

Impact of UMRA's Professional Development Grants for Retirees Program

UMRA's PDGR program has been giving small Professional Development Grants to Retirees for over a decade. Since 2009, the program has made over 130 grants for projects ranging from researching 15th century trade routes to documenting the life of Josie Johnson, a prominent local civil rights leader. This report looks at the impact of these grants on society, academia, and the retirees who received them.

Grant recipients from 2014-2019 were contacted in June 2020 and asked about their award. Responses were received from 38 of the 49 people contacted, an excellent 78% response rate. Appendix 1 lists the people who responded to survey. Appendix 2 presents the survey instrument and response distributions.

The output from the PDGR grants has been considerable. So far, the program has helped recipients generate nine books, 48 journal articles and an untold number of public and professional presentations. A mix of videos, websites, public exhibits, software, and educational material was also produced or updated with PDGR funding.

These projects were personally rewarding to the recipients, with 87% saying their projects gave them major or exceptional personal satisfaction (see table below). Nearly all (92%) said their projects added to their professional knowledge. Almost three-quarters (71%) said they grew their professional network. Sudderth's experience is a prime example; his professional presentation on game theory led to an invitation to visit a European university where he met and began a collaboration with two professors there.

Beyond personal satisfaction, the projects brought many of the award recipients exceptional recognition. Two (Asher and Romano) subsequently were named Fulbright Scholars. Prell recently received the Lee Max Friedman Medal from the American Jewish Historical Society, a national award given biannually. Others have received awards from their peers, requests for keynote presentations, and offers to organize sessions or write (or edit) a book on topics originally supported with a PDGR grant.

Besides benefiting the scholars themselves, the projects benefited both academia and society at large (See table and graph below). Some 82% said the product of their award had at least a moderate impact on the reputation of the university or their home department. And 42% percent said that impact was major or exceptional. The impact on their discipline was even greater: 87% moderate or higher, 53% major or exceptional.

These projects were impactful beyond academia. A third of respondents said that society strongly benefited from their projects, and another third said that benefited moderately. Over half (57%) said that individual people benefitted strongly. Examples of some of these projects will listed later in this report.

Other people involved in PDGR projects have benefitted as well – from people interviewed to student colleagues and workers. The women whom Vecoli interviewed about their organizational efforts were

moved as they reflected on their early careers, coming to better realize the significance of their work. Tarone watched her student associate grow as they presented a paper and published it in the *Modern Language Journal*; he has now published his master's thesis in another journal and been accepted into the Second Language Education program at the University. Ravdin mentored eight URS (Undergraduate Research Scholarship) students and saw significant growth in all of them – current students blossoming in their undergraduate careers, former students heading off to graduate and medical school programs.

The PDGR program itself is seen in a very positive light by award winners. These are retirees with active minds who did not want to step away from intellectual work. For some, it was a chance to keep working on a topic that had been central to their university work. For others, it was a chance to start on something fresh. Enhancing their professional reputation was not an issue because it was already well established. They used the PDGR grant to help stay engaged. Respondents said:

- “This grant has helped keep me intellectually active during my retirement and I am very grateful for it.” (Bouchard)
- “... the award also made my transition from an active faculty member a smoother and less traumatic experience.” (Overmier)
- “It enabled me to begin a successful post-retirement trajectory of scholarship.” (W. Phillips) Note that Phillips goes on to list 2 books, 6 articles, multiple conference presentations made since he retired in 2013.
- “UMRA funds certainly helped to support my continuing professional activities. The funds are valuable source of financial support and they encourage retired faculty to maintain scholarly activities. The activities not only benefit the faculty member, but also the UM.” (Romano)

PDGR Projects Supported, 2014-2019

This section provides examples and an overview of projects supported during the 2014-2019 time period. A complete list of PDGR supported projects is on the UMRA website under [Grants for Retirees](#). This survey focused on the impact these projects have had since completion.

Some projects focused on **racial equity** issues and proved to be timely given the 2020 killing of George Floyd, a black man, and the civil unrest that followed. University and civil rights leader Josie Johnson received a PDGR grant to help write and publish her memoir *Hope in the Struggle*. Prell had documented University of Minnesota racist policies in her [Campus Divided](#) exhibit. A PDGR grant helped her enhance the web-version of that exhibit. Both resources were consulted during the chaotic period following Floyd's death – Johnson was interviewed by the local press and Prell's website received many hits, especially about a 1942 student protest about segregated housing on campus. Fennelly's online anti-bias course, [Understanding Immigration](#), was taken by the entire Bedford New York Police Department where an officer had killed an undocumented Guatemalan; that officer was tried and convicted of second degree manslaughter.

