BUILDING RURAL LIVELIHOOD

A Thinking and Action Framework

for Designing

RDP Program and Grantmaking Efforts

CONTENTS

BUILDING RURAL LIVELIHOOD

A thinking and action framework
for designing RDP program and grantmaking efforts

Rural Development Philanthropy (RDP) is the process and practice of creating and steering locally controlled endowment- and resource-building, program and grantmaking efforts to improve rural livelihoods, economies and community vitality.

RDP innovation and learning is organized around **four learning questions**. The one we want to focus on here is:

> **How can community foundations use grantmaking and program activities to enhance the economic security of low-income rural families and communities?**

Community foundations that engage in Rural Development Philanthropy use convening, endowment-building, fundraising, grantmaking, leveraging, and other community-building practices to develop human, institutional and financial assets that will strengthen rural places and families now—and into the future.

Effective RDP programs and grantmaking intentionally engage a broad range of rural community institutions and individuals—especially those who typically are left out of community choices and prosperity.

In this framework guide, we will walk you through four steps meant to help you design more effective program and grantmaking efforts focused on improving rural livelihoods in *your* region with your foundation's (and partner) resources. Each successive step is meant to help your board and staff establish good information and a useful context for making challenging design decisions for your rural effort.

The four steps are:

Step 1: Think rural

Development Choices in
Rural Communities

Step 2: Take notice

Start-up Pointers from RDP Practice

Step 3: Know yourself

Gauge Your Rural Readiness

**Step 4: Navigate the RDP
program design circle**
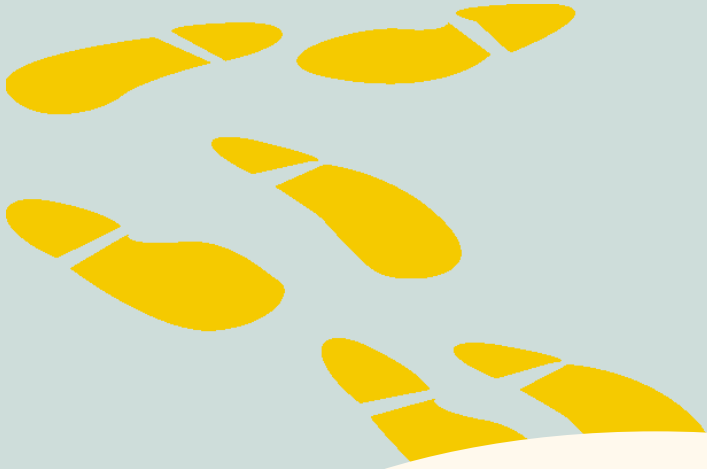
Step 1: Think rural

Development Choices in

Rural Communities

RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE 1: JUST THE BASICS

Who or what is being developed?

Natural resources

Firms

Built resources

People/workers

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructure

Culture/ way of life

Natural resources

CIVIC CAPACITY

Individuals

Government

Community

Organizations

STEP 1: THINK RURAL

Development choices in rural communities

The rural development triangle

What does it mean to improve rural futures? The Rural Development Triangle offers one picture that very simply illustrates the options—and the tensions—you can engage in to advance rural communities.[1]

We have two versions of the triangle to ponder.

Rural development triangle 1: Just the basics. Let's start with the "plain brown wrapper" version. The Rural Development Triangle pictured on the facing page shows three important components of rural development, and how they relate to each other. In it:

■ **Economic development** covers development of the broad economic base as well as targeted economic opportunities for the disadvantaged. Greater equity, in terms of the distribution of wealth and income, is an important core value to keep in mind and promote when making economic development decisions.

