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girlsBEST IV Multi-Year Grant: Year 3

*Summary
Evaluation Report*
SUBMITTED TO
Women's Foundation of Minnesota

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

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Women's Foundation of Minnesota is a statewide community foundation investing in innovation to drive gender equity.

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I. Executive Summary

BACKGROUND: This evaluation report summarizes online surveys completed by 19 Minnesota programs/projects that were awarded grants from the girlsBEST (Girls Building Economic Success Together) Fund in 2015-2016 (Year 3 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 40 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 2015-2016 are: Bagosendaan (Mahnomen), Big Buddies of Western Community Action, Inc. (Marshall), Casa de Esperanza (St. Paul), Girl Scouts of MN & WI River Valleys (Rochester and Worthington), Hmong American Partnership (St. Paul), 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), Northwest Technical College Foundation (Bemidji), Peacemaker Resources (Warroad), Pillsbury United Communities - Brian Coyle Community Center (Minneapolis), Project FINE (Winona), Two Harbors High School (Two Harbors), WE WIN Institute (Minneapolis), Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (St. Paul), YouthCare 1 and YouthCare 2 (Minneapolis), and YWCA Mankato.

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: As was the case during the previous grant year, all 2015-2016 programs/projects provided information regarding their girlsBEST track and progress made. The majority (90%) met or exceeded their goals in 2015-2016. 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' entrepreneurial, career development, and public education and advocacy activities are explored; as are parent engagement, girl's awareness, agency, activism, and financial literacy activities. Also shared are grantees inspirational stories and their overall reflections on their girlsBEST programs/projects.

A. Program Enrollment and Participation: More than 2,000 girls attended 19 girlsBEST programs/projects during Year 3, up 12% from Year 2. Fifty-three (53%) percent of the girls were core participants in programs/projects, attending most of the time. Most (881 or 40%) program/project participants were girls ages 10 to 13. 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 2015-2016, approximately 50% (1,101) live in the Twin Cities area, about 36% (792) live in Greater Minnesota, and 6% percent are from American Indian nations, up from less than one percent in 2014-2015.

- **High School Graduation Rates:** Of the 19 programs/projects, 16 included 161 girls who were eligible to graduate from high school. One-hundred fifty-one girls from the 16 programs were

on track for graduation and 216 girls from 16 programs were on track to enroll in post secondary education

- **Rate of Post-Secondary Enrollment:** Fourteen (14) of the 19 programs/projects reported that a total of 138 girls would enroll or were planning to enroll in post-secondary schools/institutions during Year 3. Most (64 or 46%) of the girls projected to be on track to enroll in various types of post-secondary schools/institutions during Year 3 would attend two-year colleges/universities and 61 (44%) would attend four-year colleges. The statewide post-secondary enrollment rate in 2014 was 69%.¹
- **Making Smart Choices:** The number of program/project participants avoiding teen pregnancy during Year 3 was 1,366 (99%) or three per 1,000. Just four of the 1,370 program participants became pregnant which is less than 1%. The girlsBEST teen pregnancy rate was lower than the statewide ranking of 42 births per 1,000 teens and lower than the rate of Caucasian/White girls, which at 18 per 1,000 teens (the lowest in the state).²

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: **(B) Academic, (C) Entrepreneurial, (D) Career Development, and (E) Public Education and Advocacy.** The most effective of these activities in building girl's academic, entrepreneurial, public education and/or advocacy skills, as reported by the most grantees (63%), is leadership development including public presentations, learning from mentors, and service learning projects. The second most effective activities in building girl's academic, entrepreneurial, public education and/or advocacy skills, as reported by the most grantees, are college tours/visits, and mentoring (tied at 53%).

As examples, 63% of programs offering academic activities took girls on college tours/visits, as did 74% of those providing career development work, and 79% of programs/projects offering public education and advocacy. Similarly, 79% of entrepreneurial programs/projects offered leadership development activities, and 74% of programs/projects provided mentoring activities.

