

# Project FINE



Years of Bridging Cultures &  
Building Community

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

***About Project FINE:***

We have been serving Winona County and the surrounding area since 1990. Project FINE serves as a connection point for refugees and immigrants, helping build contributing individuals, healthy families and a stronger, more welcoming and respectful community. Our work is two-fold: for refugees and immigrants we provide educational programming and services to help them build a new life in our region; and for the community we promote inclusion and provide opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and relationship building.

We are committed to excellence in our operations, carrying out our programs and services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, avoiding duplication of services by serving as a connector, and striving for transparency and fiscal responsibility. Our work is accomplished by our dedicated staff and board of directors, committed volunteers, and exceptional community partners.

***Our Mission:***

To strengthen and enrich our community by facilitating the integration of people who are ethnically diverse.

***Our Vision:***

To create a respectful and welcoming community.

***Our Guiding Values:***

- We work to build bridges across cultures.
- We work to build respect and trust in the community.
- We carry out our work with passion.
- We honor partnership and collaboration.

***Geographic Area Served:***

We are proud to serve Winona County and the surrounding region.



# Welcome

I am so amazed and proud of the work that Project FINE has accomplished in this difficult year. Our grand plan of gatherings to celebrate 30 years quickly devolved into a pandemic shutdown and lots of uncertainty. But there was no pulling back. Under Fatima's leadership the staff stepped up to identify and address the new needs, along with modifying and continuing our ongoing programs – we have an amazing staff that accomplishes amazing things. With perfectly-timed support from many partners during the darkest days (remember how ominous things felt during the time toilet paper hoarders emptied the shelves), we were able to provide assistance to families to help with immediate needs. I can only imagine the layers of uncertainty and difficulty in navigating the pandemic as a refugee or newcomer and am overcome with emotion when I think about the difference that Project FINE staff have made in people's lives.



The year 2020 also had financial uncertainty. Early in the year, we anticipated this would be the “rainy day” where the organization would need to rely on its reserves. Yet we finished the year in the black and in very good financial condition to move forward, and the credit goes to our outstanding executive director, Fatima Said, and generous support from community members, partners and foundations.

It has been my privilege to witness the synergy between Project FINE, community members and leaders and I would like to thank you for your partnership. We look forward to putting social distancing behind us so we can get back to interacting face-to-face. And I look forward to filling your plate at a Welcoming Table gathering!

David Kramer, 2020 Board President

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on 2020, I am filled with mixed emotions. Some were positive, like the excitement of celebrating our 30th anniversary and some were difficult, as we all faced health risks and uncertainty. But the emotion I experience most often when thinking of 2020 is gratitude. In the midst of challenges and uncertainty we saw hope, resilience, generosity and passion that was inspirational.



We saw hope in those we serve as we connected them to services to meet their basic needs. We saw resilience in our partners as government agencies, health care providers, educational institutions and the private businesses came together to share resources. We saw generosity in the overwhelming response of our funders, board members and donors who provided support for our clients and operations. And I saw passion in our staff and volunteers, who quickly adapted to a new reality and demonstrated their commitment by being flexible and working diligently to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. Through it all, we were reminded that in every crisis there are opportunities to learn, and that what truly matters is connection, kindness and respect.

I am so grateful for your partnership and am proud of what Project FINE was able to accomplish during a very difficult year. We look forward to continue working with you to build a community where all are welcomed, respected and valued.

Fatima Said, Project FINE Executive Director

# Navigating Com

*Programs in the Navigating Community Systems category provide educational resources to refugees*

## Language Services

Language Services offer a way for service providers to communicate with their non-English speaking clients and customers. We provide in-person, phone and virtual interpreting services as well as written translation services and our roster consists of 53 interpreters proficient in 23 languages. We utilize an industry-specific software program that increases efficiency by allowing us to store patient information, enter appointments, submit timesheets electronically and organize billing information.

In 2020, Project FINE provided over **3,444** hours of interpreting and translating services in **96** locations across our region. We offer training for interpreters on a variety of topics, including best practices, mandatory reporting and ethics, and **10** of our interpreters are currently registered with the Minnesota Department of Health's Spoken Language Healthcare Interpreter roster.

Each year, we distribute a survey to service providers who utilize our Language Services to gain insight into our performance and identify areas for improvement. In 2020, our survey was conducted electronically and we received 40 responses. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with all respondents indicating that they are satisfied with our Language Services and that they feel Project FINE interpreters are professional.

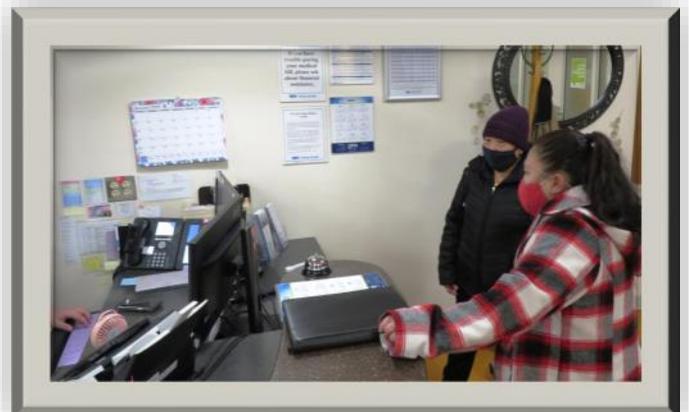


*Project FINE interpreters are the best and very appreciated for their professionalism and courtesy.*

*-Language Services Survey Respondent*

You all do a WONDERFUL job and it's a pleasure to work with you! The Project FINE staff are very nice, polite, professional and friendly. Love what you bring to our community!

*-Language Services Survey Respondent*



# Community Systems

*and immigrants to ease their adjustment to the United States and begin the journey to self-sufficiency.*

## Advocacy & Information Referrals

Project FINE's Advocacy & Information Referrals program connects refugees and immigrants with existing resources in our community to meet their basic needs such as education, housing and employment. Staff meet with individuals to assess their situation and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information about services and resources available. They also make referrals to connect individuals to partner agencies to avoid duplication of services.

During 2020, we provided **6,894** hours of advocacy and information referral services. The demand for Advocacy & Information Referrals was higher than ever due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many individuals faced changes to their employment, schooling or household needs and relied upon Project FINE for assistance. In addition to referrals for services, Project FINE worked with providers and community partners to ensure that resources were accessible and relevant for those in need.



