



Study of Diversity Coalitions in Rural Communities

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'Rural Diversity Coalitions'

Programs that *improve relations between immigrants and people born in the U.S.*



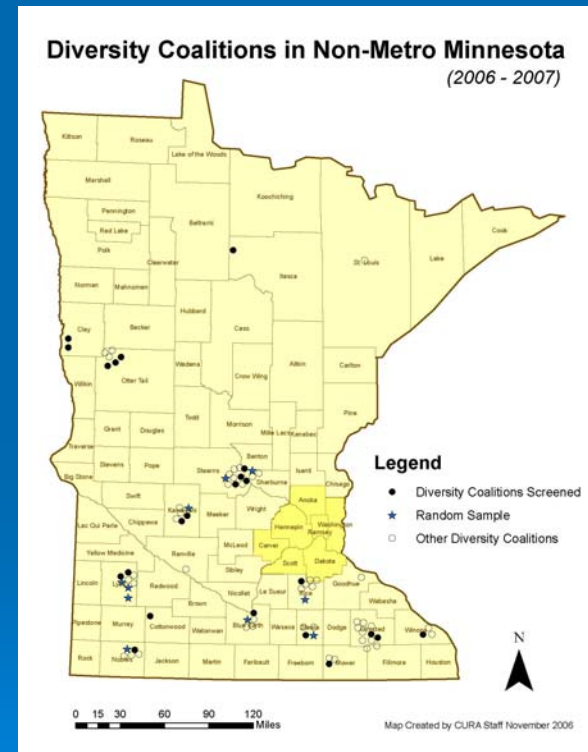
Why study this?

- Most research on urban areas
- Rural residents have most negative views of immigrants
- Most public discussion focuses on the *needs of immigrants*
- Real need is programs that *focus on native born* and strive to *improve cross-cultural relations*
- I've seen these coalitions (or collaboratives or 'welcome centers') in many rural communities

Study Purpose

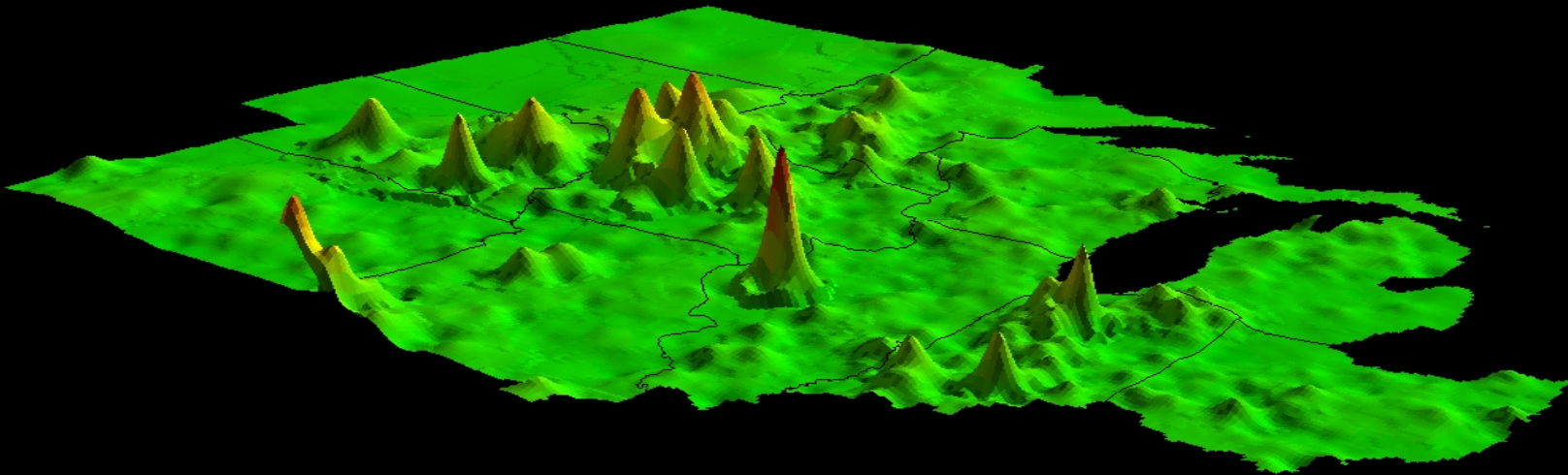
To conduct a census of 'diversity coalitions' in rural Minnesota, and examine:

