
Acknowledgements

Contributing Staff, Minnesota Council on Foundations

David Biemesderfer, Vice President of Communications and Information Services
Shannon Gahagan, Research and Information Services Coordinator
Barb Laun, Communications Associate
Wai Wong-Lai, Research and Information Services Manager

Youth Development Advisory Task Force

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Becky Erdahl, Carolyn Foundation
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Supporting Minnesota's Youth: The State of the State's Youth Development Funding

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Terminology

The definition of “youth development” is broad, and can mean different things to different people. Likewise, people often use the term “youth” to describe different age groups.

For the purposes of this report, “youth” is defined as children ages 8-18, while “youth development” is defined as organizations and programs that address the social, emotional and cognitive development of young people. Within this broad definition, five major youth development program areas formed the basic framework for discussions with grantmakers and nonprofits for this report:

1. Learning and Education (examples are academic achievement, tutoring and service learning).
2. Safe Places and Activities (examples are after-school and summer programs, youth centers and clubs and recreational activities).
3. Healthy Choices (examples are crime prevention, substance abuse, mentoring and role modeling programs).
4. Leadership and Life Skills (examples are foundation-building, independent living and transition to adulthood).
5. Family Support (examples are parenting instruction, family resources and economic assistance).

Although this report focuses on youth ages 8-18, it is important to note that a child’s developmental process is in reality a continuum, which starts at infancy and does not end at the same age for everyone. In most situations, a child is no longer considered a “youth” when he or she reaches the generally recognized “adult” age of 21.

Most grantmakers that provide major youth development funding in Minnesota operate under a similar definition for “youth” adopted for this report, according to interviews. Some funders define “youth” as starting at an earlier age (from 0-8), but a majority support programs that serve children up to age 18.

For youth-serving nonprofits, the term “youth” covers a broader age range. In the report’s survey of youth-serving nonprofits, 46 percent serve “youth” beyond age 18, and 32 percent provide services to older adolescents through their early 20s.

Most grantmakers and nonprofits define “youth development” in accordance with their organization’s own specific mission statement. In general, the various versions are consistent with the definition adopted for this report. One youth-serving nonprofit in the survey offered the following definition:

“We define youth development as preparing young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical and cognitive competencies. We address the broader developmental assets all children and youth need, such as caring relationships, safe places and activities, health and mental health, marketable skills, and opportunities for service and civic participation.”

Foreword

Ensuring the well-being and healthy development of Minnesota’s youth is a growing concern for many people in the state, including many in Minnesota’s philanthropic and nonprofit sector. To gain a better understanding of the current state of youth development funding in Minnesota, the Minnesota Council on Foundations has prepared this first-ever “Supporting Minnesota’s Youth” research report.

The report is a forum for grantmakers and nonprofits to speak about the current issues and challenges of youth development funding in Minnesota. Through this report, the Council intends to contribute to a public conversation about how to strengthen the positive development of Minnesota’s youth, and to help identify and advance ways in which nonprofits, grantmakers and other funders can work together to support youth development. We also hope to inform the broader public about the current state of funding in the youth development field.

The report is based on personal interviews with the state’s largest private youth development grantmakers and a survey of youth-serving nonprofits (see Methodology in Appendix A). Although most of the information in this report is based on perceptions rather than hard data, there is significant value in documenting people’s viewpoints. Perceptions influence how people interact with each other, how they make decisions and how they plan for the future.

The Council has been conducting quantitative research on Minnesota grantmaking and philanthropy since the 1970s. This report represents the Council’s first-ever comprehensive, qualitative report on youth development funding, and its second qualitative research report on a specific funding area (the first being the “Minnesota Arts Funding” report in 2002).

Many people are responsible for making this report possible. In particular, I would like to thank Council staff members David Biemesderfer and Wai Wong-Lai for their leadership in managing the research project and developing the report; and members of the Youth Development Advisory Task Force for their invaluable expertise and advice: Claire Chang, The Saint Paul Foundation; Becky Erdahl, Carolyn Foundation; Chris Ganzlin, The McKnight Foundation; Toni Green, Cargill Foundation; Lynn Haglin, Northland Foundation; Jean Sazevich, Piper Jaffray; and Lisa Simer, The Minneapolis Foundation. I’d also like to thank the Cargill Foundation, The McKnight Foundation and The Minneapolis Foundation for their generous funding of the report’s production, printing and distribution costs. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the many people who took the time to share their thoughts and insights through the survey and interviews for this project.

We hope this report will help advance the dialogue on how to best ensure the healthy development of Minnesota’s youngest residents.



William R. King, President
Minnesota Council on Foundations

Executive Summary

From October 2003 through January 2004, the Minnesota Council on Foundations engaged in personal interviews with Minnesota's largest private youth development grantmakers and conducted a survey of youth-serving nonprofits in order to gain a better understanding of the current state of youth development funding in Minnesota. This report describes the findings from that research.

Overview

A majority of youth-serving nonprofits in Minnesota report that recent declines in funding have resulted in thousands of youth being denied programs and services they once received to support their well-being and healthy development — from after-school programs to substance abuse prevention programs — thus putting more youth at risk of being ill-prepared to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

Many nonprofits say they are struggling to maintain their existing services — let alone fill the many vital but unmet needs of Minnesota's youth. Nearly all agencies report being forced to cut staff and hours, eliminate programs and/or reduce service levels and quality. Likewise, many grantmakers say they are struggling to be as effective as possible in advancing effective youth development programs with their relatively limited financial resources.

Despite this fairly negative situation, nonprofits and grantmakers also share some positive ideas for how to improve the state's funding climate for developing strong, healthy and well-educated young people. Many of these ideas are detailed below and in the remainder of this report.

Key Findings

Current Funding Environment

- Youth-serving nonprofits in Minnesota report a declining funding environment for their youth development programs in the last two years, particularly from government sources:
 - Only 12 percent of nonprofits believe their youth development programs are well-funded from all sources.
 - Nearly two-thirds of nonprofits report a decline in government support for their youth development programs — the largest drop of all funding sources.
 - Nearly half of nonprofits report a drop in funding from foundations and corporate grantmakers in the last two years, and 63 percent believe they do not receive sufficient support from these funders.