The Project FINE staff have been there for my family in so many situations - they helped me and my wife find jobs and this year they connected us to resources to purchase our own mobile home. I am so grateful for your support.

*- Project FINE Client*

## Employment Services

Employment Services connect refugees and immigrants with employers and training to help reach their financial goals. This program began in 2019 and was developed in response to the changing workforce needs in our community. This year there was a significant increase in demand for Employment Services due to the COVID-19 pandemic as individuals faced layoffs, reductions in hours or missing work to quarantine. In 2020, we provided **463** hours of Employment Services to **302** individuals.

Through this program, staff assist with job searches, help participants explore training and educational opportunities, assist with resume and cover letters and provide referrals to partner agencies to overcome barriers to employment such as transportation or child care.

# Building

*Programs in the Building Communities category bring together diverse groups of refugees,*

## Diversity Training

Diversity Training provides information and education on culture and best practices for engaging refugees and immigrants. Sessions are offered in partnership with local businesses, organizations, service providers and educational institutions. Each presentation is customized to meet the unique needs of the client to increase effectiveness and relevancy.



In 2020, an estimated **300** individuals participated in Project FINE's Diversity Training.

## Healthy Connections

The Healthy Connections program engages refugees, immigrants and community partners to build a community that is more safe, inclusive and welcoming for all residents. Activities are focused on key areas of need in the community and are intended to bring lasting changes to the systems and environment that we interact with on a daily basis. In 2020, program activities included educational sessions, outreach to rural areas to build connections, engaging an advisory group of refugees and immigrants and collaborating with community leaders to promote equity in systems and policies.

In March, **21** individuals attended an educational session on immigration updates for Southeast Asian populations by Sara Karki, Staff Attorney at Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota. In June, we created a series of videos with nutrition information and healthy recipes that were shared on our Hmong and Spanish Facebook pages. In November, Virtual Welcoming Table gatherings were held in Lewiston and St. Charles to build connections and reach individuals in rural Winona County. We distributed **100** Welcoming Table kits and for many participants, it was the first time they had joined a Project FINE event.

Our Advisory Group has grown to **17** members and met on a regular basis during 2020. In December, the Advisory Group organized a dialogue with local law enforcement, which engaged representatives from the Winona County Sheriff, Winona Police Department and Goodview Police Department. We also continue to engage community partners to embrace equity in their policies and practices and currently **23** have adopted a Welcoming Statement and committed to action steps.

This project is funded by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.



# Communities

*immigrants and established residents to promote cultural sharing and build understanding.*

## Welcoming Table

Welcoming Table provides an opportunity for community members to come together to share a meal and build cross-cultural relationships. The program consists of monthly gatherings focused on a country or region to provide a unique culinary and learning experience, foster a welcoming atmosphere and increase cultural awareness.



In 2020, we hosted two in-person Welcoming Table gatherings with **51** distinct participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program format shifted from in-person meals to virtual “kits” that highlight a specific country or region and include a traditional recipe and ingredients that participants can cook at home, as well as one or more fun activities from that region.

From June-December 2020, **166** families received kits. Because each kit serves 4-5 people, the program reached over **850** individuals! When distributing the kits, we asked participants to share photos or quotes about their experience. Our in-person attendees complete a “Ticket to Dessert” evaluation form which includes questions that are exchanged for a dessert at the end of each meal. Feedback for the program was overwhelmingly positive, with **98%** of respondents indicating they learned something new from attending a Welcoming Table gathering.

This project is funded by the Laura Jane Musser Fund. We would also like to thank Central Lutheran Church, Lewiston-Altura High School and the City of St. Charles for sharing their space with us for program activities.



***Our entire family enjoyed the Virtual Welcoming Table kit! It was our first time participating and our kids were a bit nervous to try new items but they loved it and asked for seconds!***  
***-Welcoming Table Participant***

# Empowering

*Programs in the Empowering Youth category support youth from refugee and immigrant families*

## Kid's Cultural Club

The Kid's Cultural Club provides education for youth age 5-12 about culture, diversity and respect. The program meets weekly at Kid's First, an afterschool program based at Maplewood Townhomes. In January, February and March, the Kid's Cultural Club met in-person and each session included a lesson and fun activities. Topics included Hmong and Spanish language lessons, presentations about Hmong and Puerto Rican culture and cooking classes. **51** youth participated in these in-person sessions.



Due to COVID-19, we shifted program activities to a virtual format and developed a kit with seven weeks of activities, including all supplies and a few fun surprises. We partnered with the Winona Area Public Schools to pass out **80** Kid's Cultural Club kits at the same time they distributed school meals. Feedback for in-person sessions and kits was very positive, with 100% of respondents indicating that they learned about another culture as a result of this program.

The Kid's Cultural Club is funded by the Sheltering Arms Foundation.

## FORCE : Focus, Overcome, Respect, Connect, Excel

The FORCE program is designed for middle and high school boys from refugee and immigrant families. Activities focus on developing positive character traits and values, promoting healthy choices and preparing for future financial stability. Program sessions are held monthly in Winona and St. Charles, and include educational content and fun activities.

In 2020, **34** boys participated in FORCE sessions. Throughout the year, sessions were held in various formats including in-person, outdoors, small groups and virtually to comply with COVID-19 safety precautions.



# Youth

*as they pursue education and seek a balance between their traditional and American cultures.*

## GRAB: Girls Reaching Above & Beyond

The goal of the GRAB program is to help middle and high school girls from refugee and immigrant families discover their identity and create a roadmap to pursue their dreams. Program sessions are held monthly in Winona and St. Charles and include presentations focused on financial literacy education, cultural expectations and empowerment.



In 2020, **50** girls participated in program activities. The year began with in-person sessions, but was held in several formats due to COVID-19, including phone calls, outdoor sessions and a hybrid format. In the hybrid format, staff create a kit of activities that is delivered to participant's homes, and then they meet as a group online. The girls also participated in several virtual community art activities and created thank-you cards with messages for their family and neighbors.

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GRAB is funded by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota.



## Colorful Growers

The Colorful Growers program is designed to provide youth age 10-18 with hands-on agricultural and entrepreneurial experience. Through this program, youth to plan and plant their own garden plot and sell their produce at the Goodview Farmers Market.

In 2020, **11** individuals participated in program activities, which included virtual sessions on agriculture and weekly visits to the garden site.

