



Practitioner Recommendations

Practitioners

These recommendations apply to practitioners in the field of rural development, including national NGOs, Rural Development Hubs, and their local partner organizations.

Deepen collaboration

- Keep the region at the center of your work and hold yourself accountable to the community.
- Convene coalitions in response to landscape changes (e.g., federal funding cuts, natural disasters, major employer closures).
- Attend regional rural-focused gatherings in other parts of the country and build relationships with peers.
- Join efforts with other organizations, including other Hubs.
- Find creative ways to share resources and create efficiencies.
- Don't be extractive: always remember that your community and region are more important than your organization.

Strengthen your organization and organizational structures

- Align mission and business plans.
- Develop accounting systems that allow for full accounting of program costs.
- Measure how much risk your Hub can manage (e.g., know your financial capacity to front funds you only get back on a reimbursement basis).
- Invest in staff and their development.
- Staff and grow your teams with people from the places you serve.
- Train staff in an asset-based approach to the work and communication about the work.

- Ground yourself in your purpose and mission—be careful about chasing funding, maintain power and boundaries, and teach these skills to your staff.

Speak up

- Push back on harmful narratives and actions with positive frames of impact and opportunity.
- Speak in plain, direct language that resonates with your region—know your audience.
- Communicate needs: tell local and state philanthropy what you need them to be or do.
- Encourage funders to take risks (e.g., lending on Tribal trust lands).
- Communicate the value of Hubs (and the value of having a national model and network).
- Politely call out bad behavior by funders, partners, and the public sector.
- Advocate for yourself—walk away or say no when needed.

Support and learn from other Hubs

- Help communities take the next step toward Hub development.
- Participate in field-building.
- Take time to travel to other regions to learn from other Hubs.

"Make sure you have young people on your boards and staff to represent, not just to build a leadership pipeline."



Stephanie Tyree

West Virginia Community Development Hub, West Virginia

Rural Priorities

Hub leaders consistently identify specific priorities for all levels of rural work, including:

- Civic education and engagement.
- Leadership development.
- Disaster preparedness and response.
- Local food systems.
- Alternative economic paradigms.

"It's when you start chasing funding that you start to twist and contort and turn into a pretzel, and then you wake up one day and you don't know who your organization is. But as long as you stay true to your mission, you'll be okay."



Ebonie Alexander

Black Family Land Trust, Virginia

"As Hubs, we need to actually do internally what we're wanting to do externally: foster leadership, capacity, agency, and a high level of communication across teams. We really need to be deliberate about walking the walk."



Rob Riley

Northern Forest Center, New Hampshire