

**The Recommendations  
Of the Various Working Groups  
At the 2007 Conference on “Philanthropy and Rural America”  
August 7-9, 2007, Missoula, Montana**

*In August of 2007, the Council on Foundations along with the Montana Community Foundation, the Northwest Area Foundation and others convened a Conference on Philanthropy and Rural America: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agenda.” As part of this conference, various working groups identified their key recommendations/ideas for growing philanthropy’s role in building a better quality of life in rural America. The following recommendations (with each working group listed in alphabetical order) represent the specific recommendations of each of the working groups:*

**Arts and Culture**

- Research and disseminate appropriate models for supporting rural arts and culture in rural America.
- The Council on Foundations should incorporate the perspectives of arts and culture into each topic area of the Rural Initiative as the Agenda moves forward in order to expand the understanding of how arts and culture help to advance each sector’s goals, beyond the specific goals of arts and culture.
- For all arts funders and partners: learn what funding mechanisms are available to arts as entrepreneurs and the arts industry as a whole.
- Grantmakers in the Arts should seek to move the discussion of the Rural Agenda forward at its own annual meeting in order to expand the dialogue for all topic areas in rural America, and include other affinity groups in the discussion when possible.

**Community Philanthropy**

- Conduct the transfer of wealth study nationwide for every county in every state. Also, develop and distribute guides on the utilization of the resulting data to grow endowments in each county.
- Promote the use of low profit limited liability companies (L3C’s), and other ways to leverage foundation assets.
- Pass the L3C bill in North Carolina and/or another state legislature and educate Congress about the possible use of L3C’s in legislation at the federal level.
- Identify the rural policy groups already in existence in order to utilize their expertise and engage them in developing the agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Assemble a rural community philanthropy steering group to develop an agenda and strategy to advance the field of “rural community philanthropy as a community change agent.” (The goal: become an affinity group of the Council on Foundations.)
- The Council on Foundations and the philanthropic sector accept their leadership roles as the connectors between rural America and all relevant sectors that have an impact on the issues of rural philanthropy; including Congress, the FDIC, the Federal Reserve; as well as state legislatures and the private sector.

### **Economic Development**

- Pass the L3C bill at the state and federal levels.
- Document other vehicles like the L3C to benefit rural Americans.
- Build new rural capacity to do regional development and discovering and implementing funding for rural economic development work.
- Address the mismatch issue across the philanthropic spectrum of short term versus long term funding of projects.
- Form a Council on Foundations Rural Economic Development Working Group, or link with an existing ongoing effort.
- Build a national fund with pools for starting work on compelling issues.
- Begin building capacity to do rural economic development.

### **Education**

- Develop community engagement and public support from policy makers to parents in the education of rural America's children.
- Replicate successful ideas through funding demonstration projects.
- Support community-based alternatives for children and youth to learn, and that also support learning, especially when parent support is lacking.
- Each foundation working in education should issue reports, hold convenings, or in some other way raise awareness regarding the key issues in rural education, creating a buzz around rural education.
- Identify funders, and provide professional development grants to teachers in rural America.

### **Environment and Natural Resources**

- Encourage grantmaking that marries environmental protection and restoration with community economic development. (For example, community and landscape-scale demonstrations and targeted initiatives.)
- Take advantage of growing interest in locally-grown, healthy food systems; support messaging and outreach that bridges the differences between rural and urban.
- Invest in innovative technologies and in policy development to maximize local community benefits while rapidly increasing renewable low-carbon energy production.
- Fund more long-term collaborations that are cross-disciplinary in projects around the environment, health, community and economic development. Many of today's best innovations come from these collaborative processes.

### **Growing Philanthropy**

- To grow philanthropy in rural America, organized philanthropy can facilitate community transformations in order to facilitate leadership, as well as addressing the issues of race, class, and power.

- Conduct and publish the Transfer of Wealth study now for all 50 states, and demonstrate the ten-year shelf life which reveals opportunities, and demonstrates the sense of urgency this data provides.
- Build capacity in rural organizations – build networks, neighboring, etc., to utilize these needs. Philanthropy needs to expand the networks beyond the traditional rural institutions most commonly associated with these discussions.

### **Health and Wellness**

- Assess the impacts of the 2007 Farm Bill on rural communities and small farmers.
- Engage foundations to develop policy options to promote universal health care at the state level.
- Conduct a national assessment of broadband deployment and rural coverage.
- Work towards universal health care at the federal level.
- Convince Senator Baucus to call for a commission whose mission will be to redefine “Rural” definitions in all federal programs.

### **Housing**

- Build the capacity of rural community developers and rural communities to address the housing needs in rural communities.
- Develop standardized tools and metrics to evaluate and identify local community housing needs as well as housing capacity.

### **Individual and Family Assets**

- Launch the L3C initiative to focus on alternative financial services to rural Americans. Assist in the passage of the bill in North Carolina, or in another state. Also, secure a Congressional mandate to require the IRS to approve nationwide approval.
- Channel more support for innovative financial services and products such as the L3Cs, Shorebanks, Southern Bancorps, MACED, ECD and AFCU.
- Create a funding pool of \$1 million match to operating funds for fuel efficient late model IDA cars.
- Hold a rural meeting again in 2008 with an agenda built by practitioner working groups in advance and responsibility to report on the progress made in one year’s time.
- Assure that rural and underserved areas get attention at the “Philanthropy’s Vision: A Leadership Summit,” the Council’s 2008 Conference.
- Rebuild and strengthen the Rural Funders Networks.

### **Technology**

- Do the research required to discover which foundations fund technology in the grantmaking community and which public entities are involved.
- Leverage existing policies, such as e-rate, etc.
- Build alliances. Survey foundations interested in, or currently funding telecommunications infrastructure; communities and community foundations that are interested in funding.

- Technology's infrastructure in rural America requires a huge commitment by numerous actors, and cannot be accomplished without the commitment from the many sectors needed to achieve optimum results. This includes commitments from the investment, research, policy, and implementation sectors.