Some projects focused on **health issues**, another relevant topic as the world tries to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Two grant recipients worked on projects to develop and implement statistical tools that help better understand and treat individual maladies. Ravdin worked on using biostatistical data to develop approaches that lead to better outcomes for younger AIDS patients. Gierke developed a

software package that analyzes circadian rhythms in the rapidly growing field of chronomics; that package has been used across the US and four other continents.

Other aspects of the **human condition** were addressed in other PDGR projects. Anderson dug deeply into the issue of human suffering, producing four books and a continuing run of academic presentations on suffering and quality of life. Bouchard analyzed a variety of psychological measures and found support for the growing EDP-theory on the structure of personality and how different individuals respond to different features of the environment. This work has gotten him numerous speaking requests, an honorary degree, and the Dunnette Prize for research on causation from the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology. Romano used the PDGR grant to extend his scholarship around prevention science into retirement – which now include recent Fulbright award and an article reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic in the *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*.

Education and learning issues were a strong theme of PDGR projects. Keynes looked at ways to bring more females into the University's UMTYMP (University of Minnesota Talented Youth Mathematics Program) program developing advanced math skills in Minnesota's secondary school students. His work led to our School of Mathematics receiving the 2018 Award for an Exemplary Program from the American Mathematical Society because of its success in attracting and retaining female students. Tarone conducted research on a new theorized approach for people working to acquire a second language by accounting for learner social identity; her work was published in a special issue of the *Modern Language Journal*, the only non-theoretical paper in that issue. Cooke used her funding to help professionals supporting families with young children. She and her colleagues developed a series of high-quality videos showing parent-child interaction, which the professionals can then use to discuss with parents. Videos includes a wide range of races, cultures, and languages. Consultation with the University's Center for Technology Commercialization led to a new company now being created to promote and disseminate the videos.

Documenting the significant contributions of **individual people** was the focus a number of PDGR projects. Savage focused on Frances Andrews, a woman who quietly contributed to successes of Planned Parenthood and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area; her biography is now posted on the Minnesota Historical Society's [MNopedia](#) website. Zipes forthcoming book, *The Folk and Fairy Tales of Charles Godfrey Leland, the Forgotten Folklorist*, in his attempt to re-introduce this 19th Century author to American and English publics. Miller focused on a group of early American Indian women writers, showing they were the "founding mothers" of the canon of Native American literature, a fact formerly underappreciated and unrepresented in the classroom and curriculum.

Some projects looked to develop **archival material** for future research and scholarship. O'Brien interviewed 65 women who served in Minnesota local government, 1970-2000; transcriptions have been archived at the MN History Center. Rinehart reviewed and summarized historic documents on campus religious organizations and their interactions with the University, noting that those organizations provided most of today's standard student services until the 1940s. His report and materials have been submitted to the University Archives. Vecoli is collecting an oral history of women who founded and operated early lesbian organizations in Minnesota. These are being placed in the Tretter Collection in the University Library's Archives and Special Collections; she hopes a documentary video will follow.

Other projects delved into **early modern history**, documenting international travel and trade activities in early times. Asher discovered evidence of trade across the Indian Ocean prior to 1500 that the limited written texts had been unable to support. His PDGR-funded work led to a Fulbright award, a journal article (in review) and the beginnings of a book. Eicher, looking at dress and textiles of the Kalabari people in Nigeria found evidence of early global trade, demolishing ideas that Africa was a dark continent; her book will be published in 2022. W. Phillips documented foreign travelers' views of slavery of 15th and 16th century Iberia, now part of a book on significant encounters between the old and new worlds.

Several other projects addressed critical **environmental issues**. Brezonik discovered new ways of determining water quality in lakes through remote sensing, then assembled a team of scholars from disciplines across campus to address related issues. A related project engages citizens to update water quality information using their cell phones. At the other end of the world, C.R. Phillips' analysis of Spanish fishing records off the coast from 14th to 16th centuries shows that tight control of fishing rights by the dukes of Medina Sidonia kept the tuna population at stable levels, even during periods of high demand, a finding that has implications for today's environment.

