

2025 NWMN Foundation Project Summary

Project: Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging completed a survey and focus group study of the 12 counties and 2 Tribal regions of the NW MN Foundation service area.

Project components:

- 319 completed surveys
- 5 Focus Groups held in Baudette (10 attendees), Bemidji (6 attendees), Lake Bronson (8 attendees), Clearbrook (19 attendees), and Twin Valley (13 attendees) for a total of 56 attendees.
- Reports: Project Summary; Survey Summary Report, Survey Excel Document, County Survey Summary Reports; Focus Group Summary Reports; Dancing Sky Needs Assessment Report

Timeline: June - September 2025

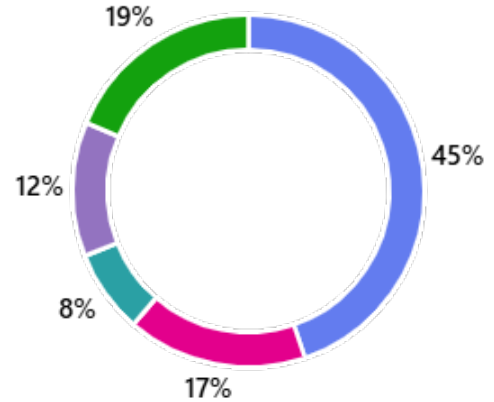
Reoccurring themes/needs across the region:



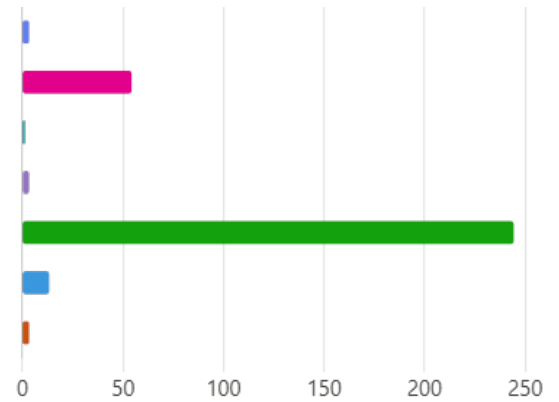
- Housing that is affordable, accessible, and close to town/services
- Transportation as people age
- In home services - personal care, housecleaning, yardwork/snow removal, home repairs, etc.
- Legal services
- Mental Health Services
- Social connections
- Emergency/disaster planning
- Safety concerns

Who completed the project surveys:

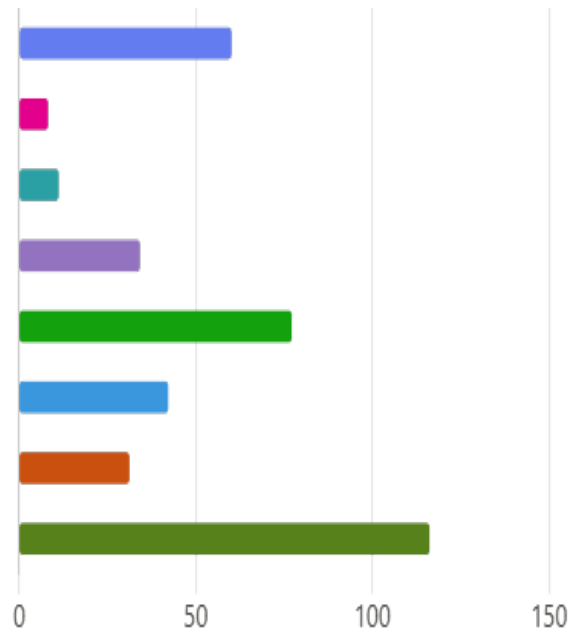
- Older Adult (aged 60 and up) 211
- Caregiver to an older adult (family member, friend, or neighbor) 78
- Older adult (aged 60 and up) caring for a family member's child/children under age 18) 36
- Provider/staff of services for older adults 58
- Concerned community member 88



