



Community
Action Duluth

STRATEGIC PLAN

2015-
2017

Approved by the
Community Action Duluth
Board of Directors
on November 5, 2014

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. History	4
III. Community Profile	4
IV. Vision, Mission and Core Values	6
V. ROMA Statement	7
VI. Goals, Objectives and Strategies	8
Employment	9
Housing	9
Health, Wellness and Food Access	9
Transportation	9
Financial Stability	9
Community Engagement	10
Communications	10
Volunteer Opportunities	10
Strong Partnerships and Board Initiatives	11
Capacity Building	11
Strategic Leadership, Compliance and Oversight	11
Performance Measures	11
Operational Excellence	12
Sustainability	12
Education	12
VII. Plan Implementation and Accountability	13
Acknowledgments	14

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I. Introduction

Community Action Duluth (CAD) is in the midst of an exciting time of reflection, refinement and creativity. Our strategic planning process challenged us to consider the past, present and future of the agency. We looked at where we have been and what benefit CAD brings to the Duluth community. Planning helped us look at current trends and determine if we are meeting identified community needs. It also reinforced our shared vision of the future, reaffirmed core values, defined CAD priorities over the next three years, and identified and quantified measures that will determine our success.

This plan is the result of several months of information gathering and analysis from Community Action Duluth staff, board, community stakeholders, partners, funders and participants. That work was crucial to our self-reflection and is a product of current affairs in the world, the government, economy, Minnesota and the Duluth area. More than 100 people shared data and ideas regarding the needs of people with low income in the Duluth area. The planning process produced a deliberate and proactive framework for adapting to change and assisted us in reflecting on how well we utilize resources to meet community needs. We developed a clear understanding of our mission, adjusting it to better clarify CAD's current and future work.

Within these pages is Community Action Duluth's response about how we will grow and improve our services locally; what our agency's goals and internal needs are for the next three years; and a roadmap of how we'll meet these goals.

This long process was overseen by a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of CAD board and staff and completed with full input and support from CAD's full-time staff and Board of Directors. Consultants kept the process focused and well-documented, gathered information from interviews and focus groups of participants, board, and staff; completed research and analysis, and helped identify and determine Community Action's objectives, strategies and priorities.

As CAD moves into the future, this plan will serve as a guide to help us alleviate the conditions of poverty in the Duluth area. Our staff and Board of Directors will assure that this plan is followed and has built in accountability steps to ensure progress.

We would like to extend our gratitude to external and internal stakeholders, consultants, the full Board of Directors, CAD staff, and the Strategic Planning Committee. Their considerable time and effort helped to insure the quality and depth of this Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,

Tim Meininger
Chair, Board of Directors

Angie Miller
Executive Director

II. History

Community Action started in 1965 as a public agency operated through the City of Duluth. During its first years, the agency's emphasis was on direct service to people with low income. Among the programs administered were: Head Start, remedial reading, child development centers, and Neighborhood Youth Corps. In 1982, Duluth Community Action Program (DCAP) incorporated as a nonprofit and became independent. DCAP relocated to the Duluth Armory on London Road and began providing services like energy assistance, weatherization, and food assistance.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, DCAP formed strong bonds with several community-based organizations and was instrumental in the early development of affordable housing, grassroots organizing and neighborhood empowerment efforts.

In 1999, DCAP became Community Action Duluth, moving to the Lincoln Park neighborhood. Recognizing that many services already existed in Duluth to address the effects of poverty, CAD's Board of Directors decided to address poverty using high-impact strategies. This approach led to programs that strengthen economic security (through asset building), supporting families (by focusing on employment and relationship building across racial and class lines), and working to change public policy. CAD programs are designed to help families and individuals increase their income and assets, secure jobs, and develop social capital.

III. Community Profile

Duluth, Minnesota is a seaport city and is the county seat of Saint Louis County. It is the fifth largest city in the state with a population of 86,128. Duluth forms a metropolitan area with Superior, Wisconsin called the Twin Ports, forming the Great Lakes’ largest port transporting coal, iron ore (taconite), and grain. It is a Midwest tourist destination featuring America’s only all-freshwater aquarium, the Aerial Lift Bridge, which spans the Duluth Ship Canal, and the world’s largest baymouth bars, which span 6 miles.

