

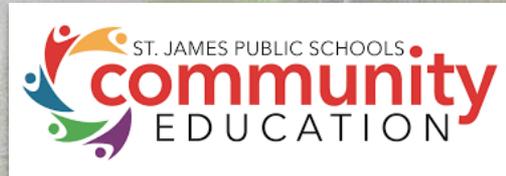
Embracing Change

Strengthening Communities in Rural America

Alejandra Bejarano
Pat Branstad
Sue Harris



REGION NINE
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION



Inclusive Development in Economic Development District's COVID-19 Recovery

Today's webinar is co-sponsored by:



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Thanks for Joining the Webinar!

- Questions or comments can be submitted via the questions box on the right side of your screen in drop down menu
- A recording of the webinar will be made available soon at www.nado.org & e-mailed to all registrants
- Please take a moment to complete the post-webinar survey to provide helpful feedback
- Contact Ciara Ristig at cristig@nado.org with any questions about the webinar or project

Today's Presenters

Nicole Griensewic, Executive Director
Region 9 Development Commission

Alejandra Bejarano, Economic Recovery Planner
Region 9 Development Commission

Pat Branstad, Uniting Cultures/Uniendo Culturas Facilitator
St James, MN

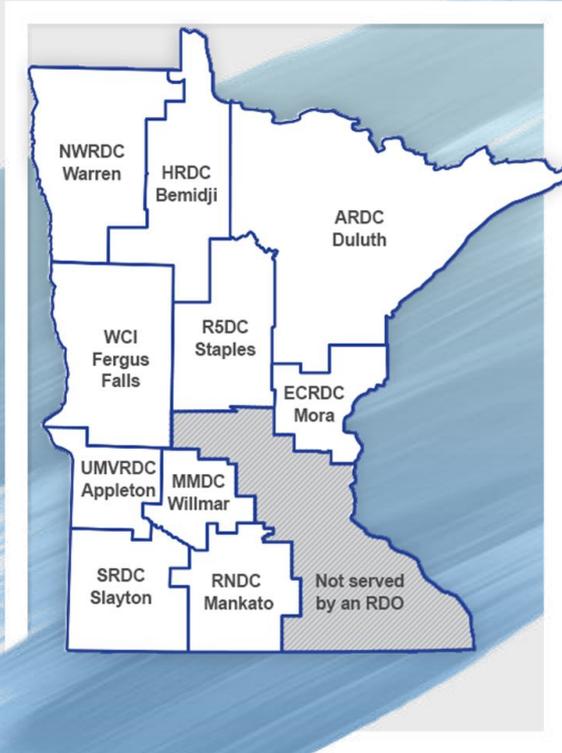
Sue Harris, Community Education Director
St James, MN

