



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA  
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

# Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

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Tim Penny

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# Vision & Mission

## **VISION FOR THE REGION**

Southern Minnesota will be a prosperous and growing region with vibrant communities, innovative and successful economies, and engaged and valued citizens.

## **MISSION**

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation is a regional development and philanthropic organization that fosters economic and community vitality in 20 counties of southern Minnesota through a culture of collaboration and partnership.

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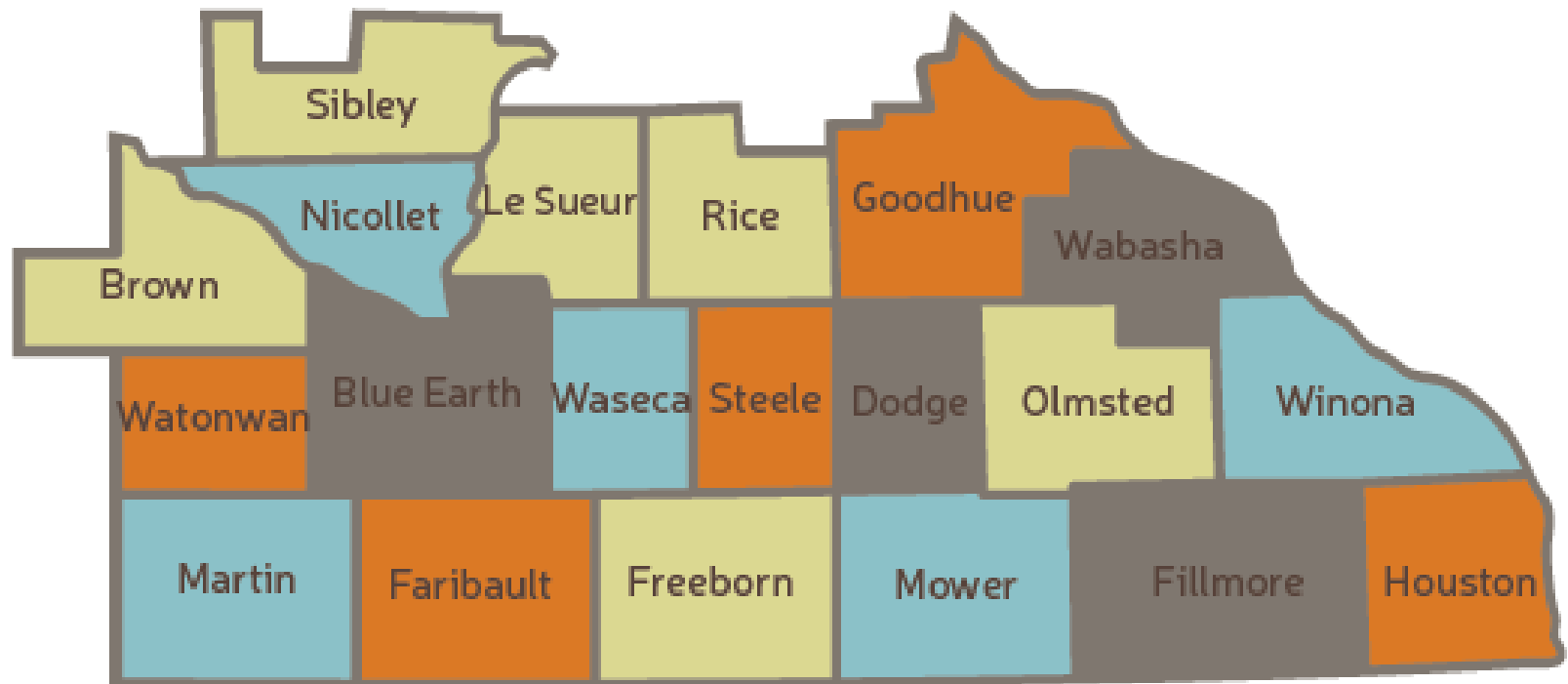




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# Our 20-County Region

\$162 million invested since 1986



Serving 20 counties, 175 communities and one Native nation

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# Focus Areas

**Early Childhood**

**Entrepreneurship**

**Community Vitality  
& Small Towns**

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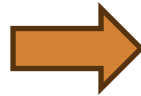




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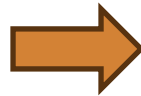
# \$57 million invested through Grantmaking

**Early Childhood**



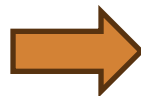
- Early Literacy Grant
- Early Care and Education Grant

**Entrepreneurship**



- Economic Development Grant
- Inclusive and Equitable Communities

**Community Vitality  
& Small Towns**



- Small Town Grant
- Paint the Town Grant

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# Early Literacy Grant

Supports early literacy for children birth to age 8 by giving books to children and their families.

