

Community Strategies Group



Access the slides &
related resources here!

Bonita Robertson-Hardy

Chris Estes

Co-Executive Directors

Measuring What Matters: Applying a Rural Prosperity Framework to Your Region

Community Strategies Group

 aspen institute



Hub of Hubs

Peer Learning

Field Development

Join at
slido.com
#3514 771



Opening Questions

Question 1

What are you hoping to learn more about in this session?

Question 2

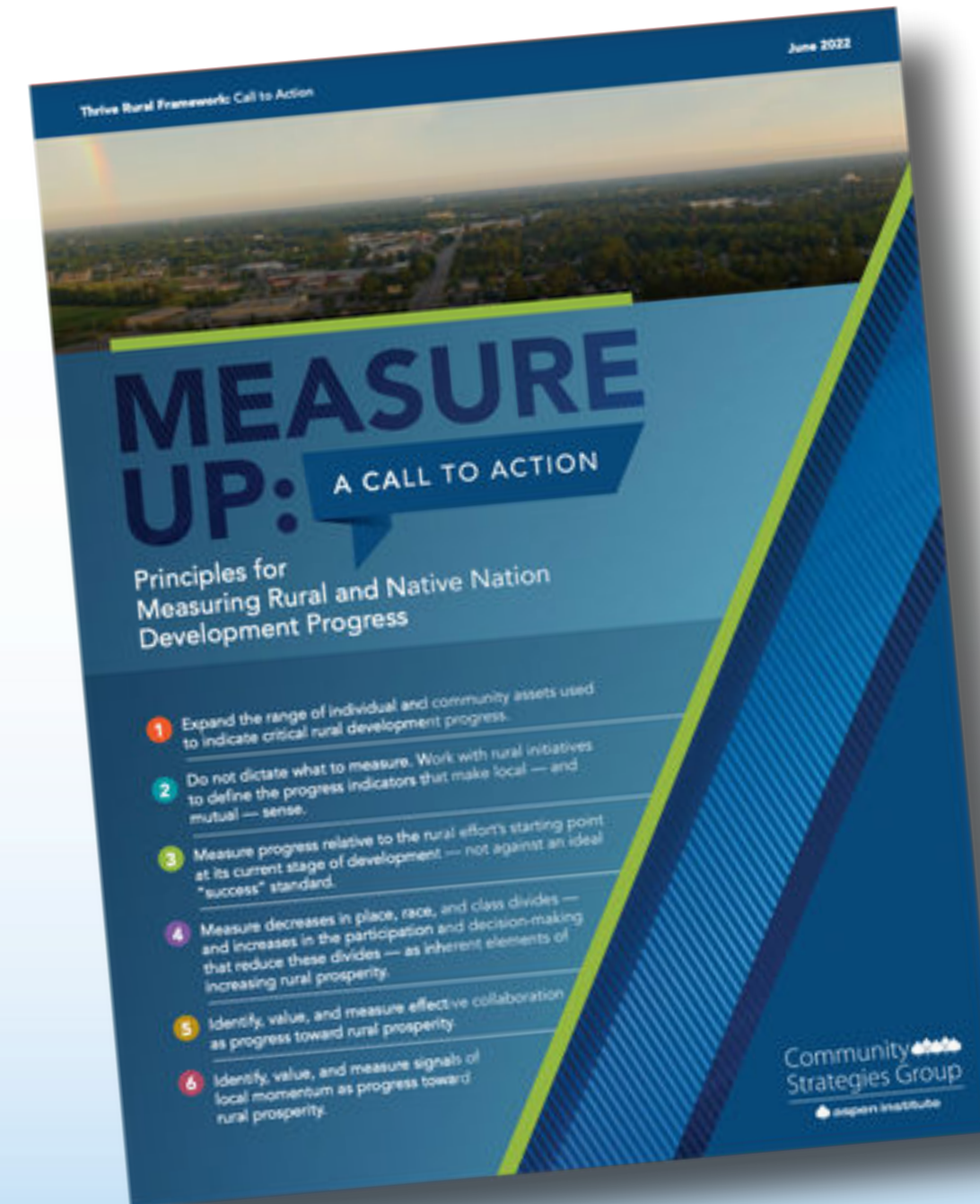
What type of organization do you work within?

Why Measurement is Important



Community Strategies Group

 aspen institute



Why Measurement is Important



A fundamental reassessment of how we measure rural development progress and who defines success



Funding pipelines from all sources will have far greater impact



There has to be mutual respect, and I think oftentimes communities value what funders bring to the table because of the connection to the financial resources that will come along with them. But that same respect isn't always given or shown by funders who walk into a space acknowledging the [local] work. . . If you don't demand that, it doesn't happen.



Felicia Lucky
President, Black Belt
Community Foundation

1

Expand the range of individual and community assets used to indicate critical rural development progress.