Ciara Ristig, Senior Program Manager
NADO Research Foundation

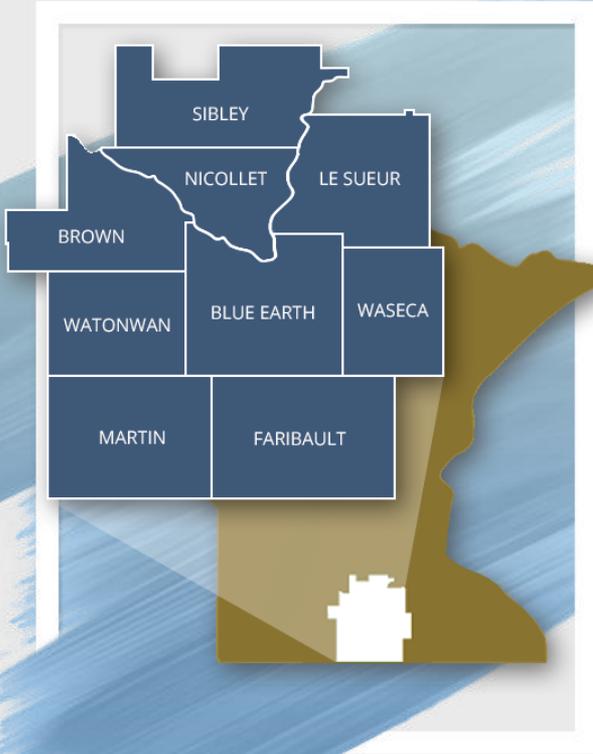


Regional Development Organizations

- Established by Minnesota statute to provide technical assistance to local units of government in their region
- Provide a variety of services based on the unique needs of their region
- Partner with numerous state and federal agencies to obtain and administer grants for programs and projects at the local level
- Governed by volunteer commissions composed of elected officials, business and community leaders



Nine Counties in South Central Minnesota



Blue Earth
Brown
Faribault
Le Sueur
Martin

Nicollet
Sibley
Waseca
Watonwan

72 Cities
147 Townships
33 School Districts



Labor trends

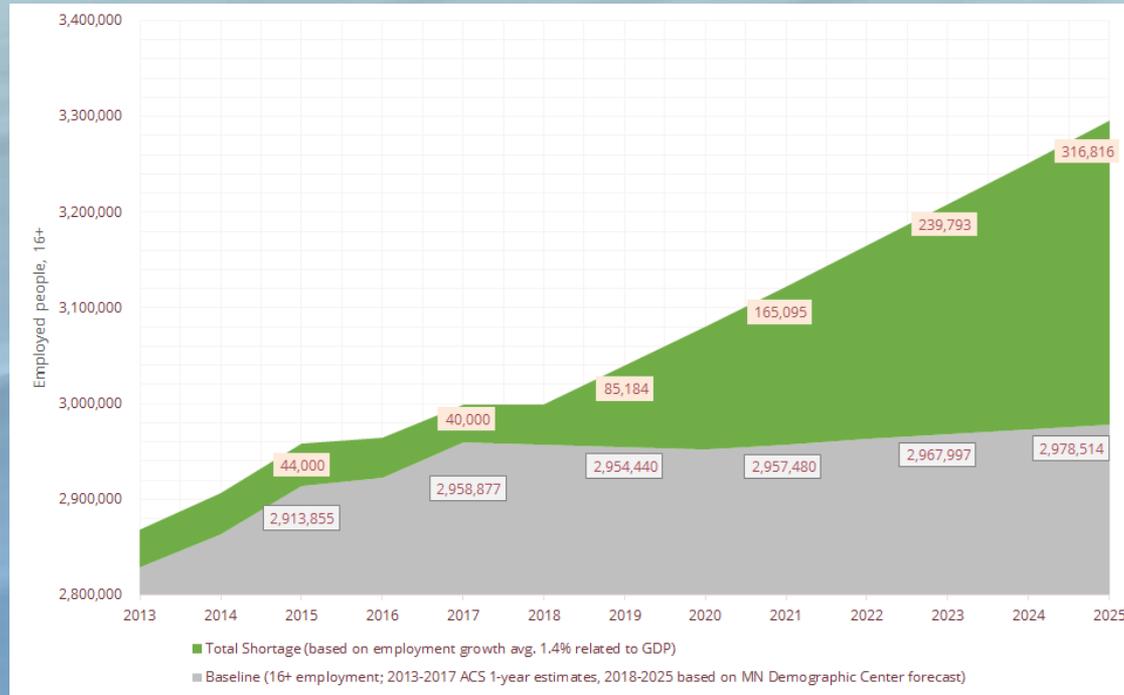
- Higher seasonality & turnover among workers of color compared to other workers.
- Underrepresented in these industries:
 - Finance and Insurance
 - Management of companies & enterprises
 - Professional, scientific, & technical services
 - Education
 - Arts, entertainment, & recreation
 - Public administration



