

Case Study on Minnesotans for a Fair Economy

Report Background & Executive Summary

Prepared by

The Engage Network
and
Movement Strategy
Center



MOVEMENT
STRATEGY
CENTER



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REPORT BACKGROUND

Minnesotans for a Fair Economy (MFE) is an innovating and leading-edge “Alliance¹” of strategic partnerships across labor, faith, and community-based organizations based out of Minnesota². It was formally launched in April 2011, after an infusion of FFE³ funding from SEIU over a two-year period.

¹ See next page for a definition of an Alliance versus a Coalition.
² Alliance Member Organizations are mainly based out of the Twin Cities and include: SEIU Local 26, SEIU Local 284, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, AFL-CIO, TakeAction Minnesota, ISALAH, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC), Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL), Jewish Community Action (JCA), Land Stewardship Project, and UFCW 1189.
³ FFE stands for Fight for a Fair Economy.

Between September 2012 and January 2013, SEIU asked The Engage Network to conduct a case study on MFE. As part of that study, The Engage Network completed the following work:

- ✓ Conducted over 65 detailed in-person interviews (at 1.5 to 2 hours each) with:
 - MFE Mobile Team Staff
 - Staff of the Table (staff from each of the Alliance Organizations)
 - MFE Member Leaders (members of each of the Alliance Organizations)
 - Other key stakeholder or organizations and individuals involved with MFE
- ✓ Conducted an online survey to capture quantitative data with Staff of the Table and The Mobile Team (26 respondents)
- ✓ Reviewed all relevant background information on MFE and Alliance best-practices

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of the Engage Network’s study, taking a look at MFE’s successes and best practices during its first 1.5 years of operation. The report is broken into 2 parts: an Executive Summary and a Full Report (separate document), which includes a longer, more detailed review of MFE’s strategies, results and best practices. This report is supported by three additional documents:

1. “Summary of MFE Survey Responses”: a Microsoft Word document that summarizes quantitative and qualitative data from the online surveys that were conducted.
2. “MFE: A Case Study”: a Power Point document that provides a more pictorial representation of the findings in this report which relate to MFE’s structure, strategies, and impact.
3. “MFE: A Study of Best Practices and Building Blocks”: a Power Point document that provides a more pictorial representation of the findings of this report which relate to the best practices that have helped create and define MFE. This Power Point is to be used for community outreach and engagement.

Since the consolidation of findings and writing of this report, MFE has gone on to achieve additional significant successes, including: Homeowners’ Bill of Rights to protect community members facing foreclosure; expanding affordable health coverage to 190,000 more Minnesotans, as the only state in the country to implement a “Basic Health Plan” under Obamacare; the right to organize a union for 20,000-30,000 low-wage home care and childcare workers; closing over \$400 million in corporate tax loopholes, as part of a \$2.1 billion new progressive-revenue package; restoring a program that balances education funding across districts, correcting for some of the inequities of local financing of schools; “Ban the Box” legislation helping the formerly-incarcerated get jobs; and major improvements in wages and health benefits for thousands of janitors and security guards. While winning these legislative and contract-campaign victories, MFE launched a multi-front campaign (which included the first two strikes by retail-store janitors in U.S. history) to initiate a community dialogue with Target around its core values; and have recently entered negotiations with Target executives about a host of community issues (standards for their janitorial subcontractors; racial bias in hiring, particularly with regards to formerly-incarcerated African-Americans; and investments in the suburban community where Target built their new corporate headquarters)

This report does not elaborate upon these successes; but instead serves as a historical perspective on MFE’s first 1.5 years of work – looking up at how MFE set up the foundation that has now led to MFE’s ongoing victories in 2013 and beyond.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Minnesotans for a Fair Economy is a leading-edge, innovative and inspiring alliance. In the 1.5 years since its inception⁴, MFE has had a significant impact on numerous fronts: on the ground, city and state levels, and nationally. On the ground level, MFE has powerfully transformed the lives of thousands of the staff and members⁵ who have participated in the workings of the Table⁶, MFE actions, and Weeks of Action. At the city and state levels, MFE has played a significant role in changing the conversation in both the Twin Cities and Minnesota overall on income inequality and economic fairness. It has drawn enormous attention to certain corporate bank unfair practices. Most recently it has successfully spearheaded the defeat of the Voter Restriction Amendment – a huge success given that polling initially showed 80% support for the amendment. At the national level, all of these initiatives have drawn significant national media attention. In addition, the success in defeating the Voter Restriction Amendment potentially has significant national implications – it is less likely that this amendment will now be pushed forward in other states due to its defeat in MN.

The core purpose of this report is to review core MFE strategies and impact with a look at MFE best practices and transferable building blocks.

This report first looks at the background and formation of MFE and how has it achieved such powerful results (or collective impact) in such a short period of time. The report moves to looking at the significant transformation that has occurred as a result of MFE at the member, organization, and alliance levels. It examines core strategies and impact, and concludes with best practices and transferable building blocks.



