



In the summer of 2004, Youth Professionals and Regional Extension Educators in Community Youth Development were asked to write case studies about community efforts to coordinate out-of-school time programs. They examined how the coordination occurred and how it impacted availability of programs for young people. They also captured the lessons from the coordination efforts that could help other Minnesota communities work together to increase programs and opportunities for youth.

This is one in a series of ten reports.

About The Community

The PACT4 Family Service Collaborative area covers Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville, and Yellow Medicine counties. Populations in Renville and Yellow Medicine are declining, having reached their reported peaks in 1940. Meeker and Kandiyohi counties are increasing in population.

The four-county area includes the Upper Sioux Indian Community near Granite Falls, and Willmar, which has increasing Latino and Somali populations.

There are thirteen school districts, one charter school, and six private schools serving approximately 50 communities ranging in size from under 100 people to a community with a population of 18,300.

PACT4 extends from the South Dakota border on the west to within fifty-five miles of downtown Minneapolis on the east. It is sixty-five miles from Regal in northern Kandiyohi County to Fort Ridgely in southern Renville County.

What's Happening in Out-of-School Programming?

Out-of-school activities would happen with or without the PACT4 Families Service Collaborative. But the collaborative process has created a gentle evolutionary

DATA FROM THE CENSUS

Population:

Kandiyohi County: 41,203
 (Willmar: Pop. 18,351)

Meeker County: 22,644
 (Litchfield: Pop. 6,562)

Renville County: 17,154
 (Olivia: Pop. 2,570)

Yellow Medicine County: 11,080
 (Granite Falls: Pop. 3,070)

Total Co. Pop. 92,081

Minority Populations:

Kandiyohi	3991	9.7%
Meeker	737	3.3%
Renville	1069	6.2%
Yellow Medicine	511	4.6%

For various reasons, minority populations are higher than reported in the census. According to the Willmar School District census, 29% of the student population is minority.

Other schools in the PACT4 Families area with high minority populations include:

Buffalo Lake-Hector	12%
Yellow Medicine East	13%
BOLD	16%
Renville West	21%

environment where funding comes to organizations that learn to talk and work together. When it comes to out-of-school programming, not only must agencies meet

grant requirements and follow best practices, they must also show that they are looking with other program providers for “efficiencies in programming”. Attendance at PACT4 after-school committee meetings is a minimum requirement.

PACT4 Family Service Collaborative is made up of nearly 100 cooperating partners working to develop a broad system of care for children and families. Attention to what happens to youth in the out-of-school hours is one small part of their approach to care.

While several agencies and organizations in Willmar have degrees of coordination responsibility, PACT4 stands out for its ability to draw partners from a wide geographic area, for its ability to pull in large grants, and for the way they use their partnerships and grant dollars to help communities focus on key issues. Other coordinating agencies and organizations, including Community Education and the YMCA, are part of PACT4 and representatives of PACT4 often serve on boards and committees of the other organizations. But it is to PACT4 that agencies apply for money (not the other way around) and it is through those grants and a long-term collaborative process that PACT4 is able to influence the direction of programming, including encouragement of best practices in out-of school time programming. Several of the previously mentioned programs receive funding or other assistance from PACT4.

About The Coordination Effort

Mission/Goals:

PACT4 is a unique organization developed to fill gaps in services and reduce duplication. Members include county social service, public health, and corrections agencies; school districts; mental health providers; and other child-serving agencies

from across the four county area. PACT4 and its partners are dedicated to changing systems to be more prevention focused and family friendly. It builds a network of connecting links for kids and addresses key issues. PACT4 has the critical mass needed to build systems of care otherwise impossible in low-population areas.

PACT4 Value Statements:

- Our shared vision will be strengths based and outcome driven.
- All children and families are valued and treated with respect.
- Parents will always have a voice, will be listened to, encouraged, and empowered.
- The system of care will accept and support the uniqueness of every family.
- Trust will be continually developed and nurtured.

The PACT 4 Family Service Collaborative has the vision of healthy and safe communities where individuals, families, and children care and support each other. The use of grants is one way PACT4 has influenced the direction of youth programming in the area. In August 2004, PACT4 announced the availability of \$400,000 in grants for After-School Enrichment projects (for before-school, after-school, and summer programming). All Collaborative members have the opportunity to apply for this funding. Emphasis is on providing opportunities for children in as many locations as possible. Funded programs will focus on the following three goals: 1) Provide supervised, positive experiences for youth. 2) To promote “best practices” for all projects funded through the After-School Enrichment grant. Representatives from all projects funded will be required to attend an annual seminar to review after-school “best practices” and reporting requirements. 3) To engage at risk children from diverse social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in before-school, after-school, and summer activities.