Labor trends

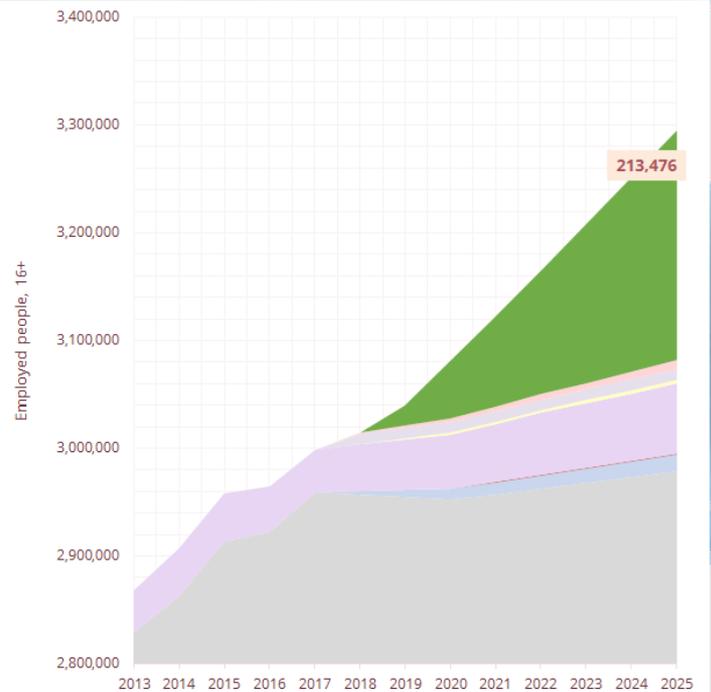
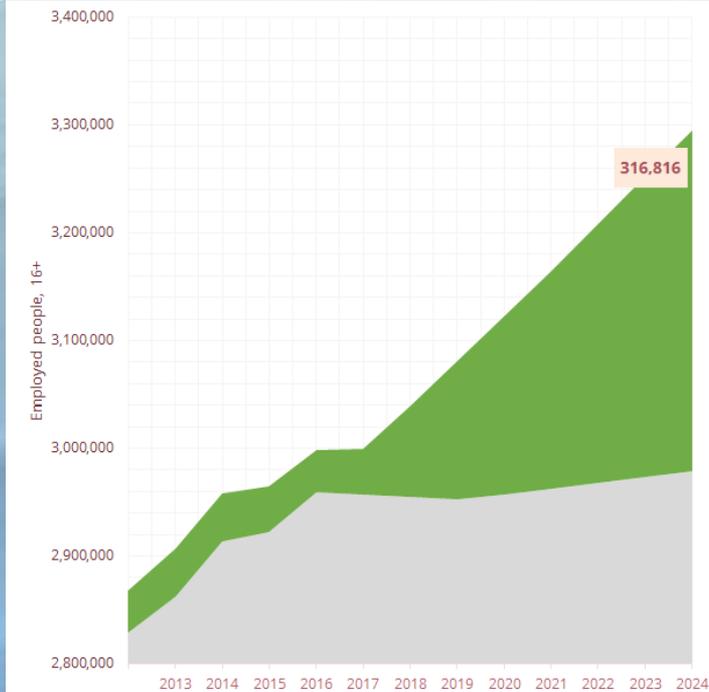
- Labor market segments are like “*sandpits.*”
- Low-wage jobs offers **less upward mobility.**
 - Race and gender mobility gaps hold some workers back.
- Traditional pathways from low to high-wage work are expected to disappear (Escobari et al., 2021).

Minnesota's labor shortage



MINNESOTA'S LABOR SHORTAGE. RealTime Talent. October 2016, Erin Olson, <https://www.realtimetalent.org/research-2/mnlaborshortage/>

Minnesota's labor shortage



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**What can an RDC
do?**

Partners



eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

2017

IT'S TIME TO TALK: FORUMS ON RACE

It's Time to Talk: Forums on Race is a YWCA trademarked racial dialogue facilitation process utilizing trained facilitators to lead small table discussions on race.

2019

WELCOMING COMMUNITIES PROJECT (WCP)

Providing a framework for equity and inclusion learning through hands-on activities with subject-matter experts to build relationships, learn inclusive community practices, tools, and skills based on outcomes gathered through a community-wide assessment.