In this picturesque city in 2011, the poverty rate was dramatically higher than the national average, with nearly one in four Duluthians living with income below the federal poverty standard. Since 2006 the poverty rate in Duluth has risen by almost 10%. It’s possible that the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) may have slightly overstated Duluth’s poverty rate, but the long-range trend suggests that our city’s poverty rate is now higher than 20%. In 2011, the poverty rate in Duluth was nearly double the rate for the state, which was 11.9%. During this time, 40.9% of all Duluthians were at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. This was up from 34.7% in 2005. A family of one child and one parent is at or below the poverty guideline if they lived on less than \$14,710 annually, according to the 2011 federal poverty level guidelines. For a family of two, an income of \$29,420 or less is 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

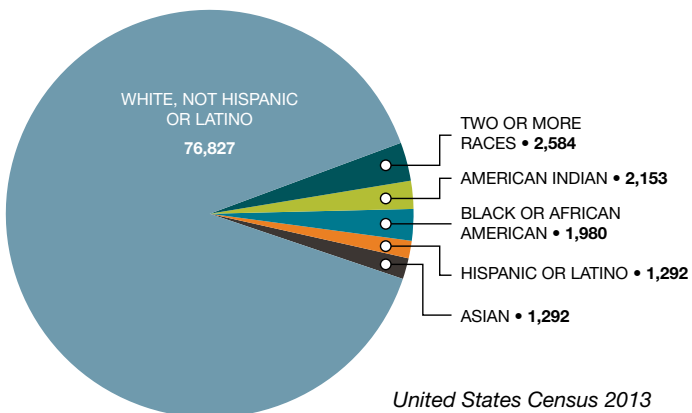
The percent of people of color in poverty in Duluth is substantially higher than for whites. African American and American Indian populations are disproportionately represented among Duluthians living in poverty. Fifty-five percent of Duluth’s African Americans were in poverty in 2011, up from 40% according to the 2000 Census; and 69% of Native Americans were in poverty, an increase of 20% since the 1990 Census.

According to the US Census Bureau 80% of single women living in Duluth are in poverty. Single mothers in Duluth with children under 5, have a poverty rate of about 80%. Families with a female householder, no husband, and only related child(ren) under the age 5 had a poverty rate of 58.9%. All families (one or two parents in the home) with only children under 5 have a poverty rate of 26.4% and families with children under 18 have an aggregated poverty rate of 21.9%. Twenty-three percent (23%) of people living in poverty in Duluth are under age 18, and Duluth males’ ages 6-24 also represent a high number of people living in poverty.

In 2011, an estimated 799 Duluthians living at or below the 100% of poverty level worked full-time, year round; and another 7,909 worked either part-time or at full-time jobs part of the year.

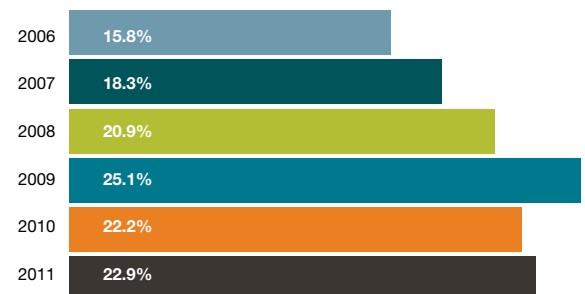
Population by Race/Ethnicity/Culture

TOTAL 86,128



Increasing Poverty in Duluth

Duluthians at or Below 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines



2011 American Community Survey

IV. Trends

The current trends explored during the strategic planning process were: improving community health and wellness, creating expanded pathways to employment, advocating for affordable housing, and giving attention to the City's changing demographics. Community health and wellness was noted by nearly half of those interviewed as a potential focus area for Community Action Duluth. This focus includes sustaining community programs that address the social determinants of health such as healthy food access as well as healthcare access which ensures a more vibrant and physically fit community. These issues were discussed in the context of addressing poverty for families through two-generational and multi-generational approaches, specifically addressing issues such as ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

Creating expanded pathways to employment (such as addressing issues that prohibit people from getting jobs and training people for available jobs) were noted by a third of those interviewed as an area of need for Duluth. Among promising practices that create broader pathways to employment are: building partnerships with colleges (to address employer skills gaps); getting people ready for higher entry level jobs (that do not require degrees), and wealth disparities education. The importance of addressing barriers associated with employment was also emphasized. These were: 1) access to childcare and associated costs, 2) easing barriers associated with criminal histories, 3) the effects of limited access to technology, 4) access to living wage jobs, 5) racism and equity in accessing and sustaining employment, 6) educational expenses (including student loan debt and impact on cash assistance), 7) reliable transportation.