⁴ Please note that during the analysis and writing of this report, MFE had been in operation for 1.5 years.

⁵ Please note that at times the term “member” can be confusing as to whether it is referring to 1) members within the individual MFE organizations or 2) the actual “organizations” themselves who are members of the MFE alliance. In the report, when referring to the former, we are simply using the word member or members – and as part of the definition are including the whole range of members: union members, faith-based and community organizing members, as well as dues paying and volunteer/non-dues paying members. When referring to the latter, we are always stating “alliance member” or “alliance partner” or “alliance organization” to clarify this distinction.

⁶ According to MFE parlance, referring to the “Table” is equivalent to referring to the MFE alliance and its corresponding member organizations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MFE

While MFE was founded 1.5 years ago in April, 2011, the foundation for MFE began six years earlier when SEIU, ISIAAH, and TakeAction MN began a process of building deep bi-lateral and tri-lateral relationships and sharing best practices across their organizations. As an extension of this initial groundwork, in February of 2011 (pre-official creation/funding of MFE), SEIU, ISIAAH, TakeAction Minnesota (TAMN), and Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL) brought together 70 leaders to look at how each of their organizations could work together and learn from one another. The convening led to a pivotal vote/decision to work together more closely and an initial loose vision of aligning issue campaigns in each of the organizations around corporate accountability.

“When looking at potential strategic partners the group that rose to the top was ISIAAH. They could build power and attend meetings in even greater numbers than the labor movement.”

– Jon Youngdahl, Chief of Staff, SEIU

With the advent of securing two-year SEIU/FFE funding in April of 2011, a group of leaders from these organizations led the creation of MFE. This creation developed the following mechanisms:

- **A Shared Analysis around Corporate Accountability and Banks:** This analysis became the basis for alliance member MFE-related issue campaigns. This had been agreed upon on at the outset but continually refined over the following months via “alignment discussions” that helped define how each organization could combine what they were already doing with the broader vision of the alliance.
- **Coordinated and Mutually Re-enforcing Campaign Strategies (The Multi-Wave Strategy⁷):** Each alliance member committed to separate issue campaigns rooted in the shared analysis on corporate accountability. Issue campaigns are grounded in campaigns that already exist within partner organizations and are coordinated over weeks and months to maximize community dialogue and pressure on common areas of focus (see Multi-Wave Strategy below for details).
- **A Steering Committee and a Coordinating Committee:** This Committee sets the vision, strategy and agendas for the alliance (comprised of the top leaders from each of the partner organizations in which everyone has an equal vote).
- **A MFE Mobile Team:** This group is a unique “roving” team that provides capacity and expertise (around research, communications, organizing, etc) that otherwise no single partner could afford otherwise on its own.
- **Embedded Staff (Campaign Marshalls):** Comprised of one or two staff embedded within each organization dedicated to MFE-related work and funded by SEIU/FFE.