Colorful Growers is supported by a grant from the Winona Rotary Club.



# *Empowering Youth, continued*

## **ConnectedMN**

The ConnectedMN program was developed to support refugee and immigrant families as they navigate distance learning. Activities include digital navigation services for parents, focused on how to access online portals to view their children's grades, assignments and attendance. The program also helps students access online classrooms and offers homework assistance. These activities were carried out via home visits to families, as many are not aware of how to participate in virtual meetings.

This program will continue through the end of the school year and serves students in Winona, Lewiston-Altura and St. Charles school districts. Response to the program has been very positive, as many students are struggling to adjust to distance learning and in need of support. In 2020, staff conducted **45** hours of visits with **81** children from **30** families in Winona County.

Funding for this program is provided by the Partnership for a ConnectedMN, a public-private partnership to bring tech devices and internet access to students across the state.

## **College Education Connection**

The College Education Connection program provides academic support and access to resources for youth from refugee and immigrant families who are pursuing post-secondary education. This program serves students from Lewiston-Altura, St. Charles, and Winona school districts.

Project FINE awarded scholarships to **6** graduating seniors in 2020 to support their post-secondary education. Since 2009, Project FINE has given scholarships to **54** diverse students across Winona County.

College Education Connection scholarships are funded by individual donors in our community.



## **Financial Literacy**

A financial literacy component is incorporated into all of our Empowering Youth programs. Each program in this category includes banking and business components, with a goal of educating and inspiring youth to plan for their future and begin on the pathway to a secure and prosperous financial life. In 2020, **100** youth participated in financial literacy programming.

Funding for this financial literacy component is provided by a grant from Wells Fargo.

# Community Impact

More than **3,000** *Refugees and immigrants served through Project FINE's Educational Programs*

Over **\$20,000** *Of direct assistance provided to assist with needs related to COVID-19*

**795** *Hours of continuing education completed by Project FINE staff*

Almost **7,000** *Hours of Advocacy & Information Referrals provided to refugees & immigrants*

**463** *Hours of Employment Services provided to refugees and immigrants*

**6** *Scholarships provided to high school seniors from refugee & immigrant families*

Over **1,300** *Reached through Welcoming Table gatherings in Winona, Lewiston and St. Charles*

**444** *Youth participated in Project FINE's Empowering Youth programs*

# COVID-19

At the beginning of 2020, most of us would have found it difficult to imagine a world where face masks, sanitizing and maintaining six feet of distance would become part of our everyday lives. As the COVID-19 virus spread quickly across the globe, we had to adapt to changes in the way we work, learn and live to prevent the spread and keep ourselves and our families safe.



For Project FINE, the past year has been one of challenge, opportunity and growth. COVID-19 affected everyone, but many refugees and immigrants faced additional challenges of language and cultural barriers that made it difficult to navigate this “new normal”. When the pandemic began in March 2020 and our offices were closed because of the Stay-at-Home order, we shifted to working from home. We learned to navigate the world of virtual meetings and interpreting appointments, and fielded thousands of calls from refugees and immigrants seeking information and assistance.

COVID-19 also brought changes to our programming - requests for Language Services decreased considerably during March, April and May, while the demand for Advocacy & Information Referrals almost doubled. Many of the families we serve were affected by loss of employment and we worked to connect them to resources to meet their basic needs. We provided daily posts with information about COVID-19 and relevant community resources on our Hmong and Spanish Facebook pages, offering a timely and credible source of information. We also used our Hmong, Spanish and Project FINE Facebook pages to share messages of hope and encouragement during a time where people were increasingly isolated. We filled our remaining hours with professional development and completed daily training while working from home.





# Welcoming

Project FINE hosted several events in recognition of Welcoming Week. This annual celebration recognizes the contributions of immigrants and refugees and the role communities play to foster greater welcome for everyone. Because of COVID-19, our Welcoming Week events were different than usual, but despite the challenges, we offered a full week of virtual and outdoor activities that highlighted the value of newcomers in our community and the important role we all play in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Events began with a panel presentation of naturalized citizens that was co-hosted by Winona State University. **Six** presenters from 5 different countries shared their experiences with attendees, which included students, faculty and community members.

On September 8, the mayors of Winona and St. Charles issued proclamations declaring September 12-20, 2020 as Welcoming Week in their cities and encouraging all residents to extend a warm welcome to newcomers in the community.

Throughout Welcoming Week, we highlighted local refugee and immigrant owned businesses on our Facebook page. **16** businesses chose to participate, representing a wide variety of sectors and locations across Winona County.



We hosted a new event - a Welcoming Week Art Contest. The theme was welcoming, inclusion and unity and it was open to all community members. We received 13 submissions of art, representing a diversity of art forms, ages and cultural backgrounds. Voting for the contest was conducted via Facebook and the three artists who received the most votes were awarded a prize package. The art contest and voting process had over **2,000** engagements on Facebook.



# Week 2020

Each day during Welcoming Week, we posted a story from a local refugee or immigrant on our Project FINE Facebook page. These stories shared their journey to the United States as a way to build understanding and share the unique experiences of individuals who now call our region home.

On September 14, we hosted a virtual Welcoming Table gathering focused on Welcoming Week. **27** families participated in the event, which included an All-American meal of grilled cheese, tomato soup and apple pie and Constitution Day activities.

We held a virtual film screening featuring films from the New Immigrant and Refugee Visions project. The films were created as part of a community project where refugees and immigrants were trained in filmmaking and video production, then paired them with other newcomers to capture their stories. The event included a showing of 3 films, followed by a group discussion.

On September 17, we hosted our annual Citizenship Day Celebration outdoors at Lake Winona. Despite the windy weather and limitations on large group gatherings, **17** naturalized citizens joined us for the event. Winona Mayor Mark Peterson shared remarks and Project FINE staff read statements from several elected officials, including Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Jeremy Miller and Representative Gene Pelowski.

Thank you to the City of Winona, City of St. Charles and WNB Financial for their support of Welcoming Week and to Winona State University, Minnesota Conservatory for the Arts, Minnesota Marine Art Museum and River Arts Alliance for their partnership on events. We would also like to thank the Winona Post, Winona Daily News and Rochester Post Bulletin for their coverage of Welcoming Week.



