us as their child and it's like no.

Have any of you found positive ways to work the generational gap?

I feel like I bring up what I learned in college whenever I'm bringing up a new idea. I feel like that resonates with them more because they recognize that they haven't been in college in a long time.

I feel like that's usually a way to connect with them because then it's like they want to know what you were taught.

Their generation is a big generation like ours of building themselves up. So, I think that the generation we're battling with is so similar to us and that's where the battle comes from. They worked for so long building their name and being secure and so now they see essentially a young them and they feel insecure because they want to still feel needed and want to feel that all the work they put in mattered.

What do you feel are the different values and cultural differences between generations?

I feel there are a lot of the same values. Cultural differences are huge, but when it comes down to morals and values, I think it is very similar.

I kind of feel like the more generations that come through, the more liberal it becomes as well. You know, I think that we're much more liberal in the workplace as young professionals.

Is there collaboration in your workplace or silos?

I think it depends on the size of the team and the team building efforts you put behind it.

I mean we all get along, we're great together. We don't have that problem, but yeah, I can say we're lucky.

We're more open to attempting to collaborate and it's a real attempt, but it's hard when the higher ups have done it one way the whole time. It's hard for them, it's scary.

And I think that the workplace is starting to get to a point where you are forced to collaborate with different generations. You have to, to be successful. So, I think it's getting better than it has I think. But, it's going to be something to keep working through.

Generational Workforce Gaps

What does the workforce look like for you as the older generation retires?

Yeah, I've lived here since, well since 1991 and this town is like completely different. I mean there's, it's exploded really. I mean there's lots of growth happening, but I don't know if it's necessarily the growth that's necessarily going to get us to where we really really need to be. And I think that some of it is just time and some of it is being able to pass the baton from the older generation to the newer generation [...]

So, I think that's going to be easier to see than we think. It's just gonna be a bit slow transition for the next couple years, but I think that they know. They know that it's going to be the younger people. We already have a lot of emerging leaders who even the older generation will recognize as somebody that's going to be in charge of the town someday [...]

And I don't have anything agains the people that are there, but they've just been there forever because nobody has run against them and so they just keep moving down the road. But, I do agree. I think at some point it's intimidating for our generation because it's like, oh, I can actually do that? So, let's just do it or at least give it a shot you know. Run for city council, run for some of these different things.

Organizational Engagement

Are there organizations in the community that help facilitate engagement or generational engagement?

Lakes Area Professional Women. The main reason that I joined is because at the EDC, Nicole is the president of the LAPW. But, I had fun, I went to the first meeting when I was here and like you look back and there's Lee that's been there for 25-30 years and then me who's coming to my first meeting. Like, that's huge.

When I moved here, I went to the Alexandria Newcomers Club and so it was just like a really great club for me to get to know just like a couple of faces in town. And some of the people that were part of it have been a part of it for five or six years. But, they still make it very welcoming.

There's a club which is heavily based on volunteering which is all different ages and all different backgrounds.

I'm in Rotary. Tons of old people. A bunch of old people. No, they're actually doing pork chop and feed along with the fire department. It's based on community involvement and just like helping others.

Are the generational gaps in clubs as stark as they are in the workplace?

For me the big thing that I notice that causes hang-ups is that I don't have kids and so immediately it's like let's all talk about our kids. I don't have kids so I don't fit in.

Even people that aren't married in this town, everybody has kids so when you meet someone that doesn't it's like oh my gosh, do you want to be friends.

That's actually what made me quit going to the newcomers club. Not that I don't like children but it was like I automatically had nothing to talk about with these people.

Brainerd Narrative

Location: Brainerd
Facilitator(s): F1 – David Milavetz
Number of Participants: 8
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 pm
Length of Transcript: 121:54 minutes

Focus Group Composition

The focus group began with introductions of the facilitator and participants and a review of what each participant did in their communities for work and volunteer. There were eight participants during a meeting that took place from 5:30 – 7:30 pm. Participants worked as labor analysts, project coordinators, at Foundations, in politics, as a manager, and in marketing. Participants live in Baxter, Brainerd, and Nisswa.

Word Association Activity

The facilitator brought up several crucial words in the study and asked participants to state the first words that emerged in their minds. The words used were *emerging leader, and community.*

Emerging Leader – young professional, millennial, entrepreneur, visionary, younger generation, engaged, curious future, proactive person, active young citizen, young person involved in the community, and a young person just starting to engage in community.

