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girlsBEST IV Multi-Year Grant: Year 2

Executive Summary

SUBMITTED TO
Women's Foundation of Minnesota

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*Specializing in planning,
facilitation, data collection,
report writing, assessment,
and evaluation*

PREPARED BY
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The Women's Foundation of Minnesota invests in social change to achieve equality for all women and girls in Minnesota.

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I. Executive Summary

BACKGROUND: This evaluation report summarizes online surveys completed by 20 Minnesota programs/projects that were awarded grants from the girlsBEST (Girls Building Economic Success Together) Fund in 2014-2015 (Year 2 of a multi-year grant for some of the programs/projects). The survey was administered by the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota (WFM) and asks 39 questions about the girls the programs/projects served, girls’ awareness and leadership, program/project activities, and overall program/project performance. GrayHall LLP, an independent research firm in St. Paul, completed the data ordering and analysis for this summary report.

Programs/projects that received grant awards in 2014-2015 are: Bagosendaan (Mahnomen), Casa de Esperanza (St. Paul), Casa Guadalupe Multicultural Communities (Cold Spring), Dakota Wicohan (Morton), Girl Scouts of MN & WI River Valleys (Rochester and Worthington), Hmong American Partnership (St. Paul), Lake Superior School District (Two Harbors), Life-Work Planning Center (St. James, Madelia), Men as Peacemakers (Duluth), Minnesota African Women’s Association (Brooklyn Park), Minnesota Urban Debate League (Minneapolis and St. Paul), New Horizons Crisis Center (Redwood Falls), Peacemaker Resources (Warroad), Pillsbury United Communities - Brian Coyle Community Center (Minneapolis), Project FINE (Winona), SURGE! (Mankato), WE WIN Institute (Minneapolis), Western Community Action, Inc. (Marshall), Willmar Public Schools (Willmar), and Women’s Initiative for Self Empowerment (St. Paul).

WFM established the girlsBEST Fund in 2001 to make grants to girl-led programs across the state that build the economic success of Minnesota’s girls. girlsBEST focuses on underserved and underrepresented girls and makes grants based on evidence of satisfactory progress toward goals. Programs/projects must serve girls between the ages of 10 and 18 and demonstrate how girls are involved in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This summary report documents and quantifies the outcomes of the current girlsBEST programs as they relate to the fund’s goal of increasing “the readiness of girls to achieve future economic well being.”

KEY FINDINGS: All programs/projects provided information regarding their girlsBEST track and progress made. Forty five percent (45%) of the programs/projects exceeded their goals for the 2014-2015 grant cycle. Data on girls’ high school graduation completion and post-secondary education enrollment, and information regarding girls’ awareness in various areas of the girlsBEST program model (including career choices, high paying careers, and building agency) appear in this report. In addition, girls’ financial literacy, leadership, activism, mentoring, and cultural and community identities skills/experiences are explored; and inspirational stories are shared. Information is also provided on the types of activities that: help girls graduate from high school, prepare girls for post-secondary education and careers, and assist girls in building strong identities and financial literacy.

A. Program Enrollment and Participation: Nearly two-thousand (1,957) girls attended 20 girlsBEST programs/projects during Year 2. Sixty percent (60%) of the girls were core participants in programs/projects, meaning they attended most of the time. Most (1,692 or 86%) program/project participants were girls ages 10 to 18. Program/project participants represent a range of race, ethnic, and cultural groups, including African American/African/Black, Asian American/Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latina/o, American

Indian Nation, Caucasian/White, and Multiracial. Girls with disabilities, low-incomes, and Immigrants/refugees were also among program/project participants, as was girls who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Inter-sex. Of the girls served in 2014-2015, approximately 34% live in the Twin Cities area, about 44% live in Greater Minnesota, and less than one percent is from American Indian nations.