Too often, people think that "rural development" means *nothing but* "economic development." This misguided thinking drives the traditional view about how to build rural economies that has dominated the last half century: Rely on the ready 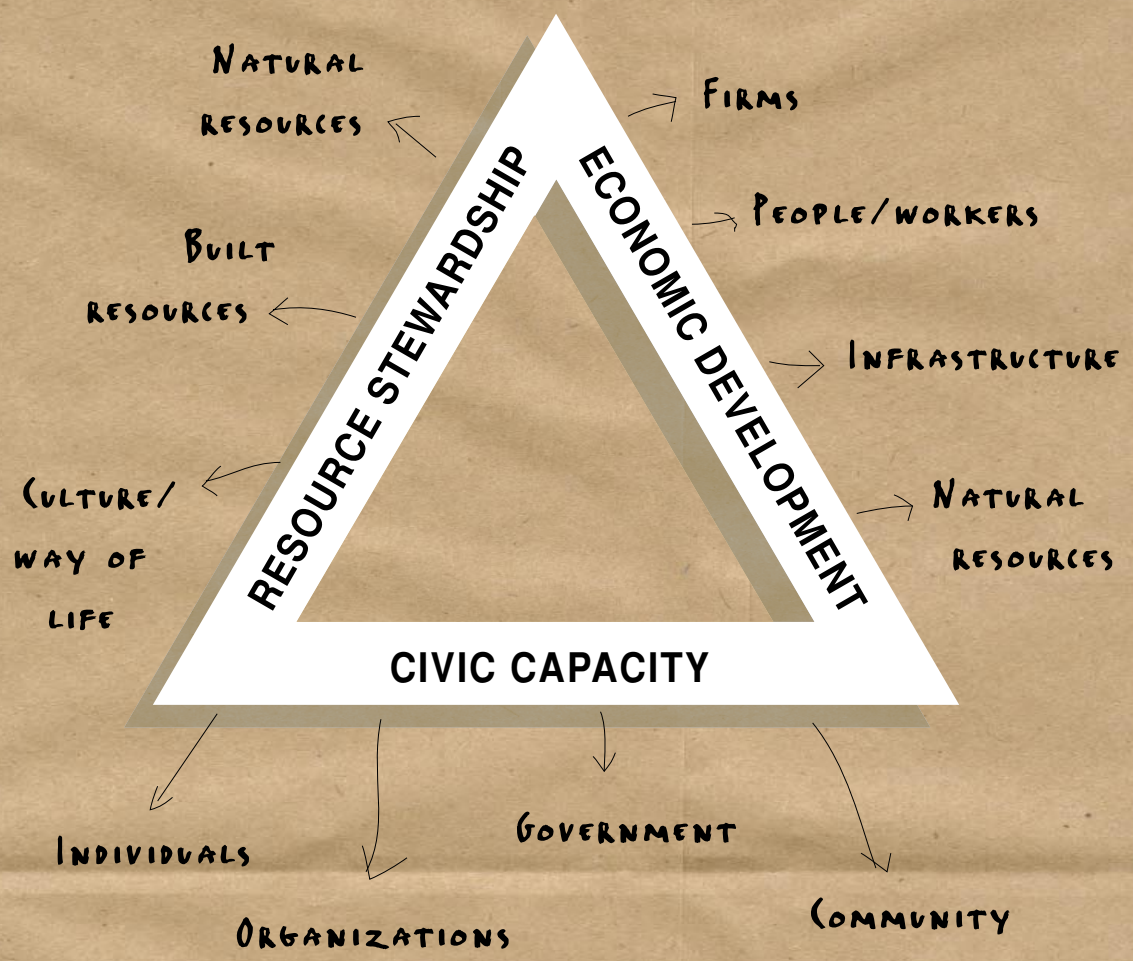availability of natural resources, low labor costs, and lax taxes and regulations to recruit businesses to rural areas. This approach has helped some rural areas, if only temporarily, but has left others scarred economically, socially and environmentally.

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[1] Please note: Many organizations have developed similar pictures or ways to think about rural development options and choices. In Appendix [to come], we refer you to the good work of other organizations, some of them providing much more detail than we do here. There is no one way to think about this; thus, we advocate for no one picture as best (including our own triangle). Rather we advise: Find the explanation that works best for you, and use it!

In recent years, as the economy has gone global, as the methods and technology of work have changed, and as natural resources have become scarce and more highly prized as contributors to our quality of life, new choices for rural development have emerged. They center on growing entrepreneurs from within the community. They base business development strategy on the existing core competencies of resident people and firms—in other words, trying to take advantage of and strengthen what rural people, firms and organizations are already good at. And they focus on finding and pursuing the market opportunities—that is, places to sell their existing products and skills, new ways to sell them, and ideas for developing new products and skills—that complement these core competencies

■ **Resource stewardship** means that natural resources, the resources built by people, and the culture and way of life of the community and its people are both used well today *and* preserved for the use of future generations. A community must steward its natural resources and way of life—that is, nurture its culture and people—if development is to be maintained at a healthy and sustainable level over time.