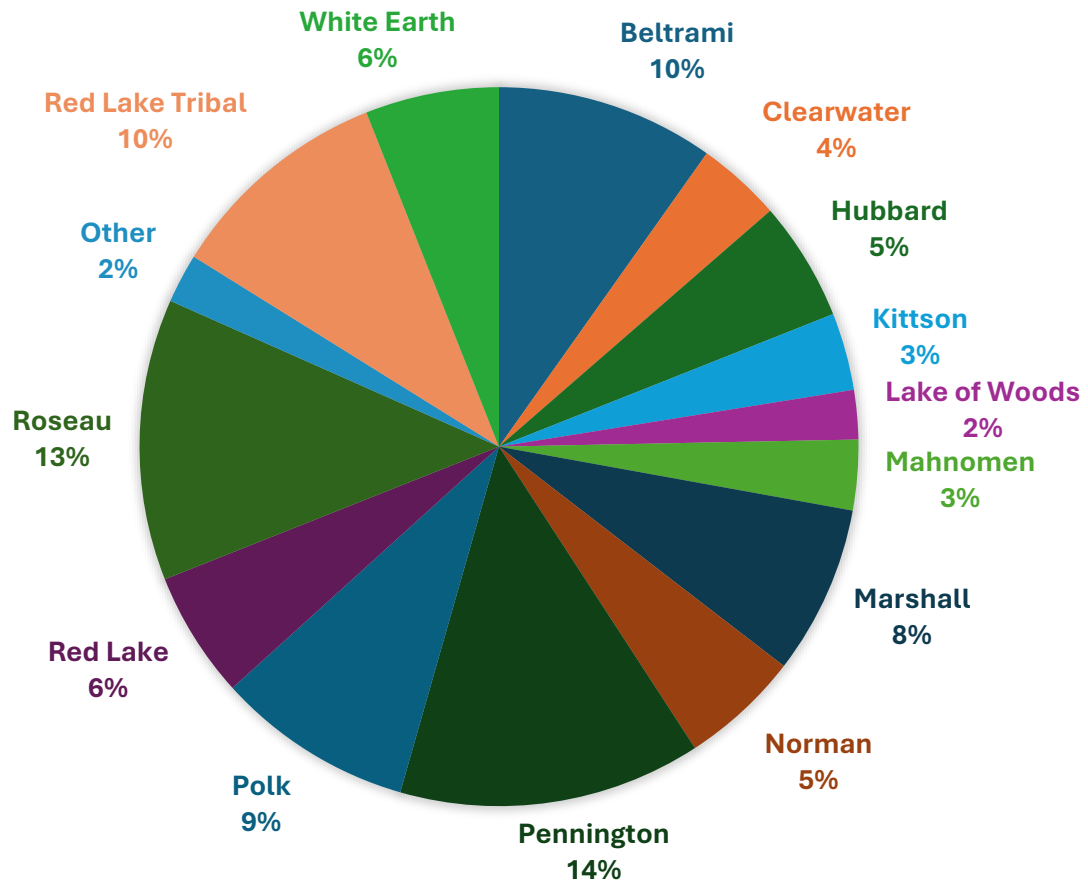
- Asian American 3
- Indigenous/American Indian or Alaskan Native 54
- White or Caucasian 244
- I prefer not to answer 13
- Other 3



- Veteran 60
- English is second language 8
- Identify as LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two Spirit) 11
- Living with a cognitive or emotional disability 34
- Living with a physical disability 77
- Monthly income is at or below \$1,305/month if single and living alone, or \$1,763/month if married and living with spouse. 42
- I prefer to not answer this question 31
- None of these apply 116

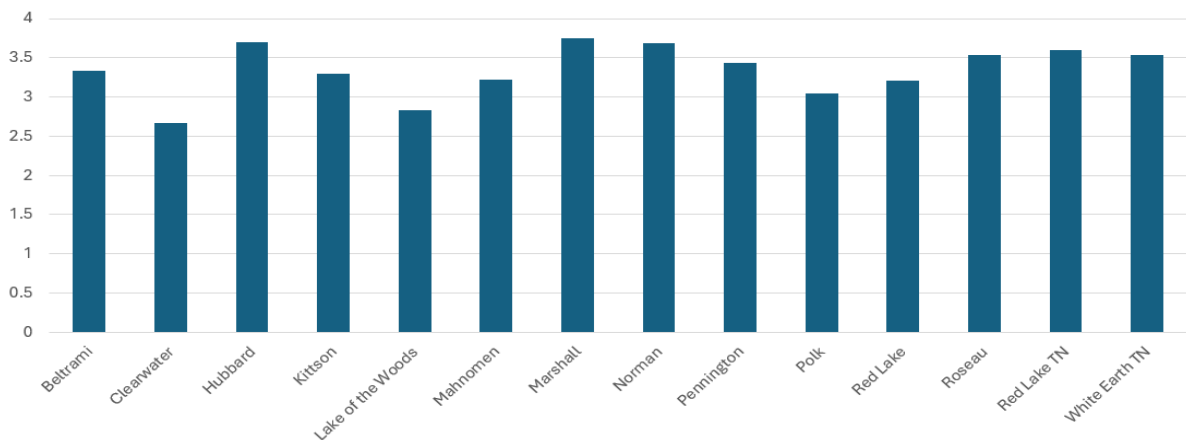


COUNTY OR TRIBAL NATION



How did survey respondents rate their community:

Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?”



