

# Increasing and Sustaining the Impact of Your Rural Community Economic Development Program/Grantmaking

Friday, 8:15-10:15 a.m. Burlington B

## Session Facilitator

- Elizabeth Myrick, Senior Associate, Community Strategies Group, The Aspen Institute  
Former Program Director, Maine Community Foundation

## Peer Leaders

- Kathy Moxon, Director, Institute for the North Coast; CAO, Humboldt Area Foundation
- Nelsy Dominguez, Program Director, New Mexico Community Foundation
- Elouise Cobell, Executive Director, Blackfeet Reservation Development Fund

## Session Topic

This session will explore the ways in which community foundations fortify or structure their program and/or grantmaking efforts so as to increase and sustain positive impact on rural communities and low-income rural populations.

## Strategic/Implementation Issue Session Flow

The session will flow something like this:

Elizabeth	Intro, Context, Introductions	5 mins
Kathy	HAF Approach and Lessons: <i>Launching and leading a regional economic development initiative...</i>	20 mins
Elizabeth	Clarifying questions for Kathy	5 mins
Nelsy	NMCF Approach and Lessons: <i>Intentionally weaving peer learning and technical assistance into the lifespan of a rural grantee's grant cycle ...</i>	20 mins
Elizabeth	Clarifying questions for Nelsy	5 mins
Elouise	Blackfeet CF/Development Fund Approach and Lessons: <i>Building critical connections among complementary community and economic development projects/grants within a specific community/region</i>	20 mins
Elizabeth	Clarifying questions for Elouise	5 mins
Elizabeth	Instant Advice	Remainder

*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 increasing their impact. We are aiming for practical rather than theoretical exchanges here. We will suggest that you ask questions or draw inferences *from your experience* – by first taking a minute or two to give us some 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 Kathy, Nelsy and Elouise to focus on during their initial *Increasing and Sustaining the Impact of Your Rural Community Economic Development Program/Grantmaking* presentation.



To help us go deep on some key elements of this sizeable topic, we are asking each of you to focus your attention on and talk about a specific *impact-adding* strategy or tactic of your grantmaking:

- **Kathy:** Why and how the Humboldt Area Foundation launched and led a *regional economic development initiative* – the Institute for the North Coast and its Prosperity project – and how that connects to and fortifies your other rural grantmaking.
- **Nelsy:** Why and how NMCF intricately *weaves peer learning and technical assistance into the lifespan of a rural grantee's* grant cycle – and how it adds to the impact of a grant and beyond.
- **Elouise:** Why and how a community-focused community fund *intentionally builds critical connections among complementary community and economic development projects/grants within a specific community/region* in order to build a more sustainable whole that is greater than the sum of its finite parts.

1. **Your Program.** Just for context, *briefly* tell us about your rural community economic development grantmaking or program effort. To help your listeners follow your tale, with your story focus in mind, start out by simply answering:

- What was your *catalyst* for starting the rural CED program/grantmaking effort you are focusing on in your story?

Then, in the order you think your foundation answered them when designing the program, *briefly* answer the *relevant* questions below:

- *Where:* What rural region or set of places did you target with your program/grantmaking effort?
- *For Whom:* What rural people or population did you target with your program/grantmaking effort?
- *What* rural development approach did you support with your program/grantmaking effort?
- *With whom:* What type of grantees did you target?
- *With whom:* What other partners did you work with to help with technical assistance, learning, or project management?
- *With whom:* What other resource partners (funders) did you work with?
- *How long:* For what period of time did you sustain the program?
- *Which and how much resources:* What resources did you commit to this program – staffing, board, operational and grant resources?

2. **Design and Implementation Elements.** What are some other key aspects of how you have initiated and structured this effort? If you have not already covered it in answering Question 1, please tell us:

*Kathy:*

- When and why did HAF find it necessary to establish a separate organization (Institute for the North Coast) to address Humboldt Area Foundation’s CED concerns?
- How was the organization designed? Who were the stakeholders/participants in the organization and its design?
- What does the Institute do? Who actually does it?
- What process does the Institute for the North Coast use to identify and choose potential projects?
- What “ground rules” did you establish for INC to work with HAF and other program partners? How were those rules to be enforced?