Economic development typically produces growth. Growth, however, is not always good. Sometimes it can cure what ails you; when children grow taller and stronger, they feel they can do new and better things. Other times, growth can just make a bad situation worse, like when we become overweight. For many communities, as for most people, there is a "right size" beyond which growth will take over the way of life, deplete resources and change the standard of living of many residents—some for the better, some for the worse. In short, economic development and stewardship are sometimes in tension, and a community that focuses on either extreme—growth at any cost *or* a knee-jerk resistance to any change—will not serve residents well.

Community stewardship is made possible when rural citizens acknowledge the value of their resources and engage in civic dialogue to determine, as a community, how and which resources should be developed or preserved. In a healthy community development context, it is the people who live, thrive and survive in the community (rather than "outsiders") who identify the

resource assets the community most values. Unfortunately, such dialogue and action typically occur when it is far too late, when unplanned development has destroyed the amenities that residents most appreciate—often the very natural and cultural resources that have the most value for the community's long-term viability and vitality.

■ **Civic capacity** refers to the ability of a community's citizens to work together over a sustained period to shape a collective future. It includes building individual skills, organizational competence, and community will, connections and effectiveness. Civic capacity is the base from which development decisions—and development actions—take place.

The purpose of building civic capacity is to enable people in a community to work together, make well-considered and collaborative decisions, develop a vision and strategy for the future, and act over time to make these real—all while tapping and building the individual skills and abilities of a ever-increasing quantity and diversity of participants and organizations within the community.

Civic capacity building efforts can encompass a wide range of activities, from formal leadership development efforts to community-wide strategic planning to a wide variety of less formal activities that build trust and camaraderie among citizens—like church socials, girl and boy scouts, volunteer community clean-ups, or regular chamber of commerce breakfasts.

Civic (or "community") capacity building forms the base of the Rural Development Triangle because the better a community's civic capacity, the better the decisions a community is likely to make about its economic development or stewardship choices—and the better the community is at turning those decisions into effective action.

Rural development triangle 2: Development approaches. Now let's look at one other version of the triangle, which can help deepen our understanding of the many opportunities and choices that face us when trying to "enhance economic security of low-income rural families and communities."

Preserve natural resource systems

Retain/expand existing business

Manage use of natural resources

Recruit outside business

Manage waste stream from natural resource use

Develop new business

Preserve/maintain built resources

Capture outside $

Adapt/reuse built resources

Develop human resources/workers

Preserve/maintain local culture(s)

Develop infrastructure

Adapt local culture(s) to change

Manage natural resources

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CIVIC CAPACITY

Equip citizens with leadership skills

Develop local government

Stimulate/sustain civic participation and dialogue

Equalize and share power

Develop community organizations

Conduct ongoing community assessment, planning and evaluation

Connect the community

In this "Development Approach" version, you will find listed the primary approaches or strategies pursued by communities and practitioners—whether by design, luck or default—to develop a community or region.

We won't go into great detail about each approach here, but do take a moment to review the listed approaches listed. As you do so, you may note a few things:

■ **Joint appearances.** Some approaches connected to one side or aspect of the triangle are identical or closely related to approaches on other sides. For example, "Manage natural resources" appears on both the economic development and resource stewardship sides; "Equip citizens with leadership skills" on the civic capacity side is closely connected to "Develop human resources/workers" listed with economic development; many of the approaches listed with civic capacity connect to "Preserve/maintain local culture(s)" approach of resource stewardship.

■ **Impact happens.** That last point clues us in on how connected these approaches are to each other. For example, choose any one approach on any side; now think of how pursuing that approach might affect prospects or aspects of each of the other two sides—whether for good or for ill. (It's pretty easy, isn't it?)

■ **Tension will out...** On the "for ill" side of that last equation, as we mentioned earlier, there is some inherent tension among decisions made on the different sides of the triangle. This is especially true of decisions about economic development and resource stewardship, since the sustainability of economic development requires that some local resources be utilized for development now, while some are preserved for future generations to use (or preserve) for future development.

■ **And so can synergy.** On the "for good" side, you might be able to devise a development approach that engages development on all three sides in a healthy way. For example, what about an approach that develops rural students' business skills and scientific knowledge to re-use some material in the local waste stream (e.g., discarded used tires from the dump) to develop a new product and business (e.g., artistic woven

doormats)? Finding approaches that "hit" all three sides in a positive way tends to make development more healthy and sustainable.

In general, we are coming to believe that rural leaders and communities *must* attend to each side of the Rural Development Triangle if they wish to achieve healthy, sustainable development, and that there is an advantage to addressing the three areas simultaneously.