F. Parent Engagement: Twelve (63%) of the 19 programs engaged parents/other family members in girlsBEST programming during the program/project timeline. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the programs/projects ensured parents/family members participation in two to 5 activities; 33% engaged parents in at least one girlsBEST activity, and 8% involved parents/family members in 6 or more girlsBEST activities. Of possible activities that the programs/projects could involve parents/family members in, most (42%) programs/projects engaged them in decisions involving their children and/or linked parents/family members with services (also 42%). The most effective of these engagement activities were said to be providing and linking parents/family members with other services (42%).

The girlsBEST Theory of Change: The girlsBEST Theory of Change suggests that girls advance through three distinct stages (awareness, agency, and activism) on their way to greater readiness for economic well-being. The activities most effective in building girls awareness, agency, and activism during Year 3, according to grantees, are "displaying leadership and self-advocacy (79%)" and "awareness of the value of problem solving and goal setting (47%)".

Notable Practices: Notable practices associated with girls building strong cultural/community identities and making smart choices are financial literacy, leadership and activism, girl-driven activities, and mentoring. The girlsBEST notable practice that is part of the most (37%) 2015-2016 programs/projects is

¹ Alexandra Djurovich, Meredith Fergus, and Greg Lewin, *Minnesota Measures: A 2016 Report on Higher Education Performance*, St. Paul: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2016.

² LiveScience, "Teen Pregnancy Rates By State, May 5, 2014, <http://www.livescience.com/27417-teen-pregnancy-rates-by-state.html>

leadership and activism that results in girl-driven programs. The financial literacy and leadership activities offered by the greatest number of programs/projects in 2015-2016 are: Explored financing for college (68%) and Mentored (74%). During the 2015-2016 grant cycle the 19 programs/projects engaged 315 mentors and a total of 1,615 girls were mentored. The activity that the most (95%) 2015-2016 programs/projects mentors participated in is “creating supportive environments for girls.”

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES: The category containing the most inspirational stories about girlsBEST programs/projects during Year 3 is “Girls building strong identities and making smart choices.” That category was selected by 89% of grantees, up four percent since the 2014-2015 grant cycle. The next two popular story categories are Mentoring (79%) and Diversity (74%).

REFLECTIVE SUMMARY: Responses in this section of the report discuss overall program/project outcomes, factors that contributed to programs/projects’ successes, and lessons learned. Among notable program outcomes, reported by grantees, were: collaboration with tribal court, capacity to reach out to more Latino youth, creating network support, girls receiving critical education on college and career opportunities, girls connecting with adults who support them, increase in college admissions, and understanding of gender inequalities across cultures. A few factors that contributed to programs/projects’ successes, according to 2015-2016 grantees, were girls’ connections with each other; exceptional facilitation; teamwork; strong relationships with both faculty and administrators at local schools; identification in year one that human trafficking was a concern effecting girls’ communities; involving parents, mentors, and partners; funding; and dedicated staff. Many lessons were learned, chief among these were: Girls need a safe place where they can be genuine with each other. The opportunity gap for girls in some communities is vast and girlsBEST programming is uniquely positioned to address it. Participants are more excited and encouraged about attending college when they have been on college visits. And, there is a need to have strong connections with community resources because mentors need a lot of support from sexual health, housing, social services, etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: As in previous years, the results of this analysis indicates that the 19 programs/projects 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, post-secondary enrollment, leadership activities, and connections to culture and community. Of note, as in previous years, is the large number (1,366) of core program/project participants who avoided teen pregnancy during Year 3. The girlsBEST teen pregnancy rate is lower than the statewide rate.

Based on this analysis, it appears that girlsBEST grantees are achieving good results. One exception is the girlsBEST program expectation that girls be involved in “program planning, implementation, and evaluation.” Not all programs reported this involvement. If girl-driven programming is truly important it is recommended that the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, ensure all grantees have girl-driven programs/projects. Also recommend is that WFM continue aligning the evaluation survey for the purpose of creating question and section continuity and eliminating repetition. As one example, the new “Reflective Summary” invites repetition because of data shared prior to that section of the survey. It would be helpful to respondents if the survey was on-point and shorter.