



Creating Age-Friendly Communities

Request for Proposals from the Southwest Initiative Foundation

The Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) is offering a competitive grant to help ensure that our region's aging residents can lead healthy, vibrant lives in their own homes and communities. The Age-Friendly Communities Grant reflects our commitment to forward-looking, thoughtful, and transformative work that meets the changing needs of our region.

It is our intention that this work will clearly respond to the needs of older adults in southwest Minnesota through evidence-based practices and offer opportunities for replicable work throughout rural Minnesota.

Funding requests of up to \$100,000 will be considered. The applicant must show a portion of financial match toward the project. Applicants may define the timeline that best fits the scope of their work.

This is a competitive grant program. It is our expectation that this opportunity will spur collaboration and partnerships. Grants will be awarded in June of 2016.

Questions can be directed to Community Impact Director Nancy Fasching at nancyf@swifoundation.org or 320-484-9104.

Southwest Minnesota Research

Age-friendly communities are places that "actively involve, value, and support older adults, both active and frail, with infrastructure and services that effectively accommodate their changing needs" (Alley, Liebig, Banerjee, & Choi, 2007). As a growing number of adults enter retirement, is it important that communities have the infrastructure, services, and supports in place to ensure that residents can continue healthy, vibrant lives where they choose to live, as long as possible.

SWIF commissioned Wilder Research, a division of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, to research current strengths and service gaps and to anticipate the supports that are needed. The findings, detailed in the *Creating Age-Friendly Communities Report*, describe our changing demographics and potential strategies to support our 55+ residents.

Please review the executive summary or full report online at: www.swifoundation.org/age-friendly-communities

Research Findings

- In our southwest Minnesota region, 19 percent of residents are age 65 or older, 5 points higher than the state average. In two counties, Lincoln and Big Stone, over one-quarter of residents are age 65 and older.
- Poverty among adults age 65 and older in our region varies considerably by county. Poverty rates for this age group are highest in Lyon County (13 percent), much higher than the 3 percent poverty rate in Cottonwood County.
- In all counties, at least one-quarter of adults age 65 and older live alone. These residents may be more likely to feel isolated or have greater difficulty accessing the resources they need.
- Self-reported health status, a strong predictor of overall health status, decreases with age in many southwest Minnesota counties. Among adults ages 55 to 64, at least 40 percent of residents in all but one county reported their health as “excellent” or “very good.” Among adults age 75 and older, relatively few people (15-17 percent) rated their health that well. Ideally, with improved services, a larger percentage of residents will rate their own health positively and those ratings will stay at a high level with age.

Although transportation was the most common concern among stakeholders, a number of other challenges were identified that may make it difficult to help residents access the services they need and to create age-friendly communities. Some residents, particularly aging residents living on farms and aging residents of color, were identified as groups that are difficult to reach and that could become isolated.

There was also interest expressed in more supports for caregivers, the need to attract volunteers for many vital programs communities rely on, and communication of best practices, especially those that reduce the stigma seniors feel when needing to access the services in their community. We must engage our communities in recognizing the barriers and creating change across sectors to promote quality of life and the ability of seniors in southwest Minnesota to live independently. The result will be an active aging lifestyle and longer quality of life.

In southwest Minnesota, we have a history of collaboration, a large number of organizations interested in aging issues, and a number of local initiatives already working to address challenges identified. These are strengths that must be leveraged. The key to project success will be in more intentionally drawing on the wisdom of aging residents when creating and implementing new services and initiatives. We seek to inspire partners to leverage resources in a way that provides older adults living in rural areas access to service, allowing our residents to maintain their independence.

By 2025, 25 percent of southwest Minnesota residents are projected to be over the age of 65. This is a shift in the demographics of our region. This is our call to action. We want to be in the forefront, finding new and innovative ways to address this change and any challenges it may bring.