- How they began
- What they do
- Funding
- Staffing
- Obstacles
- Successes



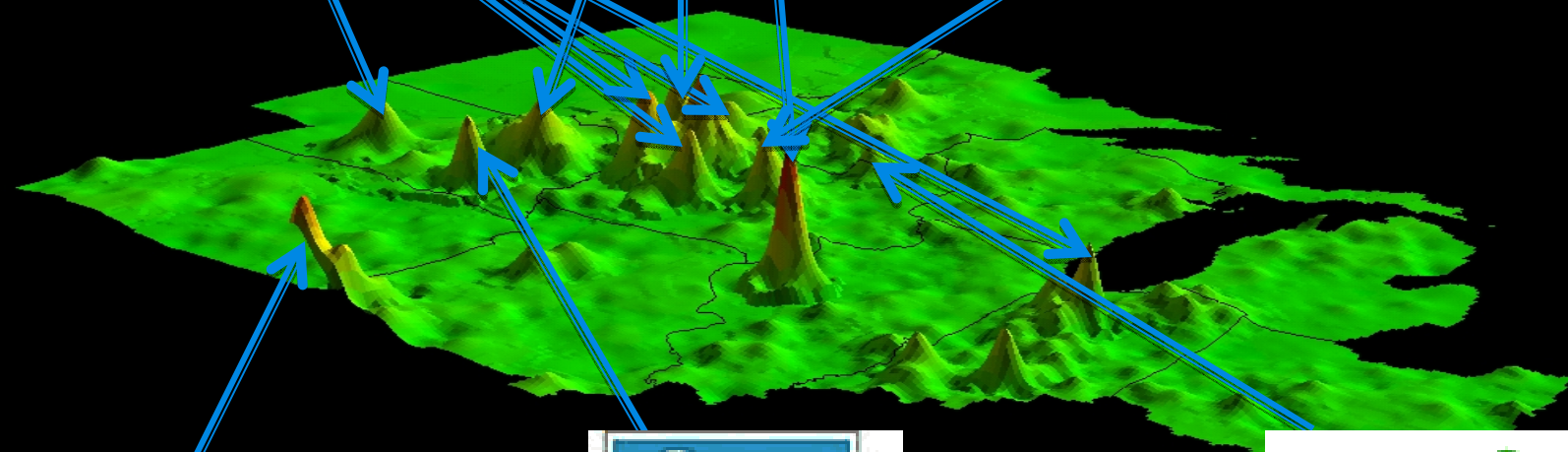
Immigration in the Midwest

Percent Hispanic Population Change,
1990-2000

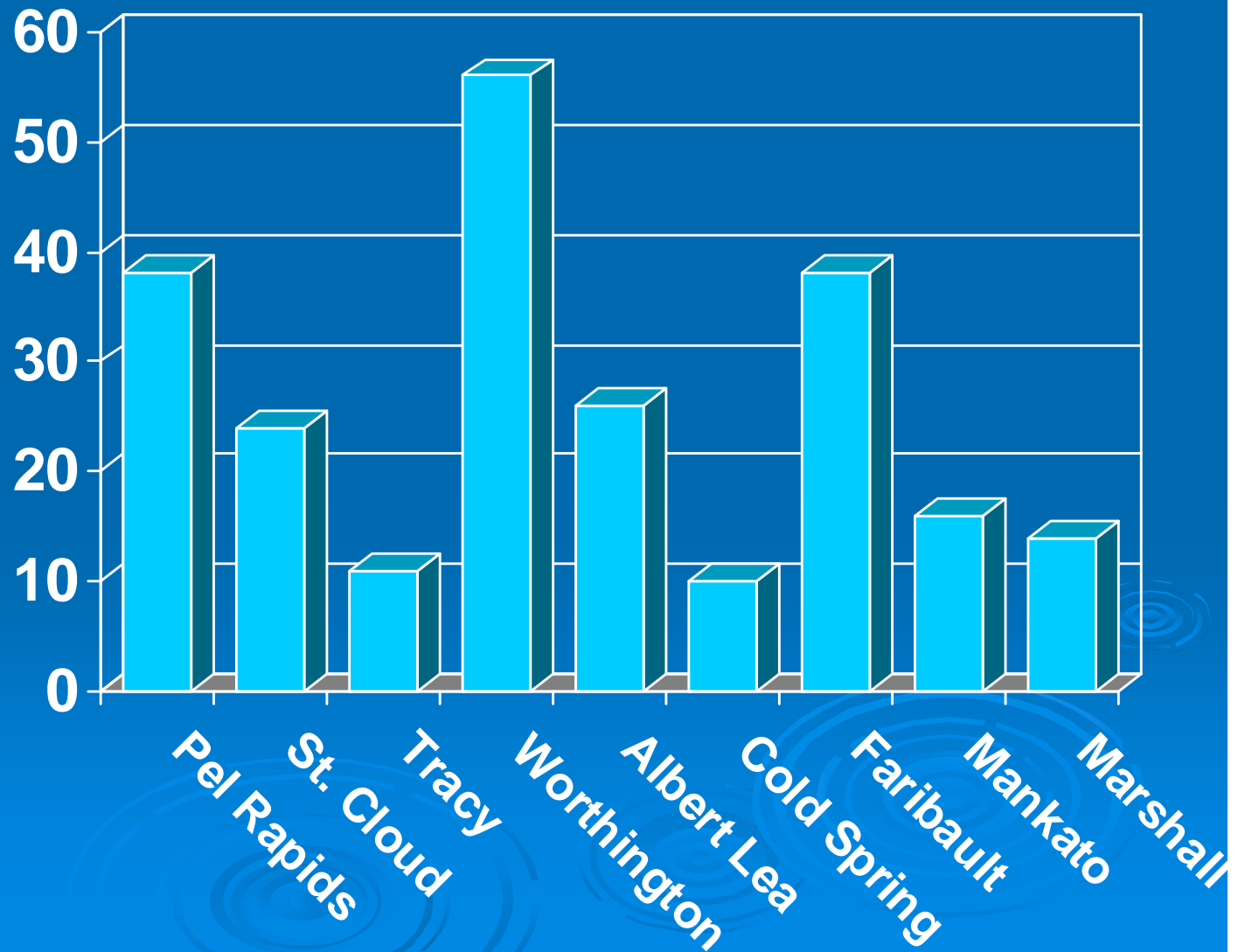


Paul Voss, 2002

Immigration in the Midwest, continued

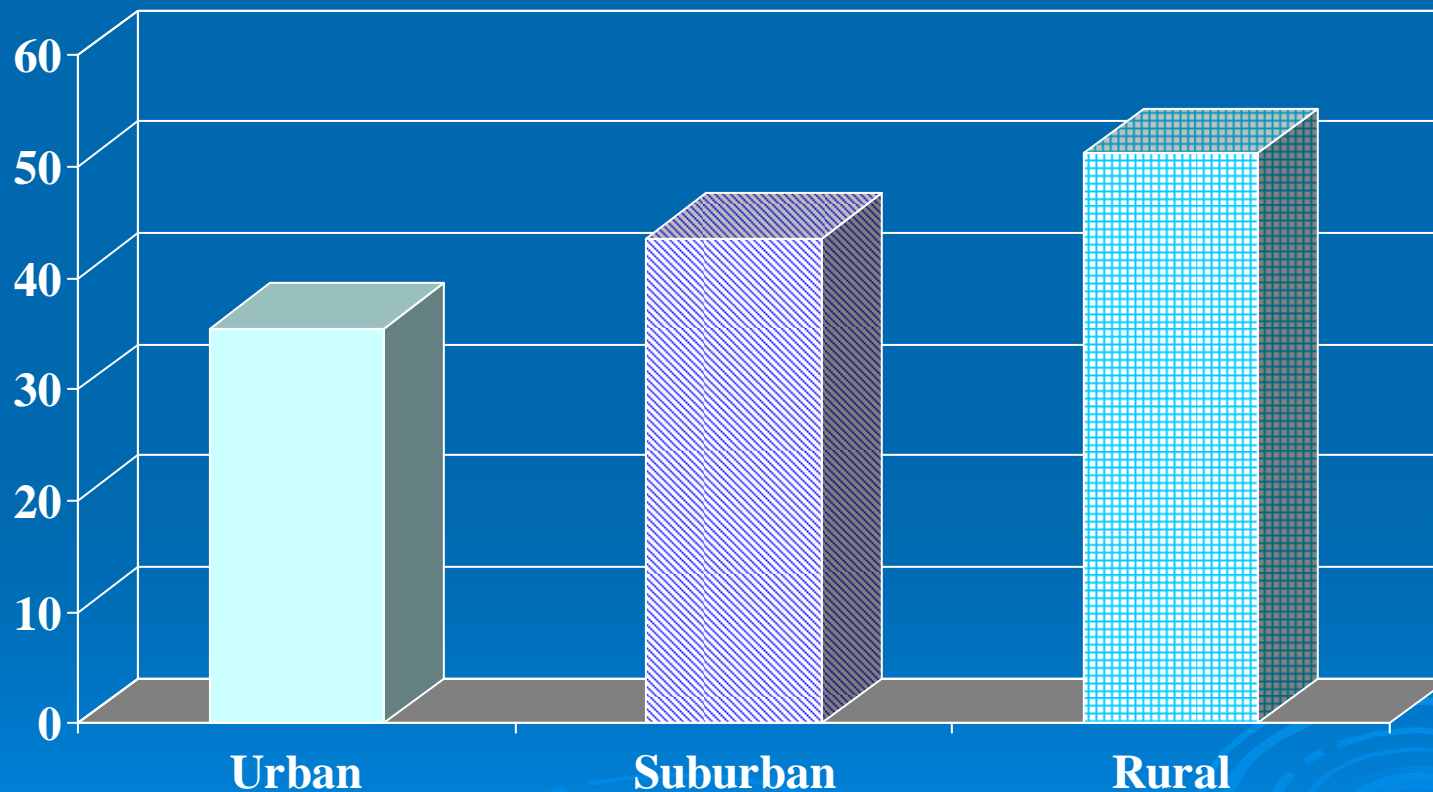


Percent Minority Children in Grade K: Sample Cities, 2006-2007