Fairhurst began developing videos on mining to deliver an online lecture to the International Society for Rock Mechanics. His current PDGR grant will develop 2-3 shorter videos on the critical importance of mining to the US economy and national security. They will focus on government decision-makers, the general public, and middle-school students.

Art was produced and displayed by several of the award recipients. Potratz created new sculptures, which have been displayed in 21 exhibitions around the world – and which provided additional material for his new book on casting metal for sculptures. Angell created a dance film based on translations of journals written by her mother, a refugee from Nazi Germany. The film has been shown at multiple locations around the country and Europe, including Schwedt, Germany where her mother grew up. Allen's exploration of archives in Taiwan uncovered middle-school graduation yearbooks that show how the photographs both promoted and challenged Japanese colonial policy. Besides a journal article on the topic, it is expected that the original photos will be on display at the inaugural exhibit at the new Center for Photography in Taiwan.

Old and new **textiles** have been the thrust of several PDGR grants. Eicher's collection of African textiles was documented in an online portfolio. In 2020, her book of text and 80 color photographs is forthcoming from the Indiana University Press, the premier publisher of African cultural books. D.C. Johnson's interest in the handcrafted textiles of India became a hot topic with his paper on British Queen Alexandra's 1902 coronation gown – made of cloth from India. That paper has been consulted over 1,400 times.

At the more technical level, several PDGR grants have supported the development of **statistical techniques**. Kvålseth's conference paper on summarizing large amounts of data with a single number, evolved into an article in the journal *Entropy* and an invitation to edit a collection of papers around the theme of his paper. Sudderth's work on game theory has received a series of travel grants from PRGR to present results to international audiences. Connections made at the first conference led to subsequent collaborations. One journal article has been published, two are in-press, and one has submitted for review.

How the grant program works

PDGR grants are intended to support retirees pursuing projects related to their research, instructional, or other work history or new scholarly and/or creative interests and that contribute to the educational, scholarly, and academic reputation of the University.

Each fall a call for proposals is issued. Retired faculty or staff from any of the five campuses are eligible to apply. Proposals are due mid-December, after which they are reviewed by the UMRA Grants Committee. Awards are announced in March. Funding becomes available April 1. On average, 10 awards are given per year, though that number can vary greatly depending on available funds and the quality of the proposals.

PDGR grants can cover travel and per diem costs related to research trips and conference attendance, stipends for research assistants, and scholarship-related expenses like transcription and software. Ineligible expenses include salary for the applicant and institutional overhead charges.

The 2014-2019 grants were spent in all three areas. Two-thirds of the projects involved travel. One third used their funds to hire graduate or undergraduate student research assistants. Just over half used their grant to cover other expenses.

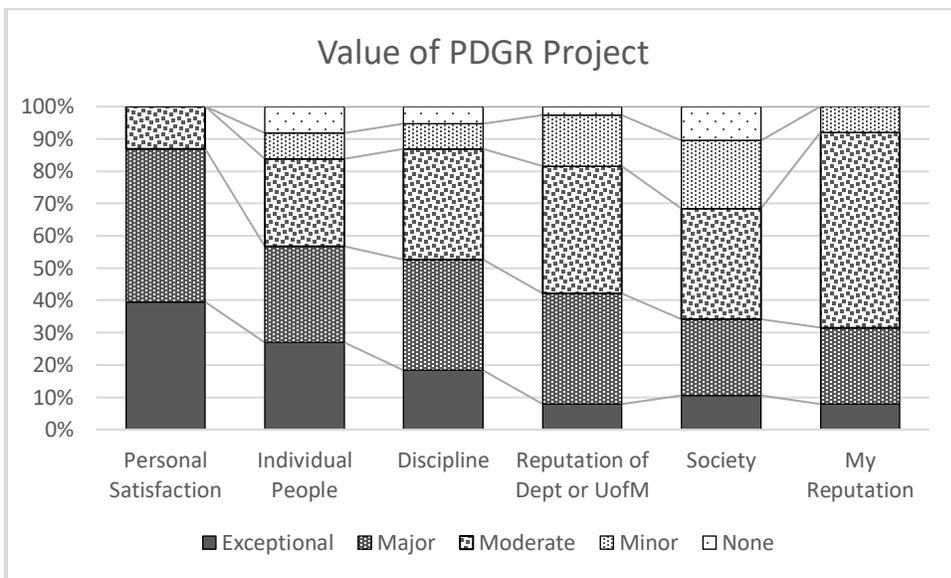
Funds must be spent in a single year. For longer projects or new projects, a new grant application is required. Of the 49 people surveyed, nine had 2-3 grants, with most multiple grants covering extensions of the original project. Multiple-grant people were restricted to a single survey response.