2020

WCP DISTRIBUTES FUNDS FOR FOOD SHELVES

In response to the pandemic, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) Foundation of Minnesota (\$20,000) and SJP Consulting (\$2,500) provided the WCP with funds that were distributed to local food shelves in the communities where RELC and WCP programs have been held.

2021

RIPPLE EFFECTS OF SOUTHERN MN EQUITY SUMMITS

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) was used to evaluate and document the impacts and themes of the Summit held in 2019 and 2020.

2018

RURAL EQUITY LEARNING COMMUNITY COHORT (RELC)

A learning cohort designed to bring together diverse stakeholders to share, examine, and explore inclusive best practices through education and relationship-building to build capacity for local action.

2019

SOUTHERN MN EQUITY SUMMIT

A two-day statewide Rural Equity Summit in St. Peter geared toward small towns and rural communities in Minnesota as a platform to provide approaches and strategies to create a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable communities.

2020

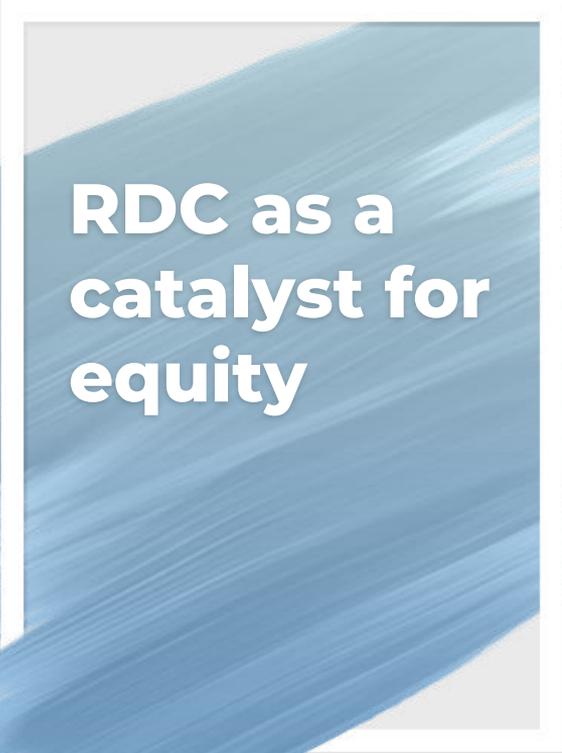
SOUTHERN MN EQUITY SUMMIT

Held virtually due to the pandemic, the Rural Equity Summit provided approaches and strategies for small towns and rural communities in Minnesota working to strengthen racial equity and social justice.

2022

DEVELOPING A REGIONAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

With funding from Bush Foundation, the plan will showcase data, strategies, and solutions that will aim to build more inclusive economies, recruit and retain talent, and reduce inequalities.



RDC as a catalyst for equity

- Resources
 - Technical assistance
 - Grant writing
 - Community development expertise
 - Funding sources (Regional, state and federal)
 - Data & analysis
- Partnerships
 - Foundations, non-profits, experts, community liaisons.
- Training and mentorship
 - Strategic planning



Building internal capacity

- Internal training and research
 - Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Qualification
 - DEI toolkit
 - Consultants
- External resources
 - NADO, IEDC, online tools
 - Similar organizations
- Staff buy-in & commitment
- Review and update internal policies
- Board and commission makeup
 - Youth & minority commissioner



NADO National Association of Development Organizations
Regional Strategies. Partnerships. Solutions.