“Immigrants Are Hurting Our Quality of Life”

Percent Agreeing: MN Community Survey, 2004



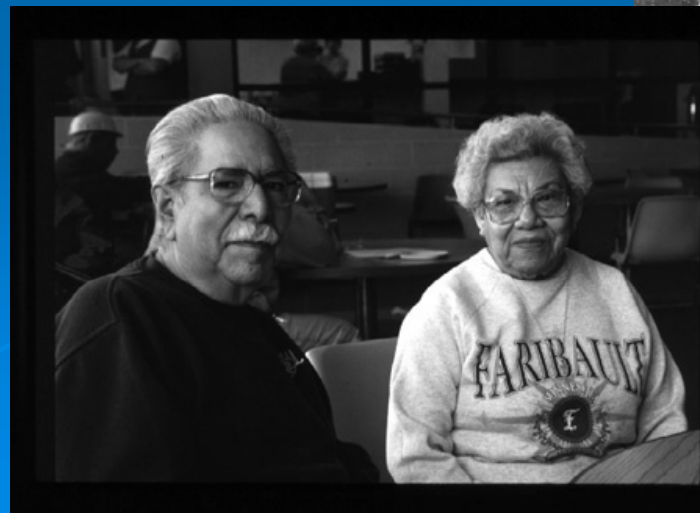
Statewide Survey: n=673 likely voters; Exurban Survey: n=239 likely voters

Community Interviews

- 14 interviews were held with immigrant community leaders, business people, and educators in the sample cities

- Interviews were held in the language most comfortable for the interviewee

- 5 Somalis and 9 Latinos



Interviews with Immigrant Leaders: Latino Voices...

I think that often discrimination and racism and all the prejudicial things that people say about us are the result of a lack of education. Some Americans who aren't very educated feel invaded; they think that we are coming to rob them, and this leads to resentment toward Hispanics.