We will surface more ideas for development approaches focused on improving prospects for low-income rural people and communities when we get to Step 4.

Picture this: A healthy rural community

What does a healthy rural community look like?

Most people think of a place's physical beauty or their standard of living when they are asked, "Is your community healthy?" In your mind, you might see a refurbished main street, a new river walk or a cleaned-up park with children using it; or you might think of some growing businesses, new stores, or a neighbor who just got a pay raise.

These are important signs. But they are signs of what happens *if*—and *after*— a healthy community makes good decisions. What are the signs that a community can do this? These signs are harder to picture. Indeed, one way to raise the level of reflection and discussion about what rural community and economic development efforts might address is to answer this: How *do* you know a healthy community when you see one?

Several years back, civic activist Bruce Adams created such a word picture, by making a list of the contrasts between the attributes of a healthy and an unhealthy community.

RDP foundations have found this table a real discussion-opener with rural community groups, board and advisory committee members, and in town meetings. You may find this useful in a similar way as you orient yourself to beginning or improving your rural program and grantmaking effort. You can use it in a variety of ways, for example:

Healthy	Unhealthy	Reasons	Possible actions to take
optimism	cynicism		
collaboration	confrontation		
focus on unification	focus on division		
"we're in this together"	"not in my backyard"		
solving problems	solution wars		
broad public interest	narrow interests		
consensus building	polarization		
interdependence	parochialism		
tolerance and respect	mean-spiritedness		
trust	questioning motives		
politics of substance	politics of personality		
challenge ideas	challenge people		
problem-solvers	blockers & blamers		
reconciliation	hold grudges		
individual responsibility	me-first		
renewal	gridlock		
focus on future	redebate the past		
listening	attacking		
community discussions	zinger one-liners		
diversity	exclusion		

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Adapted from Bruce Adams *Building Healthy Communities,* (Charlottesville: Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 1995).

■ In a community discussion or leadership retreat, have rural community members individually check off or circle the "healthy" or "unhealthy" attribute they think most closely characterizes their community. Then compare and tally their responses to gauge where they agree they have health assets—and symptoms of malaise (or worse). (Or compare your staff/board answers with community members' answers to get a reality-check on your own perceptions...)

■ Have your board or program advisory committee look at the whole list, and think about rural communities in your region. Which ones are the most healthy? Which are the least? Which fall in the middle? Can you identify any patterns or conjecture any reasons that place a rural community solidly in either column—or in-between?

■ If you find that a majority of rural residents agree their community suffers with a few symptoms in the "unhealthy column," ask them what action(s) they might take to help move that toward the "healthy column."

Note that the Healthy Community chart focuses mostly on aspects of what the Rural Development Triangle calls "civic capacity." As one tool that can help orient your thinking on development choices in rural communities, use of the chart might suggest that you weave some convening of disparate parties, consensus building, or skill/leadership development into the design of your rural program and grantmaking process (even if you are funding economic development or resource stewardship activities); if you do so, it may build the capacity of the community to move toward the healthy column over time.

On to step 2!

So...with all of that back in our heads...

How do *we,* in *our* community foundation, decide what *we* are going to do to improve rural livelihoods with our program and grantmaking energy and resources?

Well, before you start, more to Step 2 for a few pointers or lessons learned from earlier RDP pioneers who have actually... "tried this at home, kids."

Step 2: Take notice

Start-up Pointers from RDP Practice

STEP 2: TAKE NOTICE

STEP 2: TAKE NOTICE

Start-up pointers from RDP practice

You might have a lot of energy, maybe some trepidation, perhaps an urge to experiment or "do it right this time" when you start channeling some of your foundation resources toward improving rural outcomes. The temptation to jump in headlong with both feet is tough to fight, but we suggest that before you leap into the drink, you and your foundation's rural-leading staff, board members and donors reflect on the following advice from others who have taken this challenge on (and learned from it).

■ **There is no cookie cutter approach; wholesale replication of someone else's rural development strategy is not your best route.**

The environment in which your community foundation lives sets the stage for the initial role it can play in its RDP program and grantmaking strategy. In other words, what worked somewhere else may not work for you, because your economic, demographic, cultural and geographic situation may be significantly different.

Your best program design depends on the structure of your community foundation, its age, its current reach, its existing knowledge about local rural economies, the current rural knowledge about the community foundation, the economic development approach you wish to pursue, the region's economic base and assets, and your region's culture.