ABOUT US | ADVOCACY | LATEST NEWS | RESOURCES | EVENTS & TRAINING | JOB BANK

Equity Resources for Economic Development & Planning

NADO.org > Resources > Featured Resources > Equity Resources for Economic Development & Planning

Posted on: July 15th, 2020 by [Carrie Kissel](#)



Equity & Inclusion Resources for RDOs

Sustainable Communities Series

Key Strategies to Advance Equitable Growth in Regions

PolicyLink

Sustainable Communities Learning Network




New Growth Innovation Network
POWERING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES



INCLUSIVE RECOVERY INITIATIVE



CENTER FOR ECONOMIC INCLUSION



INDICATORS OF AN INCLUSIVE REGIONAL ECONOMY



INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

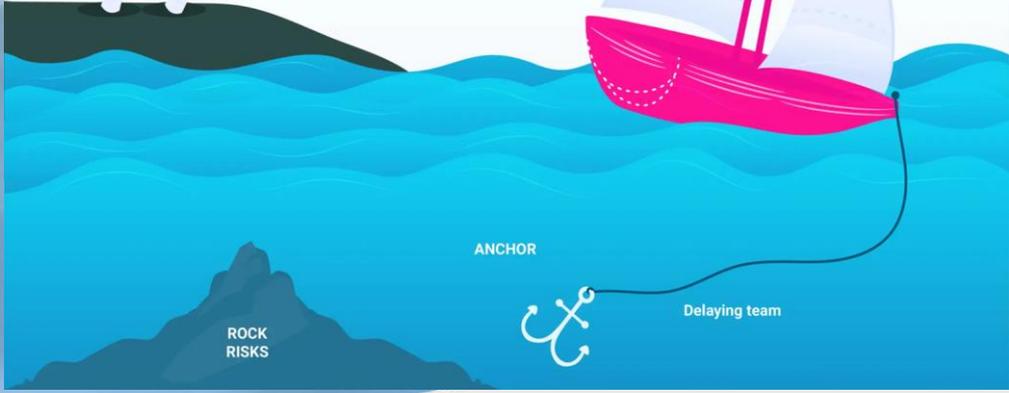
GOAL / VISION



Wind



Helping team



ANCHOR



Delaying team

ROCK RISKS

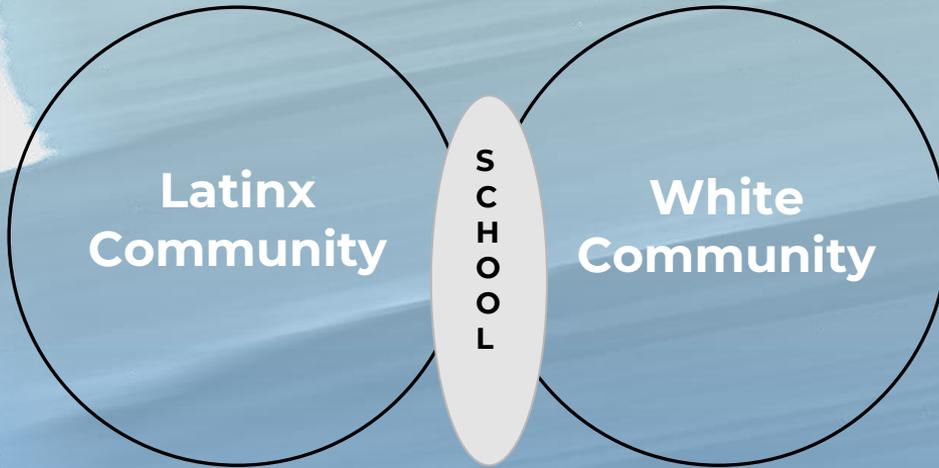




St. James MN

- Railroad town - 150 years old in 2020
- Rural - Population: 4,750
- Industry – Food Processing & Agriculture
- Low income - over 56% Free and Reduced lunch
- Settled by northern European immigrants
- Shift in demographics last 35-40 years - Mainly Latinx - more rural stable population due to immigration
- Community 38% non-white
- School 51% non-white

Past Community Efforts to Address Changing Demographics



Late 90s: The Spirit of St. James
Unity / Unidad

Mid 2000s: Horizons – Poverty Reduction
Leadership Plenty, Study Circles

Latinx Leadership:
Convivencia Hispana

Region 9
Forum on Race
Spring 2017

2016 Presidential Election
Next Steps for Action

**Joint
Meeting**

IT'S TIME TO TALK: FORUM ON RACE

Region Nine Development Commission
Greater Mankato Diversity Council and the YWCA



