

Tactic and Strategy Break-Outs – Session 1.1

Honoring Rural: Choosing and Using Language, Message and Methods to Market Rural-Focused Endowments

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The Story of The Beacon Community Foundation

Daniels County, Montana

Flaxville, Peerless, Scobey

Presented by: Tom Cote

“No one in our rural area knows what an endowment is”

Know your environment

Daniels County is roughly the size of Rhode Island with a population of 2,200. Scobey is the largest community with a population of 1,150.

Agriculture drives the economy. In the past ten years it has been listed as one of the poorest counties (during the drought) and one of the richest counties (abundance of rain).

A new non-profit organization, Scobey Alumni Foundation, Inc. (SAFI) was active in raising money to build new facilities at the Scobey High School.

Daniels County had identifiable movers and shakers – the “Old Guard Dogs” who were the promoters and supporters.

State the endowment-building goal

SAFI originally applied for Montana Community Foundation grant as part of the Ford Foundation Rural Initiative Program. When we applied for the grant it was understood that it could not be used for brick and mortar. The grant was to enhance the viability and stability of our rural community and required the matched dollars we raised to be set-aside in an endowment.

Tactics and Targets Chosen

SAFI board did not want to pursue the grant because it could not be used for brick and mortar. The board voted not to undertake the grant and it was a time to drop it or find someone or some group who was interested.

Current Residents.

- 1) Educate Professional Advisors – combined charitable giving presentation with local CPA. Let him show the public his expertise in explaining the tax calculations.
- 2) Cultivate 1-on-1 – started by visiting with friends on the opportunity that was available. Raise the match and put it in a “Community Savings Account” and then spend the grant money on economic projects that promote the viability and stability of the community – we were stable.
- 3) Host Community events – invited all organizations in the County to an information meeting. Followed up with special visits to large service organizations.
- 4) Emphasize Community & Area Funds – we pulled three communities together for this fund raising project. Still not sure if this pulled the communities together or allowed them to still have division.
- 5) Outreach to Media – this was the final piece used to education the community. Paper-thon, radio “Hotline” and Leave A Legacy campaign.

Part-time/Former Residents

- 1) Direct Mail – alumni lists compiled by board members.
- 2) Outreach to Media – stories and pictures (powerful).
- 3) Emphasize Community & Area Funds - The “Community Savings Account”.

Organizations

- 1) Host Community Event – compiled a list of every known organization and the contact person and invited them to an information meeting.

Foundations

- 1) Cultivate 1-on-1 Relationship – MCF invited us to a number of Regional and State meetings.

Capacity

- ◆ Started with three of us writing the grant.
- ◆ No staffing or board.
- ◆ We were about to be the first to ask the community for money and not spend it.
- ◆ We had MCF and each other.

So what? Outcomes and Lessons

It was a task of talking to one person at a time to start with. Finding the support and then going out in teams. Once the core group was formed, keep meeting until you know they get it. Other board members who got it prepared all the stories and ads. The initial process probably took six months.

- 1) You need a leader(s) – for life
- 2) Build a core group
- 3) Be a Servant to other organization