Well you know I think that depending on when you come into your own, you could be an emerging leader later in your life than young. I mean I'll just say that it took me up until my 40's to be an emerging leader and that could be because there were so many baby boomers in the way that it took a while for them to get out of the way for younger people who are a generation above you guys to have any opportunity.

They had an interesting presentation at our last session from somebody from the state, who showed the numbers and why there is a need for this whole emerging leaders thing. It was fascinating looking at how they calculate the budget long-term by the number of people who are in retirement, the number of people who are working. [...] It was very eye opening to see the baby boomers and how then they kind of go through the years and how that affects us as a state, as a city for various different needs.

That's what I was going to say is that's how it was and that's how it was when there was two generation and all the big boomers told them that's what they had to do but then my generation is just go take what you want. I'm not waiting in line behind anybody.

We're not going to sit down and wait and do the procedure that other generations want me to do. You know, go sit on a commission for the city for four years and then sit on another commission and then run for city council. No, I want to be on city council, I'm just going to go run and beat the incumbent.

The work style of the younger generation compared to the work style of those who have perhaps been there for a while and are entrenched. Vigorous work style, that's why your new director is probably 25.

Community – inviting, home, important, engagement, a place to belong, to feel a part of, or a place to get involved, belong to associations that people choose, specific geographic areas of voters, and then a group of people in an area that are working together.

Well I put it down because, I feel like community of people are trying to organize, just kind of society which is just kind of so, has so many different parts to it. You know it's kind of chaotic. It's kind of hard to organize, but people try and succeed often.

Is it really just one singular community or is it a collection of communities?

That's why I wrote down associations that people choose. Because you're part of so many communities in everyday life and you depict which communities you're part of and which ones you identify with and do not identify with.

[...] So, communities to me are bigger and so we have to, I can't afford to go and say okay here's this church community, how are they different from this church community? Like no, they're a church community for us.

[...] The range is kind of it's own community. You don't deal with counties so much up there. Here it is very county-oriented. The only thing that really unifies them. There's tourism, because we all rely on tourism up here and we all hate the cities. Those are the two biggest ones. Like the cities got this money, well we can't mention that the cities got this money because that means that the rural community did not. Yeah, so those are really the only unifying factors. There really aren't a lot.

Connection to Community

What community events have you been too lately and what caught your interest about the event?

On a smaller scale, I'm a big player of the local DFL party around here, so getting involved in that has been showing up and obviously common interests and being able to talk about that. So, that's how I kind of got first involved in the community.

The last community event that I can recall was Bridges of Hope Glow Run. It seems like lately, I'm too busy to do anything. I have like these three priorities: work, city council, and grad school. So, if I want to do anything, it has to be somehow connected to running because I want to still keep active or like a community engagement thing that's kind of like part of the Brainerd community.

The last thing I did was really Crow Wing County Fair. My future husband is a fire fighter and so we are really involved with the fire department just because it's a wonderful cause. We completely rebuilt their broad-stand this year, got everything set up for that. I worked a lot of grandstand events through the ambulance service and it's just networking with people. I think that's a community within community. Firefighters, you know the medical, police. I don't know, you can walk up to someone in uniform and you can have a whole conversation and not even know that person, but just because you're a part of that group you're accepted. [...]

Initially when you asked the question I didn't think I had been to any events recently to really have a scope on but then I realized four of the past five weekends I've been at events but as a worker, as a volunteer, as an organizer. I'm not really there on the consumer side. [...] So, my perception of events is always just on the running end and if I'm actually at an event to enjoy it I'm just kind of looking around logistically and seeing, comparing how they're running their event to see how I can improve any events I'm involved with.

Is the value of being open something that you have seen at other community events or something that you would like to build?

I would think it expands your or people's loyalty in a sense. You know, I know I feel like I go since I was young, I've been very loyal to the American Diabetes Association. And so like every year we'll do, I'll do a fundraising event for them and it's like when you go to their event right, it's very, it's everybody kind of with a shared interest and a passion of a) giving back, b) caring about people who live with diabetes, 3) people are sort of on fire to raise money.

Do you think that loyalty came about because of the cause or did it come up because of people you had worked with there, past experiences?

Yeah, I mean I think it was a two-part thing. One, they happened to be the nonprofit that reached out to my family when my younger brother was diagnosed and put into the hospital here locally. [...] But then, two, you meet a lot of people as the years go on who you enjoy or you have similar backgrounds or you know you have those shared values. Then it's like, yeah, maybe there are some bumps in the road over the last 19 years, but you're very committed to them. That's how I feel.

