



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATION



2026 Funding Request: City of Mankato

The City of Mankato's generous contribution supports SMIF's overall mission which includes impacting programming for entrepreneurs, child care professionals, and community vitality efforts in Mankato and throughout our 20 county region. Cities and counties account for our largest segment of donors, representing one third of our local support. Other areas of support include local businesses, individuals and state funding.

In the past two years, SMIF has invested over \$950,000 back into Blue Earth county. For every dollar raised locally, we invest \$14 back into your communities.

Operating budget for 2025: \$6,050,000
City of Mankato contribution: \$10,000

In 2026, we will continue to follow our strategic plan, which includes focusing on making an impact in Mankato. Our plan strives to serve your local entrepreneurs through lending and technical assistance. We will support local child care professionals by providing access to free, continuing education, credit approved trainings and technical assistance. We also support Mankato by providing grants in these areas. Our goal is to partner with you to keep Mankato and the region a wonderful, growing and thriving place to live, work, and raise a family.





SOUTHERN MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

SMIF activity in Mankato in the past two years

Early Childhood Support:

- Children's Museum of S MN, Early Childhood Wrap Around Grant, \$14,500
- YWCA Mankato, Early Childhood Wrap Around Grant, \$20,000
- Mankato Area Public Schools, Early Childhood Wrap Around Grant, \$20,000
- Children's Museum of S MN, Early Literacy Grant, 500 books (\$9,975)
- MVAC Head Start, Early Literacy Grant, 675 books (\$13,470)
- Children's Museum S MN, Early Care & Education Grant, (\$11,749)
- YWCA Mankato, Early Care & Education Grant, \$10,000
- MVAC Head Start, Early Literacy Grant, 675 books (50 in Spanish) (\$13,500)
- MVAC, Early Care & Education Grant, \$20,000
- YWCA Mankato, Early Care & Education Grant, \$20,000
- Mankato Area Public Schools, Early Care & Education Grant, \$15,000
- Good Council Learning Center, Early Literacy Grant, 110 books (10 in Spanish) (\$2,200)
- Mankato Kiwanis Foundation, Early Literacy Grant, 4,100 books (100 in Spanish) (\$82,000)
- Mankato Area Public Schools Community Ed, Early Literacy Grant, 120 books (20 in Spanish) (\$2,400)
- MVAC, Early Literacy Grant, 425 books (25 in Spanish) (\$8,500)

Entrepreneur Support:

- MN Council of Churches Refugee Support, Inclusive & Equitable Grant, \$20,000
 - Region 9 Dev. Commission, Grow a Farmer Grant, \$25,000
 - Loan activity: Mankato Pickle Barn, Pippi Lane Boutique, Nick's Car Care, totaling \$408,000
- Prosperity Initiative Clients: Guadalupe Quintero, Minnie Albadry, Raul Hi





Southern
Minnesota
Initiative
Foundation

SMIF's investments and partnerships in

Blue Earth County since 1986

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) is a regional development and philanthropic organization that fosters economic and community vitality in southern Minnesota through a culture of collaboration and partnership. Serving 20 counties which includes 175 communities and one Native nation.

For every donation
from Blue Earth
County of

\$1 → **\$14** is invested back into
Blue Earth
communities.*

**Includes grants, loans & programming*



63 Loans

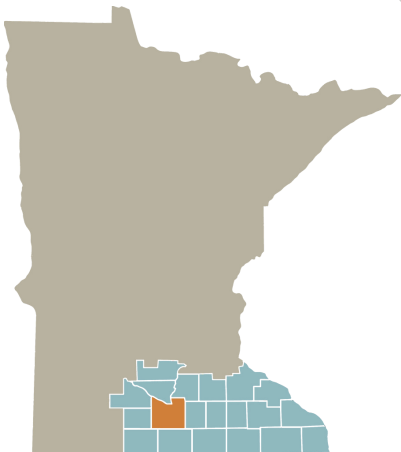
to support entrepreneurs

729 Grants

to support community projects

\$24.2 Million

invested by SMIF in Blue Earth County
through grants, loans and programming



Questions?