Past History



New Efforts



Community ready for action

Uniting
Cultures

Uniendo
Culturas
August 2017



Ripple Effects

School District



Equity Team

Teachers of Color

Staff Development

Social Justice Club

School strategic plan

Fiscal host:
Uniting Cultures/ Uniendo Culturas
& Convivencia Hispana



Black
Lives
Matter

“We realized that silence is not going to be acceptable or the norm anymore” ~ Briar Lenz



Community Response



"White Fragility"
monthly discussion



Building Bridges for Thriving Communities
A Summit for Equity

Local
Sponsorships of
Equity Summit



Local Church
Study Groups

Community response

Broad base support for families with food insecurity:

- Backpack - High School Food Pantry
- Family Food Giveaway
- Support for Food Shelf



City:

- Bilingual publications/ signage
- Support for Equity Summit
- Support for Latinx businesses and entrepreneurs
- Handyman's Certificate



**CONVIVENCIA
HISPANA**

Local Latinx group - Convivencia Hispana

- “Our Golden Age”
- Partners in the community Art Place project and helped design our “new” Plaza
- Received **Department of Health grant** for Covid Education and Immunization outreach



“New” Downtown Mural - A special story of Immigration in St. James





MISSION STATEMENT

To create community where acceptance and belonging, community pride and ownership, and celebration of diversity are the way we are together



Efforts in the past four years

Community Efforts

- Education and celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity
- Building bridges through trusting relationships
- Support of Convivencia Hispana
- Equity work

Organizational Development

- Intercultural competency
- Sustainability
- Building capacity for increasing social capital

Education and Celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity

Multicultural Fiesta





“One of the beautiful things for people is to show their kids, grandkids, where they come from. We don’t want our ancestors to die.”



“Before [these events] we felt excluded...”