Yeah, exactly. But, you know, if people can, I think communities, people, whatever, if they really kind of stand by you in any time of adversity or maybe when you're not at 100%. To me then, I'm always going to do whatever I can on my end, maybe when I'm at my best to go out on a limb for them. So, I always think as a business, as a nonprofit, as a person, how can you do that for other people to build loyalty for things? You know?

And I think the shared experiences and being able to identify with people is huge. Because even within our ambulance service it's the shared experiences that we watch each other's back.

Are there any secrets you've found in planning events?

Plan for the worst.

You always plan for the worst. You always plan for terrible weather. Just the small list of things like I went to Frozen on Ice with my kids this year and it's like trying to, writing down notes on how Disney is running their operation just to see if we can keep ourselves in front of our audience like Disney does. Because you show up for Frozen on Ice, you want to see Frozen, but they bring out in front of you every single character they've ever written over the last 100 years.

This consumer, this producer part of the conversation is pretty interesting I think. My last thing I did, I volunteered at the Crow Wing County Fair but that was like a broad general community interaction.

What would you want present at an event that you attend?

I think a great speaker, somebody who, I mean obviously for that, like I felt obviously he was talking about moral compass like making the right decision even when you're in tricky spots. So, I felt it was applicable to the audience for anyone there. [...]

Emerging Leaders: Who they are, how they're engaged, and why they leave

What events are happening right now, what's good about them, and how are some of the values and ways that you're engaging in community events applicable to the emerging leader group?

One thing for me, I have no idea about events, I never hear about them.

Well that, or you could have a centralized place for people who are emerging leaders or identify as leaders for events that people might be interested in. Because otherwise how am I

going to know? I'm not going to read the Dispatch, I'm not going to search Facebook, I'm not going to ask around. I mean, it needs to be accessible otherwise it's not going to happen.

If it's in a centralized place it would just be easier because so many places have their events and okay, their event is posted on their website. Okay, well I'm not going to check 20 community websites to find out what all's going on in the community.

[…] Something that would scrape the events and put them all in one spot.

Why are people moving to the area right now?

Most of the time it's spouses work. Like, I came here for my husband's job. A bunch of other people I've met also and he grew up around here too, so that's another thing that attracted it to them. Also, just, I don't know because it's not the restaurants that's for sure. It's not the raging nightlife.

There's a big, I think there's a big retirement community up here. And they have service, clearly run into a lot of old people and they're all from the cities and they move up here after they retire to get away from the cities.

I moved up here from St. Cloud because of my husband.

But it's a slower pace. It seems like a smaller community. It just seems smaller.

Okay, to me, small town feel means if I go to Target, I'm running into someone I know. I lived in Minneapolis for years. I could go and I would never see a soul, which frankly, I sort of liked. But here you're in Costco, wherever, you don't go anywhere without running into somebody who you know and so to me that's, I don't know, that's to me like small, how I define small town just in an essence, in a sense.

What do you think needs to change to develop attraction and inclusivity?

Well to me I've always felt right that your government should be representative of your population. So, my hope always would be that then and at least for Baxter, it's always sort of been one person making a lot of the decisions or it seems to have been that way is that we can see that the collective voices, voices from the different pasts that actually make you stronger and brings better ideas and better collaboration […]

I think it's easier to tell people to do it and then they will. Like I've had a couple friends or people I know who I said hey, you live in Brainerd, go get on HRA, go sign up for EBA and they did. They just don't know and they're like okay what's that? It's like oh it's a meeting a month, go do it.

Before I moved up here, I had no inclination of moving up here. Someone goes hey there's this awesome job, you should go apply for it. It took me a split second before I was like, yeah, why not? But it took someone to really say something before I really said to myself that that was a realistic thing.

What types of events do you want to see? What types of things in your community would be helpful or interesting for you?

I think you need a hook, a hook to get them in.

Yeah, so connect it to something that's a hook and like the things the Initiative Foundation is doing right now with emerging leaders. The concept very similar to that for our Brainerd Area.

I think you need a, depending on the event, you need a good cause. People want to come out and support good causes.

I think that's how the YP group from the chamber kind of dissolved or stopped meeting is they didn't have a cause. There was nothing to rally around, it was just a networking group. In reality, you are always networking no matter where you go or what you do. So, if you have a group set up for networking it's bound to fail.

