

## **Tactic and Strategy Break-Outs – Session 2.1**

### **Many Donors, One Fund: Developing Area Funds in Amazing Rural Places**

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### **The Story of Beacon Community Foundation**

Daniels County, Montana  
Flaxville, Peerless, Scobey  
Presented by: Tom Cote

**“That’ll never work here”**

#### **Know your environment**

Daniels County has always seemed to rise to any local challenge or need.

**Raffles** – If it hadn’t been named Scobey it would have been named Ticket Town or Raffle City. They design the raffle tickets roughly the 3 ½ inches wide by 7. The club members then walk around with the tickets sticking out of their pockets.

**Radio-thon** – I believe it started at KCGM – The Voice of the Prairie

- 1) Swimming Pool – 10K
- 2) Fire Hall – 40K
- 3) Library / Senior Citizens - 50K
- 4) Moving building to Pioneer Town – 10K
- 5) New Ambulance – 30K
- 6) Save KCGM – 95K

The local hospital received over \$650,000 from an estate back in 1984. There was considerable debate whether to save the money or build a new hospital, but the savers prevailed and it has grown to over \$2 million.

The year was 1995 and Daniels County had experience it fourth straight year of great crops.

#### **State the endowment-building goal**

SAFI originally applied for Montana Community Foundation grant as part of the Ford Foundation Rural Initiative Program. Our goal was to raise \$117,000 in cash and \$117,000 in revocable gifts in order to receive the match of \$117,000. We anticipated receiving contributions from the entire community over a three-year time period.

## **Tactics and Targets Chosen**

SAFI board did not want to pursue the grant because it could not be used for brick and mortar. A new group emerged and so we started with no Current Donors.

### Current Residents.

- 1) We replaced the "High Wealth" category with the "Na Sayers".
  - a. Cultivate 1-on-1 Relationship (Convert or Silence)
  - b. Emphasized Donor Advised Funds (this was also High Wealth)

### General Public

- 1) Cultivate 1-on-1 – this was essential in knowing whom we could count on before starting the Paper-thon and Radio-thon. Our goal was to secure between 25% and 50% of the good pledges before going public.
- 2) Provide Match Incentive – MCF's challenge grant really made it happen for us because the community was used to raising money to spend it now. The grant money had to be spent and the match raised by the community went into our "Community Savings Account".
- 3) Direct Mail - Compiled lists of Alumni from the three communities and sent out newsletters.
- 4) Outreach to Media - Paper-thon was developed because BCF was snubbed by the radio station, which actually gave more energy to the group.
- 5) Emphasize Scholarships – used the example of another Montana's community of building a scholarship fund. We had a number of scholarship funds paying out very small amounts.

### Part-time/Former Residents

- 1) Cultivate 1-on-1 Relationship – had enough depth on the board to allow us to approach older generation who could give the \$1,000 donation.
- 2) Direct Mail – alumni lists compiled by board members.
- 3) Outreach to Media – The Daniels County Leader as 648 local subscriptions out of 922 households. They also had 618 subscription outside Daniels County.
- 4) Emphasize Community & Area Funds – stayed completely clear of sponsoring any group or project. Because of the original association with SAFI, we spent the first month fighting for our purpose and image (which had no relationship with SAFI).

### Businesses

- 1) Direct Mail – sent a special letter.

### Organizations

- 1) Cultivate 1-on-1 Relationship – targeted specific groups within the community and went to their meetings.

### Foundations

- 1) Cultivate 1-on-1 Relationship – MCF and specifically Sid Armstrong and consultant for the grant program Bob Buzzas. Were great with

- encouragement and preparing the reports (which mean more now than at the time).
- 2) Provide Match Incentive – One of the main factors in our success. At the time I would have believed it was just our efforts but progress has slowed considerably in both effort and endowment dollars raised.

### **Capacity**

- ◆ We started out with nothing except the seed money from MCF.
- ◆ When we wrote the grant we realized that we needed someone to keep us accountable for tasks we volunteered for. As part of our grant proposal, we budgeted for a community coordinator who would do just that. Our thoughts were that as volunteers we may have the best intentions but projects tend to stretch out. This worked great.
- ◆ BCF was more like the Musketeers – all for one and one for all. We had a few that had to spend more time drafting newspaper articles, but then all would meet and really look at it from the community perspective.
- ◆ We really only had one semi-expert and everyone else learned what they needed in order to explain to the local community.
- ◆ MCF, Sid Armstrong and Bob Buzzas were always there to help with our questions and more importantly encouragement.

### **So what? Outcomes and Lessons**

Of the three communities selected for the MCF grant, BCF was the first to make the match \$117,000. In addition, there were over \$140,000 in future revocable pledges made. At the same time we helped establish over \$90,000 in donor directed endowments.

The success was really in the number of community members that participated. There were over 100 donations and pledges made ranging from \$2 (kids) to \$25,000. Included in the gifts were cash, grain, cattle, bequests, and life insurance.

Since then we have helped individuals with Charitable Remainder Trusts and life insurance strategies to grow our potential future gifts to over \$700,000. This was a direct result of our Leave A Legacy campaign emphasizing the Montana Tax Credit for planned gifts. Just last year BCF received a gift of \$300,000 from an estate and that was the direct result of the local CPA.

- 1) Nail the “Na Sayers”
- 2) Educate, Educate, Educate
- 3) Give It – Get It – or Get Out