

the COMMON THREADS PROJECT:

a framework for rural community building

When immigrants and other rural community members are able to focus on what they have in common, they're in the best possible position to tackle shared challenges – to see possibilities.

That's what organizations and individuals in Moorhead, Minnesota discovered when they came together for civic engagement training and planning in early 2008. Main Street Project, working with strong, local community partners, helped participants learn about a movement-based approach to change, uncover barriers shared with many low-income people and people of color, and begin to build relationships across cultural divides.

The Common Threads Project approach was developed as a way to continue that momentum in a community-centric, strengths-based way. We see the potential to help immigrants and refugees make their voices heard and participate more actively in their community – in Moorhead and in other increasingly diverse rural communities.

making CONNECTIONS

The Common Threads Project offers multiple opportunities for building and strengthening relationships, leadership capacity and communications – within and between organizations working with immigrants and refugees; between immigrants and other members of the community, including leaders and officials; and within the communities of immigrants and refugees.

We're helping communities build an infrastructure that supports long-term results around social connectedness and problem solving.

- **Measurement** – Beginning with a survey assessment of attitudes, awareness and self-reported community involvement gives us a way to set targets for improvement and periodically measure progress.
- **Common Threads Project network** – Community organizations will use regularly scheduled conference calls and Webinars to stay connected, plan issue meetings, promotion and follow through.
- **Community meetings** – Participants will address one or two common issues at each quarterly session. Government representatives will be invited based on issues discussed. Language interpretation will be available.
- **Common Threads Project newsletters** – Newsletters in English and other languages based on community needs will share what was discussed at community meetings and promote the next event or opportunity to get involved. We'll distribute them at locations frequented by people of color and other community members; copies will be shared with elected officials and community service providers.
- **Training workshops** – One to two training workshops each year will help build cultural competence, support leadership development and address opportunities identified through the Common Threads Project network and the community.

