

Building Rural Livelihood:

Using Community Foundation Program and Grantmaking to Improve Rural Community and Economic Development Outcomes

Workshop Welcome and Orientation

Welcome to **Building Rural Livelihood: Using Community Foundation Program and Grantmaking to Improve Rural Community and Economic Development Outcomes**, the second 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 ideas and experience among community foundation staff and board members about different programs and grantmaking strategies community foundations are using to build rural livelihood – and the challenges and benefits of using each approach.
- Roll out and field-test a rural program and grantmaking design tool.
- Surface, collect and organize useful, practice-based information and lessons about rural community economic development programs to share with the community foundation field and to guide and improve Rural Development Philanthropy outcomes.
- Broaden and deepen the collegial network and connections among foundation leaders in the Learning Network.

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 *Building Rural Livelihood* 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 program and grantmaking strategies currently used in the field.* Based on work with community foundations that have successfully implemented programs aimed at building rural livelihood, we have prepared a guidance document that will help you think through and design your own RDP program.

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- We surveyed you in advance about what strategic issues related to RDP program and grantmaking are important to you, and set up strategic issue sessions around the most common answers. Each session will be launched with the experience of at least two foundations that have some track record handling it.
- We offered each of you the opportunity to bring your foundation's particular RDP program and grantmaking issue to the workshop table, and we will give you an on-agenda opportunity to get advice on it from your peers.
- For those of you who want to explore a topic not on the agenda or to go even deeper with a few people, we will make it easy for you to organize specialized "Table Topic" discussions for any breakfast, lunch or dinner you want.
- We will end the workshop by asking a representative panel of participants to lead a conversation with you about how you can connect donors to rural community economic development programs. A few innovators in the field will share how they have pitched RDP projects and programs to individual donors, private foundations and other potential funding partners.
- All the presentation handouts and storytelling and discussions that take place here will be collected and made available on the RDP website (www.aspenccsg.org/rdp) within a few weeks of the workshop. At the same time, a website-based RDP discussion board – *Talkin' RDP!* – is open to Learning Network members so that you may continue the discussion and exchange of ideas and materials started here. (And anyone who has not yet joined the Network can join at any time to participate!)

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

Overall, 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 livelihood.

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

Pat Vasbinder, Consultant

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

Mary Virtue, Consultant

Clients have included Maine Community Foundation, New Mexico Community Foundation and other private foundations and community development organizations

And a very special thank you to the *Workshop Resource Team* members who have joined us to make 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!

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Blackfeet Community Development Fund and Blackfeet Community Foundation – Browning,
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Pat Vasbinder, Consultant
Former Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the New Hampshire Charitable
Foundation

Mary Virtue, Consultant
Past clients include Maine Community Foundation and New Mexico Community Foundation –
West Chester, Pennsylvania

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,

*Akila
Berry*

*Meriwether
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*Mridulika
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*Diane
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*Elizabeth
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*Janet
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