Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

BRAND GUIDE

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

Collaborating for Regional Vitality

COLLABORATION

STRONGER TOGETHER

- We are committed to serving as a leader in uniting partners and resources to ensure that southern Minnesota thrives.
- Our brand and logo underscores the collaborative spirit that SMIF brings to the entire region.

TAGLINE: Collaborating for Regional Vitality

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

SHARED MEANING

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation defines collaboration as a well-defined relationship (or partnership) entered into by two or more organizations which accomplishes more together than would have been possible alone. True collaboration includes a means by which an ever wider circle of participants can join in realizing the effort's goals. Collaboration is a result of fruitful partnerships.

- While SMIF often serves as a primary and lead partner on collaborative projects, the Foundation recognizes the necessity and importance of being a secondary or supporting partner in relevant collaborations.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation defines partnership as to join forces in pursuit of a shared goal. Meaningful partnerships are an essential part of creating collaboration.

BRANDING

BRANDING AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Branding is the essence of an organization. While branding is initially conveyed in words and phrases, at its core, branding is the reflection of how you live and what you believe as an organization. The Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation brand is supported by a series of commitments that constitute the brand promise of the organization.

Your brand is the impression you leave with every stakeholder of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation – partners, collaborators, funders, donors, fellow employees, the communities you serve and the countless other people that play a vital role in your success.

Because we live in a fast-paced, mile-a-minute world with literally thousands of messages being thrown at us daily, the successful organizations are those that carve out a niche in the minds of the people important to them. The only way to successfully create that niche is to effectively and consistently convey who you are and what you stand for in a deliberate, conscientious and strategic manner. Without a strong brand that is consistently promoted through actions as well as through words and images, any organization will struggle to communicate effectively.

OUR BRAND PROMISES

A brand promise is an extension of an organization's positioning. Brand promises both shape and reflect an organization's mission, vision and values.

- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation will provide support for the entire 20-county region to strengthen regional and community vitality. SMIF's resources are focused on early childhood development, business resources, community philanthropy, and regional collaborations and entrepreneurship.
- We will help connect the entire region to the resources each community needs to create a successful, inclusive and thriving life for its residents.
- We will collaborate broadly, actively seeking new regional and statewide partners and resources to foster a vibrant and sustainable southern Minnesota.
- We will be wise stewards of resources and continuously work to ensure that our region's prosperity and vitality is at the forefront of everything that we do.
- We will be a clear and articulate voice for the region on key issues vital to southern Minnesota's success.
- We will reach out to all of southern Minnesota to maintain a pulse on the issues and opportunities that most directly affect our region.

MESSAGING

OUR MESSAGE

- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation is a regional development and philanthropic organization focused on the areas of economic development, community vitality and early childhood development.
- SMIF promotes the vitality of southern Minnesota by:
  - Investing in people, especially our youngest generation and entrepreneurs
  - Enabling communities to invest in themselves through local community funds
  - Bringing together partners and resources to facilitate the continued growth of the region
  - Serving as a leader and voice for the region and finding the most effective ways to use funds and resources

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- SMIF drives economic development by offering loans and equity investments for businesses looking to expand, in addition to providing technical assistance and regional networking opportunities.
- SMIF promotes community vitality by providing grants to nonprofits and community partners that strengthen local communities.
- SMIF convenes leaders and marshals resources to tackle key issues.
- SMIF focuses on improving the quality of care and education of young children by investing in caregiver education and training, literacy programs, social-emotional skill development and cross-sector collaborations.
- SMIF has identified three key areas of opportunity to make a sustainable impact on the overall prosperity of southern Minnesota: economic development, community vitality and early childhood development.
- While SMIF is a philanthropic organization, it provides much more than funding, serving as a leader that brings together key partners and identifies opportunities for collaboration.
- SMIF is a trusted resource for other organizations working to make the region stronger.
- SMIF identifies best practices and allocates resources to increase the effectiveness and collective impact of existing programs and partnerships.
- SMIF serves as a voice for southern Minnesota at a statewide level, understanding and advocating that stronger Greater Minnesota communities lead to a more prosperous state.

MESSAGING

HOW TO LIVE THE BRAND

Because you play a key role in making the SMIF brand meaningful, there are several questions you can ask yourself to ensure that you are doing your part in making our brand a reality.

- What have I done today to help promote the collaborative spirit of what we do at SMIF?
- Are my current projects contributing to our brand and mission? If not, what can be changed?
- Am I utilizing the strengths of my fellow staff members to maximize the effectiveness of this project?
- Have I been listening to all the key stakeholders related to this issue?
- Where do I see an opportunity for improvement and who should I tell?
- What do I work on that can be measurably improved through collaboration?
- How can I pitch in with others while still fulfilling the responsibilities of my own job?
- What people and organizations outside of SMIF should I facilitate connections with that will create mutually beneficial relationships?
- Who else can benefit from the collaborations that are currently alive?
- Is SMIF a project leader or supporter? What is my role on the project?