

**Blandin Foundation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation  
Alumni Gathering  
Wedgewood Cove, Albert Lea, MN  
April 14, 2015 9 a.m. to 2:45 PM**

---

- 9:00** Welcome - Tim Penny, President, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and Valerie Shangreaux, Director of Leadership, Blandin Foundation
- 9:10** Opening Speaker - Louis Johnston, Associate Professor of Economics, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN
- 9:55** Small Group Discussions
- 10:35** Break
- 10:50** Story Telling
- 11:20** Small Group Discussions
- 12:05** Lunch and Networking
- 12:55** What is your collaboration of choice?
- 1:05** Asset Mapping – Inventory what we have
- 1:25** **Group Discussions**
- 1:55** **Grant Opportunities**
- 2:45** Adjournment

# **Blandin Foundation and Southern MN Initiative Foundation Alumni Gathering Collaboration Panelist Information**

## **Red Wing Forward**

### **Project Description:**

Red Wing Forward is a grassroots, community organization that has chosen as its initial effort to brand the City of Red Wing.

### **Role of Collaboration in your Success:**

Individuals gathering from a variety of businesses, organizations and agencies in the community,

### **Who were your Key Collaborative Partners?**

City and county government, non-profits, arts, elected officials, marketing firms, business advocacy groups, business owners, charitable/service organizations and citizens.

## **FEAST Local Food Network**

### **Project Description:**

A partnership of many organizations, businesses and individuals committed to growing a sustainable, local and regional food system which encourages innovation. In 2014, FEAST launched the FEAST Local Foods Festival and Trade Show, hosted an event to explore creative financing and began a FEAST Finance Network to assist farm and food businesses in accessing suitable finance.

### **Role of Collaboration in you Success:**

A broad array of players with a range of interests came to the table and worked together to push forward a plan. It was helpful that the group came together at initial meetings to agree on the areas they could work on together.

### **Who were your Key Collaborative Partners?**

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Renewing the Countryside, U of M SE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Region 9 Development Council, Olmsted County Public Health, Lanesboro Local, Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, Organic Processing Institute, Rural Advantage, Channel One, Kwik Trip, Blue Cross Blue Shield, AgStar, Hormel, Mayo Foundation, People Food Cooperative, and more.

## **Lift One Lift All Freeborn County Beyond Poverty**

### **Project Description:**

A Blandin Foundation sponsored program that focuses on building leadership capacity in the community to increase opportunities for people to move out of poverty. Over the course of the last nine months community members have been invited to participate in community events and conversations to learn more about the makeup of poverty and begin identifying systems issues and solutions that will influence moving people out of poverty.

### **Role of Collaboration in Your Success:**

We have a diverse group sitting at the table; some who have “been there, done that”, some who have had lots of success in life, some that are in business and others that are in the human service field, and some that aren’t sure how they fit in or where they belong, but have come to find a safe place to learn. Trust and safety are the foundation of any collaboration and we have created such a space together.

### **Who are your Key Collaborative Partners?**

Area schools, Freeborn County Public Health, Freeborn County Social Services, Mayo Clinic Health System, United Way, Housing, community members, Blandin Foundation and many others.

## **Southeast MN Regional Community Growth Initiative**

### **Project Description:**

Economic development representatives from SE MN and Southern MN Initiative Foundation representatives have been meeting to discuss how communities surrounding Rochester might work together to anticipate and plan for Rochester’s Destination Medical Center and prepare for potential opportunities that may exist for outlying communities. A plan to implement a Regional Growth Initiative Program was developed. An event was planned and held for preliminary projects to be presented. Four finalists were selected with their teams invited to compete for funding.

### **Role of Collaboration in Your Success:**

Communities from southeastern MN came together to discuss regional issues. Since there is no regional development agency in this part of the state, opportunities for these types of conversations are rare.

### **Who are your Key Collaborative Partners?**

SMIF, Destination Medical Center, Rochester Area Economic Development, Journey to Growth, communities of Byron, Chatfield, Dodge Center, Elgin, Eyota, Pine Island, Plainview, Spring Valley, St. Charles and Zumbrota and community leaders and county administrators within 50 miles of Rochester.