



MISF 3.0 – charting the future through engagement

DRAFT

The Minnesota Independent School Forum (MISF) has served independent and private schools in Minnesota since 1976. In 2010, MISF undertook a significant and transformational change to a member service model. MISF expanded its footprint to serve and represent all private/independent K-12 schools focused on advocacy and advancement.

During this transitional period, membership in MISF increased from 29 high schools to 163 K-12 schools across Minnesota.

MISF now provides direct support and resources to member schools through professional development in 4 key areas (development, admissions/marketing, technology and leadership), advocacy and a multifaceted robust STEM education program. We are a trusted and respected member of the educational community and have developed strong relationships with advocates, professionals and Department of Education staff.

The following areas are key levers that MISF must enhance, develop and initiate to further ensure our place in the educational landscape.

Collaboration – We know that we aren’t doing this work by ourselves; we are lucky to have formal and informal collaborators.

During the past several years, a greater focus on collaboration in the nonprofit sector has been emphasized by the philanthropic community, knowing that a single organization is unable to solve the greatest challenges.

- **Strategic partnerships** – further building strategic partnerships in the education sector increases MISF’s profile while increasing the knowledge and relevance of the nonpublic sector. In addition, MISF can leverage its engagement and relationships to further draw partnerships in the educational business sector who serve and work to build relationships thus benefiting our member schools.
 - Current partnerships identified and engaged include: Opportunity for All Kids (OAK), Minnesota Catholic Conference, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Center of the American Experiment, Better Ed, Association of Christian Schools International, Christian Schools International, Minnesota Nonpublic School Accreditation Association (MNSAA),

Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) (newly formed, and which replaces the Archdiocese's Office of Catholic Schools), GHR Foundation, Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, Aim Higher Foundation, Catholic Community Foundation, Minnesota Comeback, the WEM (Cargill) Foundation

☞ A way in which we might work with CSCOE would be to share data with them – making sure that we aren't duplicating the work, but working in partnership.

Public Voice

Advocacy is at the heart of MISF's mission. Increasing the voice of our sector can be aided by the following initiatives.

- **Repository of data** - becoming the "repository of data" for nonpublic schools will further enhance our public voice and inform the public regarding the integral position of private/independent schools in the educational landscape. SCOPE and detailed member survey data are two primary vehicles.
- **District of record** – there are 460 nonpublic schools in Minnesota. We are the "gateway and pathway" to connect schools and companies/vendors in education. By utilizing MISF as the "district of record" for the private/independent sector, we will further engagement with potential partners. Our current relationship with Science House is a prime example of this type of structure. Researching common partnerships our member schools utilize may direct and inform partner prospects for the future.

Structure/engagement (Looking at "how we look.")

MISF must align our working environment and responsibilities around a core value of engagement.

- **External relationships** – external engagement is the key to MISF. Our external relationships include member and prospective schools, funding, educational and advocacy partners. We must model a similar term from the philanthropic world as "donor centric." Our external engagement must include staff, board and volunteers to ensure maximum reach. We also must determine an avenue and financial ability to acquire individual donors to our mission, i.e., direct mail program.
- **Internal** – focus on best business practice and efficiency is necessary to ensure the highest level of stewardship of our resources. Further focusing resources in our core areas is necessary to indicate impact and member value to schools and funders.

Business model

MISF has endured a significant organizational shift since 2010, which has strained resources. The need to align the operations and resources are necessary to ensure sustainability and impact of MISF. A large portion of the MISF budget is reliant upon philanthropy and sponsorships, which tend to be highly variable and can be unreliable.

- **2015-16 budget and revenue and expenses**
 - Total budget = \$838,800
 - Sources of revenue (75% of our revenue sources are highly variable.)
 - Membership \$148,500 (17.7%)
 - General philanthropy/sponsorship \$372,000 (44.3%)

- Program revenue \$41,200 (5.0%)
- Restricted funds/philanthropy \$271,000 (32.3%)
- Misc. income \$6,100 (0.7%)
- Expenses
 - Direct employee expenses \$429,214 (51.9%)
 - Grants \$121,500 (14.7%) (STEM grants distributed to schools.)
 - Consultants (STEM, etc.) \$125,650 (15.2%)
 - Misc. \$149,234 (18.2%)
- **Revenue per student/membership (FY13-15)**
 - 3.35/3.83/3.86

Next STEM?

STEM is the flagship program for MISF and has allowed us to engage with the business, nonprofit and educational community around this common and burgeoning platform. To further incent schools into membership and external partners, MISF must look toward a program – of common platform to our schools – that can continue to increase our profile with schools and partners.

Brainstorming: entrepreneurship, financial literacy, arts, leadership, early childhood

Leadership (How do we carry forward?)

Developing and providing leadership opportunities will assist in raising the sector’s capacity for sustainability. While there are many leadership programs available, a clear focus on leadership of independent/private schools is varied. In addition, local options are not prevalent to meet the needs of our schools’ budgets and models.

Challenges

- Specific outcomes (which are trackable/reportable) – MISF related vs. schools outcomes – securing funding
- Realistic expectation of members after 5 years of new model, and MISF resources
- MAIS – lack of one common voice (look at how we create communication)
- Over restricted in our funding model (STEM)
- ~~Remaining relevant to the HS cohort~~ (how do we continue to benefit them?)
- Change the dialogue from “what do schools get” to “what are they are part of”
- Must be seen as a professional organization and “player” in the educational field
- Catholic School Center of Excellence (CSCOE)