Impact on Youth

- Thousands of youth in Minnesota have lost youth development programs and services over the past two years due to a decline in funding, with 25 percent of nonprofits saying they have served fewer youth.

- More than 90 percent of nonprofits cited one or more key ways in which declines in funding have reduced their ability to provide youth development programs and services during the past two years:
 - Forty-three (43) percent of nonprofits said they have been forced to lay off staff, which can be particularly debilitating given the staff-intensive nature of much youth development work.
 - One-third of nonprofits cited one or more youth development programs that they have eliminated entirely, with mentorship and after-school programs being particularly hard hit.
 - Even for those programs that have avoided elimination, one-third of nonprofits said they have cut back service levels for their youth development programming.
 - Thirty-eight (38) percent of nonprofits cited a decline in the quality of their youth development programming, primarily due to increased staff workload and decreased program development and planning time.
- Minnesota's youth are being impacted in many negative ways by these cuts in youth development funding and programming, including more idle time out of school, fewer interactions with positive adult role models and more negative societal behaviors.

Perceived Gaps

- More general operating support is needed for youth development programs in the state, according to both nonprofits and grantmakers, with nonprofits expressing a particularly strong need for this type of funding.
- After-school programming is the most critically underfunded youth development program area, grantmakers and nonprofits agree, with dire long-term costs and consequences for the state.
- Other youth development areas identified as being most underfunded are transportation; prevention and early intervention programs; and family support programs, particularly parenting programs.
- Grantmakers throughout the state overwhelmingly agree that youth-serving organizations in Greater Minnesota are funded less adequately than those in the Twin Cities, but nonprofits are not in as much agreement that this disparity exists.

Future of Youth Development Funding

- Many nonprofits believe that Minnesota's funding climate for youth development would be improved greatly if grantmakers would take a more long-term approach to their work, but many grantmakers believe they already have a long-term perspective.
- Differing viewpoints from youth development grantmakers and nonprofits on sustainability create a type of "Catch-22" scenario in which grantmakers look for long-term financial health in a potential grantee, and nonprofits struggle to receive more long-term support from funders so they can strengthen their financial viability in the eyes of funders.
- Grantmakers and nonprofits alike want to see people who care deeply about youth development become better organized and more effective in researching and advocating for issues that benefit youth.
- Nonprofits and grantmakers agree they must work together more closely in order to ensure a brighter future for Minnesota's youth, collaborating statewide to develop a long-range master plan for funding and implementing effective youth development programs.

Current Funding Environment

The current state of youth development funding in Minnesota.

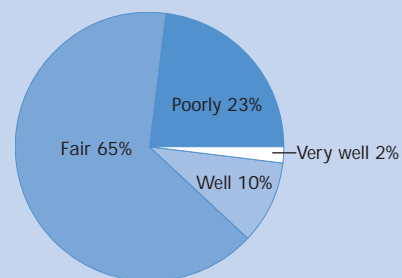
Key Findings

- Only 12 percent of nonprofits believe their youth development programs are well-funded from all sources.
- Nearly two-thirds of nonprofits report a decline in government support for their youth development programs in the last two years — the largest drop of all funding sources.
- Nearly half of nonprofits report a drop in funding from foundations and corporate grantmakers in the last two years, and 63 percent believe they do not receive sufficient support from these funders. This view is supported by research data showing a decline in private grantmaking for youth development in Minnesota.

Overall Funding

The depressed U.S. economy of the past few years has played a key role in reducing funding to Minnesota's youth development nonprofits from all sources. In a survey of youth-serving nonprofits in Minnesota, only 12 percent believe their youth development programs are well-funded from all sources (foundations and corporations, government, individual donors and earned revenue). Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents — 65 percent — described their overall funding picture as just “fair.”

How well-funded are your youth development programs from all sources?



Source: Minnesota Council on Foundations, survey of youth development nonprofits, 2003-2004.

Foundation and Corporate Funding

Grantmakers that are most actively involved in youth development funding in Minnesota encompass a diverse group of organizations representing private foundations, community/public foundations and corporate foundations and giving programs. These funders are located in both the Twin Cities metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota.

Children and youth were the top beneficiaries of Minnesota foundation and corporate grant dollars in 2001, according to the Minnesota Council on Foundations. Programs and organizations benefiting children and youth received 20 percent of the state's grant dollars in 2001 — or about

\$184 million — up from a 17 percent share in 1999¹. This percentage is slightly higher than the national average of 17.9 percent in 2001². Minnesota corporate grantmakers gave a far higher share of their grant dollars to benefit children and youth — 31 percent — than either community/public foundations (19.2 percent) or private foundations (12.5 percent) in 2001³.

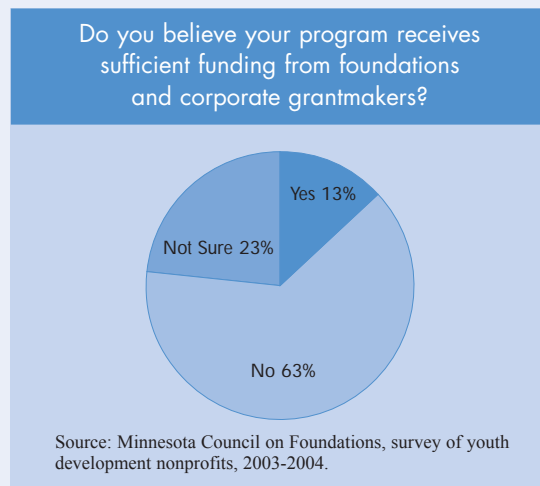
Despite this increase in funding for children and youth, total private grant dollars for youth development organizations in the state declined 6.4 percent between 1999 and 2001, according to the Council’s research⁴, compared to an 8.4 percent increase in funding for youth development nationwide⁵. (Note: These figures are for “youth development” as defined by the NTEE coding system used for Council research, which does not match exactly the definition of “youth development” used for this report.)

This decline in grant dollars is consistent with survey responses from youth-serving nonprofits. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of nonprofits said they do not receive sufficient funding from foundations and corporate grantmakers. In fact, 47 percent of nonprofits reported that their youth development programs have experienced a drop in support from Minnesota foundations and corporate grantmakers in the last two years, while 38 percent said that the support has stayed about the same.