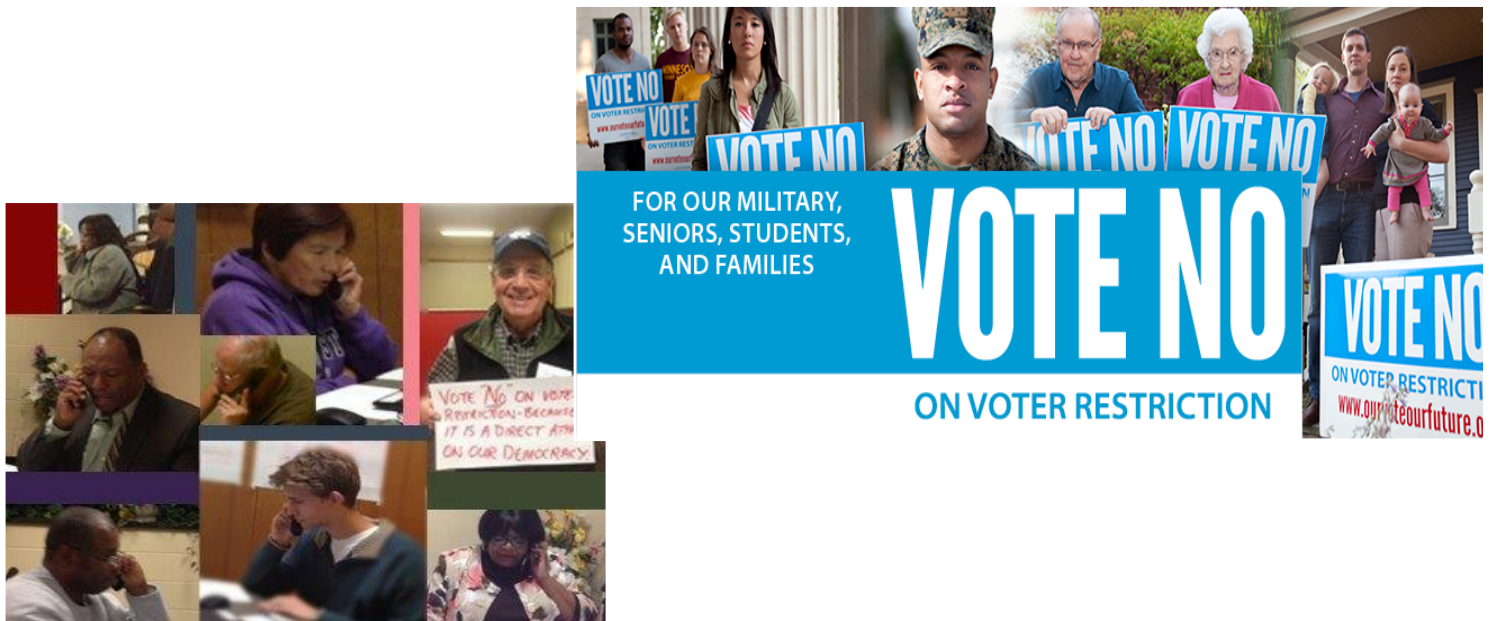
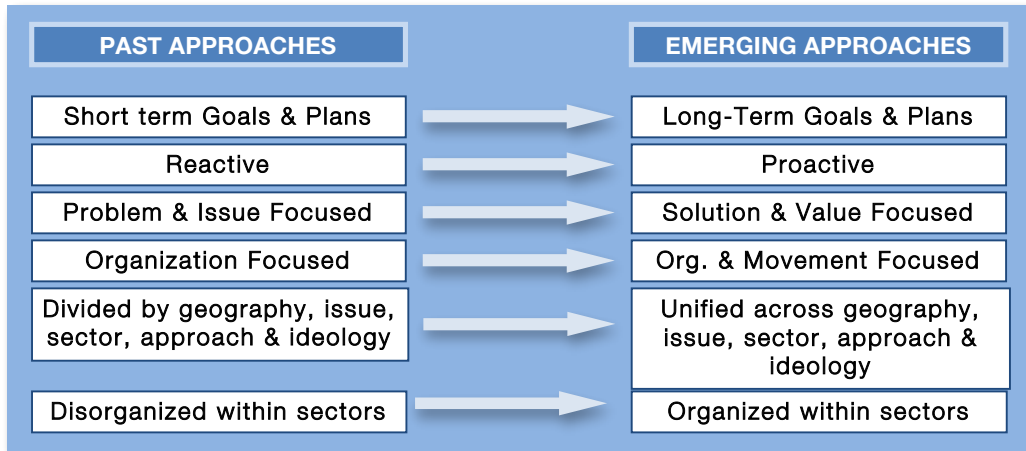
The formal creation of MFE launched the beginning of the MFE “alliance.” MFE, by our definition, is an “alliance” and not a traditional coalition. An alliance consists of people/organizations across diverse, multi-sector backgrounds who:

- have chosen to be together
- have deep levels of trust, have shared resources
- have shared values and understanding
- take a long-term view with a bold vision

⁷ The Multi-Wave Strategy is defined in greater detail in the “Core Strategies” section below.

The Movement Strategy Center best summarizes the new and emerging approaches of alliances in the following visual⁸:

Figure One: A Look at Emerging Approaches of Alliances and Movements⁹



⁸ Please note that while the authors of this report are providing a clear distinction between alliances versus coalitions, others might use these two words interchangeably. The actual terminology is not all that critical. What is important is noting when there is depth of shared goals and understanding (emerging approaches). When you have those in place, it doesn't matter what name you are using. For the purposes of this paper, however, we do refer to MFE as an alliance to distinguish that all these key conditions are in place.

⁹ Movement Strategy Center (2008). Movement Building for the 21st Century.

MULTI-LEVEL TRANSFORMATION

As mentioned above, MFE has had significant wins in the short period of time that it has been in existence. Some of these key wins include:

- Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC) advocacy leading to the Minneapolis School Board seeking proposals from community banks instead of renewing a contract with Wells Fargo
- CTUL publicity for low-wage retail cleaning workers resulting in a wage increase; as well as a recent (January, 2013) \$650,000 settlement from a cleaning subcontractor
- HCMN catalyzing the shift of \$125 million dollars in hospital pension funds from Wells Fargo
- Pressure from the October (2012) Week of Action resulting in a community dialogue with U.S. Bank
- Multiple MN home owners winning the right to stay in their homes
- The defeat of the Voter Restriction Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution

There are two different kinds of successes: results/goal-oriented successes and process or transformation-related successes. The above results-oriented successes are discussed in further detail later in this report. In terms of process-related success, MFE has also been able to affect considerable change. Every interview confirmed that significant transformation has occurred as a result of MFE being in existence. This transformation is most deeply seen at the member level – where there are numerous inspiring stories about members finding their leadership potential and power. However, transformation has also deeply occurred at both the organizational level and the alliance level as a whole.



