

# Position and Purpose: What Roles can Community Foundations Play to Improve Rural Community and Economic Development?

Friday, 8:15-10:15 a.m. Doyle Ballroom

## Session Facilitator

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

## Peer Leaders

- Ann Tartre, *Director, Donor and Program Services, Maine Community Foundation*
- John Molinaro, *Vice President-Program, West Central Initiative (Minnesota)*
- Tom Deans, *Senior Vice President, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; President, Northern New Hampshire Foundation*

## Session Topic

This session will explore the most critical roles that community foundations can play in enhancing economic security for low-income rural families and the communities where they live.

## Strategic/Implementation Issue Session Flow

The session will flow something like this:

Pat	Intro, Context, Introductions	5 mins
Ann	<i>MCF Roles and Lessons</i>	15 mins
Pat	Clarifying questions for Ann	5 mins
John	<i>WCI Roles and Lessons</i>	15 mins
Pat	Clarifying questions for John	5 mins
Tom	<i>NNHF Roles and Lessons</i>	15 mins
Pat	Clarifying questions for Tom	5 mins
Pat	Instant Advice	Remaining time

*Clarifying Questions* for each presenter will relate to their presentations and be asking for clarification or more detail about what each community foundation did and what was learned from it.

*Instant Advice* provides a time for participants to present their own situation related to choosing the best role. We are aiming for practical rather than theoretical exchanges here. We will suggest that you ask questions or draw inferences *from experience* – by first taking a minute or two to give us your background/context and then ask for advice or offer an idea for the rest of the group.

## **Presentation Outline**

Here are the questions we asked Ann, John and Tom to focus on during their initial *Position and Purpose: What Key Roles can Community Foundations Play to Improve Rural Community and Economic Development?* presentation.

1. **Your Foundation's Rural Community and Economic Development Roles.** As you know, the RDP Learning Network tries to maintain a focus on how community foundations can use their various tools to *enhance the economic security of low-income rural families and the communities where they live*. This entire workshop is focusing primarily on how you use the grantmaking and program (that is, non-grantmaking tools that are program related, like convening, etc.) tools toward that end. In this session, we want to focus not on the design of a *specific* program or grantmaking initiative; rather we want to talk about the most important meta-roles that your community foundation plays to improve rural CED, especially for poor people and communities.

So please start by answering this question: ***What are the three most critical program and grantmaking roles your community foundation plays to help enhance economic security for rural families and communities?*** Come up with a categorization of roles, using your own language, whether standard or creative. Indeed, we purposely do not want to give you a checklist here, because we want to know how *you* think about and characterize (whether to yourself or others) your roles in your region.

Start your presentation by just giving the titles of your roles – your *role taxonomy*, if you will. For each role, tell us:

- The rationale for why you have taken on this role in your foundation's and rural area's context
2. **Role Triumphs and Reversals.** Now, choose just *two* of your most critical roles and offer us:
    - A story/example of which you are proud, in which you know the foundation made a difference in rural CED because you played this role.
    - A story/example where you now feel you made a mistake in taking on this role, and why
    - What it takes to maintain/sustain a board and staff commitment to this role at the foundation
    - Under what conditions (if any), would you choose to no longer play this role?
  3. **Role Realities.** Finally, please share your best, frank advice on:
    - What two key questions should you ask yourself to determine *whether or not* your community foundation should play a particular role in rural CED?
    - What two roles in fostering rural CED do you think are the *toughest or most dicey* for a community foundation to take on, and why?
    - What two roles in fostering rural CED do you feel are *most important/effective* for a community foundation to play and why?