Government Funding

Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of youth development nonprofits surveyed said that government support for their programs has decreased in the last two years — more than for any other funding source — compared with only 10 percent who said this support has increased.

With government funding playing a prominent role in many youth-serving nonprofits’ funding streams, recent government cutbacks are a particularly critical issue for these organizations. Government funding represents an average of 39 percent of the revenue for the youth development nonprofits in the survey. More than one-third (35 percent) of nonprofits surveyed derive at least half of their budgets from government support, compared to just 19 percent of nonprofits that base more than 50 percent of their budgets on foundation and corporate support. Fifteen (15) percent of agencies reported that they rely on government funding for 75 percent or more of their budgets.



Change in support for youth development programs over the last two years:

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed about the same
Foundations/Corporations	15%	47%	38%
Government	10%	65%	25%
Individual Donors	33%	17%	50%
Earned Income	23%	16%	61%

Source: Minnesota Council on Foundations, survey of youth development nonprofits, 2003-2004. Figures do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

¹ “Giving in Minnesota,” 2003 edition, Minnesota Council on Foundations.
² “Foundation Giving Trends: Update on Funding Priorities,” 2003 edition, The Foundation Center.
³ “Giving in Minnesota,” 2003 edition, Minnesota Council on Foundations.
⁴ “Giving in Minnesota,” 2003 edition, Minnesota Council on Foundations.
⁵ “Foundation Giving Trends: Update on Funding Priorities,” 2003 edition, The Foundation Center.

Percentage of youth-serving nonprofits' budgets from different funding sources:

	0-24% of budget	25-49% of budget	50-74% of budget	75-100% of budget
Foundations/ Corporations	60%	22%	17%	2%
Government	40%	25%	20%	15%
Individual Donors	93%	5%	0%	2%
Earned Income	72%	15%	7%	7%

Source: Minnesota Council on Foundations, survey of youth development nonprofits, 2003-2004.
 Figures do not always equal 100% due to rounding.

Funding Priorities

Minnesota grantmakers devote the largest share of their youth development funding for programs in the categories of Safe Places and Activities, Learning and Education, and Leadership and Life Skills (see definitions on page 2), according to interviews. A few grantmakers indicated that their grants to benefit youth do not come through typical youth development funding categories but through categories aligned with their organizations' missions, such as scholarship, diversity and racism, immigrant youth, foster care and organizational effectiveness.

Due to the importance of connecting smaller rural communities, funders in Greater Minnesota often fund youth development activities through grants that support community-wide efforts. One example of this strategy is the Family Initiative Program funded by West Central Initiative in Fergus Falls. The program supports positive, community-wide approaches to benefit children, youth and families. Program components include information sharing and community planning, and funding is restricted to whole communities rather than single agencies or programs. As this grantmaker explained:

"Our program is based on the idea that the community knows what is best for the people within the community...we provide funding to communities who have come together to combine their resources, to build on their strengths, to build on their assets in order to do a better job of programming for children and families. You have partners coming together across multiple sectors; you have stakeholders at the table. They are not just getting together around one project, they are getting together around a mission statement and they are looking long-term into the future."

Established vs. Emerging

Youth development funders and nonprofits in Minnesota hold mixed and sometimes conflicting views of how much grantmakers do, and should do, to support established versus emerging youth development programs and organizations.

Grantmakers interviewed said they do not have a preference for funding established versus emerging youth-serving programs. Some funders said they would like to support more emerging organizations,

but find it difficult to do so during these economically challenging times. Still, most funders interviewed said they prefer to fund an organization with a good “track record.”

Among youth development nonprofits, opinions vary on this issue, according to the survey. While some nonprofits feel that funders prefer funding “something new,” others lament grantmakers’ preferences for the “tried and true.” Some nonprofits warned of the potential fallout if small, emerging youth development programs are neglected, since these programs often are closer to the ground and can best reach out to some young people who might otherwise not be reached. As one survey respondent stated:

“Please fund small and grassroots youth development organizations. This is the area of the neighborhood that has an impact on a kid who is going to become somebody or go to prison tomorrow.”

Many nonprofits in the survey shared their frustrations over the “narrow focus” of youth development funders. They noted that rigid foundation guidelines leave little room for program innovation or for effective programs to stay the course when they are perceived to be outdated. The situation makes it difficult to “maintain program integrity,” according to one nonprofit, and organizations say it forces them to “chase funding” by tweaking program content to fit changing guidelines. One survey respondent offered the following example to illustrate the point: “Our project is school attendance. (But) we are planning to incorporate a reading component in order to add an education piece, which is an area that many grant givers are specifically looking for lately.”

Types of Support

Grantmakers give program support grants more often than any other type of funding for youth development, followed by general operating grants, according to interviews. This is consistent with survey responses from youth-serving nonprofits. When asked to name the top three types of support they receive from foundations and corporate grantmakers, 84 percent of nonprofits named program support — the top response overall — followed by general operating support (mentioned by 51 percent of respondents).

One-third of nonprofits cited annual funding as the third most-funded support type. However, only a handful of the grantmakers interviewed said they provide this type of support.

A few grantmakers noted that their youth development support is guided by funding guidelines that may not have an explicit focus on youth development. For example, a funder with a technology-focused mission may give technology-related product donations to benefit youth, while a funder with an education focus may provide scholarships.

What are the top three types of support your organization received from foundations and corporate grantmakers in the last fiscal year for your youth development program?

Program support	84%
General operating	51%
Annual funding	33%
In-kind/Product donations	21%
Seed money/Start-up funds	15%
Volunteerism	15%
Sponsorships	11%
Capital	10%
Scholarships/Scholarship funds	8%
Technology/Technical assistance	8%
Emergency funds	7%
Endowment	0%
Program-related investments (PRIs)/Loans	0%

Source: Minnesota Council on Foundations, survey of youth development nonprofits, 2003-2004. Figures do not equal 100% because multiple answers could be selected

Impact on Youth

The impact of the current funding environment on Minnesota's youth.

