



2015 Annual Report

This is the first annual report issued by the Minnesota Food Funders Network (MFFN), a group of Minnesota-based funders who make informed, coordinated, and strategic investments to improve key facets of our food system. MFFN has been in existence since 2011, sponsoring networking, capacity building, and strategic opportunities for shared impact among its members. Guided by a strategic plan that informs its priorities and activities, MFFN is led by a core group of funder-members with a larger cadre of funders who attend events, are members of the MFFN listserv, and serve in shorter-term leadership roles for special events.

In 2015, MFFN undertook a variety of successful activities, based on an updated approach to their work, which has resulted in numerous exciting outcomes. This report offers:

- An overview of the Minnesota Food Funders Network
- A summary of 2015 accomplishments
- A review of the Minnesota Food Charter and its relationship to the Minnesota Food Funders Network
- An overview of 2016 priorities

For current network members, this annual report is a helpful way to convey the impacts that result from our shared investments as funders in the activities and purpose of the network. For prospective funder members, this report provides a useful description of the activities and impacts of the network.

What is the Minnesota Food Funders Network?

The Minnesota Food Funders Network is a group of Minnesota-based funders who make informed, coordinated, and strategic investments to improve key facets of our food system.

What do we do and why do we do it? - Our shared commitment to the vitality and prosperity of our state's communities and resilience of our landscapes inspire us to work together. We connect food, hunger, health, and agricultural issues, by:

- ✓ Sharing information about promising programs, organizations, issues, and research
- ✓ Coordinating funding among members to ensure well-distributed investment of resources across food systems-focused organizations and initiatives
- ✓ Increasing overall amount of funding available for food systems-related work
- ✓ Convening meetings for Minnesota's funding community on relevant issues of interest around food systems and philanthropy

This joint agenda for learning and investment emphasizes two strategic priorities:

- Facilitating local entrepreneurship and a healthy food infrastructure across the food supply chain
- Improving healthy food access to enhance wellness and health equity for all Minnesotans

These priorities are aligned with related strategies identified in the Minnesota Food Charter. They inform the content of MFFN-sponsored meetings for the broader funding community and influence strategies to align and increase funding.

Who are network members? MFFN members include agencies, organizations, and institutions that fund efforts in Minnesota to address social, environmental, economic and human health dimensions of food and agriculture (e.g. family, community, and corporate foundations; state agencies; academic institutions; health-related organizations; and hunger relief groups).

How do we work? A core group of funder members meets quarterly to monitor finances, set priorities and develop workplans, provide updates of mutual interest, monitor progress of the network strategic plan, and discuss strategy. At present, any funder who contributes cash or in-kind resources to MFFN can join the core group.

Each year, there is at least one networking event for the broader funding community that includes a learning component and informal networking and at least one strategic event also open to the broader funding community. Typically, these events are jointly

sponsored and planned by MFFN and other members of Minnesota's funding community and attended by a broad array of funders. The strategic events are based on the MFFN's shared priorities.

How does the Minnesota Food Charter Relate to the Minnesota Food Funders Network?

The Minnesota Food Charter is a shared roadmap developed by thousands of Minnesotans that offers 99 actionable policy and systems changes designed to increase reliable access to safe, affordable, and healthy food for all Minnesotans. In 2015, the Minnesota Food Charter Network launched: it is a statewide network, rooted in Minnesota Food Charter strategies, that supports and fosters shared action towards healthy food access for all. The Minnesota Food Funders Network supports implementation of the Minnesota Food Charter by educating funders about opportunities to support implementation of Charter strategies and/or the Minnesota Food Charter Network and striving to align strategic investments to increase impact.

The Food Charter is a cornerstone of MFFN's work, guiding its approach to networking and strategic events, aligned and strategic funding, communications with current members as well as the broader funding community, The Minnesota Food Funders Network has been actively involved in funding, guiding, and implementing the Food Charter during all of its phases. This report describes the role MFFN will play in the implementation of the Food Charter strategies in coming years.

2015 Accomplishments Snapshot

2015 was a very productive and successful year for MFFN with several important accomplishments, including:

- Identification of a new network name and creation of a logo
- Over 80 funders and their partners participated in MFFN strategic and networking events in 2015
- Planning and execution of the 4/30/15 "Our Common Table" event, focused on financing a healthy food infrastructure
- Planning and execution of the 12/8/15 Minnesota Food Funders Network networking event, convened at the newly opened "The Good Acre" food hub
- Planning and presentation of 2015 Food Access Summit breakout session focused on the role of Minnesota funders in Minnesota Food Charter strategies implementation

- Planning and preparation for the 1/20/16 “Issue Brief: The Impact of Access to Healthy Food on Health Equity,” focusing on the intersection of health equity, building a culture of health, and hunger relief
- Involvement and financial contributions by many new funders in network events, fulfilling new member goals established by MFFN for 2015
- Increased visibility in funding community, through use of strategic communications tactics associated with the “Our Common Table” strategic event
- Decision to become ‘Aligned Funding’ Action Team for the Minnesota Food Charter Network, charged with supporting implementation of the Minnesota Food Charter by educating funders about opportunities to support implementation of Charter strategies and/or the Minnesota Food Charter Network and striving to align strategic investments to increase impact

2015 Successes Overview

Our Common Table - The “Our Common Table” event was convened on 4/30/2015, with the intent of convening funders and leaders interested and engaged in financing the local and regional infrastructure needed for a healthy food system. With over 60 attendees, this event brought in two nationally recognized experts and generated a series of project ideas that partners attending the event agreed to pursue together. The event generated a lot of buzz in the funding community, thanks to a strategic communications plan executed via Minnesota Council on Foundations and Minnesota Food Charter communications channels.