There is a need for broader, more holistic sets of community and economic development progress measurements.

“

The data for Puna says that 78% of households are ALICE (AssetLimited, Income-Constrained while Employed) and in poverty. A woman from Puna told us, ‘We might be the worst when it comes to income, but we are the best when it comes to ‘ohana (family): None of us are making it on our own, and all of us are making it because of ‘ohana.’ The definition of wealth for Hawai’i Island communities is very different from what’s being presented to us as a measure of success.

”



Janice Ikeda
Executive Director,
Vibrant Hawai’i

2

Do not dictate what to measure. Work with rural initiatives to define the progress indicators that make local - and mutual - sense.

Extensive reporting requirements are time-consuming, extractive, and inhibit grantee effectiveness.

“

It seems to me that in rural communities there may be a different quality of conversation about what matters, because of the strength and importance of our social network and our quality of life, more so than how much someone makes, or their status.

”



Ajulo Othow
Founder and CEO,
EnerWealth Solutions

3

Measure progress relative to the rural effort's starting point at its current stage of development – not against an ideal “success” standard.

More progress is made when communities are allowed to assess progress from their own starting points.

“

How you perceive is how you proceed. I believe this and I witness misperceptions about Native America all the time. These misperceptions limit our opportunities and we use a lot of resources to break down these misperceptions just to get to a starting point with funders.



Lakota Vogel
Executive Director, Four Bands
Community Fund

”



Measure decreases in place, race, and class divides – and increases in the participation and decision-making that reduce these divides – as inherent elements of increasing rural prosperity.

Policy and investment designers should reach out to the “unreached rural” in every region, race, and class.



To us, rural is a culture, and when we define it as a culture and make it a topic around equity, I think it’s harder to marginalize rural people in rural places. [A] huge part is just ensuring that people understand who we are and that we have representation in those different buckets – to not only see our successes and see our wins, but to understand how to digest our data and make it a story that’s positive and not weaponize it against us.



Justin Archer Burch
Former Director of Workforce
Development, Rural LISC



5

Identify, value, and measure effective collaboration as progress toward rural prosperity.

Collaboration must be built on trust, shared understanding and goals, broad participation and decision-making across stakeholders

“

[In rural America] nobody has the resources to go it alone. One of the things it takes to do better – that almost no funding streams are willing to pay for – is collaboration. They’re willing to pay for that particular project, but the glue that holds it all together is just probably the most difficult piece to find support for in rural communities.

”



John Molinaro
Principal,
RES Associates, LLC

6

Identify, value, and measure signals of local momentum as progress toward rural prosperity.

Youth engagement is a particularly good indicator of momentum - it increases young adults' belief that they can find a way to stay in the community.

“

Our native youth, of the ones I was able to survey on Cheyenne River, feel optimistic that they can do better than what their parents had access to. That is a direct reflection of how recently colonization happened to us. You can tell from your grandma going to [non-Native] boarding school that “I’m going to have a better access to education or better opportunity access than what my grandma did.” I think that optimism from youth could be a good measurement of success in rural America.



Lakota Vogel
Executive Director,
Four Bands Community Fund

”



Health Equity & Measurement

Using a community's own understanding of identity and measurement of health is critical for equitably addressing health conditions and supporting community prosperity.



Community Capacity

The combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities.





Why Community Capacity Building is Important

Helps to improve ability of individuals, organizations, businesses, and government in their community to come together, learn, make well-reasoned decisions about the community's present and future and work together to carry out those decisions.

Eight Outcomes of Community Capacity Building

- Expanding diverse, inclusive citizen participation
- Expanding leadership base
- Strengthened individual skills
- Widely shared understanding and vision
- Strategic community agenda
- Consistent, tangible progress towards goals
- More effective community organizations and institutions
- Better resource utilization by the community



Types of Communities



Trojan Horse:

They seem prosperous but are actually threatened by too much change too quickly – or by the lack of change. (Perhaps an avalanche of rich, newcomer, part-time residents suddenly have too much local influence.)

Gridlock:

They make no decisions because of divisive, long-standing fights between opposed “camps” over what to do (how land is being used, whether “development” is the answer or the problem, who makes decisions, etc.).

Ghost Town:

They have given up trying to do anything because too many jobs and people have left, local energy is sapped, and nobody seems to care.

Full Tilt Communities:

They know exactly what they want but don't know enough (or disagree) about the best way to get there. Or the same few folks do all the work and are getting tired.

Key Steps to Getting Started

- Form a group
- Pick priorities
- Organize into subgroups
- Identify information sources
- Create a timeline
- Consider publicity opportunities



Community Strategies Group



AspenCSG.org

 Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group

Bonita.Robertson@AspenInstitute.org

Chris.Estes@AspenInstitute.org

This work is supported by the
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
and the Ford Foundation