# Community

## Annual Report to the Community

On February 19, 2020 Project FINE hosted our Annual Report to the Community event at Saint Mary's University to celebrate our accomplishments in 2019 and our 30th Anniversary. The event included a recognition of Central Lutheran Church as our 2019 Partner of the Year and a special birthday song created by staff to honor 30 years.



## Hy-Vee Reusable Bag Program

During February, Project FINE was selected as the beneficiary of the Hy-Vee Reusable Bag Program. When Hy-Vee customers purchase a reusable bag, \$1 is donated to local nonprofits. **29** community members purchased a bag in support of Project FINE and our mission.

## Welcoming America Webinar

On April 16, Project FINE staff were part of a panel presentation hosted by Welcoming America focused on Language Access & Communication Strategies in Times of Crisis. Participants from across the country participated, and we shared information about our response to COVID-19 and adjusting services to continue to serve the community.

## Virtual Fundraising Event

On June 14, Project FINE hosted its first virtual fundraising event on Facebook Live. It was a challenge to shift from our usual Taste of International Cuisine event to an online format, but the development committee and board did a wonderful job creating a script that highlighted our 30 year history and community impact. We are so thankful to the many partners and friends who supported this fundraising event, and we hope to see you in person for our next Taste of International Cuisine on June 13, 2021!



# Involvement

## **Broadband 2020: Connected We Stand**

On October 14, Fatima presented for the Blandin Foundation's annual technology conference. She shared information about our past technology education projects and our ConnectedMN program.



## **Aspen Institute**

On October 27, Fatima was part of a panel presentation for the Aspen Institute's Thrive Rural Project. This project is part of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group and has a goal of creating dynamic, sustainable rural communities where all people can realize their full potential and live healthy lives. She shared information about Project FINE and our welcoming efforts in our region.



## **Staff Retreat**

In October, Project FINE staff held our annual retreat in Lanesboro. We participated in several outdoor and team building activities and went on a tour of Amish farms and stores.

## **Rural Equity Summit**

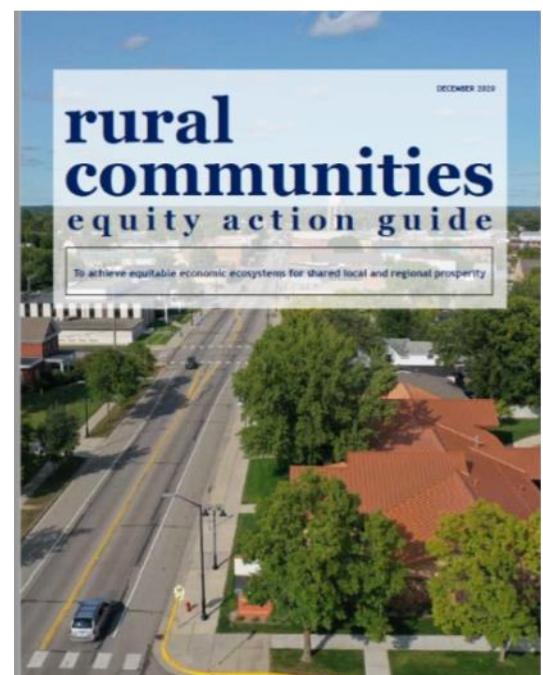
On November 16, Fatima spoke as part of a panel presentation for the University of Minnesota Extension's Rural Equity Summit. She shared about our work to advance equity in our region.

## **Digital Navigation Webinar**

On December 16, Project FINE staff were part of a panel presentation hosted by the Minnesota Department of Education on digital navigation. The webinar featured programs across the state that are focused on helping families connect to virtual learning. We shared information about the ConnectedMN program goals, format and outcomes.

## **Rural Communities Equity Action Guide**

Project FINE was highlighted as a case study in the Rural Communities Equity Action Guide created by Growth and Justice. The guide is intended to provide rural Minnesotans and communities with examples of effective models for inclusion and engagement. The guide includes an overview and equity analysis as well as in-depth information from six programs across Minnesota who are working to engage diverse community members.



# Community



## Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota

In 2020, Project FINE and the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) continued their collaboration on two specific projects in the Winona area. The first provides resources and information for those who have experienced domestic violence or other violent crimes. In addition to the legal services provided by ILCM, Project FINE provided over **40** hours of referrals and information on the criminal justice system and victim rights for refugees and immigrants. The second project increases access to legal services across southeastern Minnesota. Through this grant, staff attorneys from ILCM visit Project FINE on a regular basis to meet with clients and provide legal assistance.

## Minnesota Marine Art Museum

During 2020, Project FINE collaborated with the Minnesota Marine Art Museum on several of their Second Saturdays events. We translated project materials into Hmong and Spanish and delivered almost **300** art kits to refugee and immigrant families in Winona County. The kits highlighted various art pieces at the museum and included creative, age-appropriate art activities.



## Southeast Minnesota Together

Our involvement with Southeast Minnesota Together began in 2016 and continued in 2020, with Fatima serving as a member of their core team. This collaborative group was created to address the workforce shortage in southeastern Minnesota and they seek to strengthen regional connections and build local capacity in communities across the region.

## Welcome Center

During 2020, Project FINE worked closely with the Welcome Center in Austin MN to provide capacity building training. They have a similar focus and mission to Project FINE and we worked closely to provide insight into programming opportunities and strategies to engage the community. Project FINE staff met with Welcome Center staff on a regular basis, sharing our experience, best practices and lessons learned over the past 30 years.



# Collaborations

## Whole Family Systems Project

In 2020, Project FINE served as a collaborator for the Whole Family Systems project led by the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association and Families First of Minnesota. This is a multi-year project with a goal of improving access to early childhood learning programs for children of first-generation immigrant families, and increased engagement of caregivers of those children as they transition from pre-kindergarten into kindergarten. Project FINE staff served on various committees and administered a needs assessment for 16 families with young children in Winona County to understand their challenges related to early childhood education and access.



## Winona Wellbeing Collaborative

The Winona Wellbeing Collaborative (WWC) was created by Winona Health and LiveWell Winona to bring together organizations to help families with food insecurity. Project FINE has been involved with the WWC for several years and is a referral partner member for their main project, the Winona Community HUB, which connects individuals with community health workers to help them meet their basic needs.