And there's the same people all the time and it just got boring so, I think coming up with like with our new group it's tough in the summer. [...] But I'd also like to see a more community service oriented group because I think that would be fun and maybe a branch.

What are some challenges to making these events happen or facilitating these connections?

Well, what got me before was when we're talking about small town like if you know everybody and all of the sudden within five years you have 25,000 new people living in the area, maybe you see a lot of new faces. I don't know, I'm just saying is this region ready for that change?

I think half the population is and half isn't [ready for demographic change]. That's the problem.

And so this is my philosophy. When we first moved here some twenty years ago Brainerd was a really closed community and you couldn't get into it. You couldn't get into Brainerd I mean as far as being a part of the community because you weren't from Brainerd.

In defense of being a local guy, I have a career and kids and I'm a local guy so I have a thousand friends that I've known forever, so I'm not looking for friends.

And I have no problem hanging out with people but it's like if I have a Saturday afternoon off to golf I'm not going to think of the person I met a couple of weeks ago I'm going to think of the guys who I was in his wedding fifteen years ago. That's the person I want to call first. That's just how I think it works for anyone.

So what are some ways to overcome barriers?

Well like you said like getting people to participate in city committees. In your voice, that should be more of the responsibility of the city not the people.

I think the groups should make themselves more accessible and around here be more known. Around here, no one knows how to use a computer around here. Oh my god, I'm sorry but some of the city websites, don't get me started.

So something that I've been wanting to do and hoping to do in the future with our Lakes Ignite group is to build business relationships with people in the area. They hired a new person that's younger and moving to the area fresh, single, married, wherever they are in that younger range, but they're moving to this area brand new is they give us or me a call and say hey we're hiring this person. I will take them out for lunch and I say, let me tell you about Lakes Ignite, we meet every third Thursday. We, I mean, because you're more, I mean in my experience you're more likely to go to something if you know somebody there. You have a familiar face.

And I think that personal interaction is important to people and I mean that human connection it starts to create that sense of belonging and we want you to tell somebody up front that we want you to come. And getting that personal invite it changes.

[…] but that's what's missing in communities is some sort of high tech welcome wagon that lets people know what's available in the community that's for fun or for civic engagement or all of that. So, sorry to be offering solutions.

All these groups should have a speed dating event.

But you could have like a jobs fair with community whatever you guys want, community engagement.

But you know what I think would be fun going off the speed dating idea. And I don't know the JC's events other than the Christmas party. But like, you know I only got to talk to our table, but or like, even at the Lakes Ignite event, the first one there were so many people. I only ever talked to the people next to me, but to do like speed dating at those events because I'd like to know as many people as possible or to have some type of conversations because sometimes I feel like I like an event or whatever if somebody is taking the lead or making introductions otherwise people kind of sit.

Organizational Community Engagement

What are some organizations that might help support these ideas with funds or time?

I think that communities like the city of Baxter, Brainerd, Breezy Point, Pequot Lakes, and Nisswa should all put a link to whatever you come up with on their website new to the community or young professional and then to even piggy back that further, whatever connections that the congressman has as far as newsletters, whatever. There's opportunities to target a population and there might be a way […]

All the big companies would be interested in this.

Bremer Bank would want to help fund it.

Everyone at Bladick. And they would know people that would be interested too.

Definitely the chamber.

Well all the chambers really.

The Initiative Foundation might consider further seed to start-up.

Maybe the Brainerd School Foundation, the Central Lakes College Foundations.

What is the workforce doing to keep their employees?

Words of affirmation.

I think giving trust is really big, being able to hire somebody. I mean it's important to keep track of them when they're starting and helping them along but three months in if you're asking about every single appointment on their calendar and when they're in and when they leave, I mean that doesn't make you feel trusted at your job.

Well and words of affirmation aren't for everybody. If my boss does that, I'm like get out of here because I don't want to hear it. What I look for in a boss is that he understands the situation down to earth. So, he knows that I have one hundred or whatever in the caseload. He knows I have all these other obligations, he knows all the paperwork they throw and he understands why I'm swamped and stressed out everyday. That's what I want. I want understanding. [...]

A job that fits your lifestyle and can help with that balance. I think that's what a lot of millennials are looking for. Because I'm not going to sacrifice family life for my job like my parents and my grandparents did because that's not okay for me.