■ **Don't reinvent rural development wheels.** In the world of rural community and economic development, plenty of actors are already in the mix. Think about the special niche you can play. If there are already players in your rural fields, don't try to do something they are already doing. Instead, creatively help active players amplify *their* capacity to do more and do better.

■ **Be a neutral agent for change, not a competing actor.** Building on the last point, as a general rule, the foundation should design its rural program so that:

….Where good programs exist, you support the organizations running them.

….Where programs exist that can be improved or tweaked, you enhance the capacity of existing organizations to do so.

….Where no effective programs or institutional structures exist, you create new ones.

■ **You are creating the path you are walking; prepare yourselves to be in constant touch and to be flexible.** Taking on strategic grantmaking or other program work focused on rural community and economic development presents at least two significant challenges to most community foundations.

….You may be making grants in little known areas of your region, working with people and organizations whom you may not know that well.

….You (and your staff and your board members and your grantees and your intermediary partners) will be making decisions about economic development choices, which also may be brand new territory.

For that reason, Step 3 (which follows) becomes a mighty important starting point.
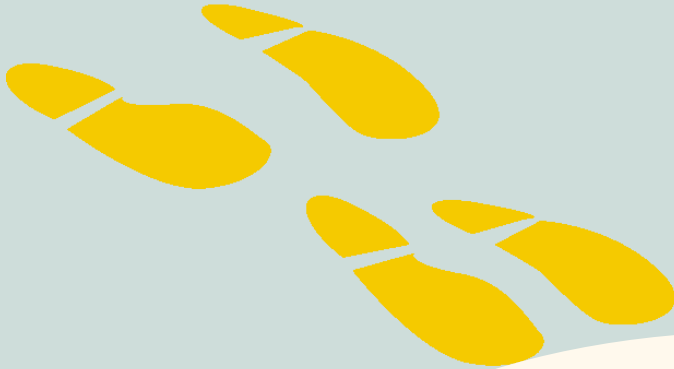
Step 3: Know yourself

Gauge Your Rural Readiness

Step 3: Know yourself

STEP 3: KNOW YOURSELF

Gauge your rural readiness

Before beginning to design a program and/or grantmaking strategy aimed at improving rural livelihoods, your board and staff will benefit from taking a close look at yourselves and your rural territory. With rural ends in mind, you can reflect on your organization, the board as a whole, your donor base, your rural communities and people, your region's organizational resources and any other factors that might help you determine an effective strategy—or that might support or thwart your success.

Consider this step the equivalent of a "rural SWOT* analysis" to determine your community foundation's rural readiness. Program and grantmaking efforts aimed at improving rural livelihoods can focus on a range of issues—from improving employment to developing rural infrastructure. The key is to design your efforts around the best information you can muster about the characteristics, assets, knowledge, and shared history of your organization and rural regions.

As you feel your way through the design of a rural program and/or grantmaking strategy, you are likely to enter unfamiliar territory—literally and figuratively! So, when in doubt, go to the source! If you know at the start that you have a particular rural goal you are seeking to achieve—like assisting rural families in accessing child care, for instance, why not share this goal as a question with other rural stakeholders? Ask nonprofit leaders, civic groups and *rural families themselves* what they know or experience related to rural child care services. What would *they* do to improve these conditions?

Rural readiness review: Queries and potential resources

Listed below are five key Rural Readiness questions. While the questions may strike you as obvious—or possibly overwhelming—the process of assessing and

*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

answering them *as an organization* can help you identify what you do know and don't know about rural conditions, people, organizations, risks and opportunities. With the resulting knowledge in hand, you are likely to make better decisions about what to do with your RDP-focused grantmaking and program resources.

To help you along, we have listed just a few potential sources of information, data and process clues that can help you begin to know yourself and your rural communities. Remember, when gaps in information and data regarding your community exist, your foundation could decide that its first RDP effort will be to *develop* these resources for itself and for other rural community builders.

This list of questions and resources is by no means exhaustive. Consider this a starting point that will no doubt lead you to even better, more specific queries that reflect your foundation's unique region and circumstances.

KNOW YOURSELF!!

The following pages are a series of questions to help you begin to know yourself and your rural communities.

1. What is the current rural capacity, motivation, and mojo of your community foundation?

Is the foundation *aligned* around its desire to engage in rural work in new or better ways? How (if at all) do you currently connect, work with and represent rural areas? In the past, how successful has the foundation been at working in rural (or new) regions?