Key Findings

- Twenty-five (25) percent of nonprofits said they have served fewer youth over the past two years due to drops in their funding, and an additional 5 percent fear they will have to serve fewer youth in the near future.
- More than 2,400 Minnesota youth have been denied youth development programs and services they once received from the nonprofits surveyed, which likely represents a small fraction of the total.
- More than 90 percent of nonprofits cited one or more key ways in which declines in funding have reduced their ability to provide youth development programs and services during the past two years, by cutting staff and hours, eliminating programs and/or reducing service levels and quality.
- Minnesota's youth are being impacted in many negative ways by these cuts in youth development funding and programming, including more idle time out of school, fewer interactions with positive adult role models and more negative societal behaviors.



Fewer Youth Served

Thousands of youth in Minnesota are being turned away from programs and services they once received to support their well-being and healthy development, according to nonprofits surveyed, as the weak economy of the past few years and related drops in funding have forced agencies to reduce or totally eliminate numerous programs. (See the “Current Funding Environment” section on page 6 for more information on funding cuts.)

A full one-quarter (25 percent) of nonprofit survey respondents said they have been forced to serve fewer youth over the past two years due to reductions in their funding. An additional 5 percent said they have not yet reduced the number of youth they serve but fear they will be forced to do so in the near future.

The number of Minnesota young people who have lost youth development programming and services over the past two years appears to be well into the thousands, according to the survey. Roughly half of the nonprofit survey respondents that reported serving fewer young people (12 percent of all respondents) offered specific figures that totaled more than 2,400 youth who have been turned away. Since the survey respondents represent a small fraction of all youth development organizations and programs in the state, it is highly likely that this figure represents a small fraction of the total number of Minnesota youth who have been denied programs and services that they once received.

Reduced Programs & Services

For many nonprofit survey respondents, the impact of the slow economy of the past few years and related funding cuts has been deep and painful. More than 90 percent of nonprofits cited one or more key ways in which recent declines in funding have had a negative impact on their organizations and reduced their ability to provide youth development programming:

Reduced Staff and Staff Hours: Forty-three (43) percent of nonprofits said they have been forced to lay off staff during the past two years. Many respondents did not offer specific figures for the number of staff positions they have cut, but for those that did the figures added up to more than 100 lost staff people — an average of four per organization.

An additional 8 percent of nonprofits said they have reduced staff through attrition, and 7 percent said they have reduced staff hours. Several nonprofits noted that they have frozen or cut staff pay.

Some respondents noted that the loss of staff can be particularly debilitating for youth development programming, which tends to involve staff-intensive activities and services. As one respondent noted: “Our operations are simplistic in the sense that the more staff we have the more children we are able to serve.”

Nonprofits provided clear examples of how the reduction in staff has directly impacted their youth programming, such as the following situation:

“We don’t have as many case managers available, which means there are youth coming in to our drop-in center who want to make some changes in their lives but they’re having to wait for months at a time before someone can work with them.”

A few nonprofits noted that they have been forced to replace some staff with volunteers. “Unfortunately,” said one respondent, “many of our kids need the professional knowledge of our staff.”

Eliminated Programs: One-third (33 percent) of nonprofit survey respondents cited one or more youth development programs they have been forced to eliminate entirely due to recent funding cuts. The types of eliminated programs mentioned most often by respondents were mentorship programs and after-school programs (see more on after-school programming in the “Perceived Gaps” section on page 15), but respondents also said they’ve been forced to drop programs for youth offenders, runaway youth, teen parenting, HIV education, youth leadership, school-to-work, alcohol education, restitution, computer skills training, scholarships and others.

Reduced Service Levels: Even for those youth development programs that have avoided elimination, many nonprofits say they have been forced to reduce their activities and service levels — sometimes drastically. One-third (33 percent) of survey respondents said they have cut back their youth development programming — by as much as 60 percent — primarily by reducing the number of activities, hours of operation and/or number of sites. A few nonprofits noted that they have started charging user fees, which have prevented some young people from accessing services.

Reduced Program Quality & Capacity

Thirty-eight (38) percent of nonprofit survey respondents cited some type of reduction in the quality of their youth development programs and services over the past two years, as they try to serve the same number of youth with fewer resources or try to handle an increased demand for their services with no comparable increase in funding. Respondents noted several common ways in which the quality of their programming has suffered:

Increased Staff Workload: The most commonly mentioned way in which program quality is suffering is that program staff workload has increased, with each staff person working with a greater number of youth. Ten (10) percent of survey respondents noted that their staff-to-youth ratio has increased in the past two years, which prevents staff from providing youth with the individual attention that so many need. “Extra time that used to be spent with individual youth is now needed to do other work, unfortunately,” noted one nonprofit.

Less Program Development and Planning: As nonprofits try to maintain or increase program delivery with fewer resources, many say they have less time for crucial program development and planning. Although the quantity of program delivery may be maintained in the short run, the quality of the programming will diminish in the long run, many survey respondents noted. “The quality of planning and preparation for programs has been reduced and in turn the quality of direct service and youth experience per event/activity has been lowered,” stated one respondent.

Reduced Organizational Capacity: Survey respondents described several ways in which their organizational capacity has suffered due to recent drops in funding, affecting the overall quality of their services. Examples of reduced capacity cited by nonprofits included not replacing needed equipment, such as computers; not purchasing needed supplies; and having less time for coordination with other agencies and for staff management, supervision and development. “Our full-time staff have less time for staff development with our part-time staff, which isn’t a full use of staff potential,” noted one nonprofit.

Less Outreach: Several survey respondents noted that they have less time and resources available to reach out to harder-to-find youth who may need their services the most, because they must devote their diminishing resources to just trying to maintain programming to existing youth clients.

“The current economic climate has made it extremely difficult to maintain an adequate level of programming for youth. We have had to trim our spending extensively, and are able to fund only the most essential programs. The workload for our staff is intense, which affects staff morale and productivity. We cannot make investments in our infrastructure, which weakens our overall fiscal health and threatens our financial viability.”

- Youth-Serving Nonprofit

The Bottom Line: Fewer Well-Developed Youth

Not surprisingly, nonprofits say that reductions in funding have affected not only the quantity, quality and capacity of youth development programs but, more importantly, the key constituency served by these programs — youth themselves. Nonprofit survey respondents offered numerous specific examples of how they have seen recent cuts in youth development funding and programming have a direct negative impact on youth in the state:

More Idle Time: Several survey respondents said they are seeing many more youth being left on their own, particularly after school and in the evenings, with much more idle time on their hands. “Youth are unsupervised more in our communities,” stated one nonprofit. “Youth have less and less to do with their idle time.”