Leadership:

The collaborative has a director and a paid staff of approximately 30 full-time employees working across the four-county area. Leadership comes from an eleven member elected executive committee composed of parents and key partners.

Membership:

Partners include parents, school, community education, mental health clinics, community corrections, human services, public health, law enforcement, county government, and others from each of the four counties.

Non-participants:

While Youth for Christ is an active participant, other religious organizations either rarely participate or participate sporadically as do the Association of Business and Professional Women and the local theater. Independent youth sports clubs, Scouts, and many other groups may participate but have not found a way to be involved at this time.

Structure:

Monthly meetings tend to draw 50-100 people and are rotated among the four member counties. Keeping in the spirit of collaboration, they are open to employees of member organizations, parents (typically 6-8), and interested guests. Standing committees often meet prior to the full collaborative's noon meeting. They include early childhood, community evaluation, family and children's mental health, back to school, and truancy and after-school.

Cost:

PACT4 is a conduit for a smorgasbord of funding for smorgasbord of projects:

- **Local Collaborative Time Study (LCTS)** dollars come from the federal government via the state and are to be used for programs directed at children and youth in danger of out-of-home

placement.

- **Federal grant dollars and state grant dollars** come for specific projects. After-school programming is a good example.
- **Funding to counties from the state** can be earmarked for family service collaboratives.
- **Member fees** are paid based on a formula agreed upon by the member organizations.

In addition to financial costs it was noted that there are increased efficiencies at one level (program delivery) and decreased efficiencies at another (more time involved in developing and delivering programs). PACT4 members feel, however, that the balance is in favor of efficiency and improved services.

The impetus for coordination:

During the 1990s financial incentives were made available to encourage collaborations of this type. As noted earlier, many of the schools, agencies, government leaders, and organizations had been meeting and working together in various ways for many years. These early efforts paved the way for greater forms of collaboration later.

What else has happened in the community to impact availability?

The unallotment of state funds in 2002 caused a number of out-of-school programs to be cut, including programs supported by PACT4. Since then, PACT4 partners have worked together to restart some programs though on a smaller scale.

An issue in any rural area is transportation. Each county has or is part of a transit program. (Yellow Medicine's program covers five counties on the far western edge of the state.) While all report extensive use by youth for summer and after-school activities, none of the transit programs run beyond 6:00 p.m., or on weekends. A typical one-way fee for a ride outside city limits is \$2.00. The cost for

riding home from practice each evening for two months would be about \$80, and double that during summer months when a round trip is necessary.

What could stimulate more local action?

- Money talks and allows the collaborative to move its members forward on important work. No grants equals no progress.
- Transportation to out-of-school programs from throughout the area.

Implications for other communities:

Money may talk, but the presence of money before a collaborative is in place can hinder the process. There needs to be money to bring the partners together and to facilitate discussion, but money alone can't make collaboration happen. Here are suggestions based on what helped PACT4:

- **Go slow to go fast.** Investing early in facilitation will pay dividends later with increased efficiency and less duplication of services. PACT4 Families Collaborative, with its partners, has worked hard throughout its history to create a truly collaborative process.
- **"I'll see it when I believe it."** PACT4 members have evolved. There is greater sharing of authority and responsibility with give and take among agencies that were formerly in competition with one another for funding and clients. For this to happen elsewhere, potential collaborators must believe it long before they see it.
- **Build a trusting environment.** Potential partners need to give and take responsibilities. Competition has to go. Cooperation isn't enough. Partners need to believe in each other and in their political support.
- **Build collaboration, not another level of government.** PACT4 strives to promote opportunities for members to talk about needs and solutions, not to create a hierarchy. In the early stages of PACT4's development, it was

common to get multiple proposals from the same small community and several of them from different people in the same agency who had clearly not seen the other proposals. The habit now is for people within organizations and from across agency lines to plan together before submitting proposals. They may still submit multiple proposals but they look different due to the collaborative process. Collaboration allows for efficiencies in staffing, transportation, and facilities. Schedules can be coordinated to better meet the needs of families and youth. True collaboration also allows partners to leverage additional funds from foundations and other outside sources.

- **Kids belong to families and to communities, not to agencies.** In the early stages of PACT4, members talked about the needs of "my clients" and "my kids". At some point members began talking about clients and kids collectively with an eye toward the benefit of the greater community.

These counties had the benefit of visionary leadership that allowed the collaborative to evolve from competition to cooperation to coordination and, finally, collaboration. They had a history of agencies coming together for various reasons. PACT4 formalized the arrangement. One theory is that it works because the three small counties provide checks and balances for the one large county, and visa versa. Individuals were more concerned in the collaborative than in their own interests. It was a slow, laborious process but there was a commitment to move forward and a recognition that all key voices should be represented when important decisions were made.

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Sources: PACT4; U.S.Census Bureau; Rick Loseth