Potential resources

■ **Staff and board rural connections:** Take an inventory: What members of your current staff and board have a strong understanding of, reside in, or work in rural communities? Do have a critical mass of rural connections, or need some more? If more are needed, how will you build them?

■ **Board and advisory meeting minutes:** Collect and review the minutes from board and advisory committee meetings taking place over the past couple of years. Have rural conditions and issues come up several or more times? What can you learn from these mentions—about what you do and don't know about your rural areas?

■ **Review of existing workload.** If you are starting a new line of grantmaking or program work in rural areas, do you have the staff and board capacity to take it on? Are any program and grantmaking initiatives or major fundraising campaigns in the start-up or middle phase? Have any just concluded? Is the staff ready to gear up for a new initiative—or do they need a break?

■ **Board and staff rural will.** Bottom line: Where there is a will, there will be a way. Use interviews, surveys, retreats or discussions to get a sense your foundations will to do rural program and grantmaking, addressing such questions as: Do the official and unofficial board leaders agree that the organization should focus on rural right now? Is the approval conditional or unrestricted? Is the staff excited and prepared to take on more and/or different rural work? Do you have enough "rural champions" on staff and board to keep your focus on improving what you start in rural—and sticking with it?

1. Current rural capacity, motivation, and mojo of our community foundation

Resources/to learn:

2. What have you learned from your foundation's rural experience?

Has the foundation any track record—recent or not—in rural and community development from prior program or grantmaking efforts? If yes, what have you learned from it—about your own capacities and your region's rural challenges?

Potential resources

■ **Program and grantmaking history.** Create a list of the foundation's rural grantmaking or program (non-grantmaking) efforts over the past three-five years. Convene a staff and board team to review that track record. Do patterns emerge? Have you allocated rural funds in certain topical areas—environmental projects, for instance? Have you allocated resources for community and economic development at any time in the past; if yes, what did you learn from it? Have you served certain geographical areas well, while serving others less well or not at all; why or why not? What kind of organizations have you been supporting in rural areas, and why? What process have you used to find potential rural grantees, and how well has it worked for you? Will your next rural program venture be a continuation of prior grantmaking efforts or charting entirely new waters?

■ **Grantee reports.** Collect grant completion reports (if you have them) for grants made in your targeted rural area(s). Do patterns emerge that can help you understand the needs and assets of the rural region(s)? Identify the rural individuals and organizations that have been most successful, been strong partners, exceeded your expectations and/or been willing to share what *didn't* work along with what did work. Also identify which grants seem not to have produced much compared to your expectations, and try to find out why.

■ **Evaluation and learning.** Read through evaluations from past program and grantmaking initiatives—whether related to rural community economic development or not. Does your current rural program or grantmaking practice reflect changes and improvements suggested from this prior evaluation and learning? What steps could you take to ensure that you

2. Lessons from our foundation's rural experience

Resources/to learn:

design your next rural program effort in ways that incorporate lessons from prior initiatives?

3. What is your CF's image with potential rural "customers"?

Do rural community leaders, non-profits and donors know what your community foundation *is?* Do they think you are big-towners or artsy rich folks? Do they understand the range of services that you can provide to the community and donors? Do they really know what "endowment" means?

Potential resources

- **Rural donor lists.** One indication of whether rural people know and trust you is their willingness to give to you...so run a geographical list of your donors. Review the list to see how many of your donors reside in or once lived in rural places. How many have established funds that serve rural places? How many have businesses or second homes in rural places? If these numbers are low, it may indicate the foundation's general lack of presence in rural communities—important to recognize before launching a new rural program.

- **Rural or rural-savvy donor interviews.** Remember also that rural donors can be your eyes and ears in their communities. While donors are not always "in the know," they can be a good starting point for rural reconnaissance. If you can gather a list of rural-focused donors, interview them. Ask them how the foundation is viewed in their rural community. Ask how they themselves came to know and trust the foundation. Why did they choose to give to or establish an endowment? Would they be willing to tell their neighbors and friends their story?

- **Rural nonprofit scan.** Have your board and staff review a list of active rural nonprofits. Are there any rural nonprofits of size or consequence? How many of them have applied to the foundation for grants? Do any of them have endowments; if so, are their agency endowments held by the foundation? In rural areas where you know of no non-profits, are there really none or just none of whom the foundation is aware?