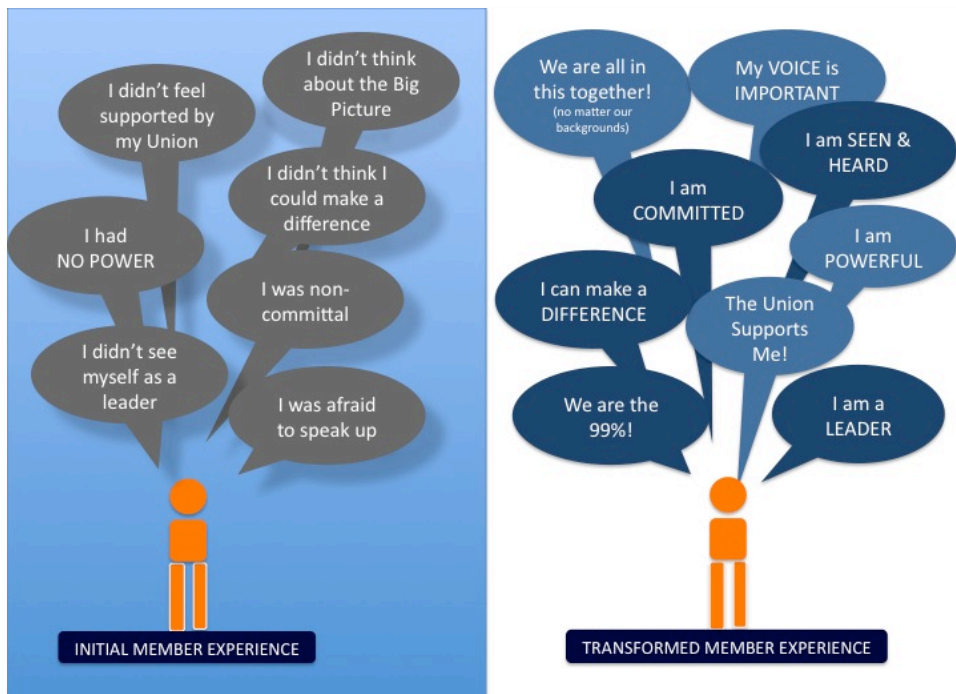
Member Transformation

For member-level transformation, more than 65 interviews indicated that members are significantly transforming both in terms of a “culture-shift” - how members see their power and purpose and the world around them - and “capacity-shift” - gaining new skills in leading, communicating, organizing and relationship-building.

Some examples of themes highlighting the culture-shift and capacity-shift changes that we heard during the member interviews, as well as a spotlight from an interview with a member from Local 26, are summarized in the boxes and picture below:

Summary Box 1: Member Culture-Shift

- Members saw themselves as leaders for the first time
- Members identified themselves as powerful individuals who could make a difference
- Members felt seen and heard and were given a voice for the first time
- Members found inspiration and purpose in renewed ways in their lives
- Members learned from other members across race, gender and sexual orientation – breaking down barriers between groups to show “that we are all in this together”
- Members saw the world in a new light in terms of economic justice, corporate accountability & how this impacts them and their work
- Members saw unions and organizations with a new perspective – seeing that their unions and organizations support them



Summary Box 2: Member Capacity-Shift

- **Leadership Skills:** Members felt that they had received real-life, experiential leadership skills – through delegated leadership responsibility during the weeks of Action, other various MFE actions; and numerous one-day to multi-day trainings
- **Organizing Skills:** Members felt they had gained new and specific organizing skills such as phone banking, door knocking, marshaling, and campaign strategy
- **Communications Skills:** Members felt that they really improved their communication skills: learning to speak in public, speaking from the heart when addressing politicians, getting trained on agitation and conducting one-on-ones, and understanding the power of the press and the media

Spotlight on Kim Martini, Member Local 26

“I used to own a house and had a good paying job, and then I got really sick and life fell apart. I went through foreclosure and bankruptcy and never saw myself as someone who would recover from the fall. I saw a need for change, yet I didn’t see the change happening.

Once I started getting more involved with the union and then MFE, I started seeing that there is hope for change. By hearing other people’s stories and participating in actions myself, I began seeing that there is a chance for people to make a difference and not have to go through the pain of what I went through -- even if they are not part of the union.

When I went back to work as a security officer, I didn’t trust myself to take on a leadership role. But the union and MFE saw leadership qualities in me.....and tried to nurse that and strengthen that and grow that without pushing me past my limits. It helped me feel like me again. It helped me build my confidence back up in what I am capable of doing.

Today, I am not sitting by the sidelines, afraid to take action. Today, I am taking on leadership roles in the Weeks of Action. I am helping people so that they don’t have to go through the same struggle. Now –my life falling apart – is a tool that I can use to help others. I know I am a strong person. I don’t have to settle and I have hope....”

As a result of the member transformation in terms of culture and capacity shifts, we have also seen significant follow-on outcomes – MFE and the alliance partner organizations now have a new cadre of committed and inspired member leadership. This cadre is working at trying to re-infuse the member bases of the MFE partners with similar passion and commitment. They are also spearheading leadership development where transformed members are proactively identifying, training, and mentoring other leaders. And these leaders are proactively leading alliance building outside of MFE with school supervisors, teachers, and other partners.