Funding Background

SWIF is a single connection offering unlimited possibilities for families, businesses, organizations and communities in southwest Minnesota. As one of six regional funds founded by The McKnight Foundation in the 1980s, we were created to provide financial resources, creative leadership and hope for a brighter future. In our 30-year history, we have:

- Made loans totaling \$42 million, assisting 670 businesses and creating or retaining 8,400 jobs
- Awarded \$27 million in grants to nonprofits to support important services and projects
- Established 24 community foundations and more than 90 donor advised, school and other designated funds
- Established 16 Early Childhood Initiative coalitions
- Received 1,650 acres of farmland through our Keep It GrowingSM farmland giving program

This research and grant opportunity was made possible by SWIF's Paul and Alma Schwan Aging Trust Endowment Fund. Established in 1990 with a generous gift from Marvin Schwan in honor of his parents, this fund is designed to help communities prepare for and respond to the opportunities and challenges of an aging rural society. Additional donations from caring community members and wise investment by SWIF have resulted in more than 25 years of positive impact for our aging rural population. Past programs supported by the fund include Productive Aging, Inter-generational Dialog, Senior College, Parish Nursing, Honor Flight Southwest Minnesota, and Encore Entrepreneurship.

Potential Grant Projects

To respond to the needs of the region, SWIF invites applications related to the following areas:

- Projects focused on building age-friendly communities and how local stakeholders refine their vision for our region. Using age-friendly community checklists ([like this one](#)) to respond to key questions about community assets and concerns to increase awareness of ways that communities can be enhanced.
- Volunteer opportunities to offer key supports to aging residents and to foster intergenerational connections. Giving priority to innovative approaches that make those volunteer experiences more meaningful. The relationships that develop out of volunteer opportunities should be mutually beneficial, drawing on the wisdom of aging residents.
- Education and support for caregivers throughout the region. Priority given to education and awareness around early signs of Alzheimer's or dementia, or innovative programming ideas.
- Transportation, either as an area of focus in itself or when developing strategies in response to other service gaps or regional concerns. Innovative approaches to collaboration will be given highest priority.
- Innovative approaches to aging in place. Creative approaches that take the strengths of the community and utilize resources in a way to help older residents maintain their independence.

Application Process

- Applicants must complete the online pre-application questionnaire found at swifoundation.org/grants **before March 1, 2015**. Please identify "Age-friendly Communities" in the project title.
- You will receive an e-mail confirming our receipt of your pre-application questionnaire.
- If you meet the criteria for the program, we will invite you to submit a full application. **The deadline to submit a full application is April 15, 2016.**
- Upon receipt, your full application is assigned to a staff grant reviewer. They will contact you with questions and schedule a site visit, if deemed necessary.
- You will be informed of the final decision by **June 30, 2016**.

Grant Guidelines

- All proposals must demonstrate a benefit within the following 18 counties in southwest Minnesota: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift and Yellow Medicine. SWIF prefers that the applicant is located within the 18 county area and that ideas and visions are generated locally.
- Proposals must be submitted by an independent 501(c)(3) organization, a unit of government, or by a public agency.
- Funding requests of up to \$100,000 will be considered. The applicant must show a portion of financial match toward the project.
- Projects must be completed within two years of the grant award date.
- Targeted and diverse populations are involved early in the development of the proposed project and throughout the implementation. (i.e. older adults and various interest groups)
- Proposals incorporate an innovative approach and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Proposals must exhibit evidence of appropriate partnerships. It is best to include letters from partners that clearly state their level of support and commitment to the project.
- Proposals have clearly stated goals and measurable outcomes. Priority will be given to projects that align with evidence-based research to achieve outcomes. Proposals must show evidence of one or more ways to continue the project beyond SWIF funding.
- Churches and religious organizations may apply for support for activities that benefit the larger community but not for activities that have a sectarian religious purpose.

Grant Award Selection Criteria

Proposals that are in line with the criteria below will receive priority consideration in our grant review process.

- Applicant organization meets all eligibility criteria and any other requirements specified in this RFP.
- Applicant organization has a mission and primary programs, services, and/or activities that strongly align with SWIF's mission.
- Applicant demonstrates a measurable impact toward southwest Minnesota residents.
- The proposed activity aligns with the outlined area of focus specified in this RFP.
- The application provides evidence of an approach that is based on established best practices to lead to the desired outcomes for the organization(s).
- The application reflects recent outside forces that have shifted and the impact potential of the proposed activity will respond to those needs.
- There is collaboration among several partners to create a systems change so that older residents can maintain their independence.
- The proposed project clearly responds to the findings of the research in the *Creating Age-Friendly Communities Report*.