The need for affordable housing and coordinated ways of addressing housing issues was also highlighted by the focus groups. These included: 1) housing conditions (such as high rent and code violations), 2) creating more affordable housing; 3) the need for more affordable rental units, 4) supportive and emergency housing for people who are homeless.

Also noted were changing demographics (number of younger people in the community compared to older people and greater cultural diversity), and issues associated with low high school graduation rates for students of color.

V. Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision

Individuals and families in the Duluth community prosper with access to quality education, affordable housing, healthcare, gainful employment and meaningful involvement in civic life. Through partnerships, people with low income find support, resources and relationships, which helps them overcome economic, racial, and cultural barriers to establishing and maintaining self-sufficient and connected lives.

Mission

The Mission of Community Action Duluth is to empower and engage our community to eliminate poverty, and create prosperity and equity in the lives of the people we serve.
(Adopted by CAD Board of Directors November 5, 2014)

Values

Respect

We value the strengths and assets of all people and organizations with whom we partner.

Integrity

We believe in honest listening, processing information accurately, and following through on our commitments.

Cultural Competence

We value meaningful relationships between people of diverse cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Optimism

We believe it is possible for Duluth residents and organizations to improve the quality of life for everyone.

VI. ROMA Statement

The goals outlined in the strategic plan are consistent with the six broad anti-poverty goals developed by the Community Services Network. These ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability) goals provide a framework for continuous growth and improvement for community action agencies across the nation. The goals are:

- Low-income people become more self-sufficient.
- The conditions in which low-income people live are improved.
- Low-income people own a stake in their community.
- Partnerships among supporters and providers of service to low-income people are achieved.
- Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.
- Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

Community Action Duluth's 2015-2017 Strategic Plan establishes objectives and strategies that are linked to ROMA goals. Each objective and strategy is connected to a responsible party, a timeframe for completion, and the desired outcome. Each ROMA goal, along with related objectives, strategies and priorities is presented below.

VII. Goals, Objectives and Strategies

The strategic plan supports Community Action Duluth's overall objective of being a high functioning and adaptive organization, widely known in the community for innovative programming; competent staff; the engagement, commitment and oversight of its board; and its strong partnerships with other organizations that share CAD's commitment to addressing human needs.

CAD's 11 strategic objectives are listed below and described in more detail on the following pages:

- Continue to offer exemplary existing and new outcome-based programming.
- Nurture citizen involvement through volunteer opportunities.
- Develop and implement an integrated communications plan to advance CAD's brand identity (i.e., broaden awareness of CAD's programs and outcomes).
- Increase agency feedback and broaden community volunteer opportunities.
- Inspire and equip leaders throughout the community to end poverty.
- Improve internal communication systems and remove obstacles to staff job satisfaction.
- Continue effective board governance, targeted financial oversight of short and long-term strategic initiatives and the overall agency, making full use of the talent and resources of CAD board and staff.
- Enhance agency-wide data gathering to better enable measurement of program effectiveness.
- Use ROMA to determine CAD's overall effectiveness; inform annual and long-range planning; and support agency advocacy, funding, and community partnership activities.
- Maintain diverse revenue sources, strong financial partnerships and an individual donor base.
- Continue to successfully work with education partners to increase parental involvement in children's school experiences. And adopt a two-generation approach in programming where appropriate.

The top strategic priorities for 2015-2017 are:

1. Exemplary outcome-based programming
2. Strong brand identity
3. Inspiring community leaders to end poverty

GOAL #1
People with low incomes become more self-sufficient.

OBJECTIVE

Continue to offer exemplary existing and new outcome-based programming.