For most projects (71%), PDGR was the only source of funding. For others, multiple sources were tapped, with over half of those project leaders say the PDGR grant helped them leverage those additional funds. Brezonik received additional funding, approximately \$680 thousand, from NSF (National Science Foundation) and LCCMR (Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources). He says, "I am convinced that none of these grants would have been obtained without the seed funding the PDGR provided."

Perceived value of completed PDGR projects by 2014-2019 Awardees

Value Domain	None	Minor	Moderate	Major	Exceptional	TOTAL
Personal satisfaction	0 0%	0 0%	5 13%	18 47%	15 39%	38 100%
Professional reputation	0 0%	3 8%	23 61%	9 24%	3 8%	38 100%
Reputation of dept or UofM	1 3%	6 16%	15 39%	13 34%	3 8%	38 100%
Discipline	2 5%	3 8%	13 34%	13 34%	7 18%	38 100%
Society; e.g. Minnesota	4 11%	8 21%	13 34%	9 24%	4 11%	38 100%
Individual people	3 8%	3 8%	10 27%	11 30%	10 27%	37 100%

Value Domains Sorted by Impact Level High/Exceptional



Appendix 1:

PDGR Grantees Responding to June 2020 Impact Survey¹

(includes date and title of award-winning project)

F. R. P. Akehurst, Emeritus Professor of French

- 2013 To List the current locations of the manuscripts of the Conseil à un ami of Pierre de Fontaines (13 c)
- 2016 Construction of a Stemma of the Manuscripts of an Important 13th-Century Legal Text, The Conseil of Pierre de Fontaines

Joseph R. Allen, Emeritus Professor of Asian Languages and Literatures

- 2019 Labeling the City: Public Signage in Taipei City, Taiwan and a New Civic Consciousness Parent

Ronald E Anderson, Emeritus Professor of Sociology

- 2009 Comparative Social Well-Being during Financial Crisis
- 2013 Individual and World Suffering
- 2014 A Handbook on World Suffering
- 2015 Completing a Book on the Topic of Suffering Relief

Ferolyn Angell, Emeritus Lecturer in Dance – Morris

- 2011 Translate Mother's Journals as Historical References for a Theatrical Work
- 2016 Production of a Theatrical Dance Film of Family During the Nazi Reign in German

Frederick Asher, Professor Emeritus, Art History

- 2017 India and the World: The Visual Culture of Indian Ocean Trade to 1500

Thomas J. Bouchard, Jr, Emeritus Professor of Psychology

- 2014 Personality "Writ Large"

Patrick Brezonik, Professor Emeritus, Civil, Environmental, and Geo- Engineering

- 2011 Controls on Mercury Bioavailability and Cycling in the Environment by Natural Organic Matter (NOM) and Aquatic Humic Substances (AHS)
- 2015 Use of Optical Remote Sensing to Estimate Total Dissolved Organic Matter (DOM) in Lakes: Effects of Iron & Spatial Variability in Chemical Characteristics of DOM

Steven M. Colman, Emeritus Professor of Geological Science and Director of the Large Lakes Observatory – Duluth

- 2015 Glacial and Post-Glacial Sediments Below Central Lake Superior

Betty Cooke, Retired Lecturer, Family Social Science

- 2017 Parent-Child Interaction Video Update: The Reflective Dialogue Parent Education Design
- 2018 Parent-Child Interaction Video Production: Updating The Reflective Dialogue Parent Education Design. The Reflective Dialogue Parent Education Design (RDPED)

Randall Croce, Video Producer, Retired, Labor Education Services

¹ Note: Job titles and department/unit names were taken from the survey responses and from award notices on the UMRA website of [Past PDGR Awards](#).