## Continuing Education

Ongoing education and training was a highlight of 2020 for Project FINE staff. During the year, staff completed **795** hours of continuing education on topics related to cultural intelligence, well-being, language services, mandated reporting and nonprofit best practices. Due to COVID-19, the majority of training was completed online, allowing for flexibility and increased learning options. While working from home, staff completed several online courses as a group and continued their training after returning to the office. We would like to thank the Otto Bremer Trust and the Bush Foundation for supporting the continued growth and professional development of the Project FINE team.

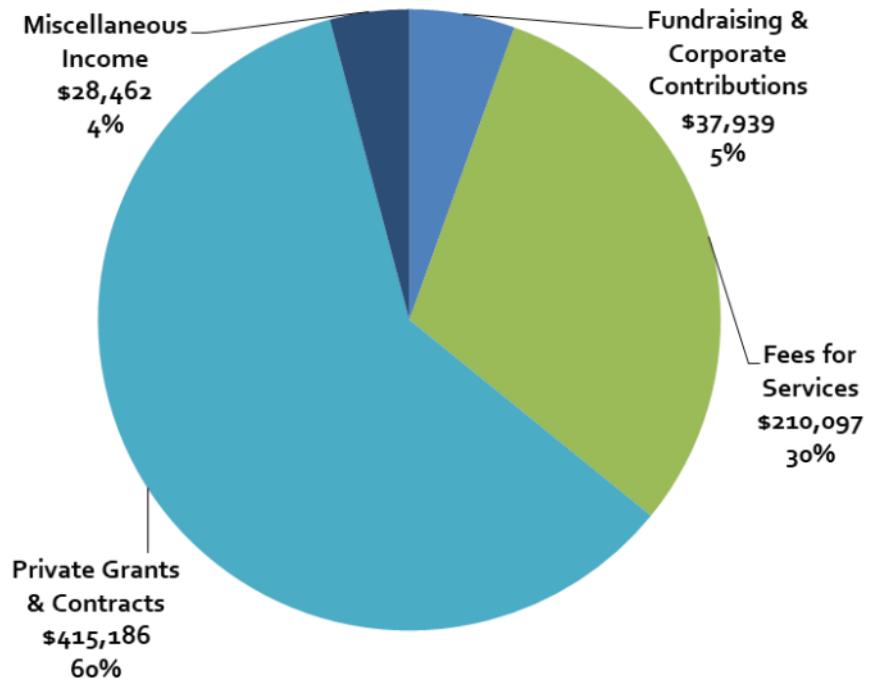
## Project FINE staff serve on several boards and committees, including:

- Cotter School Board of Directors
- Goodview Farmers Market Board of Directors
- Ready Set School Board of Directors
- SE MN Together Core Group
- SHIP Community Leadership Team
- U of MN Extension Community Advisory Committee
- Winona County Community Services Advisory Committee
- Winona County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- Winona Health Board of Directors
- Winona Health Diabetes Advisory Board
- Winona Human Rights Commission
- Winona Rotary Board of Directors
- Winona Wellbeing Collaborative
- Winona Workforce Development Board

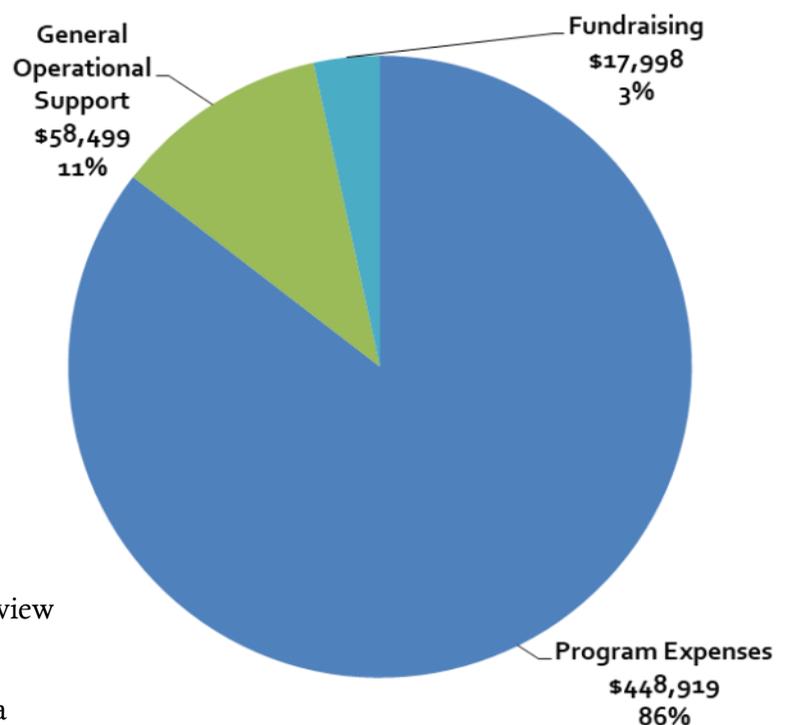
# 2020 Financial Summary

Income Statement	
Total Revenue 2020	\$691,684
Total Expenses 2020	\$525,416
Board Designated Funds (as of 1/1/21)	
Navigating Community Systems Programs	\$25,000
Building Communities Programs	\$75,000
Empowering Youth Programs	\$50,000
Balance Sheet	
Assets	
Current Assets	\$803,845
Fixed Assets	\$16,323
Other Assets	\$1,002,851
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,823,019</b>
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	\$395,600
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$395,600</b>
Net Assets	
Board Designated (as of 12/31/2020)	\$90,000
Undesignated	\$1,337,419
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,427,419</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,823,019</b>
Financial information provided was prepared using the Accrual accounting method.	

## Revenue 2020



## Expenses 2020



The Meets Standards Seal is given by the Charities Review Council to nonprofits who meet their Accountability Standards. The Accountability Standards create a common ground across the nonprofit sector, building a foundation of strength in our community. For more information, visit [www.smartgivers.org](http://www.smartgivers.org)

# Community Partnerships

Thank you to the many businesses and organizations who partner with Project FINE in support of our mission.