Yeah, so frontloading that would be a good way to attract a workforce.

I think also flexibility. You know, because I think, I usually am actually more productive if I get to work from Baxter in my own apartment than when I'm sitting in my office in Wadena. [...]

For me personally, I might have a problem with authority at times, but I don't have a problem with work. I think that's something that other people in my generation will agree with.

I can't have somebody micromanaging me because I will leave. There was a big blow-up during the campaign. Got a new person in, I was there before her, but she was my boss and she started micromanaging me and I threatened to leave you know, I've been here, I've shown that I'm trustworthy and in the beginning you need a little bit of micro-managing but after that you need to trust me.

Mentorship.

Nisswa Narrative

Location: Nisswa
Facilitator(s): F1 – David Milavetz
Number of Participants: 5
Time: 5:30 – 6:30 pm
Length of Transcript: 62:37 minutes

Focus Group Composition

The focus group began with introductions of the facilitator and participants and a review of what each participant did in their communities. Participants lived in Pequot Lakes and Baxter and were from Alexandria, Nisswa, and the Twin Cities.   Participants worked in sales, insurance, city administration, banking, and accounting.

Word Association Activity

The facilitator brought up several crucial words in the study and asked participants to state the first words that emerged in their minds. The focus group used the words *emerging leader, connection, and community*. The following demonstrates the responses and discussions about these words.

Emerging Leader – youth, someone to look up to, engaging, proactive, and charismatic.

I just think it's someone who always takes charge and organizes everything and leads the way.

I don't think you need to be young to be an emerging leader. You can emerge as a leader when you're fifty if the circumstances call for it. Maybe you're only a leader that develops when you're young. I'm not sure.

Connection – Social media, friendship, relationship, and family.

I would say just in general like if you have a connection with someone there has to be some relationship at the foundation of that connection, whether it be personal or business. A lot of my business is based on relationships with people, so that was what came to mind for me.

I guess I wasn't thinking like family, like personal relationships. I was thinking more of like relationships with like professionals.

Community

People that care about other people.

Working together.

Connection to Community

What young professional or community event have you gone to lately? What caught your interest about it?

The most recent event that I did that was a community event, was actually the March of Dimes in Baxter. What was really surprising about that to me was all these people that are local people have had, they've actually benefitted from the March of Dimes. They've had kids born with birth defects and things like that.

I actually go to a lot of different events, I guess, because it's partially good for my business, but I like to meet new people. I went to the Mayors Prayer breakfast yesterday at Grandview. I was invited by a business colleague and I really didn't know what to expect. [...] So, I guess you never know if you don't try different things or engage yourself in different opportunities that are out there. You just don't know. It was worthwhile.

Well, like I brought up earlier, that young professionals thing where it's just once a month where they go out for a few drinks with other people that are young professionals. That was a good way to meet some people who are in the same boat as me.

The last event I did was a golf tournament with the Minnesota [indistinguishable] association golf tournament at the Pines, which we won no thanks to me. Those types of events are always fun. That event specifically was more so a business networking event and it was just a good time, and it was for a scholarship fund.

Did attending any of these events cause you to think any differently about your community or how you build relationships with people?

Not really, it was just something to do, it didn't really change anything.

Mine did. Because mine was March of Dimes and you realize some things that you didn't realize before that these people live in your community and they have these things that you always hear about on TV. There are kids born with these horrible horrible birth defects and things like that. I think anytime it hits close to home like that, you start thinking about that a little bit differently. You know.

Emerging Leaders: Who they are, how they're engaged, and why they leave

What do you think an emerging leader is?

I just think that anyone can be an emerging leader. Like, I think it has to do with like taking the initiative. You know? Just something new and you know expand your horizons a little bit.

Well I think it can be for anything. Like I think it can be for volunteering in something or professional.

I agree for the most part with the definition you have. I don't know that, I couldn't think of a different way to describe it.

Yeah, I thought about it, but I couldn't come up with a better definition. It seemed accurate.

I agree with the definition too, but I also agree with her that it can be for a variety of things.

To me an emerging leader would be someone who's starting to see success but who still has the potential and the opportunity to grow.

Have you had any opportunities to engage emerging leaders?

I don't know. I mean, I get people together every Monday, we play basketball.

We do the same with hockey and a group of guys that send out an email once a week.

What recruiting methods seem to work for you?

That's how it happens. Usually just word of mouth. So, yeah, I mean, I don't know that there's any defined method or just happens on its own.