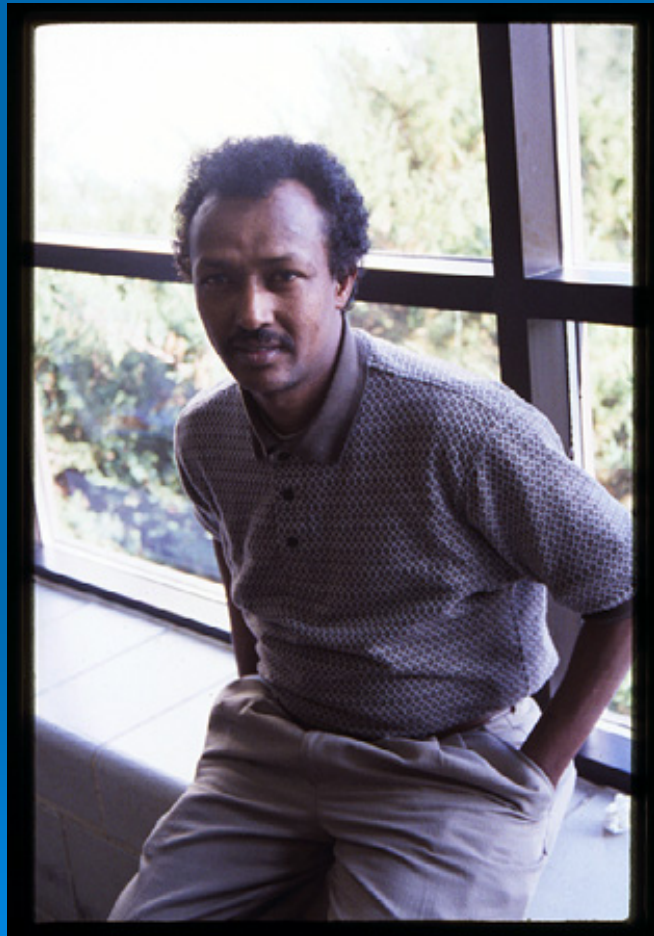




We immigrants have no voice. We are full of fear and we are waiting for bad things to happen because they do happen. Being undocumented gives carte blanche to many Americans and other immigrants to think that we have no rights, but we are human beings, and some people forget this.

Latino leader

Somali – American Religious divisions:



We don't go to bars and nightclubs where native-born [people] usually socialize. . . . There are social relationships in limited capacities, not widely open relations.

Somali Leader

Language Barriers

- **One Somali leader estimated that only 2% of 600 Somalis in his community were proficient in English**



Improved Somali – American Relations



- **When you talked to some people in the old days, they looked surprised and uncomfortable.. ... I think there's a visible welcoming environment right now. You can see people smiling and welcoming us, not with suspicion. People, including officials, are opening to us.**

Somali leader

Diversity Coalitions in Rural MN

- 50 'eligible programs'
- 34 'screening' interviews
- 12 face-to-face coalition interviews

Enormous Diversity of Goals and Programming

Examples of goals:

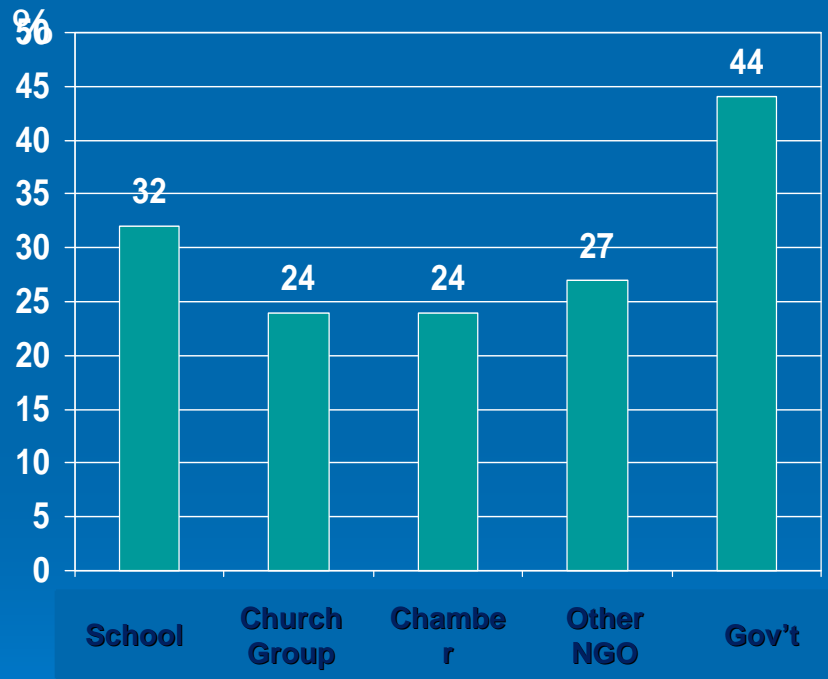
- “building understanding and trust”
- “encouraging cross-cultural interaction”
- “bridge gaps between immigrants starting businesses and local establishments”