- Advocacy Center of Winona
- Behrens Manufacturing
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of MN
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of MN Foundation
- Bridges Health Program
- Bush Foundation
- Catholic Charities
- Central Lutheran Church
- Charities Review Council
- Children's Dental of Winona
- City of Goodview
- City of St. Charles
- City of Winona
- ConnectedMN
- Cotter Schools
- Engage Winona
- Family and Children's Center
- Frozen River Film Festival
- Goodview Farmers Market
- Gundersen Health System
- Hiawatha Valley Mental Health
- Home and Community Options
- Hometown Resource Center
- Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association
- Kids First
- Knitcraft-St. Croix Foundation
- Laura Jane Musser Fund
- Lewiston-Altura School District
- Live Well Winona
- Mardag Foundation
- Mayo Clinic
- Merchants Bank
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Minnesota Department of Corrections
- Minnesota Marine Art Museum
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- Minnesota State College Southeast
- Otto Bremer Trust
- Pleasant Valley Church
- Ready Set School
- River Arts Alliance
- Rollingstone Cenex
- St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
- St. Charles Farmers Market
- St. Charles Public Schools
- Saint Mary's University of MN
- Semcac
- Sheltering Arms Foundation
- Southern MN Initiative Foundation
- Southern MN Regional Legal Services
- Southeast Minnesota Together
- UCare of Minnesota
- University of Minnesota Extension
- Welcome Center, Austin MN
- Welcoming America
- Wells Fargo
- Wincraft
- Winona Area Ambulance Service
- Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
- Winona Area Public Schools
- Winona Area YMCA
- Winona Community Foundation
- Winona County
- Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention
- Winona County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)
- Winona County Historical Society
- Winona County PartnerSHIP
- Winona Health
- Winona Hims
- Winona Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Winona Human Rights Commission
- Winona ORC
- Winona Rotary Club
- Winona State University
- Winona Volunteer Services
- WNB Financial
- Women's Foundation of Minnesota

## 2020 Partner of the Year

Each year, Project FINE designates one or more partners for special recognition through the Partners Award. This year, we are proud to recognize the following exceptional partner:

### **Winona Community Foundation**

The Winona Community Foundation has been a partner to Project FINE for many years, but in 2020 they went above and beyond to support community members affected by COVID-19. They quickly organized the Winona Community Foundation COVID-19 Relief Fund, which offered funds for Project FINE and other organizations to use to provide direct support of those we serve.

We would like to thank the Winona Community Foundation for their commitment to strengthening our community through philanthropy and for ensuring that all residents are able to benefit from their generosity.

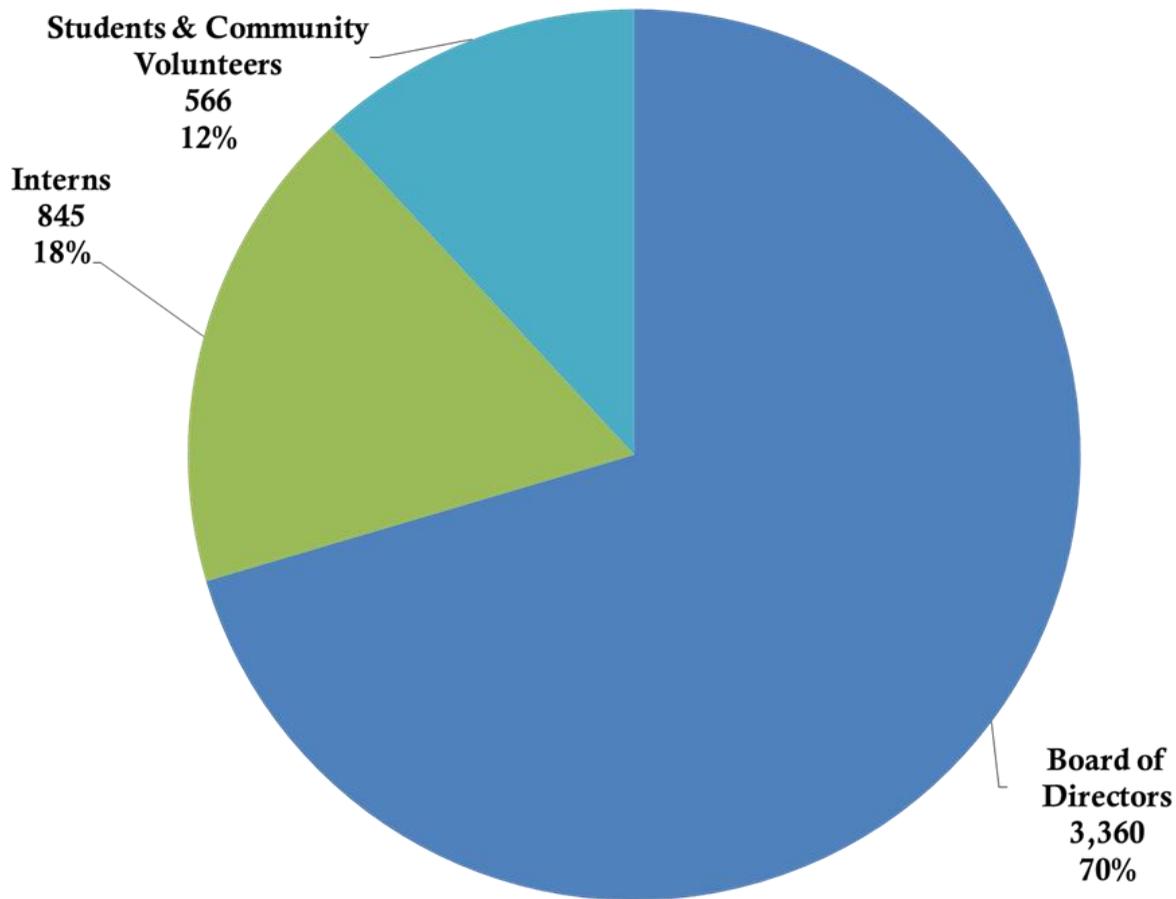


**WINONA  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

# Volunteer Information

Volunteers are a valued part of Project FINE and we would like to thank the individuals who contributed thousands of hours of volunteer service in 2020. We appreciate you sharing your time and talent to help us fulfill our vision of creating a respectful and welcoming community.

## Project FINE Volunteer Hours 2020 4,771 Total Hours



**A special thank you to these 2020 volunteers:**

**Committee Members:**

Deb Ward, Development Committee  
Andrea Northam, Development Committee

**Interns:**

Riley Parsons, Sheewa Shrestha, Yohanan Urbina  
and Paige Yangwakue

**Community Volunteers:**

Lucia Rodriguez, Lydia Rahman and Pa Cha Vang



# Board Members & Staff

Our board members are essential to our success, sharing their time and expertise to advance our mission and vision. Their dedication is a great benefit to Project FINE and the community.