Partner Organization and Alliance Transformation:

At the partner level, deep transformation has occurred within each alliance member organization. From the beginning MFE has made it a priority to learn from, share and integrate the unique strengths and best practices of each alliance partner. This ensures that each alliance partners' skills are augmented by the knowledge of the collective. Key sharing of skills and perspectives has been around leadership development, relationship building and agitation,¹⁰ corporate campaigning and rigorous direct action, policy/electoral campaigning, popular education techniques, and including a racial lens in organizing work.

“One of the key achievements of MFE is the new learning and innovations on how to do direct action...a higher more sophisticated level of direct action. SEIU pioneered it and taught all of us.”

--Pamela Twiss, *Organizing & Training Director, TakeAction MN*

The sharing of best practices, bolstered by the support and capacity of the Mobile Team and Embedded staff, and in the context of a shared power analysis and common agendas – has led to much more powerful and committed alliance partners. They have new skills and ways of organizing and they have greater power and willingness to take direct action.

“Increasing strategic partner capacity through shared expertise & resources has resulted in powerful and highly committed alliance members. Much more so than if we had simply provided strategic partners with money.”

--Greg Nammacher, *Secretary Treasurer, Local 26*

This transformation and deep commitment is further seen in the online survey data. **91%** of respondents state that MFE is their strongest or strong commitment in terms of all the alliances or coalitions of which they have ever been a part¹¹. When choosing to work through MFE vs. other coalitions, **83%** indicate that MFE is their top choice (see Appendix A for detail)¹².

At the alliance level, over the last 1.5 years there has been a significant deepening and strengthening of the network as well as a palpable sense of collective impact and feeling that “MFE is more than the sum of its parts.” Alliance partners are more and more deeply supporting each other's individual issue campaigns with their own members and capacity. They are also collectively aligning behind new goals and causes that are not in any of the existing alliance partner agendas in order to most impact change. Aligning behind payday lending is a great example of this.

¹⁰ Agitation is an in depth one-on-one process that ISALAH, TakeAction MN, and other alliance partners take their staff and members through on a regular basis.

¹¹ This data is pulled from the online survey that was administered to Mobile Team and alliance partner staff. For detailed results see separate report called “Summary of MFE Survey Responses. Also see Appendix A.

¹² Ibid

Spotlight on Payday Lending

The October 2011 Week of Action resulted in U.S. Bank agreeing to meet with us. We started off by having each partner organization put together a list of concerns including both concrete solutions and more transformational (or visionary) ideas. After several months of no success, we decided to **align behind a collective position that we thought could have the most potential for a positive outcome in pushing U.S. Bank to take on greater corporate social responsibility in the community.** We did some research, and came up with payday lending as the most salient issue. Even though this wasn't in any one of our individual agendas, we decided to take it on as a collective and drive energy there. The Mobile Team wrote a paper. Local 26 conducted a survey with 3000 of its members around payday lending. And we folded our payday lending work into the work around the second Week of Action (May, 2011) – whose primary focus was on an array of campaigns putting pressure on U.S. Bank to change its practices.... Just a few weeks later, a front-page article in the NY Times provided an exposé of these practices in the big banking industry as a whole.

–From an interview with Phillip Cryan, Organizing Director, HCMN

There is also evidence of deepening trust throughout the network. This is seen in the increasingly flat communication across the alliance where anyone can speak to anyone else no matter the position/level. The staff at the Table trust each other to interchangeably take on roles and responsibilities based on available bandwidth. Steve Payne, of Local 26, helps capture this spirit of flat communication when he states: ***“A key factor of success is the network depth and capacity and the fact that MFE is a flat network. MFE is without gatekeeping. You can go direct. When one person needs help, they can reach out to any of the leadership in MFE cross organization for resources.”***

CORE STRATEGIES

Above we have discussed process-related success that MFE has had – as seen by the multiple levels of transformation that have occurred at the individual, organization, and the alliance levels. In terms of more goal-oriented success, MFE has focused on three core strategies to maximize collective impact and social change.

Multi-Wave Strategy:

The first is what MFE calls a “Multi-Wave Campaign Strategy.” This strategy is the backbone to much of what MFE has done since its founding. It starts with a shared analysis – which for MFE is about corporate accountability.

Each alliance member then commits to separate issue campaigns rooted in this analysis. However, alliance member issue campaigns are, as a requirement, grounded in already existing work and not add-on campaigns. This ensures that “alliance member interests are aligned and not pitted against each other;¹³” and the campaigns receive much greater attention and commitment from each of the alliance partners.