- **High School Graduation Rates:** Of the 20 programs/projects, 19 included 165 girls who were eligible to graduate from high school. Three hundred eighty three girls from all 20 programs were on track for graduation and 291 girls from 17 programs were on track to enroll in post secondary education
- **Rate of Post-Secondary Enrollment:** Sixteen of the 20 programs/projects projected that a total of 179 girls would enroll or were planning to enroll in post-secondary schools/institutions during Year 2. Most (87 or 49%) of the girls projected to be on track to enroll in various types of post-secondary schools/institutions during Year 2 would attend four-year colleges/universities and 79 (44%) would attend two-year colleges. The statewide post-secondary enrollment rate is 34% to 54%.
- **Making Smart Choices:** The number of program/project participants avoiding teen pregnancy during Year 2 was 1,138 (99%) or three per 1,000. Just three of the 1,141 program participants became pregnant which is less than 1%. The girlsBEST teen pregnancy rate was lower than the statewide range of 32 and 132 per 1,000 and lower than the rate of Caucasian/White girls, which at 17 per 1,000 is the lowest in the state.
- **Parent Engagement:** Sixteen (80%) of the 20 programs engaged parents/other family members in activities. Forty-five percent (45%) engaged parents/family members in at least one activity and another 33% engaged parents/family members in 2 to 5 activities during the grant period. The most effective of these activities was regularly engaging on decisions about their children, according to 59% of the respondents.

B. Program Activities that Build Future Economic Success of Minnesota Girls: A host of activities designed to build the economic success of Minnesota girls were offered by programs/projects on all four tracks: Academic, Career Development, Entrepreneurial, and Public Education and Advocacy. The most popular of these were career exploration and college tours/visits, offered by programs/projects on all tracks. Eighty-five to 90 percent (85%-90%) of girls participating in programs/projects on the Academic track experienced career exploration, college tours/visits, learning from mentors, and self-development activities.

Seventy to 85 percent (70%-85%) of girls in programs/projects on the Entrepreneurial track experienced career exploration, leadership development, and budgeting/money management activities. Seventy five percent to 85% of girls in programs/projects on the Career Development Track also completed career exploration, college tours visits, and learning from mentors; and 70% to 75% of girls in programs/projects on the Public Education and Advocacy Track experienced college tours visits, cross-cultural interactions, guest speakers/discussions, mentoring, planning, and team building. The most effective of

these activities were said by 55% to 65% of respondents to be college tours/visits, guest speakers/discussions, leadership development, and self-development. Most (80%) of programs/projects engaged the parents/family members of participating girls. In most cases, according to 66% of respondents, parents/family members were regularly engaged in decision making about their children.

- C. *girlsBEST Notable Practices:*** Eighty percent (80%) to 100% of grantee programs/projects are using girlsBEST notable practices in their work. The practices are Mentoring: creating supportive environments for girls (95%); Diversity: working with underserved and underrepresented girls, helping girls gain self confidence and self esteem by building cultural and community awareness (100%); Leadership and activism resulting in girl-driven programs (75%); Girl-driven activities (80%); Cultural and community awareness (85%); Financial literacy (75%); and Collaboration (85%).

The top three activities noted by programs/projects were: Explore a variety of career choices (75%), explore financing for college (70%), attend financial literacy workshops/conferences and explore personal finances (50% each). Ninety percent (90%) of the grantee programs/projects cited mentoring as an activity that helped girls build leadership in the community during Year 2 of the girlsBEST grant; 70% noted girl-driven activities as building leadership; and 65% explored a variety of career choices, and helped girls gain self confidence and self esteem by building cultural and community awareness. The category containing the most inspirational stories about girlsBEST programs/projects during Year 2 is “Girls building strong identities and making smart choices,” selected by 85% of grantees.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The results of this analysis indicates that the 20 grantee programs/project are engaged in a wide range of activities that are helping girls increase their economic readiness to achieve future economic wellbeing. The programs/projects reported multiple examples and measures of girls’ personal and collective growth, including projected high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment, leadership activities, and connections to culture and community.

Based on this analysis, it is recommended that Women’s Foundation of Minnesota continue aligning the evaluation survey for the purpose of creating question and section continuity. This practice will improve the numerical outcomes of the survey. As two examples, there are discrepancies in reporting girls served in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. These numbers should add up to “total” (1,957) or “core” (1,176) girls served. Likewise, the number of program participants avoiding teen pregnancy during Year 2 was 1,138 and just three girls became pregnant. These numbers should also add up to the “total” or “core” girls served.