STRATEGIES

Employment

- Expand Bridge to Employment Program over the next two years by enacting new model which includes adding more program staff to achieve small caseloads to facilitate intensive and individualized advocacy and employment and educational goal plans.
- As part of the Bridge expansion, hire a business liaison to build in-depth relationships with employers in the Duluth area and establish links to CAD participants seeking employment.
- Expand partnerships with employers to hire 20% more CAD participants than were hired by employer partners in 2014.
- Develop employer partners to provide paid and unpaid internships and on-the-job training for CAD participants.
- Increase CAD transitional jobs by 50% over the next three years with year-round greenhouses and value-added production (e.g., more Stream Corps projects, more Seeds of Success work).
- Conduct a feasibility study on value-added food production utilizing Seeds produce and the commercial kitchen space.
- Explore bike maintenance as volunteer work experience or transitional employment.
- Expand participation in the GED program.

Housing

- Expand working partnerships to strengthen advocacy resources for tenant rights and housing stabilization.
- Explore a more streamlined process for referrals to other providers of housing services.
- Through Community Engagement, create, develop and implement one training per year so people with low incomes can learn how to advocate for themselves and gain insight about local, state and federal resources and tenant rights groups.

Health, Wellness and Food Access

- Use existing partnerships to engage a coordinator of health and wellness by 2017.
- Through existing partnerships, engage a Health Care Access Advocate for CAD participants.
- Enhance the internal knowledge, marketing and coordination of CAD's health and wellness services.
- Assess the need for increased health and wellness coaching.
- Explore ways to better connect program participants to mental health services through referrals and partnerships.
- Explore adding nutrition/cooking classes, specifically looking at the Healthy Table Community Cooking Initiative.

- Expand partnerships with providers of Medicare services to increase referrals to better serve seniors.
- Continue providing high quality MNSure navigator services.

Transportation

- Expand JumpStart to include bike/bus commuting pilot in 2015.
- Organize and teach Jump Start alumni how to advocate on transportation issues.
- Explore creation of bike donation/repair program

Financial Stability

- Explore the addition of a child/family-centered financial education curriculum.
- Consolidate the Tax Site operation without significantly reducing the number of participants served.
- Reduce regular tax clinics from 55 to 36 and compress post-season to finish on June 30.
- Explore the possibility of two or more staff being certified to work on taxes year-round.
- Promote use of MyFreeTaxes.com (e.g., new brochure, CAD website, new partners).
- Expand MyFreeTaxes partnerships from current partners (Duluth Public Library and Lake Superior College) to additional community partners

GOAL #2
The conditions in which people with low incomes live are improved.

OBJECTIVE

Nurture citizen involvement through volunteer opportunities.

STRATEGIES

Community Engagement

- Keep community engagement, anti-racism and public policy advocacy work at agency core and integrated across programs.
- Design and implement community engagement policy dialogue and train, support and engage in culturally specific community/civic leadership development.
- Expand Getting Ahead's leadership track; explore the continuation of Staying Ahead beyond 2015; focus Big View Town Hall Meetings on 8 trending issues in 2015; and build coalitions/community partnership to address two identified issues in 2016.
- Increase by 20% the number of people engaged in Big View and Getting Ahead by 2017.
- Design and launch a culturally specific and culturally led Adult Freedom School pilot to organize, mobilize and empower communities of color to address structural barriers that hinder economic development, job opportunities, civic engagement and non-profit development opportunities.
- Increase participation of people with low incomes in transportation policy and planning issues.

OBJECTIVE

Develop and implement an integrated communications plan to advance CAD's brand identity (i.e., broaden awareness of CAD's programs and outcomes).

STRATEGIES

Communications

- Explore the possibility of investing in a marketing/development position.
- Develop a new marketing plan designed to effectively communicate the nature and value of agency services.
- Continue to improve agency newsletter, website, e-news, annual report, impact stories, branding, marketing, outreach, and community needs assessments.
- Develop and implement targeted and inclusive outreach/marketing campaigns to reach traditionally underserved groups (e.g., adults over 45 and singles, communities of color) and potential donors.
- Explore grant opportunities to support participant-driven outreach/marketing work.
- Increase visibility/marketing of agency to broader donor base.
- Increase marketing cohesion of all programs, services and opportunities (e.g., show relevancy of services to a broader population, demonstrate how services relate to one another, create return on investment report and publicize data on agency outcomes).

GOAL #3

People with low incomes own a stake in their community.

OBJECTIVE

Increase agency feedback and broaden community volunteer opportunities.