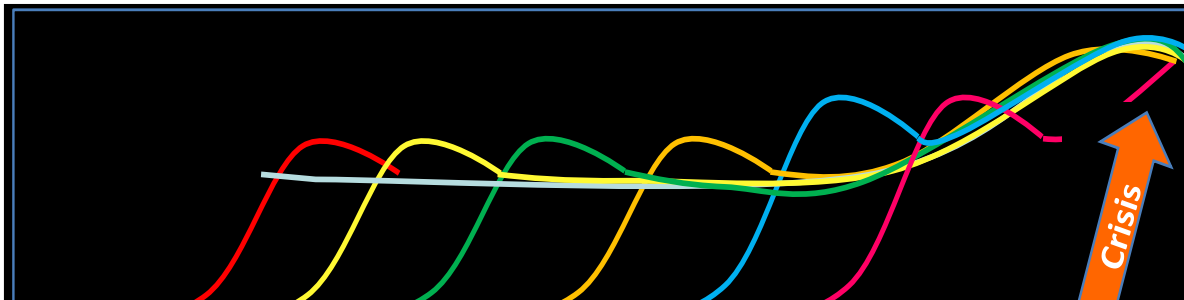
This was so appealing. This was not about doing something else. This was about doing what we were doing – but better!”

- Dan McGrath, Director, TakeAction MN

These separate issue “campaign waves” are coordinated and orchestrated to provide increasing build-up of dialogue and pressure over period of months. This pressure culminates in maximum pressure during the Weeks of Action to engender a crisis that drives social change.

MFE has successfully demonstrated its Multi-Wave Campaign Strategy and Weeks of Action twice. The first Week of Action was in October of 2011, and the second Week of Action was in May of 2012. A third Week of Action occurred in February of 2013.

Figure Two: Visual of Multi-Wave Strategy



Single-Wave and Tidal-Wave Campaign Strategies:

Within the Multi-Wave Strategy, MFE focuses on single-issue campaigns (or single waves) – bringing forth all MFE resources, expertise, alliance member support, and pressure from the Weeks of Action in order to significantly amplify impact of a specific individual campaign. Lisa Amman, Organizing Director from ISAIAH summarizes this strategy when she states: “A big part of MFE is empowering one another to win on our own campaigns. An important piece of this is the Mobile Team. The idea is so awesome. We create extra capacity that all of us need and don’t have in-house. And then we share our extra capacity.”

“A big part of MFE is empowering one another to win on our own campaigns.”

- Lisa Amman, Organizing Director, ISAIAH

MN Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC) and Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL) are primary examples of this Single-Wave Campaign Strategy. In each case, MFE brought its significant resources to bear: from writing pivotal research reports that got

¹³ Lisa Amman, Organizing Director, ISAIAH

local and national press coverage; to jointly helping craft the campaign strategies; to providing press and media support; and providing organizing, logistics and turn-out support by the Mobile Team and Alliance staff and members.

The spotlight below brings to life this strategy and NOC's story:



Spotlight on NOC

Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC) grew out of what was left of ACORN in Minnesota. NOC had been engaged with tornado relief in North Minneapolis and had been doing surveys to hear about the concerns of the community in determining their direction.

The Mobile Team, in partnership with NOC, realized through research that there was a direct connection between the loss of students to a school and foreclosures in the neighborhood.

As a result, MFE and NOC created a joint strategy at the Alliance Table to call on the Minneapolis School Board to address the foreclosure crisis through its contracting practices. The Mobile Team researched and wrote a report showing the pattern of foreclosures and the resulting harm to the affected students and the school district's tax base. The Communications Team helped with press. And the whole effort was launched during the October Week of Action – amplifying the focus on Wells Fargo via a 100-person dedicated Bank Action Team and other anchor campaigns also focusing on banks.

“Instead of just Local 284 going to the School Board, now it’s NOC, CTUL, ISIAIH and other organizers – which has such a powerful impact!” – Mobile Team Staffer

Major Impact results were that NOC got local and national media, the School Board ended up seeking community banking alternatives instead of renewing a contract with Wells Fargo; and, this is now a state example where Local 284 is bringing up this issue to school boards in various places throughout the state in their bargaining.

“Before we were talked about as “former Acorn” and now people were listening to us. We got local and national media.” – Steve Fletcher, Former Director of NOC



Lastly, as the MFE Alliance has deepened, MFE is now also taking on a “Collective” or “Tidal Wave” Strategy. In this strategy, alliance partners unite with cross-organizational staff and resources behind one common cause that is a root cause of systemic issues. This Tidal-Wave of pressure allows MFE to take on systemic and large-scale change. It is how MFE defeated the Voter Restriction Amendment.

