

“There’s Wealth in the Boonies”

Engines for Building Rural Endowments

Workshop Welcome and Orientation

Welcome to “There’s Wealth in the Boonies” *Engines for Building Rural Endowments*, the third Peer-Exchange Workshop convened by the Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network, managed by the Community Strategies Group of the Aspen Institute. After months of planning, we are very excited to get underway, and we want to thank you for traveling to Washington, DC to participate.

We *heartily* encourage you to actively partake in this workshop in as many ways as possible. Doing so will help make this experience more valuable for you, for your peers in the Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network, and for the entire community foundation field. This brief introduction and packet of materials will get you ready for the start of our workshop and offer you ideas about how to make it work best for you.

Workshop Objectives

We’ve designed this workshop to advance these objectives (*not necessarily in this order!*):

- Exchange and learn from our RDP peers – community foundation staff and board members – about their experience with rural endowment-building strategies and tactics
- Roll out and field-test a six-step “thinking and action framework” for constructing rural endowment-building engines.
- Apply the *Framework Steps* and insight from Workshop sessions to advise each other and revise our own rural-endowment building goals – complete with an action step or two to take back home *and act on!*
- Get energized with a lively sense that “*it can be done*” – that is, that rural-focused community foundations *can* build endowments in rural areas, no matter how remote
- Broaden and deepen productive peer connections by sharing lessons, working and eating together!

The RDP Learning Network Peer-Learning Process and Practices

Have you ever left a conference with the sense that all your best conversations seemed to have happened away from the actual meeting room – during a chance encounter in the hallway, over drinks at the end of a long day, or in the airport van on your way back home? We’ve designed *Engines for Building Rural Endowments* to bring those “best conversations” *into the meeting* while still leaving you plenty of “off-agenda” time for impromptu chats and friend-raising.

You and your peers are the current experts in this work. Indeed we have all come together because we *want to learn from one another*. Keeping that in mind, we have used and will use these practices in designing, conducting and following up the workshop:

- We framed the workshop around the leading rural endowment-building strategies and tactics currently used in the field. Based on work with community foundations that have successfully built engines for rural endowment, we have prepared a **Thinking and Action Framework** to help you think through and design your own endowment-building goal and action plan.
- For those of you who want to explore a topic not on the agenda or go even deeper with a few people, we will make it easy for you to organize specialized “Munch Meetings” for any breakfast, lunch or dinner you want.
- We offered each of you the opportunity to bring your foundation’s particular RDP endowment-building goal to the workshop table, and we will give you an on-agenda opportunity to get advice on it from your peers.
- We will end the workshop by sharing and celebrating the progress you have already made toward sharpening your RDP endowment-building goal.
- All the presentation handouts and storytelling and discussions that take place here will be collected and made available on the RDP website (www.aspeninc.org/rdp) within a few weeks of the workshop. And, Talkin’ RDP – the RDP Learning Network’s listserv – is open to anyone interested in RDP. To subscribe, email the listserv moderator, Mridulika Menon, at mmenon@aspeninstitute.org.

Please review the **Agenda** and the **Session Outlines and Design** handout in this packet to help you determine how best to use the various peer-learning opportunities at this workshop to your advantage.

Workshop Resources and Thank You’s

We have relied upon you and your colleagues to help us design an intense but versatile workshop agenda. So first let us **thank you** for responding to our inquiries as we prepared an agenda that (we hope) tackles the questions and challenges you are facing in building rural endowments.

But we also brought together in advance a set of community foundation leaders and consultants familiar with rural endowment building to help Aspen CSG staff design the workshop and review materials. Thank you to the members of this *Workshop Planning and Thinking Team*:

Sidney Armstrong, Consultant
Former Executive Director, Montana Community Foundation

Meriwether Jones, Director
Community Strategies Group, The Aspen Institute

Pete Plastrik, Consultant
Integral Assets

Pat Vasbinder, Consultant
Former Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

And a very special thank you to the *Workshop Resource Team* members who have joined us to deliver learning-story presentations, lead break-out sessions and make themselves and their experience available to you over the next couple of days. Your *Resource Team* represents nearly every facet and region of rural community foundation work. Please take advantage of their wealth of knowledge and experience – and that of *all* your peer participants!

Sidney Armstrong, Consultant
Former President, Montana Community Foundation

Elizabeth Banwell, Consultant
Former Director, Communications & Marketing, Maine Community Foundation

Michael Chamberlain, Chief Development and Operating Officer
New Mexico Community Foundation

Thomas Cote, Organizer
Beacon Community Foundation (Daniels County, Montana)

Christine Delpont, Chief Executive Officer
Greater Rustenburg (South Africa) Community Foundation

Douglas Friedli, Development Director
Nebraska Community Foundation

Diane Harrop, Board Member
Wyoming Community Foundation

Monica Mutuku, Executive Director
Kenya Community Development Foundation

Alan McGregor, Director of Philanthropic Programs
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Andy Morikawa, Executive Director
Community Foundation of the New River Valley

Alexandra Reid, Director of Donor Services & Planned Giving
Humboldt Area Foundation

Judy Sjostedt, Executive Director
Parkersburg Area Community Foundation

Pat Vashbinder, Consultant
Former Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

Jeff Yost, Executive Vice President
Nebraska Community Foundation

Finally, we sincerely hope you learn a lot, have fun and make connections that will help you to better serve rural communities today and into the future. We look forward to getting to know you!

Productive Peer Learning to You!

Your RDP Learning Network Team

*Mridulika
Menon*

*Diane
Morton*

*Elizabeth
Myrick*

*Janet
Topolsky*