STRATEGIES

Volunteer Opportunities

- Create and train a CAD Participant Advisory Council to provide on-going feedback and input on work.
- Recruit, train and maintain a diverse, broad section of participants as Advisory Council Members. Diversify the Council's membership (e.g., age, gender, race, culture/ethnicity).
- Encourage more participants to volunteer at CAD (e.g., Seeds of Success, Tax Site, Community Engagement).
- Encourage more participants to register and vote in all public elections.
- Provide support, encouragement and trainings for organizations wanting help to instill policies of inclusion for low income representation on their boards, committees and commissions.
- Increase the number of people with limited incomes that are represented in local organizations, on boards, committees and commissions by providing support, encouragement and trainings to participants

- Increase the number of opportunities people with low incomes have to provide testimonies at public hearings, local forums and community events.

GOAL #4

Partnerships among supporters and providers of service to people with low incomes are achieved.

OBJECTIVE

Inspire and equip leaders throughout the community to end poverty.

STRATEGIES

Strong Partnerships and Board Initiatives

- Improve quality of all partnerships (e.g., accomplish shared goals, mutual respect and create MOUs).
- Utilize board members strategic thinking, listening, coaching and leadership presence related to economic privilege to get others inspired and motivated to take action to end poverty.
- Design and implement board inspired presentations on economic privilege.
- Become the recognized and valued place in the community for people to gather and access a wide array of services, programs, activities, education, trainings and special events.

GOAL #5

Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results.

OBJECTIVE

Improve internal communication systems and remove obstacles to staff job satisfaction.

STRATEGIES

Capacity Building

- Improve and promote healthy, respectful communication and transparency between departments; managers and staff; and between the board and staff about each other's work, organizational operations and priorities.
- Align job descriptions, department goals and individual work plans with strategic plan.
- Increase training, on-boarding, support, recognition and performance feedback for improved staff satisfaction.
- Identify opportunities for cross-training staff.
- Promote a healthy staff and work environment by implementing simple strategies such as promoting lunch break walks, and providing ongoing professional and personal wellness training to encourage balance between professional demands and need to focus on personal issues, friends and family.
- Establish, maintain and promote a common understanding of professional boundaries between staff, community members, partners and participants.
- Use Outlook Calendar to communicate agency events and opportunities to start programs and classes.

- Improve CAD resource sharing, resource organization, and ease of access/use of information between/among staff for more effective coaching, advocacy and referrals.

OBJECTIVE

Continue effective board governance, targeted financial oversight of short and long-term strategic initiatives and the overall agency, making full use of the talent and resources of CAD board and staff.

STRATEGIES

Strategic Leadership, Compliance and Oversight

- Continue board education and training, opportunities for board members' active participation in CAD activities, and development and implementation of goals and action plans for board committees.
- Raise the board's fiduciary profile as responsible trustees of the organization's assets.

OBJECTIVE

Enhance agency-wide data gathering to better enable measurement of program effectiveness.

STRATEGIES

Performance Measures

- Explore the use of ETO (Efforts to Outcomes) database to facilitate the development of a tracking system aligned with each division to document how many CAD participants join civic initiatives and boards, testify at public meetings and hearings (e.g., Normalize Financial Services referrals and tracking to Community Engagement programs)
- Use ROI (Return on Investment) data and strategy screen for decision-making.

OBJECTIVE

Use ROMA to determine CAD's overall effectiveness; inform annual and long-range planning; and support agency advocacy, funding, and community partnership activities.

STRATEGIES

Operational Excellence

- Provide annual ROMA training to board and staff.
- Through community engagement/ adult education and leadership development, serve as a role model for the community by promoting the importance of cultural competence within all organizations as a means to eliminate barriers that inhibit progress towards economic self-reliance.

OBJECTIVE

Maintain diverse revenue sources, strong financial partnerships and an individual donor base.

STRATEGIES

Sustainability

- Develop a strategic infrastructure for fundraising by hiring a full-time marketing/development director.
- Increase sustainability with expanded work to grow donor base and fundraising.
- Create a donor recognition plan.
- Continue to explore revenue-generating activities (e.g., establishing self-sustaining and revenue generating service delivery models).

GOAL #6

People with low incomes, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.