3. Our CF's image with potential rural "customers"

Resources/to learn:

■ **Rural nonprofit interviews or surveys.** As with donors, you can talk with rural non-profits to find out what they think of the foundation, to see if they know about all the services your community foundation can offer a community and its donors, and to learn what challenges face them. A quick, simple and confidential survey of nonprofits can give you a basic sense of whether these potential partners that serve rural communities know and trust you—or, conversely, if they tend to think of you as the "here-today-and-gone-tomorrow" type. Remember, the key to asking for this information is being ready to hear it *and* act upon it—especially if the reviews are mixed!

■ **Rural philanthropic scan.** What is rural grantmaking and grant-receiving experience in your rural areas? Through your statewide or regional association of grantmakers, develop a list of other grantmakers and philanthropic organizations in your targeted region. (If you have no association, you can also try www.guidestar.org—an on-line national database of non-profit organizations, including foundations). How has organized philanthropy or grantmaking been active in your rural region? Is there one family or individual who has been *the* philanthropist in the rural town or region? Do rural nonprofits or community groups that might become your grantees understand the financial, tax-related, and reporting obligations that come with getting grant dollars? If not, might you begin by investing staff time or other program (non-grantmaking) dollars in developing the capacity of the region to receive grants from you and others?

4. What do and don't you know about your rural regions, issues, organizations and people?

What are the assets and needs of low-income people and the communities in your rural regions? What issues confront and confound your rural communities? What do you know about the organizations currently working in your rural area(s)? Do you truly have a good understanding of your rural region or can you point to areas and individuals that you may need to get to know better?

Potential resources

- **Rural weekly/monthly newspapers and radio stations:** Local media outlets can vary widely in quality, community esteem and usefulness but, *generally speaking,* local newspapers and radio stations are the only public forums for rural issues, celebrations and disputes (from garbage collection to zoning). Simply subscribing to and reading the papers and listening to the radio station, especially editorial portions, can help you glean the issues facing a community *right now.* Because they live and breathe community issues, reporters and editors can also help you identify the issues (and the community leaders, both traditional and non-traditional) around which a program or grantmaking effort might be designed. Building positive relationships with editors, station managers and staff reporters can help ensure constructive press coverage and help build awareness of the foundation in a rural community.

- **Rural civic and business groups:** Just as you have done with nonprofit alliances, seek out opportunities to speak to rural civic groups like Kiwanis and Lions Clubs and Chambers of Commerce. These civic organizations are always eager to find speakers for their meetings and can help you learn about a region and begin to identify the individuals who are leaders in their communities. They can also help the region learn about you.

- **Rural social service groups and churches:** Organizations like community action programs, health and human service agencies, volunteer foodbanks or churches are at work in even the most rural communities.

4. Our rural regions, issues, organizations and people

Resources/to learn:

They reach low-income individuals, some on a daily basis. Taken together, they can help you learn the needs, assets and gaps in serving low-income rural individuals and families.

■ **Statewide or regional associations of nonprofits.** If your state or region has developed a nonprofit association, its board and staff can be an excellent resource to help you identify not only the rural nonprofits at work in your region, but also the issues facing these nonprofits and their constituents.

■ **Local nonprofit alliances:** Even in the most rural regions, nonprofit leaders often seek formal or informal ways to connect and share information. Regional nonprofits can steer you toward meetings of these folks. Whether a monthly breakfast gathering or an official staffed association, members of these groups often are assigned to bring in speakers and would be happy to invite a representative of the foundation to speak about grantmaking and community building. In the process, you can ask what you need to know about the region and its assets and needs.

■ **Other philanthropic organizations:** If any other family, corporate, community chest, United Way or other community foundations engage in program and grantmaking activity in this rural region, it will be extremely useful to study their grantmaking priorities, history and track record, and to meet with the boards and staff of these organizations. While the opportunity for collaboration with these foundations, as well as additional funding for your efforts, may emerge, you will also get a sense of the foundations' overall approaches—which can be very important in improving prospects in the rural region.

■ **Rural community meetings:** Invite the rural community at large to a discussion of the region and rural issues. You can do this at a stand-alone "listening event," or in conjunction with a meeting of your board. (Some statewide and regional community foundations "circuit ride" their board meetings from place to place to promote learning about the region and about the foundation.) While this approach can help ensure wide citizen involvement, it might not necessarily be your first step into the community. Relationships with local media outlets, civic groups and nonprofit leaders

will help you convene a more successful and well-attended community meeting. Remember: Rural people do not keep bankers' hours. So don't schedule the meeting for the middle of the day—when most folks are at work, and, in fact, don't schedule just one meeting. Schedule a few meetings at various times and if at all possible, provide child care and transportation. Something worth doing is worth doing right.