Dancing Sky funding recommendations:

- **Housing**– that meets the communities’ needs across the lifespan.
 - Potential partners/grantees: RDCs, city/county, developers, Universities/colleges (housing studies), community action agencies, businesses (work force housing), Dancing Sky (technical assistance provider), health care providers (people gravitate to areas with healthcare).
- **Transportation** – many indicated that they drive themselves, but when they can no longer drive, they will have the need for other options. Preference seems to be friends and family to drive them as they are not sure about public transportation. Reimbursements to cover gas, repairs, etc. might be an incentive for friends and family to drive more.
 - Potential partners/grantees: Community Action Agencies (gas cards and repairs funding), county human services (gas cards) local car repair shops (provide needed repairs), incentives (scholarships, paid internships) to students/mechanics to come to rural areas to provide car repair services, transportation service providers.
- **Sidewalks and public building accessibility** – many communities need new sidewalks and/or repairs. Public building/business (pharmacy, grocery store, etc.) accessibility updates such as ramps, drive-throughs, reserved parking close to public buildings for older adults (not necessarily in need/want of handicap parking permit).
 - Potential partners/grantees: city, RDCs, businesses (accessibility & parking updates).
- **Home and Community Based Services** – yard work, home repairs, home health, etc. People also talked about the need for a place to find out about all these local resources.
 - Potential partners/grantees: service providers, incentives (scholarships, paid internships) to students/providers to come to rural areas to work for providers (CAN, PCA, nurses, etc.). Dancing Sky (technical assistance provider).
 - Place to find resources: County specific annual care guides – updated by providers and ads sold by area newspapers (benefits providers of services and local newspaper) Example:
https://issuu.com/dlnewspapers/docs/229891_bc_caregd_prf1
- **Affordable or free legal education** – 1:1 session for individuals/families on POA, wills, trusts, etc.

- Potential partners/grantees: Legal Services of NW MN, pro bono attorneys, law school students (partnership with colleges and universities). Dancing Sky (The File presentation).
- Mental health – privacy concerns in small town, not enough providers. Technology availability at various sites with privacy for telehealth. Education around telehealth and how it works.
 - Potential partners/grantees: incentives (scholarships, paid internships) to students/providers to come to rural areas to work in mental health field.
 - See Technology section below for telehealth.
- Technology – affordable internet access, devices, and technology classes. (telehealth options)
 - Potential partners/grantees: libraries, senior/community centers, health care providers (Sanford, Essentia, Altru), high schools/college/community colleges (after hours), community education, churches, Dancing Sky (scams presentations, technology classes, etc.)
- Social isolation – events/activities, places to gather, funding for building updates, supplies, staff/volunteers to lead activities, exercise classes.
 - Potential partners/grantees: Senior/community centers, libraries, community education, activity/exercise leaders (volunteer with stipend, staff), Dancing Sky (technical assistance provider)
- Emergency preparedness/safety – emergency notification systems (like Code Red https://www.co.red-lake.mn.us/index.asp?SEC=915808D4-CC1E-4FD8-987E-93096529BC98&DE=E380A383-75B7-45A7-9E2A-C9363220A71B&Type=B_BASIC , or Everbridge https://www.co.roseau.mn.us/news_detail_T28_R112.php) education on system, and incentives to enroll people. Personal safety education, including scams, theft. Community-based events that detail emergency preparedness and safety at individual level. First responder (EMS, Fire) volunteer incentives.
 - Potential partners/grantees: city/county emergency planners, notification system providers, EMS/Fire departments, local law enforcement. Dancing Sky (community/first responder educational events – emergency preparedness, Dementia education, scams).