*Nelsy:*

- How does NMCF choose grantees for this initiative?
- What are the technical assistance and peer-learning components of the initiative? How are they integrated into the grant deal?
- How do you orient grantees in an initiative like this into NMCF’s companion technical assistance and peer-learning components? How are expectations and consequences conveyed?
- What is the process by which NMCF and the grantees choose and use the TA/peer-learning components?

*Elouise:*

- What was the process for conceiving the initial mission, vision, organizational values and goals of the Blackfeet Development Fund and Community Foundation?
- How did you ensure that more than the “usual suspects” were involved in this process?
- What unique challenges does your community—as an economically challenged Native American community — face? And what unique strengths does your community bring to this effort?
- What approach did BDF/CF take in making its first grants in the community?
- How did BDF/CF come to go beyond simple grantmaking to connect and develop projects actively within the community?
- How would you describe or characterize BDF/CF’s role(s) today in improving community and economic development in the community?

3. **Impact.** So what is it that makes this different and better - and how do you know it?

*Kathy:*

- What are the key accomplishments of the Institute for the North Coast?
- *And so what?* What impact-adding or value-adding difference has the Institute made related to the focus, structure or impact of HAF’s rural grantmaking and program efforts?
- How do you know that? That is, how do you evaluate the program’s success or failure? How does this analysis get applied to current and future projects?

*Nelsy:*

- What are a few key accomplishments of your technical assistance and peer-learning efforts on individual grantees in your initiative?

- *And so what?* What impact-adding or value-adding difference has the peer-learning/TA components of your initiative made related to the focus, structure or impact of NMCF's rural grantmaking and program efforts? (To grantees? To NMCF? To the state?) (For example, how are the outcomes of this program greater in some way from the outcomes of more standard NMCF grantmaking programs—current or past?)
- How do you know that? How do you evaluate this effort's success or failure? How does this analysis get applied to current and future projects?

*Elouise:*

- What are a few key community CED accomplishments have been significantly supported/fostered by the Blackfeet Development Fund/Community Foundation?
- *And so what?* What impact-adding or value-adding difference has BDF/CF's coordinating approach/role in the community's development made – as compared to what might have happened with a more traditional grantmaking approach?
- How do you know that? How do you evaluate your success or failure? How does this analysis get applied to current and future projects?
- What specific and repeatable tools or strategies used by the Blackfeet Development Fund/CF might be transferable to other foundations focused on a specific community?

4. **Sustaining the Effort:** How have you sustained your effort? Be as specific as possible.

*Kathy:*

- How has the relationship between HAF and the Institute changed over time? What precipitated these changes?
- What (if any) major challenges have threatened to halt progress or bring to an end the Institute for the North Coast? How was the challenge overcome?
- How does the Institute for the North Coast continue to cover its operating and program costs?
- How does the Institute for the North Coast identify and develop new leadership (staff and board)?

*Nelsy:*

- What (if any) major challenge has threatened to halt your efforts to include peer learning and technical assistance in this initiative? How was the challenge overcome?
- How does NMCF orient new staff and board members to this design approach?
- How does the NMCF cover its operating and program costs related to the peer learning and technical assistance components?
- How does NMCF (if at all) help maintain peer relationships among grantees and NMCF beyond the conclusion of the grant?

*Elouise:*

- What (if any) major challenges have threatened to halt progress or bring to an end the Blackfeet Development Fund/Community Foundation's CED involvement or efforts? How was the challenge overcome?
- How does the BDF/CF cover its operating and program costs related to CED efforts in the community?
- How does the Blackfeet Development Fund/CF identify and develop new leadership (staff and board) to carry on your mission?

5. **The Lessons:** Please finish up with these lessons. Try to make them brief, clever and bumper-stickerish. Related to your own story and experience, conclude with:

- What are the top *three toughest things* your foundation has learned about increasing and sustaining community and economic development impacts using this strategy or tactic?
- What are the top *three best things* your foundation has learned about increasing and sustaining community and economic development impacts using this strategy or tactic?
- What *three lessons or pieces of advice* would you offer to other community foundations that seek to increase and sustain community and economic development impact using this strategy or tactic?