Future Events

What do you want to see happening in the future for your community?

I've been hoping for it to be winter soon so I can meet some people who are on the outdoor rink or whatever that have a similar interest to me. That would be one thing.

I've had a hard time finding volunteer opportunities around here unless I initiate it myself. You know and make my own group. I have a hard time finding groups that I can join.

I was thinking earlier on just again about my husband and that in order to get him involved and he's going to be so mad at me that I'm talking about him. To get him involved in something there has to be a direct payoff whether it be satisfaction or doing something good with his friends or if it's building relationships for professional and job related reasons. There has to be a clear chance that this going to get him some sort of result.

I think whenever you offer free food or free drinks or something it's easy to get people there.

But I think you also need to clearly explain your cause. There's a ton of events but people don't understand what they're for or why they should go, or how it benefits them. You know when I had my coat drive, which is kind of a weird thing to do anyway, I would actually go talk to people. I would go around the office and we had an office of 400 people and I would tell them why this is good and how it helps people and how we do it. And just on a personal level, to make them realize this is really important.

Organizational Collaboration and Engagement

What are ways in which organizations or communities can effectively work together to make events that you want to see happen, happen? How can we overcome barriers of entry to events?

I definitely think there are a lot of events and I do look at the paper every day. I agree with you, I mean it is kind of depressing because it's just always bad stuff in there. But there is a lot of information in there about events that are taking place. […] You know and then the other barrier to getting the word out is cost. I mean, if you're putting on an event, it's expensive to put into the paper unless it's a charitable thing.

Are there organizations here that you could work with?

Chamber.

To me it sounds like there are several barriers, one is that people might intentionally not look and the other is an anxiety about the event. Are there ways in your experiences, of overcoming those things?

What's worked best for me is talking to them. Like I said, actually having a conversation with them about what this is so that they can fully understand what it is.

I think that works best. The face to face is always better. You can do it with phone, you can do it with email, but the face to face is always the most effective.

When I've been involved in events a lot of times it has been not employer mandated, but employer encouraged. Like, hey you can work the week before Christmas, but if you want

we're going to have you go volunteer instead. [...] It makes a difference because you start to think about it and you know once you feel almost obligated to do something. You know I've done some of these things, you know you probably enjoy it and get past some of those barriers.

Twin Cities Narrative

Location: Minneapolis/St. Paul
Facilitator(s): Brooke McManigal and Andrea Nadel
Number of Participants: 6
Time: 6 – 7:30 pm

Focus Group Composition

The participants of the focus group largely all lived in Minneapolis or St. Paul in the Seward, Whittier, Inver Grove Heights, and Hamline-Midway neighborhoods. Participants held a wide range of participants from the University of Minnesota Extension, a barista, program manager, data analyst, and a researcher at Wilder Research.

Word Association Activity

The facilitator brought up several crucial words in the study and asked participants to state the first words that emerged in their minds. The words used were *emerging leader, collaboration, belonging, and connection.*

Emerging Leader – Skilled; Opportunity; Network; Direct; Approachable; Youth; Intelligence; Bravery; Relatively Young; Minnesota Rising; Thinker; Youth; Critically Aware; Barriers; Organized.

Collaboration – Open Minded; Shared Understanding; Spectrum; Together; Addressing Wicked Problems; Brainstorming; Teamwork; Google Docs; Peace-Building; Communication; Give and Take; Cross-Sector; Compromise; Goal; Communication; Verb and Noun.

Belonging – Identity; Comfortable; Connection; Community; Unity; Acceptance; Welcoming; Peers; Home; Like-Minded; Authentic Welcome; Listening; Acceptance; Chosen Kin; Community; Respected.

Connection – Bridge; Brings Together; Communication; Spark; Durable; Internet; Shared Experiences; Honest; Bridge; Bridge; Introduction; Interest.

Community Connection

Can you talk about a young professional or community event you have gone to lately?

I went to this thing last November called the 'UnConference'. I was invited by Jackie and said hey okay. Now, I'm here drinking soda and sitting on the porch. The thing that struck me is that it was so nice to be with nonprofit professionals, who may not have the same experiences, but that we're in the same generation. So many people I network with are 10-20 years older than me and their path is so much different than the reality of the world.

I was thinking about an opportunity I had last year with a leadership development philanthropy. I received an invitation was a big piece. It matched some of my interests professionally and personally. I felt that I could get something out of it. Some of the people there were similar and different. New connections to be made and a lot to learn.

