

# CENTERING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Fostering Rural and Indigenous Community Well-Being with Asset-Based Development

A CALL TO ACTION

## Why Your Work Matters

This summary is for the builders, weavers, and doers who are shaping rural and Indigenous well-being and building community wealth from within. Yet funding gaps, siloed systems, and top-down policies often ignore the expertise of rural and Indigenous practitioners.

## Core Insight

Well-being doesn't happen just from services focusing on health. Lasting change comes from building trust, connecting siloed sectors, and investing in local leadership, voice, and infrastructure. **You** are central to this work and deserve tools, resources, and relationships supporting your efforts.

## Key Practitioner Recommendations

### Lead Local Conversations That Spark Action

- Start small with committed individuals and **build momentum**.
- Model community engagement and decision-making that reflects local values and voice.

### Build Trust Before Scaling Initiatives

- Invest time in relationships — not just for funding, but for shared understanding.
- Embrace a “lead from behind” approach: listen first, then support existing energy.

### Create On-Ramps to Leadership

- Engage those who are often left out with low-barrier, welcoming opportunities.
- Redefine leadership to include diverse skills, lived experience, and new faces.

### Design from Within, Not for

- Co-create programs and partnerships with community members, not just for them.
- Use storytelling and shared data collection to define success and adapt strategies.

### Build and Leverage Networks

- Facilitate physical and virtual spaces for collaboration.
- Connect across rural, Indigenous, and regional peers to share learning and solidarity.

### Push for Better Metrics and Terms

- Track what truly matters: well-being, equity, and systemic change — not just outputs.
- Work to find ways for these metrics to work for each funding source.
- Advocate for flexible metrics and reporting structures that reflect your reality.

## What's Next?

You are already doing the work. This is about resourcing, recognizing, and strengthening what you're building. Use these insights to advocate for your community's needs and connect with others walking the same path.

Let's keep building — **Connect** with Aspen CSG and our partners  
to grow the movement for equitable rural and Indigenous development.

# Insights from Report Participants



**Stephanie Tyree**  
West Virginia Community  
Development Hub,  
West Virginia

"Practitioners should lead from behind. Don't assume nothing's happening. Build relationships, map the field, and partner with community leaders as whole people. Support their growth and invest in ongoing leadership development—when you do, interesting things happen."



**Manuel Machado**  
Oregon State University  
Extension Service, Oregon

"Overcoming these bigger issues requires building solidarity. This is becoming a bigger and bigger part of the work I'm engaged in. Rural communities facing similar problems and creating spaces where those problems can be shared and people can see eye to eye on those. Changing public perceptions. Getting them to see that problems are the same from rural communities to Latinx and/or tribal communities. We need to build spaces where those exchanges can happen."



**Alton Perry**  
Roanoke Electric Cooperative,  
North Carolina

"Practitioners, continue to cross-pollinate with each other. We need to have conversations with each other and create a community of learning."

This is an Executive Summary of Aspen CSG's report, *Fostering Rural and Indigenous Community Well-Being with Asset-Based Development*. See the report for nuance and additional insights.



## About Aspen CSG

Since 1985, the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group has worked toward equitable rural prosperity. We support communities and Native nations to become healthy places where each and every person belongs, lives with dignity, and thrives.

As a national hub, Aspen CSG connects rural leaders, practitioners, and policymakers to share ideas, strengthen networks, and advance solutions grounded in the Thrive Rural Framework.

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Learn more: [www.AspenCSG.org](http://www.AspenCSG.org)