More than **100K books** distributed since 2002.

**Partners:** local publishers, ABDO and Capstone.

*Opens in winter 2025*



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# Early Literacy Grant

500 books to Byron Public Schools.

"The books are used to design a class for the littlest people in our community. The teacher prepares a class filled with fun activities like songs, fingerplays and art crafts related to the theme of the book. At the end of the story time class, families take a copy of the book home."

- Jennifer Dole, Community  
Education Director.



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# Early Care and Education Grant

Supports programming to address needs of young children that focus on quality care and education.

More than **7,190** children supported in latest round.

*Opens in fall 2024.*



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# Early Care and Education Grant

## \$20K Grant to Kasson-Mantorville Community Education

"Tyler has 1p36 Deletion Syndrome which affects his gross and fine motor skills. He needs assistance walking over uneven surfaces, like the woodchips previously found on our playgrounds. Now that we have a smooth surface outside, kids like Tyler can play and explore with his peers while also feeling more autonomous and confident moving around on a more solid surface."

- Katie Schrodin, Recreation  
Coordinator



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# Economic Development Grant



Supports initiatives which grow community economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives.

*Opens in fall 2025  
(alternates annually with  
IEC Grant).*

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# Economic Development Grant

**Fairmont Area LIFE**  
WORK. SHOP. EAT. PLAY. LIVE.

Whether you're a local, a visitor, or are looking to relocate, Fairmont Area Life is your one-stop-shop for all things Fairmont.

**Be a tourist in your own town and rediscover what Fairmont has to offer.**

[FairmontAreaLife.com](https://www.FairmontAreaLife.com)

The graphic features a grid of 24 small images showing various local activities and landmarks. A central column of icons includes: Dining (burger), Shopping (shopping bag), Fine Art (palette), Theater (mask), Lakes (fish), Parks (tree), Classes (group of people), Life (house), Live Music (musical notes), Non-Profits (heart), Activities (globe), and Volunteer (handshake). A QR code is labeled 'SCAN'.

\$10K Grant to Fairmont EDA to create a positive community campaign.

Repurposed Chamber website to serve as a Brain Gain attraction tool.

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# Inclusive and Equitable Communities Grant



*The Village Agricultural Cooperative in  
Rochester*

Supports projects which grow racial diversity, equity and inclusion opportunities with a focus on entrepreneurship.

*Opens in fall 2024  
(alternates annually with  
Economic Development  
Grant).*

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# Inclusive and Equitable Communities Grant



The Rice County Neighbors United of Northfield will be using the grant to grow the Mercado Local, a community nonprofit of 20 immigrant vendors.

The grant will support the emerging entrepreneurs, most of whom are women, to continue their business growth. The Mercado Local storefront officially opened in downtown Northfield in December.

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# Small Town Grant

113 communities supported through Small Town grant. Supports projects in communities under 10,000.

Tourism marketing, welcoming initiatives, community planning, etc. Projects that impact the culture, education, economy, social aspects of the town.

**Partner:** Paul Johnson's family

*Opens July 2024.*



*Welcoming Week in Blue Earth*

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# Small Town Grant

\$7,395 grant to Stewartville Public Library to update a room to accommodate virtual meetings and test proctoring.

“This project will provide the only publicly available virtual meeting space in the Stewartville community, as well as the only private, quiet place for a test to be proctored for free in the greater Rochester area.”



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# Paint the Town Grant

For community murals,  
welcome signs, historic  
structures, public art/creative  
placemaking.

10,700 gallons of paint  
distributed since 1997.

Up to 100 gallons per project.

For communities under 10,000.

*Opens winter 2025.*



*Gnome mural in Peterson*

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# Paint the Town Grant

The City of Elmore wanted to be inclusive in their Paint the Town project.

A mural was designed to have many of the images low to the ground, allowing everyone to help with the paint-by-number design. Participants, ages 18 months to 80 years, came together, sitting on lawn chairs or even the grass, to create a masterpiece the whole town is proud of.



*Elmore mural*

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# Partnerships move the needle

**SMIF's motto:**

*Collaborating for regional vitality*

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# NEW: Community Responsive Grants

**Partner:** Otto Bremer Trust

For organizations to address immediate challenges in their communities.

\$10K - \$50K Grants

**Community asset building** (community planning, diversity initiatives, small business development) or **Health and Wellbeing** (focus on early childhood)

Highly competitive

**Due April 17**



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# NEW: PROMISE Act Grants

**Partner:** MN DEED

For eligible businesses (and nonprofits that operate like a business)

\$10K - \$50K Grants

Program requirements on website

Highly competitive – not all eligible businesses will receive grants.

**Due April 24**



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# Thank You!

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@smifound @tim\_penny #soMNlove

# Contact

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