Another nonprofit detailed how its own service cutbacks have resulted in much more idle time for the youth it serves:

“We serve approximately 1,400 youth per year. These youth were previously in programs 4.5 nights per week. Now they are in programs 2.5 nights per week. They have less constructive options for their out-of-school time. Consequently, youth are unsupervised during after-school hours twice as much as in the past.”

Fewer Positive Relationships: Youth in Minnesota are experiencing fewer opportunities to develop positive, productive relationships in their lives, according to several nonprofits, and this can hamper their full and healthy development. Agencies noted that many youth in their programs are having fewer interactions with positive adult role models as well as fewer opportunities for positive interactions with their peers, as described in these comments from survey respondents:

“For our youth, the number of contact hours they have with another adult has lessened... What program time is left is reserved for structured activities, eliminating the opportunity for kids to have their own time to use the space and relax.”

“Youth have lost connections and important role models and lost opportunities for enriching experiences.”

More Negative Behaviors: With fewer resources devoted to the healthy development of youth in Minnesota, many nonprofits expressed their fears that more young people will resort, or revert back, to negative, unhealthy and unproductive societal behaviors, making them more ill-prepared to successfully face the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

One survey respondent was forced to lay off all of its youth programming staff and shut down its youth development program over a year ago, and described the resulting impact on the young people it used to serve:

“According to parents and caregivers of youth (who were) regularly attending our youth programming, they have returned to alcohol and drug usage, returned to gang behavior. The parents state there were definite positive changes while programming was available.”

Perceived Gaps

The major gaps in youth development funding identified by nonprofits and grantmakers.

Key Findings

- More general operating support is needed for youth development programs in the state, according to both nonprofits and grantmakers, with nonprofits expressing a particularly strong need for this type of funding.
- After-school programming is the most critically underfunded youth development program area, grantmakers and nonprofits agree, with dire long-term costs and consequences for the state.
- Other youth development areas identified as being most underfunded are transportation; prevention and early intervention programs; and family support programs, particularly parenting programs.
- Grantmakers throughout the state overwhelmingly agree that youth-serving organizations in Greater Minnesota are funded less adequately than those in the Twin Cities, citing a higher reliance on diminishing government support and fewer local charitable resources as key reasons for the disparity. But nonprofits themselves are not in as much agreement that this disparity exists.



General Operating Support

Grantmakers and nonprofits agree that more general operating support is needed for youth development programs in the state. Youth-serving nonprofits, in particular, appear to have a strong sense of urgency about the need for this type of funding.

A significant majority of youth-serving nonprofits — 78 percent — believe general operating dollars are the most critically underfunded type of support for youth development programming, according to the survey. Many nonprofits noted that if they were to receive more continuous support for their

general operations, they could spend more time meeting the needs of children and less time “chasing money.” As one agency put it:

“Virtually all of our support for youth programs is for one year and for a specific program. We lack ongoing support or multi-year support and general operating support for all of our youth programs. This makes it very difficult to do long-range planning or set long-term goals for our work with young people.”

One nonprofit reported that grant requests for its programs, “when submitted individually, usually gain the most attention,” rather than when submitted for the organization as a whole. Another agency observed that funders “are more interested in supporting specific initiatives within the agency” rather than unrestricted support for the overall program.

Grantmakers interviewed agreed with nonprofits that there is a need for more general operating dollars for youth development. Several funders stated their belief that general operating dollars can provide valuable stability to an organization — especially in an economically challenging environment. As one foundation representative noted:

“I would say that in the long run (general operating support) is what provides the most stability and really grows the capacity of an organization to serve a particular population.”

The Council’s “Giving in Minnesota” research shows that Minnesota grantmakers give far more general operating grants than do their counterparts nationwide. In 2001, the percentage of Minnesota grant dollars going to general operating support was more than double the national average: 34.5 percent in Minnesota versus 16 percent nationwide. (Still, program support comprised the largest percentage of funding, representing 41.5 percent of all Minnesota grant dollars awarded in 2001.)

In attempting to reconcile these fairly positive numbers about Minnesota grantmakers’ general operating support with the overall perception of nonprofits that there is not enough of it, there are several plausible explanations. One possible explanation is that even though general operating support is fairly strong in Minnesota, youth development groups need even more of it. It is also possible that general operating support is such a highly valued funding source that people will always express a need for more of it. Another possibility is that the lack of general operating support is not as severe in Minnesota as many grantmakers and nonprofits perceive it to be, although this explanation seems less likely given the strong response to this issue in the nonprofit survey.

After-School Programming

Youth development grantmakers and nonprofits agree that after-school programming is the most critically underfunded youth development program area, fueled in part by government funding cuts. They believe this lack of funding can have dire long-term costs and consequences for the state.

In interviews with funders, every youth development discipline appeared on at least one grantmakers’ list of youth development program areas that are most critically underfunded in Minnesota. However, of all the disciplines, after-school programming was mentioned most often by grantmakers as the top underfunded youth development program area.

A major reason for this perception is the recent government cuts to after-school activities and child care programs. According to the Greater Twin Cities United Way, recent cuts of more than \$86 million to child-care programming and subsidies throughout the state have caused families to struggle to find desirable, quality care for their children. The Minnesota Legislature's 2004-2005 budget also has completely eliminated statewide violence prevention and after-school programs. Against this backdrop, many grantmakers shared the same concern expressed by this funder:

"We are going to see a lot more kids home alone or wandering alone out on the streets because they have to find a place to go. They are not with a caring adult or in a safe place where they can connect with a caring adult."

Another basis for funders' perceptions about the lack of sufficient support for after-school activities lies in the types of grant proposals they are receiving. Several grantmakers interviewed reported seeing an increase in grant requests for safe places and after-school programs, which is another indication to them that there is a greater need for this type of funding.

Some youth development grantmakers also believe that a great deal of data exist to show that more needs to be done to address young people's after-school needs. As one funder put it: "The fact that teen pregnancy happens for the most part between 3:00 and 6:00 in the evening tells me that we haven't created safe places and activities in after-school programs."

This same funder questioned whether the real issue is about "adequately funding" after-school programs or about "adequately addressing" youth's after-school needs:

"It is always hard to say whether something is adequately funded or if the systems in place are inadequate to handle the challenge that we have. I could make an argument that, for example, schools are adequately funded but that we make the wrong choices as to how to use the money."