Now we can say that we feel included.”
~Julieta



Education and celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity

Culture through Cuisine



Salvadoran

Mexican

Guatemalan

Scandinavian

Culture Through Cuisine

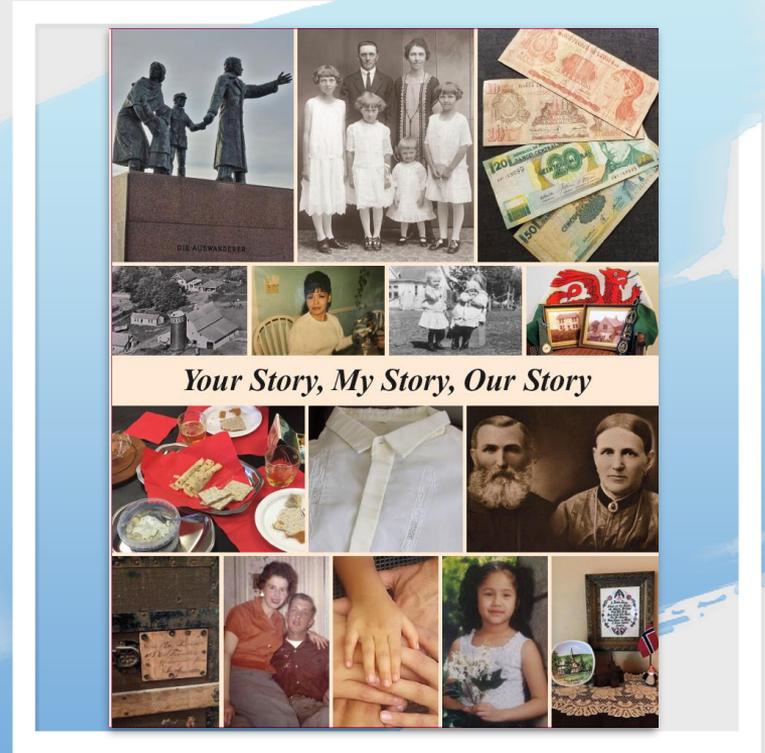


Community Conversations



Learning one another's stories

Your Story, My Story, Our Story

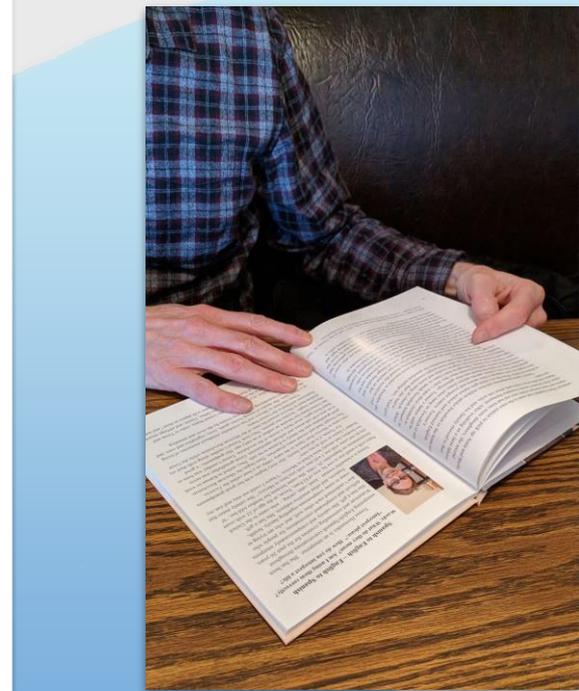


Your Story, My Story, Our Story

"Each of us has a story."

***"This puts a face on the word
immigrant."***

*"Each story is unique, there isn't
only "one" immigration story."*



Your Story, My Story, Our Story

“We didn’t have anything. No money. We had the dream to survive...the ones after us have to know their roots. Many of us will be gone but we have to leave our legacy of pride of where we come from...our customs, our values, that fighting spirit.”



“We’ve shared our stories and that’s allowed us to be more humanized”

Your Story, My Story, Our Story

*“When I first got here I felt as a little grain of sand; no one really gave importance to myself or my culture. Maybe we come from different continents and different situations but we have something in common that has propelled us to be here, that we are immigrants. **Now I feel a part of you.**” ~ Marta*



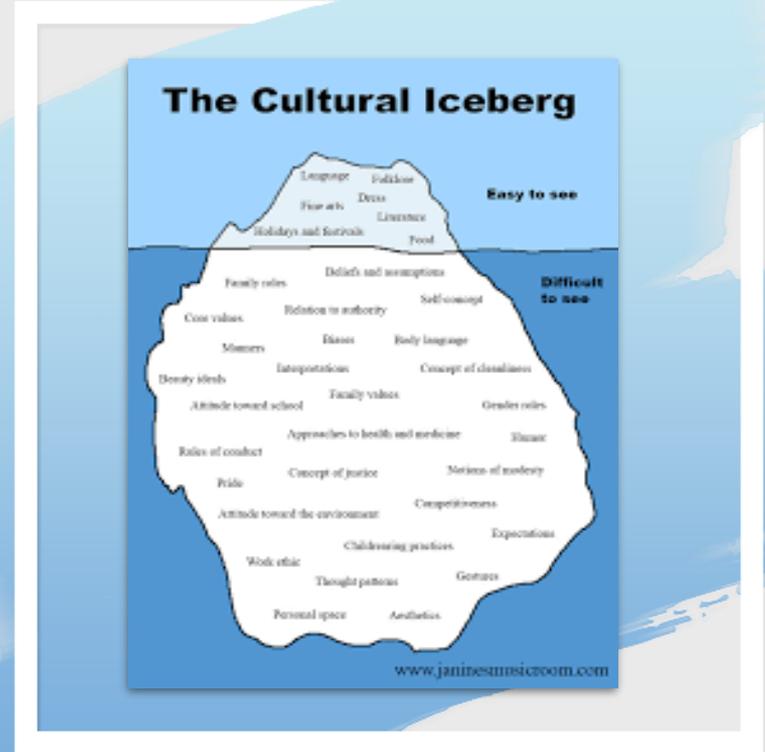
Rural Equity Learning Community

- Operating in a multicultural context - intercultural competency
- Building capacity within the community