Planning Committee members included:

- Pam Bishop, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (Co-chair)
- Sue Letourneau, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (Co-Chair)
- David Bly, Minnesota State House of Representatives (D-Northfield)
- Kathleen Fluegel, HRK Foundation
- Don Hickman, Initiative Foundation
- Cheryal Hills, Region Five Development Commission
- Warren McLean, Community Reinvestment Fund
- Ela Rausch, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
- Sai Thao, AgStar Financial Services
- Dale Umlauf, West Central Initiative

Event funders included:

- AgStar Financial Services

- HRK Foundation
- Initiative Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Food Funders Network
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Minnesota
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
- University of Minnesota Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics
- West Central Initiative
- Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota

December 8 Networking Event – Over 20 funders attended the December 8, 2015, Minnesota Food Funders Networking Reception. Held at the newly-opened, non-profit food hub, “The Good Acre,” this event offered attendees a tour of the new facilities and an introduction to the organization, a description of MFFN and the Food Charter, and a delicious buffet prepared by Appetite for Change and sponsored by the Pohlad Foundation (the founder and primary funder of The Good Acre). MFFN Co-Chairs, Alison Babb and Pam Bishop, provided leadership for planning this successful event.

Minnesota Food Charter Network Aligned Funding Action Team – MFFN took a momentous step in 2015, moving to fulfill two strategic plan goals focused on (a) aligning funding across the funding community to advance a healthy food system and (b) increasing overall funding available to do food systems work.

The new organizational model for the Minnesota Food Charter Network includes an Action Team specifically charged with supporting implementation of the Food Charter and the organizational needs of the Minnesota Food Charter Network by educating funders about the work and investment opportunities. This work will become a major focus beginning in 2016.

2016 Planning – During the third and fourth quarters of 2015, MFFN core group members met to identify a strategic direction for 2016, which included discussion about its role as the Minnesota Food Charter Network Aligned Funding Action Team, MFFN member recruitment, MFFN strategic communication priorities, and potential strategic and networking events. This plan will help guide MFFN’s work in 2016 and beyond.

January 2016 Strategic Event Planning – While the event does not occur until early 2016, the majority of the planning for the “Issue Brief: The Impact of Access to Healthy Food on Health Equity,” occurred in 2015. An MFFN strategic event co-sponsored and executed by the Greater Twin Cities United Way and the Minnesota Hunger Initiative, this event will offer members of the funding community exciting new ways to think about and approach their work related to hunger. Over 130 registrants will spend half a day

hearing from Wilder researchers, the Minnesota Commissioner of Health, the Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Human Services, a senior leader from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and a series of speakers on Minnesota-based best practices. The day's program integrates health equity, building a culture of health, healthy food access, and the Minnesota Food Charter.

The Greater Twin Cities United Way and the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota are providing leadership and resources for this event, with participation by Allina and Twin Cities Hunger Initiative on the planning committee.

Looking Ahead to 2016

The Minnesota Food Funders Network has exciting plans for 2016, including:

- Hosting the January 20, 2016, "Issue Brief: The Impact of Access to Healthy Food on Health Equity" strategic event
- Identifying and planning for one additional strategic event (in 2016 or 2017)
- Hosting up to two funder networking events
- Planning and executing membership development and strategic communications plans
- Convening 4 core group meetings to plan and monitor progress on network priorities
- Developing and executing a work plan for the Aligned Funding Action Team work, as part of the Minnesota Food Charter Network

The intended outcomes resulting from this list of activities includes:

- Increasing awareness of Minnesota Food Charter strategies and Minnesota Food Charter Network activities among Minnesota funders
- Increasing the MFFN's visibility in statewide and national funding communities
- Increasing the number and diversity of funders involved in designing and hosting strategic events
- Meeting revenue and membership targets for MFFN
- Meeting attendance and revenue goals for MFFN-sponsored networking and strategic events
- Appointing a new MFFN co-chair

Minnesota Food Funders Network Membership

Total number of MFFN listserv subscribers - 75

MFFN Core Group Members

Alison Babb, MFFN Co-Chair (Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota)

Pam Bishop, MFFN Co-Chair (Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation)

Tikki Brown (*Minnesota Department of Human Services*)

Lisa Gemlo (*Minnesota Department of Health*)

Kristine Igo (*UMN Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute*)

Sue Letourneau (*Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota*)

Amy Lopez (*Greater Twin Cities United Way*)

Donna McDuffie (*Minnesota Department of Health*)

Malvin Moore (*Mosaic, Inc.*)

Mark Muller (*McKnight Foundation*)

Geographic Representation of Core Group and MFFN Contributors

Statewide – AgStar Financial Services, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, HRK Foundation, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Human Services, UMN Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics, UMN Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute, UMN Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

Regionally Focused – Greater Twin Cities United Way, Initiative Foundation, Pohlad Family Foundation, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, and West Central Initiative

2015 Minnesota Food Funders Network Revenue and Expenses

2015 Revenue - Funder members and an individual donor contributed \$42,300 to the Minnesota Food Funders Network. Additional in-kind resources were provided by the McKnight Foundation, including catering expenses for the “Our Common Table” event and ongoing catering and meeting space support for MFFN Core Group meetings.

2015 Expenses – MFFN expenses in 2015 totaled \$40,071, including monthly management fees for Minnesota Council on Foundations, consultant services to support network operations, meeting venue and speaker fees for strategic events, and graphic design fees for logo development.