David Kramer  
Board President  
City of St. Charles



Jack Richter  
Board Vice President  
WNB Financial



Heather Bach  
Board Treasurer  
Community Member



Nicole Messenger  
Board Secretary  
Merchants Bank



Jeff Apse  
St. Charles Public Schools



Father Tim Biren  
St. Charles Borromeo Church



Annette Freiheit  
Winona Area Public Schools



Sammy Gondola  
Pleasant Valley Church



Dale Hinckley  
Hinckley Holsteins



Robin Hoeg  
Winona Health



Janell Linville  
Gillette Pepsi



Pedro Lopez  
Courtesy Corporation



Cecilia Manrique  
Community Member



Pat Mutter  
Visit Winona



Eric Schoh  
Winona State University



Joel Von Haden  
Winona Heating & Ventilating



Back Row: Christian Cruz Cartagena, Fatima Said, German Victoria, Katie van Eijl  
Front Row: Chong Sher Vang, Pang Vang, Maria Rodriguez-Ramirez

## Project FINE Staff

- Fatima Said, Executive Director
- Chong Sher Vang,  
Program Development Director
- Katie van Eijl, Program Manager
- German Victoria, Program Manager
- Maria Rodriguez-Ramirez,  
Hispanic/Latino Community Liaison
- Pang Vang, Hmong Community Liaison
- Christian Cruz Cartagena,  
Hispanic/Latino Community Liaison

# *Celebrating 30 Years*

As we look back on 30 years of Project FINE, it is amazing to think of how the organization has grown and adapted to meet the needs of the community. Although 1990 doesn't seem that long ago, there have been many changes to the way we live, work and communicate. Let's take a little trip down memory lane - 1990 brought the reunification of Germany, the launch of the Hubble Telescope and Nelson Mandela's release from 27 years of imprisonment. A gallon of gas cost \$1.34, the Simpsons first aired on television and it was revealed that Milli Vanilli had lip-synched the songs on their Grammy-winning album. The language that drives the world wide web was also created in 1990, marking the beginning of the internet era and making the world feel a little smaller.

Locally, Winona was fairly similar to the present day, with a population of around 25,000, including an increasing number of refugees and immigrants. Most of these newcomers were Hmong, Laotian, or Hispanic and there was a growing need for programming to help them adapt to life in the United States and become connected. Many things have changed over the past 30 years, but one that hasn't is the need to bridge cultures and build connections with people from all different backgrounds, and we are proud that Project FINE is still meeting those needs for our community and our region.

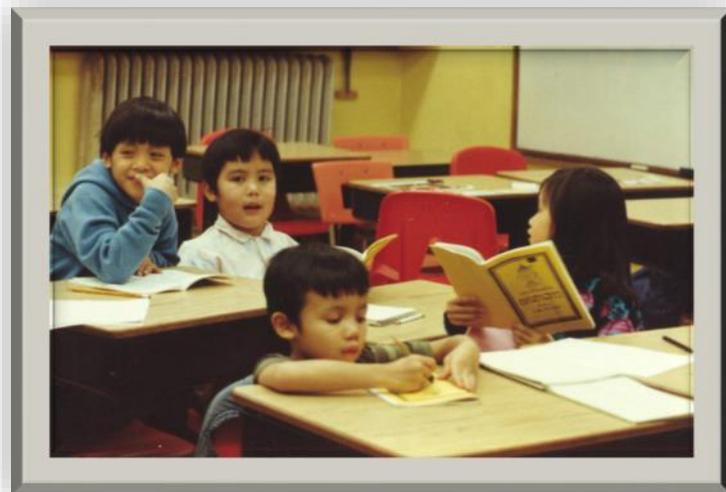
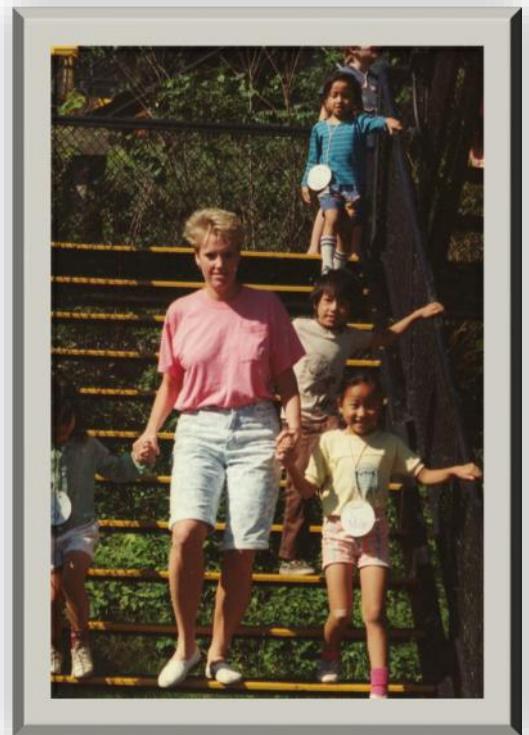
Over the next several pages, you can follow our journey from 1990 to the present and see what we are planning for the future - enjoy!



# 1990-1994

Project FINE began in 1990 as a program of the Winona County University of Minnesota Extension office through a grant from the USDA Children Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) project. At that time, a growing number of Hmong families were settling in Winona and adjusting to life in the United States.

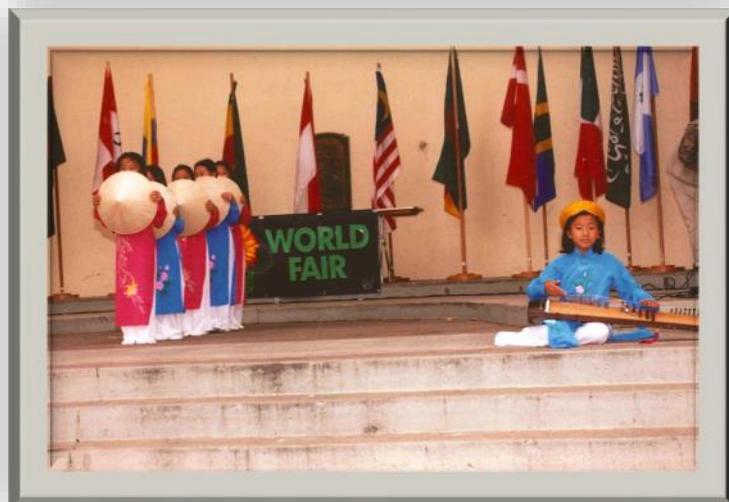
Grant activities began in early 1991 with a goal of assisting newcomer families and youth in their integration into the community, to support them in maintaining their cultural heritage and to help established county residents and organizations increase their understanding of different cultures. They provided a variety of educational events, primarily for youth. They also partnered with community education, facilitating activities for youth whose parents were attending ESL classes, hosting afterschool activities and organizing cultural presentations for schools and community groups.