Youth-serving nonprofits agree with grantmakers that after-school programming is the most underfunded youth development discipline. When nonprofits were asked, in an open-ended question, to name the top funding gaps for youth development, they identified after-school activities more than any other area (mentioned by 18 percent of respondents).

In particular, nonprofits identified two groups of youth that are especially vulnerable to the lack of after-school activities. The first group is older adolescents who need safe and structured places where they can feel comfortable and develop caring relationships with adults. The second group is youth who are classified as neither "disadvantaged" nor "at-risk" but who live in marginal circumstances and are easily overlooked. One nonprofit described the situation this way:

"In Minnesota, according to the Urban Institute, 42 percent of children ages 10 to 12 are home alone after school. Many of these children do not fit the aforementioned categories ('disadvantaged' and 'at-risk'), but clearly would be better off engaged in constructive activities with their peers and caring adults."

Another concern raised by funders is the loss of additional services that comes with the elimination of after-school programs, such as academic support. Many after-school programs incorporate services such as tutoring and mentoring that are designed to help children succeed in school. With fewer after-school programs, efforts by schools to meet or raise academic standards will also be compromised, according to grantmakers, who view this situation as a “great deficit” and think the trend is “going backward.”

Some grantmakers interviewed view the elimination of after-school programs and related services as an inefficient use of resources in the long run. They noted that when effective after-school programs are scaled back or dismantled, the cost to society will be even greater to reinvent them in the future.

Transportation

Grantmakers and nonprofits strongly agree that a critical funding gap for many youth development programs is adequate support for transportation, which many view as a key barrier to program access.

When youth-serving nonprofits were asked, in an open-ended question, to name the top funding gaps for youth development in Minnesota, transportation was the second most-mentioned issue behind after-school programming. Several respondents noted the link between these two issues, since a lack of transportation often prevents families from getting youth to and from after-school activities.

The transportation problem affects youth in both urban and rural areas, according to those interviewed and surveyed. In urban areas, many youth live with families that are not able to provide transportation for out-of-school programs. The problem may be even more critical in Greater Minnesota, where the considerable distance between some rural communities is a significant barrier for youth to participate in programs outside their own residential areas if transportation is not available.

A major reason for the lack of adequate funding for transportation is the intensive capital expenditures it requires, according to interviews with funders, since many grantmakers’ guidelines limit or restrict support for capital or equipment. Moreover, some funders noted that the purchase of vehicles would not likely solve the deeper problem around transportation. They believe that the real solution lies in communities doing a better job of sharing transportation resources and developing a solution based on collaboration among communities. As one grantmaker noted:

“Buying a van isn’t really going to solve the problem. I think it is more about rethinking how the resources are used. Programs that operate summer camps that have buses but don’t use them during the rest of the year, for example, could be looking at ways to share the resources.”

Family Support Programs

Family Support was cited by grantmakers interviewed as the second most underfunded youth development discipline in the state, behind after-school activities (see page 15) and other programs in the Safe Places and Activities category.

Funders said their key concern in this area is the availability of programs for families with older, school-aged children. They believe that ample parenting support resources are available for families through the early childhood years, but that the support system tends to weaken when a child reaches school age. According to a few funders, there is also not enough focus on helping parents support their children through the critical early-school years.

Connecting families with community resources is another program area that has been overlooked, grantmakers say. This includes a lack of adequate resources for educating parents about benefits such as the child and education tax credits and other tools that could help strengthen their economic situation.

Youth development nonprofits agree with grantmakers that there is a funding gap in Family Support programs, according to the survey. In particular, they identified parenting programs among the top five most underfunded areas of youth development. However, this issue does not seem to be as pressing on nonprofits' minds as after-school programming and transportation (see pages 15-17), which were mentioned much more often by nonprofits than Family Support programs as being in need of more funding.

Prevention & Intervention Programs

Many nonprofit survey respondents expressed the need for more support for prevention and early intervention programs. They identified this area as one of the top five funding gaps in youth development.

Nonprofits noted that funding for prevention and early intervention programs seems to be cut more easily than funding for programs to correct problems after they occur. One challenge for prevention programs seems to be the inherent difficulty in demonstrating immediate results, according to nonprofits, while the benefits of correction programs are more readily discernable.

But shortchanging prevention and early intervention programs may come at a steep price, nonprofits warned, as it is often more cost-effective over the long run to invest in programs that help prevent problems in the first place rather than to finance programs to correct problems after they occur.

Greater Minnesota

Youth development grantmakers throughout the state overwhelmingly agree that youth-serving organizations in Greater Minnesota are funded less adequately than those in the Twin Cities, according to interviews, and that they face more challenges for receiving adequate support. These challenges include a lack of wealth in rural communities, fewer grantmaking resources, and a greater reliance on diminishing government support.

Youth development nonprofits appear to be less certain than grantmakers about whether a lack of adequate funding is more critical in Greater Minnesota than in the metro area, according to the survey. When asked to identify one or more regions in the state, if any, that are most critically underfunded, 36 percent identified the Twin Cities, which was mentioned more often than any other single region in Minnesota.

The survey also shows, perhaps not surprisingly, that nonprofits in Greater Minnesota are more likely to think that the funding situation is most dire in their own regions. For example, 60 percent of nonprofit respondents in northeast Minnesota identified that region as one of the most critically underfunded areas of the state for youth development, compared to 20 percent of respondents overall who named that region.

In addition, funders noted that rural communities are less likely than the metro region to receive community development block grants, especially if they are in a county with a declining population. The survey results show that on average, youth-serving nonprofits in Greater Minnesota rely on government support for more than half — 52 percent — of their budget, compared to an average of 36 percent for those in the Twin Cities. This difference has made the recent cuts in county and city spending all the more painful for Greater Minnesota nonprofits. In addition, funders noted that rural communities are less likely than the metro region to receive community development block grants, especially if they are in a county with a declining population.

Grantmakers interviewed noted other funding obstacles that they think are particularly challenging for nonprofits in Greater Minnesota, including a relative lack of individual wealth in the region, which makes it difficult for nonprofits to conduct large fundraising campaigns; fewer resources for community foundations to tap into to grow charitable assets; and the lack of a strong industrial presence, which limits the amount of corporate goodwill nonprofits can access for funding.