2019 The Farmer-Labor Movement: A Minnesota Story

Joanne B. Eicher, Emerita Regents Professor of Apparel and Design

2015 Documentation of Eicher Textile Collection for Online Portfolio

2016 Publication of Nigerian Textile and Dress Research

2018 Analysis of Traditions of Kalabari Living Abroad

Charles Fairhurst, T.W. Bennett Professor Emeritus of Mining, Engineering and Rock Mechanics

2017 Video: Why Rock Mechanics and Rock Engineering?

2020 Earth Resources Videos

Katherine Fennelly, Emerita Professor of Public Affairs

2014 Online Training on Immigration Topics

Cathy Lee Gierke, Carlson School of Management and Halberg Chronobiology Center

2014 Analysis of Rhythms using R: Introducing Chronomics Analysis Toolkit (CAT)

Donald Clay Johnson, Retired Curator, Ames Library of South Asia

2015 Local Versus Global Perspectives of Indian Textiles

2018 Lucy Truman Aldrich and Indian textiles

Josie R. Johnson², Retired Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Office of Equity and Diversity

2016 "Josie Johnson: A Life of Service"

Diane Katsiaficas, Professor Emerita, Art Department

2016 Building on Tradition: Sharing Contemporary Papermaking and Artist Book Design in Alexandria, Egypt

Harvey B. Keynes, Professor Emeritus and founding director, UMTYUMP Program, School of Mathematics Center for Education Programs (MathCEP)

2014 Addressing Gender Issues in Programs for Highly Talented K-12 Mathematics Students

Tarald O. Kvålseth, Professor Emeritus, Mechanical Engineering

2018 Conference Attendance and Paper Presentation

Carol Miller, Morse Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor, Emerita, Dept. of American Indian Studies and Program in American Studies

2012 Shape Shifter and Trickster Were Going Along (On the Radio): A critical Analysis of Thomas King's CBC-Sponsored Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour

2017 Founding Mothers of Contemporary American Indian Literature

Kathleen O'Brien, Retired Vice President of University Services

2014 Women in Minnesota Local Government, 1970-2000

2015 Women in Minnesota Local Government, 1970-2000

2016 Women in Minnesota Local Government, 1970-2000

² Josie Johnson did not respond to the survey. Information about her and her book, *Hope in the Media*, were obtained from online and print resources.

James Bruce Overmier, Emeritus Professor of Psychology

2016 Keynote Address, 31st International Congress of Psychology, Yokohama, Japan, July 24-29, 2016

Carla Rahn Phillips, Union Pacific Professor, Emerita, in Comparative Early Modern History, History Dept.

2014 Who Owns the Fish in the Sea? Private Control of Spain's Southwestern Tuna Fisheries, 14th-16th Centuries

William D. Phillips, Jr., Emeritus Professor of History

2014 Encounters within Europe: The Ethnographic Observations of Foreign Travelers in Iberia in the 15th and 16th Centuries

Donald Poe, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry – Duluth

2016 Importance of the Thermal Environment in Chromatographic Separations

Wayne E. Potratz, Professor Emeritus/Scholar of the College Emeritus, Art Department

2015 Clay Molding Workshop Participation and Further Creative Research in Japan

2017 Lead a Workshop and Lecture at Festival of High Temperatures: Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw, Poland

2018 Participation in the 8th International Conference on Contemporary Cast Iron Art

Riv-Ellen Prell, Professor Emerita, American Studies

2018 Research and development for the second phase of the website "A Campus Divided"

Jonathan Ravdin, Nesbitt Professor Emeritus of Medicine

2017 Enhanced Clinical Data Management for the Youth and AIDS Projects by Implementation of New Health Information Technology

2018 Utilizing Biostatistical Analysis of Case Management Data to Enhance Future Outcomes of the Youth and AIDS Projects

2019 Death and Transition in Minnesota

Gerald Rinehart, Retired Vice Provost for Student Affairs

2017 Review and Summary of Historical Documents Pertaining to Religious Organizations, Activities and Issues on UMN Twin Cities Campus

John Romano, Emeritus Professor of Educational Psychology

2018 Collaborative Research: Advancing International Prevention Science to Promote Empowerment and Global Partnerships

2020 Prevention Science Counseling Psychology: 20 Years of Exceptional Growth

Marjorie Savage, Retired Program Director, Office of Student Affairs

2017 Frances Andrews: A Social Biography of Progressivism

David Schimpf, Emeritus Associate Professor of Biology – Duluth

2016 Pollutants in the Growth Rings of Red Oak

Kathryn Sedo, Emerita Professor and Senior Attorney, Law School Clinic

2017 Attend Two American Bar Association Meetings for Low-Income Taxpayer and Pro Bono Update to Maintain Mastery as a Community Volunteer