I was recently at a creative place-making event at Wilder Foundation. It was interesting because creative place-making is amorphous and involves a lot of different disciplines. The event brought together a lot of different people. It was set up as a Q&A panel. What was different about it were the people in the room who don't always sit in the same space. It was cool to see this cross-section convened in one place. It gave me a new set of faith in the place-based work that we do. Right in our own back yard. It was neat to see that and touch base with all the people we work with.

In May, I went to a convention in Madison called WISCON a Sci-Fi convention. It focuses a lot on social justice issues and focused on women. Much smaller and more academic than other conventions. People would talk about what they learned. One of the panels I went to was on how to be a good ally. I spent a lot of time afterwards talking to the panelists about it and

made a lot of good connections there. (What sort of issues?) They touched on allyship. In terms of sci-fi conventions they tend to be predominantly white. This was the only one where none of the panelists were white. People who are non-binary were interacting with each other which was very cool. Several panels talked a lot about race very candidly and something you don't see very often. Lots of things touching on trans issues and the Sci-Fi genre being more inclusive. A lot of instances of women of color talking about their experiences with publishing. [...]

So there was a thing put on, I found out about it through TechMN, it wasn't just focused on young, but women in tech. What drew me to it was there were people from groups I hang out with that were there, interesting speakers, and hosted by groups that weren't just aligned with women. I thought it'd be a learning experience. It was a larger more entrepreneurial thing. The speakers had interesting things to share, people had the chance to talk about things that mattered to them but were obviously not professional speakers.

Emerging Leaders: Who they are, how they're engaged, and why they leave?

How would you describe an emerging leader?

Emerging leader is a mix of skills and potential impact.

I said approachable, in order to be a leader you have to be someone your community can connect with. There are people in charge but not approachable. Pulling with the team. People have leadership roles but are not leaders.

I wrote barriers, because I have to think, when does someone stop emerging? Barriers is a traditional way of looking at leadership, emerging is other things and can scoot around those traditional barriers of operating within a hierarchy.

It's a relative term, there are lots of people who I think as leaders now in the traditional hierarchical mindset, and we're emerging.

I'll build on that with our idea of emergence. I didn't write down youth or young, because we're always emerging. It might be healthier if we all reframe that everyone is emerging.

What sort of emerging leader or community events would you like to see in the neighborhood that are not currently happening?

I really like YNPN (Young Nonprofit Professionals Network). They do a good job of linking up people. One example is their Breakfast with Champions series where YP's can come in and talk with seasoned professionals and hear about their journey. Those are good to help people see what's out there. Events where people can freely make connections around a common topic like what MN Rising does to bring people together and facilitate connections to be made within the group. Helps people to have familiarity when they see people in different contexts.

With any event for me it's important to have networking time built into the schedule of the event. They're going to have a speaker and you'll have 15 minutes to talk about the speaker. And then we don't get those 15 minutes. I think it's important to be very direct about sticking with the schedule. If there's a panel and no discussion, I don't like that. Same with a movie or anything that impacts our society. [...]

I always like when events have a social aspect. So, if you're going to go bowling or happy hour, it gives you that time to communicate and bond. If it's a stuffy plan or event, sometimes people aren't necessarily themselves. […]

I think as a personal amendment is that I like when there is some facilitated aspect of networking. Because sometimes I fall into the trap of talking with the same people and don't make the effort to network with people I haven't met yet.

Organizational Community Engagement

What in your opinion are ways in which organizations or communities can effectively collaborate with each other?

I live in Seward. There is a neighborhood group and a smaller Milwaukee neighborhood organization. There's been not great communication historically because Milwaukee Avenue thinks they can do it all by themselves. Where I've seen that get overcome is that people inhabit both spaces regularly and make sure there's communication going on in both sides. This has been carried by a few individuals but I'm not sure how it's sustainable.

The key is to have a shared purpose or vision. There are groups that will never need to collaborate, so what's the point of doing so? If you can find the shared ground to build that bridge, you need to find trusted people to bring that together.

I think it takes time. I need to build trust with people before I let them do anything that will impact anything that's important to me. The communication piece is key, but if it's coming from somebody that's not part of those communities, it may not help.

Appendix 3 – World Café Documents

World Café Agenda

1) Opening Discussion
2) World Café – Assessing Recommendations
3) Debrief & Share-Out

World Café Discussion Questions

Question 1: Why did you come to northwestern Minnesota?