County/Tribal specific themes/needs:

- **Beltrami County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.33

- Survey concerns/gaps: Sidewalks and public restrooms; housing; affordable services for yard work and home repair; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness concerns.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of staff, funding, insurance constraints, transportation, basic needs being met.
 - Focus Group concerns/gaps:
 - Housing; affordable, accessible, & closer to amenities.
 - Outdoor/public spaces: safety concerns over people asking for money.
 - Transportation: options are expensive and not always available.
 - Supportive and Health Services: grocery delivery, food shelf access (transportation), medical services (uninsured), pharmacy limited hours, and chore services are limited.
 - Community info/Technology: Need more technology classes.
 - Social Activities: no concerns noted.
 - Safety/Basic Needs: mutual concerns about community safety.
 - Emergency Preparedness: no designated shelter for area trailer parks and campgrounds.
- **Clearwater County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 2.67
 - Survey concerns/gaps: public restrooms; housing that is accessible and close to services/town; transportation options (evening & weekend); mental health services; affordable home care services; and health, wellness, & exercise classes; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness concerns.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of staff, funding, services for people who do not have insurance or programs to pay, reimbursement for services does not cover costs, transportation, lack of resources.
 - Focus Group concerns/gaps:
 - Housing: long waiting lists; lack of housing for all ages; accessible with care options; pets allowed, options to move into to free up housing stock for younger families; no memory/dementia care so need to move out of area; other family members moving in with older adults is not always ideal or safe; lack of socialization; workforce needed to build and maintain housing options.

- Outdoor/public spaces: sidewalks; drug activity in parks/safety; accessible parks and parking
- Transportation: options limited; need volunteer drivers; rides for medical only; medical emergency transportation (ambulance) limited; vehicle cost and maintenance; use of emergency vehicles for non-emergent cases; no dialysis in area - need redes; no return transit from ER; some providers not accepting MA due to low reimbursement; cost of liability to providers; criteria for drivers and providers difficult.
- Supportive and Health Services: Pharmacy; food access; people eligible for services but no services are available to meet needs or access LTC insurance benefits; lack of medical providers (dental, mental health, PT/OT, etc.); services in the home needed (homemaking, chore, respite); workforce issues; decreasing resources and funding.
- Community info/Technology: Lack of radio, newspaper, and digital literacy; centralized place to find community info/events is needed. Lack of privacy to access virtual health services.
- Social Activities: issue is transportation and parking to get to events.
- Safety/Basic Needs: drug activity/safety concerns; high suicide rate in county; small town inhibits people seeking help due to privacy; addiction treatment and prevention; mental health services.
- Emergency Preparedness: lack of hospital and clinic services; emergency response not set up for major/multiple events needing medical transport; snow emergencies often lead to multiple medical emergencies (shoveling heavy snow, car accidents); more training, equipment, & volunteers for emergency response (fire, EMTs, law enforcement, Dive Team, Search & Rescue).

- **Hubbard County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.7
- Survey concerns/gaps: Affordable services for yard work or home repairs and affordable home care services. Noticed for this group of surveys many “unsure” responses – indicates need for education on available services and health care in the area. Large number of safety and community challenges selected and emergency preparedness concerns.

- **Kittson County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.3
 - Survey concerns/gaps: Housing – affordable, accessible, and close to services; internet access and classes; mental health services; social connections; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness concerns.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of staff, funding, transportation.
 - Focus Group concerns/gaps:
 - Housing: affordable and accessible
 - Outdoor/public spaces: sidewalks; number of designated handicap parking spots; benches on bike paths.
 - Transportation: weekend and evening options
 - Supportive and Health Services: dental and pharmacy services; exercise classes
 - Community info/Technology: legal and technology education/classes; place to go for info.
 - Social Activities: wildfire smoke is limiting people; more gathering spots for socializing.
 - Safety/Basic Needs: driving after dark
 - Emergency Preparedness: lack of knowledge around emergency shelter location.
- **Lake of the Woods County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 2.83
 - Survey concerns/gaps: Housing; transportation (although survey takers referenced others who have issues finding it, not themselves, in the comments section); affordable home care services; affordable services for yard work and home repair; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of staff/agencies to refer to.
 - Focus Group concerns/gaps:
 - Housing: single level affordable homes that are accessible and close to town
 - Outdoor/public spaces: some stores are hard to access due to entry or ramp length
 - Transportation: public transit needs more time options and marketing; options for people with disabilities.