Multicultural Context

- Language
- Decision Making
- Meeting Norms



Building Capacity To Increase Social Capital

- Expanding our stakeholder base
- Supporting other community organizations



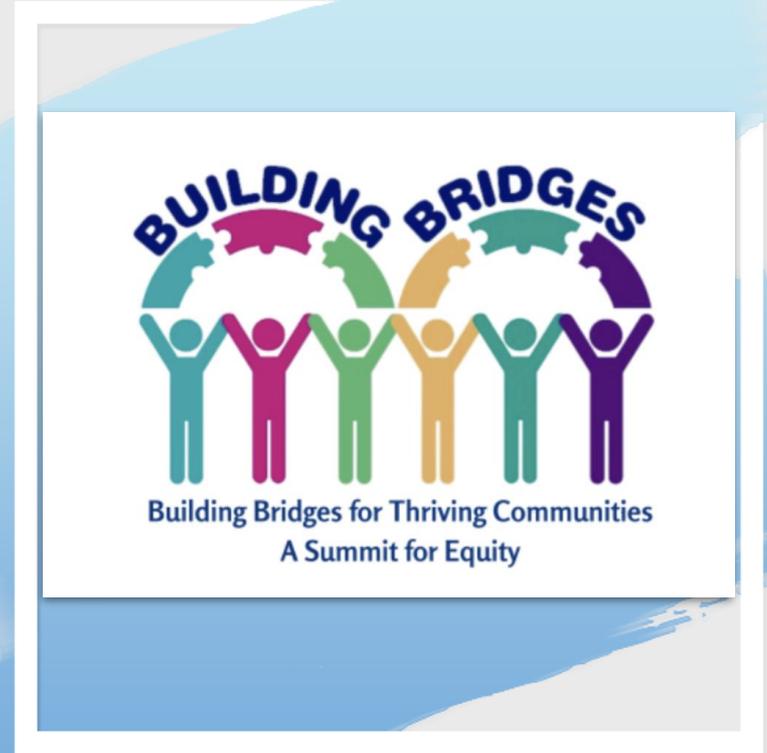
Convivencia Hispana

- Scholarship support
- Mentoring & organizational support
- “Our Golden Age”
- Day of the Dead



Equity work

- Working Out Loud
Circles: Becoming Anti-racist
- Community Education
EDI programming
- Equity Summit
- Social Justice Scholarship



Challenges

- Cultural differences
- Financial resources
- Focus and prioritization
- Sustainability
- Social capital loss
- Pushback from within community





Successes

- Recognized as leaders in equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts
- Trusting relationships and true friendships
- Sense of belonging in community
- Ripple effects

“For the first time in 25 years we feel included in this community...to feel included is the ability to contribute.” ~ Marta

How did we get here?

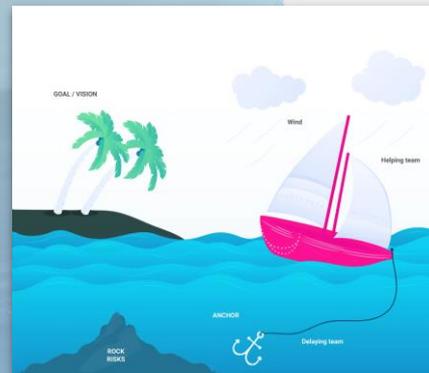
- JUST DO IT
- Don't wait until you have all the answers and a perfect plan
- Build on past initiatives

Engaging community stakeholders

- Identify, invite, listen, ask and engage
- Recognize one another's cultural lens
- Develop a plan

Build trusting relationships

- Listen
- Engage community leadership and gatekeepers
- Leadership changes
- Keep reaching out: renew connections and nurture them
- Outside partnerships



Thank you! Questions?

<https://tinyurl.com/NADO2022>

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