

The Rural Development Philanthropy Collaborative

The United States and the globe face increasingly challenging questions about how to feed, fuel and nurture the world's population sustainably and justly. The **Rural Development Philanthropy Collaborative** believes that rural communities have a critical role to play in meeting these challenges.

What is Rural Development Philanthropy?

Rural people have a long tradition of generosity and charitable *giving to* and *giving through* churches, civic associations, schools or other social structures. Rural development philanthropy taps these traditions in new ways and combines the tools of *asset-based community development* and *philanthropy* to support communities in defining their own development agendas. Rural development philanthropy builds community ownership through specific practices and strategies, while motivating people and institutions to invest in local efforts toward development.

Rural Development Philanthropy is a community-led approach that creates locally controlled assets and invests them to strengthen rural places. It builds a community's ability to shape a better future and promote the well-being of all community members. It unites the tools of community, economic and resource development, engaging all people to come together with their ideas, strategies, talents, and giving.

What is the Collaborative?

In January 2008, a group of foundations and organizations came together in Trinidad, California, to form a coalition to advance Rural Development Philanthropy (RDP).

They were anchored by this question: *How can we create a true practice of Rural Development Philanthropy and a growing network of competent and effective RDP practitioners who help rural communities achieve and sustain significantly more positive and equitable change?* The coalition considered how best to serve the field and build a network of people and institutions committed to transforming rural communities. Those present at this meeting had a long history of work in the fields of community development and philanthropy and were eager to define a practice that could support the changes needed to build healthy rural communities.

In 2009, the Collaborative convened an expanded group in Pocantico, New York, to further test RDP concepts and ideas, and to identify RDP competencies and practices. Since then, the Collaborative has worked to further define and articulate the rationale, competencies and characteristics that are the key ingredients of successful rural development philanthropy organizations that help achieve the goal of rural community transformation. These efforts are captured in the materials produced by the Collaborative and in the development of the network of organizations interested in advancing the field. The Collaborative seeks to capture the momentum and interest of the growing field of community foundations, rural affiliates of community foundations and other organizations interested in sharing good practice and emerging knowledge.

What next for the Collaborative?

In the coming years, the Rural Development Philanthropy Collaborative plans to increase understanding and practice in the rural development and rural philanthropy fields and to build a diverse, international network of rural development philanthropy practitioners.

Specifically, the Collaborative will work together to:

1. Improve rural development philanthropy practices, values, and competencies
2. Produce additional materials designed to illuminate good practice and create an interactive platform for sharing this knowledge
3. Expand the knowledge and understanding of the role and practice of rural development philanthropy to more people, places, and organizations
4. Attract support for rural development philanthropy in the United States and around the world

In the coming months, the Collaborative will commit to broadening its membership, inviting organizations who are already engaged in rural community development to add their experiences to the expression of rural development philanthropy.

Who Is the Collaborative?

The strength of the Rural Development Philanthropy Collaborative resides in the integrity and collective experience of its organization members. Currently, the core of the Collaborative is the Steering Committee, which is governed by a memorandum of understanding among eight U.S. organization members. Colleagues from Bolivia and Kenya have been involved from the beginning, and many others have joined the conversation in the last two years in meetings at the Wye (MD) and Pocantico (NY) Conference Centers and in Trinidad, California.

Initial work and planning of the Collaborative to date have been primarily advanced through the volunteer time and work of the Steering Committee members. Grant support from the Ford Foundation, California Endowment, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the community foundations on the Steering Committee has helped underwrite the cost of meetings and materials to date.

It is the hope of all who have engaged with the Collaborative that a movement for rural community transformation can be built upon the cornerstones of philanthropy and community development.

Join the Movement

If you would like to learn more about rural development philanthropy and join those who work and advocate to improve its practice, contact any member of the Collaborative Steering Committee:

▪ Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group	Washington, D.C.	www.aspencsg.org
▪ Black Belt Community Foundation	Selma, Alabama	www.blackbeltfound.org
▪ Center for Rural Strategies	Whitesburg, Kentucky	www.ruralstrategies.org
▪ East Tennessee Foundation	Knoxville, Tennessee	www.etf.org
▪ Humboldt Area Foundation	Bayside, California	www.hafoundation.org
▪ Nebraska Community Foundation	Lincoln, Nebraska	www.nebcommfound.org
▪ North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center	Raleigh, North Carolina	www.ncruralcenter.org
▪ West Central Initiative	Fergus Falls, Minnesota	www.wcif.org

Related Rural Development Philanthropy Materials

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| ▪ Rural Development Philanthropy Framework | ▪ Rural Development Philanthropy Critical Practice Profiles |
| ▪ Rural Development Philanthropy Competencies | ▪ Rural Development Philanthropy Bibliography |
| ▪ Rural Development Philanthropy Case Parables | |
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