The report's research highlighted some differing perceptions among youth development grantmakers regarding the challenges facing Greater Minnesota nonprofits in providing youth development services. Among some funders interviewed, there is a perception that smaller communities in Greater Minnesota are able to collaborate more effectively than those in the metro region, due to their relatively small size and people's close proximity to each other. One funder noted that "people in Greater Minnesota are much more resourceful with fewer resources because they have to rely on each other. There is knowledge and a connection that people have in a small community because they see each other at the dry cleaners, at the grocery stores... There is a familiarity that helps get things done in a much more efficient way that is amazing."

But other funders say the situation is not so simple and that collaborations are not always easy to achieve in rural areas. According to one Greater Minnesota funder, the idea that rural cities and townships miles apart can come together to offer services to youth is "unrealistic." To the contrary, this funder thinks partnerships and collaborations can be forged more easily in the Twin Cities because there might be "programs going on in the same neighborhood or in the next neighborhood, but very close in boundary."

Funders generally agree that the challenges confronting youth development workers in rural areas should not in any way diminish the difficulties faced by organizations in the metro area. As one funder stated, "A child is suffering whether he or she is sitting in Minneapolis or in Houston."

Future of Youth Development

The critical issues to ensure adequate funding for youth development work and a brighter future for Minnesota's youth.

Key Findings

- Most nonprofits believe the future for youth development work would be greatly enhanced if there were more respect for the work itself.
- Many nonprofits believe that Minnesota's funding climate for youth development would be greatly improved if grantmakers would take a more long-term approach to their work, but many grantmakers believe they already have a long-term perspective.
- Differing viewpoints from youth development grantmakers and nonprofits on sustainability create a type of "Catch-22" scenario in which grantmakers look for long-term financial health in a potential grantee, and nonprofits struggle to receive more long-term support from funders so they can strengthen their financial viability in the eyes of funders.
- Grantmakers and nonprofits alike want to see people who care deeply about youth development become better organized and more effective in researching and advocating for issues that benefit youth.
- Nonprofits and grantmakers agree they must work together more closely in order to ensure a brighter future for Minnesota's youth, collaborating statewide to develop a long-range master plan for funding and implementing effective programs for youth.



Respect for Youth Development Work

Most nonprofits surveyed said the future for youth development work would be greatly enhanced if there were more respect for the work itself. When this happens, they believe the government and the public will become more willing to increase their support for youth development programs. As one nonprofit stated:

“The field of youth development does not have a respected place in our society. Workers are seen as paid baby-sitters and the work they do seen as playing games. There seems to be little value by the greater community for the work, which was evidenced by the massive cuts to children and youth programs at this legislative session in order to balance the state budget.”

Grantmaking Strategy Changes

For the most part, grantmakers do not plan to change their core funding strategies in any significant way in response to the recent weak economy and related government funding cuts, according to interviews. Many funders stressed the fact that they are not able to fully fill the gaps in funding due to government cutbacks. Rather, they predict that organizations will collaborate more and try to do more with less.

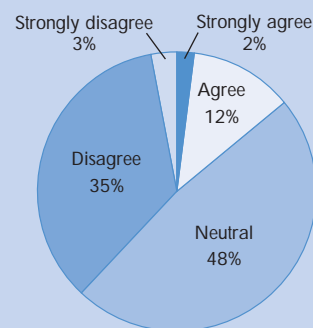
A few grantmakers interviewed stated that in these economically challenging times, it is worthwhile to take more risks with nonprofits and to have more flexibility with timelines and priorities if it can enhance a deserving organization and the young people it serves. Some funders also noted that the tight funding environment will force some nonprofits to tighten their focus on their core programs and that this would not necessarily be a bad thing.

More Fundraising Training

Some grantmakers interviewed expressed a need for nonprofits to learn more about fundraising and about diversifying their funding base to help them succeed in the future. Youth-serving nonprofits in the survey agreed, in general, that they need to seek a broader base of funding sources and that they need more training in this area, but they do not think there are sufficient resources available. Only 14 percent of nonprofit survey respondents agree that there is adequate fundraising training available for youth development workers in Minnesota.

When asked what kind of training would be beneficial to them, a number of youth-serving nonprofits pointed to the need for a common dialogue between grantmakers and grantseekers. Some think that training for funders is equally important, so that they can better understand the perspectives of nonprofits.

There is adequate training on fundraising for youth development workers in Minnesota.



Source: Minnesota Council on Foundations, survey of youth development nonprofits, 2003-2004.

A Long-Term Approach

Many youth-serving nonprofits believe Minnesota's funding climate for youth development would be improved greatly if grantmakers would take a more long-term approach to their work, both in terms of funding for long-term impact and providing sustainable funding.

In their survey responses, some nonprofits noted that funders seem more interested in supporting programs that exhibit short-term, measurable results than in supporting programs aimed at having a more long-term impact. One nonprofit shared the following advice for grantmakers, which was echoed by other youth service providers in the survey:

"Institutional funders often appear to be looking for the next big thing, the next trend, the next issue to address...While it is important for nonprofits to evolve and respond to changing community needs, as a sector I think the people we serve would benefit more from a funding focus on sustaining quality programs and agencies rather than what sometimes appears to be a restless search for new things to give seed money to."

Many nonprofits in the survey expressed frustration over the lack of sustained funding for their youth development programs, which they say makes it difficult for them to do long-term planning and program development for the future. One nonprofit described the situation this way:

"It is a challenge to plan a budget not knowing if foundation dollars are going to continue decreasing or if they might be increasing in the future. The more transparent the process is, the better it is for our agency."

There appears to be some disconnect between the views of funders and nonprofits on the issue of grantmakers' willingness to take a long-term approach. The grantmakers interviewed for this report said they value long-term relationships with nonprofits. All grantmakers noted that their largest youth development grants of the past year went to past beneficiaries. In many cases, funders talked about having a long-term working relationship with many of their grantees.