Examples of Programs

- Recreational
- K-12
- Other educational
- Community festivals
- Organizing/lobbying
- Other/misc.

Program Origins

Characteristics of Diversity Coalition Founders

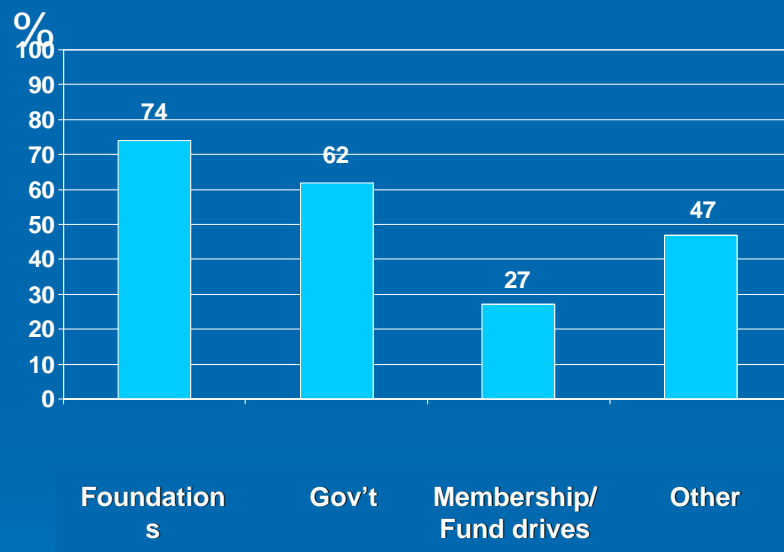


Other founders:

- Employers/Business...3
- Farm Workers...1
- Human Rights Commission...1
- Immigrant Groups...1
- High School Students...1
- An Individual...3
- U of M Extension...1
- Local Hospital/Providers...2

Funding

Sources of Funding



What's your biggest unmet need for cross-cultural work?

"Up to now it's been money."

- Does your organization receive outside funding for any of our work on improving cross-cultural relations?
 - 94.1%
- Does your organization have long-term funding?
 - 44.1%
- 2/3 had experienced budget cuts in recent years they labeled moderately serious to very serious.

Foundation Support

Foundation Support	# of programs
Otto Bremer	10
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	4
Southwest Initiative Fund	4
West Central Initiative	2
Minneapolis/St. Paul Foundation	1
Winona community Foundation	1
Grotto Foundation	1
Excel Energy Foundation	1
United Way	1
Duff Foundation	1
Jones Family Foundation	1
Red Wing Foundation	1
Bush Foundation	1
Hormel Foundation	1