Alissa Oeltjenbruns

Vice President of Philanthropy &
Community Vitality
507-475-3056
alisso@smifoundation.org



Check out SMIF's recent activity in your county



SMIF's Recent Activity in Blue Earth County

Early Childhood Spotlight



\$10,000 Early Care and Education Grant to YWCA Mankato

"The support we receive from SMIF plays a vital role in providing transportation for our families to our monthly group connections. These gatherings not only allow parents to engage with their children but also provide a space for parent education and building relationships with others."

-Kristina Spidahl, program manager at YWCA Mankato

Other recent activity:

- 4000 English and 100 Spanish books awarded to Mankato Kiwanis Foundation
- Five child care providers from Mankato, Mapleton and Lake Crystal received free business support

Entrepreneurship Spotlight



Loan client: Picklebarn (Mankato)

"Pickleball is a sport that can be enjoyed by anyone, regardless of age or athletic background. This is what makes it so appealing to people in many different walks of life. Not to mention how fun it is to play! After about 14 months of planning, a year of construction and many prayers, the Picklebarn was open for business!"

-Sidney Elofson, co-owner

Other recent activity:

- Prosperity Initiative clients: Arte En Plata, JJS Beauty Supply, MN Mobile Garage Door Services of Mankato
- \$20,000 to Mapleton's Rural Entrepreneurial Venture

Community Vitality Spotlight



\$15,600 Taylor Grant to the City of Lake Crystal

"The [Lake Crystal Historical Society] wants to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing the history of the area. The funds will help upgrade and remodel space in a historic downtown building to be used as a museum that will provide an interactive historical experience to the public."

-Angela Grafstrom, city administrator

Other recent activity:

- SMIF serves as the fiscal host for Eagle Lake Community Foundation, Madison Lake Community Foundation and Mapleton Area Foundation
- \$10,000 Small Town Grant to St. Clair Public School District

1,297

Children
Supported

159

Entrepreneurs
Supported

May, 2025

Susan Arntz
City of Mankato
10 Civic Center Plz
PO Box 3368
Mankato, MN 56002-3368

Dear Ms. Arntz and City Council,

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) has been working with our region since 1986 to vitalize both economies and community vitality. Through partnering and collaboration, SMIF focuses on three key areas: entrepreneurship, community vitality and Early Childhood development.

SMIF's Prosperity Initiative (PI) program gives entrepreneurs from traditionally underserved populations extra coaching, and technical assistance, as well as access to a supportive peer group. One of PI's new members, Wren Writing, is an all-in-one software for authors that provides tools from formatting to writing and everything in between. The support they received through the PI program positioned Wren Writing to become one of Ignite Cup's 2025 finalists, as well as winning the Busy Baby First Step Award. SMIF is proud to partner with IgniteMN on the Ignite Cup, a regional pitch competition that was created to elevate entrepreneurs and emerging startups as a feeder to the statewide MN Cup competition. In winning, Wren Writing received prize money and regional recognition that will help them take their business to the next level.



To give these kinds of opportunities to entrepreneurs, SMIF relies on funding from donors, including a large portion of funding from cities and counties. The Prosperity Initiative is just one of many ways we put your gifts to good use. Enclosed you will find a fact sheet that illustrates what SMIF has been doing in your area. You will notice that for every dollar donated, SMIF invest \$14 back into your county. ***Thank you so much for your recent gift of \$10,000.00 on 1/24/2025. Would you consider an increased donation of 5% for your 2026 gift, bringing your contribution to \$10,500.00 for 2026?***

We are enormously thankful for your support.

Sincerely,

Benya Krause
President and CEO
cc: Jamila Ibrahim, Board Member; Angel Uribe, Board Member