2019 Professional Development Grant to Attend ABA Tax Section Meetings

William D. Sudderth, Emeritus Professor of Statistics

2014 Finitely Additive Stochastic Dynamic Programming

2017 Present at Conference on Simplifying Strategies in Stochastic Games, Erice, Italy.

2020 Stop-or-Go Games

Lisa Vecoli, Curator, Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies, Archives and Special Collections, UofM Libraries

2019 Minnesota Lesbian Community Organizing Oral History Project

2020 Minnesota Lesbian Community Organizing Oral History Project

Kyla Wahlstrom, Research Associate & Senior Research Fellow, CEHD: Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development (OLPD)

2017 School Start Time Research: Further Discovery, Dissemination and Policy Implications

Jack Zipes, Professor Emeritus, Department of German, Nordic, Slavic and Dutch

2018 The Folk and Fairy Tales of Charles Godfrey Leland, the Forgotten Folklorist

Appendix 2: Survey Instrument & Response

Professional Development Grant for Retirees PDGR Grantee Survey

This survey is being sent to all individuals who received a PDGR grant from the University of Minnesota Retirees Association, 2014-2019. Your response will help UMRA document the value of those grants to UofM retirees and to the university itself.

1. You were awarded a PDRG Grant based a project you proposed. Were you able to execute that project successfully? (pick one)

a.	Yes (skip to Q2)	38 97%
b.	No	1 3%

- 1.a. Please briefly explain why you were unable to complete the project

One response” “Start partly in progress because some of the records I wished to obtain copies of have not been digitized due to closures of several libraries and archives during the COVID19 pandemic”

Exit

2. For what purposes did you request funds? (check all that apply)

a.	Travel expenses (conference, research site, etc.)	25 66%
b.	Research assistance (graduate or undergraduate)	11 29%
c.	Other (equipment, transcription, programming, etc.)	20 53%

3. Did you have a UofM student assist you on this project? (check all that apply)

a.	Yes, graduate student	7 18%
b.	Yes, undergraduate via UROP – Undergraduate Opportunities Program	3 8%
c.	Yes, undergraduate via URS – Undergraduate Research Scholarship	2 5%
d.	No	29 76%

4. How critical was the PDGR award to the successful completion of your project? (Pick one)

a.	PDGR was the sole source of outside funding. (GO TO Q5)	27 71%
b.	PDGR was part of a larger funding package.	11 29%

4a. Was the PDGR funding critical for leveraging that other funding?

a.	Yes	6 55%
b.	No	5 45%

5. What were the results of your project? (check all that apply)

Note: You will have the option of providing details later in this survey

a.	Scholarly publication (journal article or book)	21 55%
b.	Scholarly presentation (e.g., conference, workshop, symposium)	30 79%
c.	Popular material (e.g., work of art, website, book)	10 26%
d.	Educational material for use in classroom or training sessions	11 29%
e.	Instruction or mentoring of students	6 16%
f.	Other (specify _____)	10 26%

6. How did this project impact you personally? (check all that apply)

a.	Added to my professional knowledge	35 92%
b.	Grew my professional network	27 71%
c.	Added to my reputation	29 76%
d.	Other (specify _____)	10 26%

7. What do you think was the value of your project to each of the following?

	None	Minor	Moderate	Major	Exceptional	TOTAL
Your personal satisfaction	0 0%	0 0%	5 13%	18 47%	15 39%	38 100%
Your reputation	0 0%	3 8%	23 61%	9 24%	3 8%	38 100%
The reputation of your department and the University of Minnesota	1 3%	6 16%	15 39%	13 34%	3 8%	38 100%
Your discipline	2 5%	3 8%	13 34%	13 34%	7 18%	38 100%
Society; e.g. Minnesota	4 11%	8 21%	13 34%	9 24%	4 11%	38 100%
Individuals	3 8%	3 8%	10 27%	11 30%	10 27%	37 100%

Details about you and your project. The questions below focus on you and your project. We are looking for specific outcomes and their impacts.

1. About you

Name: _____

Title: _____

University department: _____

Email address: _____

2. Project Impact:

Briefly summarize your project(s) and tell the world why results are important. Tell it as you would tell a colleague from a different department, friends at a picnic, a newspaper reporter, or your grandchildren. What was it and why does it matter? How are things different? Be specific. If possible, give us a case study of a place or person that was impacted. Can you provide quantitative evidence of impact; e.g. counts of hits or downloads. Did you receive any awards for your work? Limit 300 words.

3. Products resulting from your PDGR funded project(s). Title of publications, presentations, workshops, exhibitions, etc. (OK to copy and paste items from your resume)