OBJECTIVE

Continue to successfully work with education partners to increase parental involvement in children's school experiences. And adopt a two-generation approach in programming where appropriate.

STRATEGIES

Education

- Embed two-generation approach (e.g., address children and parents needs simultaneously) and multigenerational approaches into CAD programming and address two-generational/multigenerational issues through referrals to other services and programs.
- Provide parents/family members with culturally competent education opportunities on issues important to parents in the further development of their children.
- Assist parents/family members and the greater community in advocating for the educational advancement of all children.
- Explore use of ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) framework for improving understanding of participants' experiences.
- Explore the use of the Circles of Security framework to help individual parents, groups of parents and coaches better recognize and address participants and their children's needs by sharing a common language and understanding.
- Explore the employment of a parent/child relationship coordinator and/or a parenting coach utilizing the Circles of Security framework.
- Explore the addition of the Amaze and 2nd Step programs for use with children while parents are in CAD programming.
- Examine the impact of structural change on the use of the childcare space, the roles of staff, and the design of time and space.
- Explore an increased partnership with Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative.
- Promote opportunities for local agencies and local partners to utilize Race Awareness Workshops (RAW) resourcing to promote cultural competency and equity.

VII. Plan Implementation and Accountability

The Community Action Duluth 2015-2017 Strategic Plan will be implemented by staff teams with input from managers and oversight from CAD's executive director. Teams will align program plans and budgets with the organization-wide strategic plan. Teams will include existing staff that already work together and new teams that will be established expressly to address new priorities, objectives and strategies. Other teams will include those that call upon different partners.

Senior leadership will devote time each month to review implementation progress and CAD's executive director will report to the Board of Directors on a monthly basis all progress made regarding the 2015-2017 CAD Strategic Plan. This report shall be shared quarterly at board meetings using the CAD progress dashboard.

At the 6-month (June) meeting of the Board a 6-month progress report will be presented. All existing grants and all future funding proposals, as of January 2015, will identify which of the strategic objectives are being addressed. After the Board of Directors approve the reports, copies will be shared with CAD staff and Advisory Committee. Each of the goals and objectives presented in CAD's 2015-2017 Strategic Plan addresses community change and issues, and as a result the need to communicate with the community and CAD partners is recognized.

The implementation strategies require focus and attention from senior leadership and all employees involved in implementation.

Acknowledgements

Completion of the *Community Action Duluth 2015-2017 Strategic Plan* would not have been possible without the input of key stakeholders, including participants, partners, CAD's board and dedicated staff. Nineteen staff members were integrally involved in plan development, sharing information in three focus groups and participating in sessions that developed the plan's objectives and strategies. Input was gathered from 8 focus groups and 41 interviews (a total of 109 stakeholders). Twenty-eight of CAD participants took part in two of the focus groups. We are very grateful for all contributions to the plan and for ongoing stakeholder support. A big thank you goes to individuals, foundations, local government, companies, consultants and, other organizations that have supported CAD over the years. Your support continuously inspires us.

KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Rick Ball, Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)
John Beyer, Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
Kathy Bogen, Myers-Wilkins Community School Collaborative
Dave Benson, Damiano
Ken Browell, Duluth News Tribune
Ann Busche, St. Louis County
Ed Crawford, ISD 709
Jeff Corey, One Roof Community Housing
Jessica Crowley, Lake Superior Community Health
Tony Cuneo, Zeppa Foundation
Drew Digby, Carlton County Flood Relief
Karen Diver, Fond du Lac Reservation
Karen Duggleby, Minnesota Homeownership Center
Emily Edison, SOAR-Career Solutions
Pastor Gabriel Green, Church of Restoration Twin Ports
Bill Gronseth, ISD 709
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Keith Hamre, City of Duluth
Jim Heilig, Duluth Transit Authority
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Doreen Hernesman, Lake Superior College TRIO SSS
Krista Kelbe, United Way
Rick Klun, Center City Housing
Pam Kramer, LISC
Emily Larson, Duluth City Council
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Lisa Luokkala, Healthy Duluth Area Coalition
Dan Moore, Salvation Army Northern Division
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Michaela Richey, Red Lake Tribal Office
David Ross, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce
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Gwen Updegraff Legal Aid Service of Northeastern Minnesota
Claudie Washington, NAACP-Duluth Chapter
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