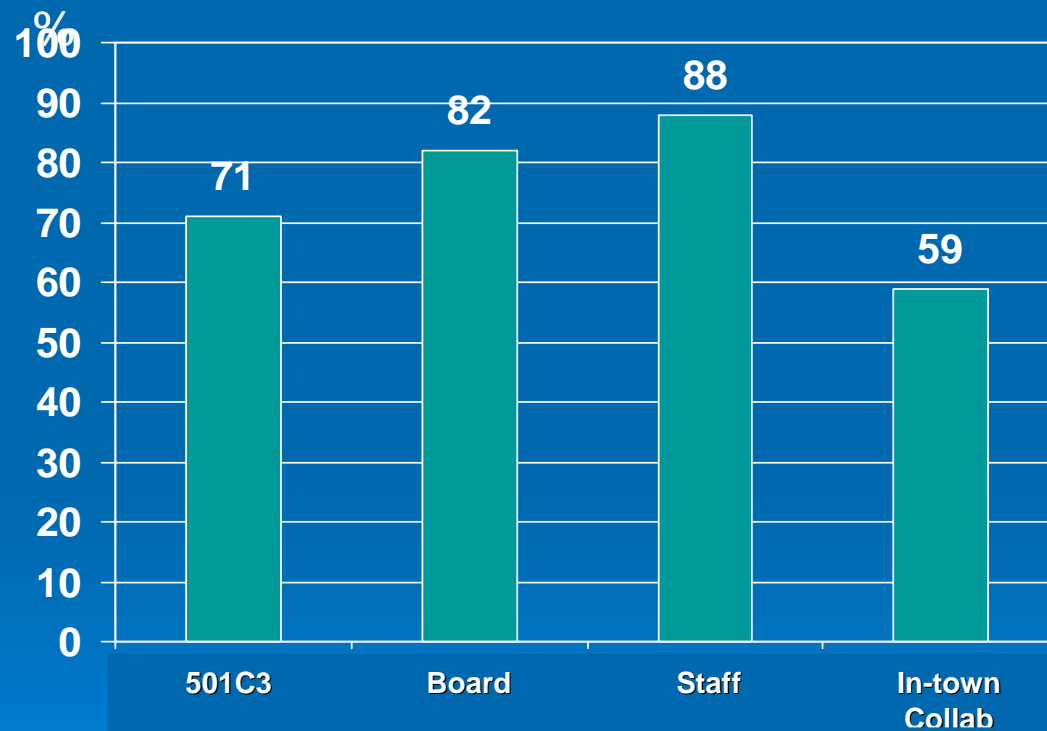
Racially Isolated Public School District Funding

- 2005 MN Court decision mandating funding to promote integration in racially isolated public school districts
 - 80 school districts statewide/\$79 million in funds
- 10 communities in screening sample receive diversity funding:

■ Pelican Rapids	■ Tracy
■ Worthington	■ Duluth
■ St. Cloud	■ Blackduck
■ Willmar	■ Austin
■ Walnut Grove	■ Rochester

Organizational Structure

Characteristics of Coalitions



Median number of staff at coalitions: 3

Organizational Diversity

- Coalitions with board members...
 - who are immigrants – **65%**
 - people of color – **38%**
- Paid staff...
 - who are immigrants – **50%**
 - people of color – **24%**
- Immigrants or people of color hold leadership positions – **41%**
- Coalition has collaborated with immigrant led organizations in town – **59%**


Program Evaluation

- Only 4 coalitions had conducted evaluations of their programs
- Others relied on attendance and feedback from program participants to measure success

Challenges

- What is the biggest problem that your program has faced in trying to bring different groups together?
 - Cultural differences
 - Historical conflicts
 - Lack of understanding
 - Ownership of the issues
 - Misinformation
 - Negativity
 - Fear
 - Time limits

Advice to new organizations:

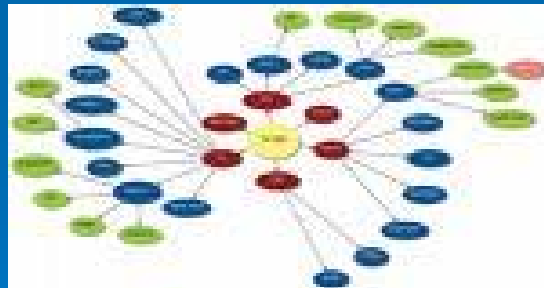
- Promote *quality* interaction between immigrants and non-immigrants
 - Patience
 - Sensitivity
 - Listen
 - Develop trust
 - Create forums for intercultural discussion
 - Create common activities
- 

Overwhelming interest in networking
with other coalitions and programs



April, 2007 Networking Conference

Purpose: To help community organizations
share experiences and strategies.



Follow-up



- Blandin Foundation
 - Continued networking
 - Regional meetings
 - List serve