

Covering Rural Territory

Affiliate and Alternative Structures for Rural Development Philanthropy

Workshop Welcome and Orientation

Welcome to *Covering Rural Territory: Affiliate and Alternative Structures for Rural Development Philanthropy*, the first Peer-Exchange Workshop convened by the Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network, which is 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 structures community foundations are using to cover underserved rural territory — and the challenges and benefits of using each structure
- Roll out and field-test a particular categorization of these rural service structure models
- Surface, collect and organize useful, practice-based information and lessons about these structures 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 *Covering Rural Territory* 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 doing 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 and conducting and following up the workshop:

- *We framed the workshop around the leading rural coverage structures currently used in the field*, and prepared a description and comparison of these models based on conversations with community foundations that use these models. You will have the opportunity to go deep with the presenter for whichever model most intrigues you.

- We surveyed you in advance about what strategic issues related to rural coverage are important to you, and set up strategic issue sessions around the most common answers. Each session will be launched with the experience of two foundations that have some track record handling it, and will then turn to you.
- We offered each of you the opportunity to bring your foundation's particular rural coverage 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 the implications of what has surfaced in the workshop for the field, and for future products and gatherings.
- All the presentation handouts and storytelling and discussions that take place here will be collected and made available on the RDP website (www.aspenCSG.org/rdp) within a few weeks of the workshop. At the same time, a website-based RDP discussion board — *Talkin' RDP* - will be opened 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 covering rural territory.

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

- **Jennifer Leonard**, President/CEO, Rochester Area Foundation; author of the original study (1991) of community foundation coverage structures, *Covering Territory: Community Foundation Area Funds and Affiliates*
- **Elizabeth Banwell**, Integral Assets, Inc., former Director of Marketing and Communications, Maine Community Foundation
- **Peter Plastrik**, Integral Assets, Inc., recent organizational consultant to Greater New Orleans Foundation, Maine Community Foundation, The Community Foundation Serving Coastal South Carolina, Arizona Community Foundation, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
- **Pat Vasbinder**, Consultant and 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 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!

- **Elizabeth Banwell**, Consultant, Integral Assets, Inc.
- **Heather Larkin Eason**, Vice President, Development, Arkansas Community Foundation
- **Ann Hansen**, Board Member, East Tennessee Foundation
- **Terry Holley**, Vice President for Programs and Rural Development, East Tennessee Foundation
- **Leslie Lilly**, President & CEO, The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio
- **Ben Johnson**, President/CEO, Greater New Orleans Foundation
- **Marion Kane**, Executive Director, Barr Foundation
- **Madeleine McGee**, President, The Community Foundation Serving Coastal South Carolina
- **Peter Pennkamp**, Executive Director, Humboldt Area Foundation
- **Bill Pratt**, Program Director, Montana Community Foundation
- **Carla Roberts**, Vice President of Affiliates, Arizona Community Foundation
- **Jeff Yost**, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, 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,

*Meriwether
Jones*

*Mridulika
Menon*

*Diane
Morton*

*Elizabeth
Myrick*

*Janet
Topolsky*