However, grantmakers sometimes spoke about the issue of "sustainability" in a different context than do nonprofits. With government and other funding resources dwindling, several funders expressed a greater need to identify grantees that are financially sound so that, as one funder stated, they can ensure that their investment is being made to "appropriate organizations that will be sustainable in the long haul." Nonprofits noted that this can create a type of "Catch-22" scenario in which grantmakers look for long-term financial health in a potential grantee, and nonprofits struggle to receive more long-term support from funders so that they can strengthen their financial viability in the eyes of funders.

Public Policy & Advocacy

As a field, both grantmakers and nonprofits would like to see those who care deeply about youth development become better organized and more effective in advocating for issues that benefit youth.

Many grantmakers cited research as an important resource, so that they can better understand what other funders are doing, identify which programs are effective and use this information to shape public policy and be better advocates for youth. As one funder explained:

“We need to fund the research and development that goes into understanding what the issues are and helping policymakers make the right decisions. We need to raise the consciousness about what is happening for young people today. I think the voter and the adult population who paid for these services need to have a better understanding of what the issues are.”

Becoming more politically active in the advocacy for youth is another way in which nonprofits and funders may choose to address government funding cutbacks, according to interview and survey results. But one funder expressed concern that this might lead to a reactive rather than a proactive approach when they talk with legislators about not cutting funding to programs like after-school activities. Instead of talking in terms of “assets” and “enrichment,” organizations have been “forced to talk about deficits and how to keep children from becoming criminals and going to jail,” the funder observed.

Working Together

Many grantmakers interviewed expressed a need to come together and be intentional about seeking more collaboration, so that they can minimize duplication of efforts in funding youth development. Some funders said the impact of their grantmaking could be greater if they were to join forces to “make a more robust program,” particularly when their interest areas are similar. This perspective is especially prevalent among smaller funders that want to use their relatively limited dollars to make a major difference in the youth development areas they care about.

A few grantmakers shared a belief that it is important to include the voices of youth themselves as youth development strategies are created and implemented. According to one funder, young people need to be heard so they “can have an impact on the decisions that are being made in their lives. That is where the next leaders come from and we need to listen to them starting at an early age.”

Youth development nonprofits and grantmakers agree they must work together more closely to ensure a brighter future for Minnesota’s youth. Through interview and survey responses, they expressed a common need for a statewide effort involving all stakeholders to convene and develop a long-range master plan for funding and implementing effective programs for youth. They all recognize it is a tall order, but ultimately a tremendously worthy goal.

Appendix A: Methodology

The “Supporting Minnesota’s Youth” report is based on one-on-one telephone interviews conducted from October 27, 2003, to December 23, 2003, with representatives of 17 foundations and corporate grantmakers in Minnesota, which together represent about 85 percent to 95 percent of private organizational youth development funding in the state. The grantmaker sample was not random. Interviews were conducted with the largest youth development funders. (See Appendix B for a list and profile of grantmakers interviewed.)

This report also is based on a survey of youth development nonprofits in Minnesota that was conducted from December 4, 2003, to January 12, 2004. The survey was sent to youth-serving nonprofit organizations that were identified from a number of sources, including the Greater Twin Cities United Way, Minnesota Youth Intervention Programs Association (YIPA), StreetWorks, and the grantees of many of the youth development grantmakers interviewed for this report. Sixty-one usable surveys were returned. (See Appendix C for a profile of nonprofits surveyed.)

Appendix B: List & Profile of Youth Development Grantmakers Interviewed

Grantmakers Interviewed

Bush Foundation
 Cargill Foundation
 Carolyn Foundation
 F. R. Bigelow Foundation
 IBM Corporation - Minnesota
 Mardag Foundation
 The McKnight Foundation
 The Minneapolis Foundation
 Northland Foundation
 The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation
 Carl and Eloise Pohlad Family Foundation
 The St. Paul Companies, Inc. Foundation
 The Saint Paul Foundation
 Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
 Southwest Minnesota Foundation
 West Central Initiative
 Women’s Foundation of Minnesota

Type

Private foundation	41%
Corporate foundation or giving program	18%
Community/public foundation	41%

Total Asset Size

Less than \$10 million	12%
\$10 - \$100 million	53%
\$100 - \$500 million	18%
More than \$500 million	18%

Note: Total percentage does not equal 100% due to rounding.

Annual Youth Development Grantmaking

\$100,000 - \$250,000	35%
\$250,000 - \$500,000	35%
\$500,000 - \$2 million	12%
More than \$2 million	18%

Location

Twin Cities metro	71%
Greater Minnesota	29%

Funding Area

Greater Minnesota	24%
Twin Cities metro only	29%
Statewide	29%
Regional	12%
Nationwide	6%

Appendix C: Profile of Youth Development Nonprofits Surveyed

61 survey respondents

Annual Budget

Less than \$100,000	10%
\$100,000 - \$500,000	15%
\$500,000 - \$1 million	13%
\$1 - \$2 million	16%
More than \$2 million	46%

Location

Twin Cities metro	74%
Northeast Minnesota	8%
Northwest Minnesota	2%
Central Minnesota	3%
Southeast Minnesota	2%
Southwest Minnesota	5%
Other	7%

Note: Total percentage does not equal 100% due to rounding.

Geographic Service Area

Twin Cities metro	64%
Minnesota regional	25%
Statewide	13%
Multi-state	5%
National	5%
International	2%
Other	30%

Note: Total percentage does not equal 100% because some survey respondents serve more than one geographic area.

Established vs. Emerging

Established	89%
Emerging	11%

Youth Development Discipline

Healthy Choices	75%
Learning and Education	74%
Safe Places and Activities	69%
Family Support	57%
Leadership and Life Skills	54%
Other	33%

Note: Total percentage does not equal 100% because some survey respondents serve more than one youth development discipline.



MINNESOTA COUNCIL
ON FOUNDATIONS

a community of grantmakers

About the Minnesota Council on Foundations

Founded in 1969, the Minnesota Council on Foundations is a regional membership association of grantmakers working to improve the health and vitality of our communities. The Council's membership includes family and other private foundations, community and other public foundations, and corporate foundations and business giving programs. For information on membership, please contact the Council at 612.338.1989.

Vision

All philanthropic organizations contribute to positive change in the communities they serve.

Mission

To strengthen and expand philanthropy.

100 Portland Avenue South, Suite 225
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2575

t 612.338.1989
f 612.337.5089
info@mcf.org
www.mcf.org