Question 2: Do you believe emerging leaders are currently engaged in your local areas?

Question 3: What about an area engages emerging leaders? Can any of this be done in your region?

Question 4: How could local organizations, community groups, or young professionals participate in these efforts?

World Café Recommendation Areas

Recommendation Area 1: A centralized hub for regional information on emerging leader events and peer groups in North and West Central Minnesota.

Recommendation Area 2: Local events targeting emerging leaders that introduce them to existing organizations and community groups.

Recommendation Area 3: Developing awareness and generating participation in volunteer events and opportunities throughout the region.

Recommendation Area 4: Brainstorming new recommendation ideas

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Appendix 5 – Greater Minnesota Rising Team

Chet Bodin, Outreach and Field Lead
Chet is a Regional Labor Market Analyst for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and currently lives in Nisswa, Minnesota. In this role, Chet supports local workforce and economic development councils as the state's primary regional resource for labor market information; including demographic, employment and industry analysis for program planning and implementation.

As a newcomer to the Northwestern Minnesota community, Chet is regularly engaged with community stakeholders on a personal and professional basis throughout the 26 county regions. His experience and knowledge from this transition provides an insight to multiple perspectives, and will add value to building a collaborative process. Outside of DEED, Chet serves his community as a Civil Affairs NCO in the Minnesota National Guard. He completed a Master of Public Policy degree from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in May 2013, with a focus on public leadership and nonprofit management.

Brooke McManigal, Research Assistant
Brooke McManigal is the summer research assistant on the Greater Minnesota Rising Research project sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs Community Assistantship Program (CURA CAP). She is conducting research about emerging leaders and community engagement in Northwestern Minnesota with the Minnesota Rising team. Brooke also works part-time at the Federal Executive Board of Minnesota, a small federal agency that focuses on intergovernmental collaboration and connecting Federal executive leaders.

She is also attending the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs where she will be receiving her Masters in Public Policy in May of 2016, and is also a Humphrey Fellow. Her focus is on global policy and quantitative analysis, and she will be completing a capstone in global policy in the fall. In addition to her involvement with Greater Minnesota Rising, Brooke acts as the organizer of a softball league through the Minneapolis Parks & Recreational Park and a participant in a kickball league through City Sports Connection.

David Milavetz, Research Lead
David Milavetz is the President of Raising The Bar LLC, an independent consulting firm, and has experience conducting evaluation and research within community, nonprofit, and informal education settings. He is particularly interested in using evaluation to support organizations and programs in creating their desired impact.

David earned a Master of Public Policy with emphases in public leadership and nonprofit management from the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and a BA in International Studies from the University of Denver. David is a recipient of the 2013 University of Minnesota President's Student Leadership and Service Award and 2010 University of Denver Profiles of Excellence Award. Currently, David is completing a Program Evaluation Certificate through the University of Minnesota's Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development department.

Andrea Nadel, Research Consultant
Strategic planning research, policy analysis, grant-writing and community engagement lie at the foundation of Andrea's experience. She is passionate about helping organizations and

communities evaluate and maximize their impact in the context of their strategic visions and has experience doing so with nonprofit organizations in the US and globally.

Diane Tran, Leadership Team Chair
Diane Tran is System Director of Neighborhood Integration for HealthEast Care System. She most recently served as a Senior Project Manager at Grassroots Solutions, a national consulting firm specializing in grassroots strategy, organizing, training, and evaluation. She previously directed Minnesota field activities for the Pew Charitable Trusts' program to advance federal clean energy policies and coordinated a local public health advocacy campaign to advance the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007, a statewide smoke-free workplace policy protecting Minnesotans from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

Diane serves on the boards of the Minnesota Humanities Center and Minnesota Philanthropy Partners, and is Immediate Past Chair of the board of directors for the Citizens League. She was selected as a 2013 German Marshall Memorial Fellow, named one of Ten Outstanding Young Minnesotans in 2008 by the Minnesota Junior Chamber, and served as a 2006-2007 Humphrey School Policy Fellow. Diane earned a self-designed bachelor's degree in International Social Policy with a double major in Humanities at The College of Saint Scholastica in Duluth, MN. She is the founder of Minnesota Rising, a statewide network of emerging leaders, and blogs about civic leadership and the millennial generation at www.MinnesotaRising.org.