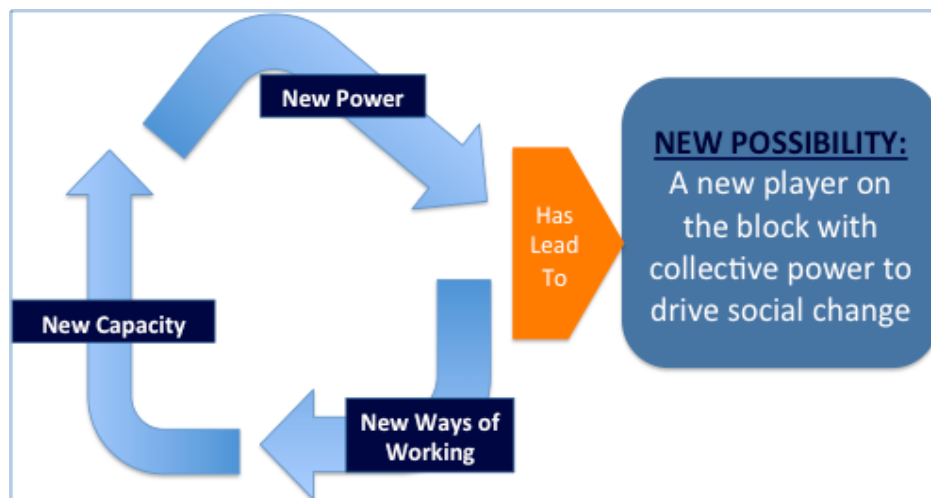
COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Because of the multi-level transformation and core strategies it employs, MFE’s impact has been much greater than any one individual organization could have accomplished on its own. All sixty-five interviews affirm, “What we achieved because of MFE either never would have happened or would have happened at a much smaller scale.” This is further confirmed in the online survey where 100% of respondents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that, “The MFE Table has achieved goals beyond what a single organization could have done” – with the majority (88%) being in the “strongly agree” camp.

“What we achieved because of MFE either never would have happened without this collaboration by all our organizations, or would only have happened at a much smaller scale.”

–Online Survey Respondent

MFE’s powerful collective impact is represented by the diagram below, in which new ways of working lead to new capacity, which leads to new power, which leads to new possibility.



In terms of actual results, the transformation section above highlighted key “process-related” results that have occurred because of MFE, but there have also been significant goal-related results. The biggest win has been the defeat of the proposed Voter Restriction Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution. In March of 2011, a poll of Minnesota voters showed 80% of respondents in support of the amendment. Challenged by TakeAction MN, MFE alliance members decided to take on this issue because of the long-term implications and who the amendment would affect (see more below). Through the combined effort of the MFE Mobile Team, TakeAction MN, ISAIAH, NOC, and 80 other organizations – this November, against what initially was perceived as impossible odds – Minnesotans succeeded in defeating the amendment 54% to 46%.

This success in defeating of the Voter Restriction Amendment is a demonstration of the how MFE has gelled as an alliance and where its new ways of working have led to new capacity, new power and new opportunities to impact social problems that initially no one else was willing to address. MFE emerged as a new “power broker.” Carol Nieters, ED of Local 284 speaks to this when she states, “The ability to take on the larger fights based on the relationships we have and the clear

“The ability to take on the larger fights based on the relationships we have and the clear understanding where our interests intersect – has made a huge power shift to what we are capable of doing – whether it is related to contracts or policy or legislative shifts.”

– Carol Nieters, Executive Director, Local 284

understanding where our interests intersect – has made a huge power shift to what we are capable of doing – whether it is related to contracts or policy or legislative shifts.” Jamie Gulley, President of HCMN, expands that HCMN specifically is more powerful in their contract wars because of MFE when he states, “The membership experience and growth as a result of participating in MFE is phenomenal....Our local has taken this as being more committed to strikes; and we have taken on a full year of strike training for every leadership group.”

“For all the wizardry and strategy of electoral politics, it doesn’t mean anything unless people are willing to take action towards a larger end. We wouldn’t have had a shot at defeating voter I.D. if we hadn’t all coalesced. And we continue to provide leadership on this issue. We might be seeing the beginning of realignment of political power....”

– Dan McGrath, Director TakeAction MN

In addition to the defeat of voter I.D., MFE has also accomplished other key objectives in the short time since its founding. Some results based on interviews and surveys are highlighted in the box below and include key successes such as: the School Board and HCMN seeking community alternatives to Wells Fargo for significant financial services; opening a community dialogue with U.S. Bank; and multiple home owners winning the right to stay in their homes.

Summary Box 3: Key MFE Results

- Changing the conversation in MN about income inequality and fairness
- Drawing enormous attention to bank excesses and fairness
- Getting the Minneapolis School Board to look for community banking alternatives to Wells Fargo
- HCMN catalyzing a shift of \$125 million dollars in pensions funds from Wells Fargo
- Leading a discussion with U.S. Bank around such issues such as Somali Remittances and Payday Lending
- Helping raise the voice of the Somali Community in their need to send money home
- Boldly participating in the U.S. Bank Shareholder Meeting which helped to catalyze Monique White's success story and helped garner national attention to Occupy Homes MN
- Revitalizing housing and foreclosure organizing in MN – with multiple home owners winning the right to stay in their homes
- Deeply supporting CTUL in its advocacy for retail janitors: resulting in national media coverage and a settlement for overtime violations
- Engaging thousands of people to be involved in Weeks of Action, specific direct actions and other work