- Supportive and Health Services: food shelf access (transportation); dental, vision and audiologist providers; PCA and chore services; operational funds needed to hire staff.
 - Community info/Technology: technology classes
 - Social Activities: need more options for older adults.
 - Safety/Basic Needs: no grocery delivery; mental health services; support services for those living with disability.
 - Emergency preparedness: no concerns shared.
- **Mahnomen County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.22
 - Survey concerns/gaps: Affordable housing; housing that meets the needs of older adults; transportation issue was the cost of maintenance to have a vehicle; mental health services; home care services and affordability of them. Many safety and community challenges selected.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of resources.
- **Marshall County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.75
 - Survey concerns/gaps: Sidewalks; public restrooms; reliant on others for transportation; mental health services; affordable home care services; legal assistance; home repairs and maintenance; emergency preparedness.
 - Service Provider Challenges: social isolation and funding.
- **Norman County**
 - Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.69
 - Survey concerns/gaps: Sidewalks; handicapped parking; Housing - affordable, meets the needs of older adults and close to services; transportation to medical appointments; mental health services; food shelf; affordable services for yard work and home repairs. Challenge – Chronic medical conditions. Concern about emergency preparedness and lack of communication.
 - Service Provider Challenges: lack of county staff, funding, transportation, lack of senior center/meal site, respite options, supportive service options.
 - Focus Group concerns/gaps:

- Housing: wait lists; current apartments need update/repairs; options for ALL ages/needs; single level, accessible, affordable units needed; housing for workforce needs.
- Outdoor/Public spaces: sidewalks; lack of greenspace in town; public parking that is handicap accessible; Post office, Hardware Store, Beauty Shop, Newspaper building, & Drug store – all have accessibility concerns.
- Transportation: few options that are not accessible or affordable, return transportation after ER or surgery.
- Supportive and Health Services: large service gaps - homecare, home health, mental health, homemaking, chore (yard and snow removal), home delivered meal volunteers, errand service; exercise facilities.
- Community info/Technology: Technology classes needed.
- Social Activities: Grove kitchen café close – no coffee/lunch groups
- Safety/Basic Needs: no police – contract with Sheriff’s Dept but not 24/7 service; highway safety through town; drugs/opioids; food access (food shelf very busy).
- Emergency Preparedness: shared ambulances across counties; Fire and Rescue Squad in dire need of volunteers; tornado siren not heard indoors in many locations in town; no emergency notification systems.

- **Pennington County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.44
- Survey concerns/gaps: Sidewalks, Housing -affordable and meets the needs of older adults; unsure of transportation options that are not during the day; unsure of resources that are available for affordable home care services, home repairs and yard work; class on internet training; emergency preparedness concerns. Parking lot at Food Shelf in need of repair due to falls.

- **Polk County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” 3.04
- Survey concerns/gaps: Public restrooms including accessibility; Housing - affordable, meets the needs of older adults and close to services; weekend transportation; affordable home care, yard and home repairs services; would

like to use the internet but no device or internet; Sometimes have to go without-transportation, social interaction, legal assistance and, home and yard maintenance; feeling unsafe due to physical environment; emergency preparedness.

- Service Provider Challenges: lack of placement options, lack of activities for those with major mobility or mental health concerns, funding, staff, transportation, veterans' services.

- **Red Lake County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.21
- Survey concerns/gaps: Transportation – most drive self, but general concerns about older adults getting around in their community; hospital; mental health (many not sure); affordable home care (not sure/poor); affordable yard work or home repairs (not sure/poor); internet access and classes; some safety concerns; community challenges - chronic medical conditions, financial barriers, etc.; emergency preparedness concerns.

- **Roseau County**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.54
- Survey concerns/gaps: Affordable & accessible housing; transportation to meet FUTURE needs; many not sure or agree that lack of transportation makes it harder to get to places or makes them feel more isolated; transportation listed as huge problem in comments section for those that cannot drive self; mental health (not sure/poor); affordable home care (not sure/poor); affordable yard or home repair (not sure/poor); internet access & technology classes; many community challenges selected; emergency preparedness.
- Service Provider Challenges lack of funding, transportation, housing, lack of supportive services, qualified staff.

- **Red Lake Tribal Nation**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.6
- Survey concerns/gaps: Public restrooms; housing – affordable & accessible; transportation makes it harder to get around & adds to isolation (many not sure/agree/strongly agree); affordable yard work and home repairs; internet access, devices, and technology classes; people going without basic needs

and health care services; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness.

- Service Provider Challenges: lack of funding, transportation, lack of chronic conditions management.

- **White Earth Tribal Nation**

- Survey rating on 1-5 scale for “how would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?” Average 3.53
- Survey concerns/gaps: sidewalks; affordable housing; transportation for future needs; grocery stores; affordable lawn care or home repairs; internet access, devices, and technology classes; people going without basic needs and health care services; financial and other barriers to getting help; large number of safety and community challenges selected; emergency preparedness concerns.
- Service Provider Challenges: lack of funding