# 1995-1999

As the CYFAR grant came to close, it was evident that the need for Project FINE would not end with the funding. A group of individuals who had been instrumental in creating Project FINE recognized that diversity in the region would continue to grow and they began the process of changing Project FINE from a program of the University of Minnesota Extension office into an independent organization. In 1997, Project FINE was granted nonprofit 501(c)3 status and the dedication and foresight of these individuals paved the way for Project FINE to become the organization it is today.

During the late 1990s, Project FINE continued to provide programming, primarily in the area of community education and cultural events. They also offered tutoring and support for diverse students through a partnership with the Winona Housing and Redevelopment Authority. In late 1999, they moved into a new office location in the Plaza Square Mall.



# 2000-2005

The turn of the century brought changes for Project FINE. In late 1999, work began to develop an Interpreter Network to meet the need for foreign-language interpreters in the community. By the year 2000, Project FINE received 450 interpreting requests and provided almost 1,300 hours of interpreting and translating services in 7 languages. The organization also began to develop new educational programming focused on engaging the Hispanic/Latino population in St. Charles and sharing information with students about post-secondary education.

Although the board and staff of Project FINE were committed and passionate, they struggled to find funding to sustain the organization. The board realized that they needed to make some strategic changes to ensure long term success. In 2004, they applied for funding from United Way to develop a plan, which included goals, business strategies and changes to operations so that the organization could continue. They received the grant and began making changes right away.

One of the first changes was to hire an Executive Director who would provide leadership and strengthen the business aspects of the organization. Fatima Said started as Executive Director in August of 2005 and began working to strengthen partnerships and develop Project FINE into the organization it is today.



# 2006-2010

During the early 2000s Project FINE continued to grow and make significant improvements to our impact and our operations. Fatima and the board focused on strengthening the structure and finances of the organization, and developing partnership and collaboration across all sectors.

Our grant-funded programs expanded, beginning with the development of the Diversity Youth Quest and College Education Connection programs for youth. There were also significant improvements in the operation of the Language Services program, leading to increased capacity and contracts with UCare and Blue Plus to provide interpreting services for their members.

Project FINE also became more visible in the community, hosting our first Annual Report to the Community and Taste of International Cuisine Fundraisers and creating a cookbook of traditional recipes from our interpreters, board and friends and the Journey of 1,000 Miles booklet of stories from local refugees and immigrants.



# 2011-2015

From 2011 - 2015, Project FINE continued to expand our educational programming, providing 18 new grant-funded programs. These offerings focused on various topics, including technology, art, early childhood and health. Language Services also experienced continued growth and improvements, and by 2015 we were providing over 3,000 hours of interpreting and translating services each year.

During this time, Project FINE also gained recognition on a state and national level. In 2013, Fatima was named as a Champion of Change by the Obama administration for her work at Project FINE. She visited the White House with a group of nine other individuals from across the country to share about our work in southeastern Minnesota.

The focus of Project FINE expanded to building welcoming and inclusion on a broader level. We hosted our first Citizenship Day celebration in 2013 to honor naturalized citizens and this has grown into an annual event that highlights the contributions of refugees and immigrants in our community.

By the time Project FINE celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2015, the organization had grown considerably and provided a wide variety of programs and services for newcomers and established residents in our region.



# 2016-2020

Over the past five years, we have continued to expand our scope and vision. Project FINE joined the Welcoming America network in 2016 and began several initiatives to promote welcoming and inclusion in our community and region. Our Welcoming Week events have grown considerably and now include multiple events held in Winona and St. Charles.

In 2017, we completed a needs assessment of 93 refugees and immigrants across Winona County and that information guided the creation of several new programs to meet the current needs of the families we serve.

Our Welcoming Table program began in 2018 to bring together newcomers and long-term residents and foster cross-cultural understanding. We also expanded collaborations and worked with a group of partners to develop a Welcoming Statement, which has been adopted by 23 different agencies, signifying their desire to incorporate equity in their policies and practices.

Project FINE continues to gain state and national recognition and was featured in many webinars, articles and publications as a successful model. We demonstrate our commitment to learning and excellence through ongoing communication with our advisory group, to discover current needs.



# Looking Ahead

When we think of the future, we are filled with inspiration and excitement. So many people contributed to creating a strong foundation for Project FINE and that work will allow us to be effective and impactful for many years to come. As we move into 2021 and beyond, the mission and vision of Project FINE are as relevant and important today as they were 30 years ago, and we are committed to continued growth and service to newcomers and established residents across our community and region. We plan to do this by being an engaged partner, a trusted resource and a positive model for integration.

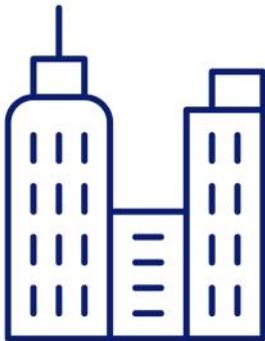
Our goals for the future are driven by our understanding of current needs and the guiding values of our organization, and includes 3 main components: bridge, build and connect, as outlined below. On behalf of the Project FINE staff and board, we would like to thank you again for your support and partnership and can't wait to see what the future will hold!

## Project FINE's Focus for the Future



### Bridge

We will be a bridge across cultures, working with partners to foster an environment that recognizes the value of welcoming and the role we all play in creating a community where all are respected and valued.



### Build

We will continue to build trusting relationships between refugees, immigrants and the receiving community, and provide opportunities for meaningful interaction.



### Connect

We will serve as connectors, working together to create a community that is more equitable, inclusive, healthy, and prosperous and where all residents feel they belong.



**1990-2020**

*Project* **FINE**

*Focus on Integrating Newcomers through Education*

[www.projectfine.org](http://www.projectfine.org)

Winona office: 202 West Third Street, Winona, MN 55987  
507-452-4100 Fax: 507-452-4644 info@projectfine.org

St. Charles office: 830 Whitewater Avenue, St. Charles, MN 55972