BEST PRACTICES AND APPLICABILITY OF THE MODEL

As part of the case study, we looked at the key best practices and building blocks that make up MFE's identity and allow for MFE's significant collective impact. MFE demonstrates best practices grouped along categories of pre-conditions, strategy, governance, operations and "essential intangibles." The body of the report details 23 observed best practices. Some of the most important best practices include:

- Unifying vision and shared analysis
- Building on already existing campaigns
- Shared resources
- Shared leadership
- A focus on member leadership development
- Shared best practices
- Deep relationships and clear communication
- Shared values: trust, respect, accountability
- Weeks of Action
- Innovation of creating a Mobile Team

The online survey corroborates these findings. In the survey individuals most often noted shared vision, relationships, resources, shared analysis, and the leadership model as the key reasons for MFE's success.

Figure Three: Top Reasons for MFE’s Success (According to Online Survey)¹⁴

Generalized Answer Categories	Response Count	Response Percent
Shared Vision/ Values/ Commitment	24	96%
Relationships	13	52%
Resources	9	36%
Shared Analysis/Strategy	7	28%
Leadership Model	6	24%
Power of the Alliance	5	20%
Trust/ Respect	5	20%
Clear Communication	3	12%
Accountability	2	8%
Total	74	

An important question is if MFE is a “unique alliance” with a unique set of circumstances and best practices (such as the deep relationships it has developed) that are not transferable to other alliances or coalitions. Or, alternately, is MFE a “leading-edge” alliance that leads the way for social change? A review of best practices research¹⁵ indicates that it is the latter. Along with The Strive Partnership, GAIN, Communities that Care, Shape Up Summerville and others, MFE is leading the way in driving social change – where MFE demonstrates a core set of shared best practices from which others can clearly learn.

There are some building blocks which are specific to MFE. However, these particular best practices are still transferable and not strictly tied to MFE or Minnesota. Best practice research does, however, strongly stress that there are certain elements that can take significant time: such as relationship building, creating a common vocabulary, and learning to trust each other. Early on MFE recognized this and began investing time in these areas, even prior to its official creation. In terms of applicability to other alliances, it simply means that “time” needs to be built into the equation as these alliances are considering how to best maximize their own strength and collective impact.

INVESTING IN COLLECTIVE VS. INDIVIDUAL IMPACT:

Part of the shift needed in creating a strong alliance is funding investment. Funding trends have recently been shifting from supporting individual organizations and single issues to investing in alliance infrastructures and multi-issue networks. Best practice research indicates that while this is a relatively new arena for funders, investing in alliances is a much better investment when trying to drive large-scale social change. Per Kania and Kramer, “No single organization

“No single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single organization cure it.”

– Kania & Kramer, *SSIR* (see footnote 15)

¹⁴ This figure represents a tabulation of the survey responses to the question, “What would you say are the top three reasons that MFE works as an Alliance?”

¹⁵ While a breadth of best practice research was reviewed, this section is specifically referring to the article: HanleyBrown, F., Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2012, January 26). Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work. Retrieved November 8, 2012 from Stanford Social Innovation Review.

is responsible for any major social problem, nor, can any single organization cure it.”¹⁶ And “large-scale social intervention comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from isolated intervention of individual organizations.”¹⁷

The staff of the Table concur with this assessment. They have a strong understanding that **only through collective action by a broad and deep cross section of players can they truly drive lasting change and build power.**

Greg Nammacher touches upon this view by stating:

*“For the last 20 years, labor has grasped that we need to get the community on our side. But the focus has mainly been transactional. At MFE we have been testing a different theory – that in order to put enough pressure on corporate targets, we need to adopt demands from our community as part of the platform. So when we are fighting, we are fighting on behalf of numerous issues....or different organizations are all at a single bargaining table....This allows for us all together to have a **very deep base**. All these people are helping us, and we are helping them. If we do a single organization march, maybe 10 to 15 folks come out from ISALAH. If we do a dual action, then 400 members come out. **It is an exponential difference in terms of the power we can leverage.**”*

– Greg Nammacher, Secretary Treasurer, Local 26

That depth of turn-out, combined with the relationship and network building which allows for each of the alliance partners to align their agendas and combine their power for the bigger agenda (or shared analysis) – is the foundation for MFE’s ability to drive change and build power. This was seen in MFE’s defeat of the Voter Restriction Amendment. And this will serve as the basis for MFE’s upcoming collective fights against Target for financial justice, and against unjust foreclosures.

Veronica Mendez, ED of CTUL, captures “the possibility” of MFE when she so clearly states:

“What I really see MFE doing is building potential for something bigger than we have. MFE is building the kind of infrastructure that is necessary to be a movement. These organizations have been in relationships for years and have never really worked this tightly together before. What excites me is what is possible even more so than what we have accomplished now.”

– Veronica Mendez, Executive Director, CTUL

¹⁶ Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective Impact. Retrieved November 8, 2012 from Stanford Social Innovation Review.

¹⁷ Ibid