■ Research and data

....2000 Census Data. These figures never tell the whole story of a region, but because you can examine much of the data by county, they are useful when first getting to know an area or when rounding out a more qualitative analysis. Since Year 2000 data is so current, this can be an excellent place to test or ground your perceptions of a place. Statistics on employment, poverty, diversity and population can be easily gathered via the Census Bureaus website at www.census.gov.

....Your State Agencies. There are many national organizations that produce state-by-state comparison data that might help you understand your overall economy and social conditions. But issue-related breakdowns and analysis by *county* (which are most helpful to understanding your rural areas) are more likely available from state agencies and organizations that track specific policy areas—for example, business and workforce development, education, child and family well being, income, environmental conditions, and so forth.

....Rural Development Councils. In addition to the National Rural Development Council (NRDC) www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp, 40 states maintain their own statewide rural development councils. Based in Washington D.C., NRDC brings together representatives of over 40 federal agencies and national organizations to provide a uniquely rural perspective to federal policy and program development. NRDC's role is to serve as a conduit of information on the implications and impacts of federal decision-making in rural communities across America.

....Youth Issues: *KIDS COUNT* is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. These annual documents provide benchmarks of child well being and can be

an excellent resource for grantmakers, policy makers and citizens. Website: www.aecf.org/kidscount

....Economic Development Councils and Community Development Corporations: Local, regional and statewide economic and community development agencies are storehouses of useful regional information and data. Again, building relationships with board and staff from these organizations will help you build stronger programs and also collaborate on efforts that would benefit from your related but distinct missions.

....Other agencies committed to improving rural livelihoods. Visit websites to find other rural data or connect to national or regional organizations that may have rural links in your state or region. Here is just a sampling to start:

- *Guide to Rural Data* by Priscilla Salant and Anita J. Waller ©1995: www.islandpress.org/books/Detail.tpl?cart=3108026621241&SKU=1-55963-384-0

- Heartland Center for Leadership Development W.K. Kellogg Collection of Rural Development Resources: www.unl.edu/kellogg

- MDC: www.mdcinc.org

- National Center for Small Communities: www.smallcommunities.org/ncsc

- National Community Action Foundation: www.ncaf.org

- National Civic League: www.ncl.org

- Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development: www.cas.nercrd.psu.edu

- North Central Regional Center for Rural Development: www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu

- Rural LISC: www.ruralisc.org

- Rural Policy Research Institute: www.rupri.org

- Southern Rural Development Center: www.srdc.msstate.edu

- Southern Rural Development Initiative: www.srdi.org

- USDA Cooperative Extension Service: www.reeusda.gov

- USDA Resource and Conservation Development Councils: www.rcdnet.org/rltlnk.htm

- USDA Rural America Briefing Room: www.ers.usda.gov/emphases/rural

- Western Rural Development Center: www.ext.usu.edu/WRDC

- Yellow Wood Associates, Inc.: www.yellowwood.org

5. In your state or region, what is the rationale for your foundation's involvement in efforts focused on low-income rural communities and populations?

Other rural stakeholders will ask you this and more pointed questions about your rural intentions and niche. Having a good answer ready is important—for you and for them.

Potential resources

Your staff and board are *the* resource for this question. And all your prior research comes into play when answering it. Without a meaningful and shared (by your board and staff) answer to this final question, you should not *and really cannot* move forward effectively. Community foundations—because they must receive a mandate from their board as well as (sooner or later) from donors—must be especially prepared to articulate why their program and grantmaking will have a critical and unique impact on the lives of rural families and communities.

Because community foundations have less frequently been invited to the rural table—let alone, the rural *community and economic development* table, staff and board must be prepared to show that they understand and respect both the assets and the challenges of rural communities. Board and staff must also be prepared to explain the value that a community foundation can add to rural efforts.

Be prepared to answer questions not only about the history, strengths, challenges and character of the region you are targeting, but also be prepared to gracefully and clearly answer these kinds of questions:

- Who do you know in this community?

- What is a community foundation?

- What's in it for us (the rural community)?

- What do you know about our community? About poor people? About community and economic development?

5. Rationale for our foundation's involvement in rural efforts

Resources/to learn:

- Who are you calling poor? We aren't poor.

- How are you different from the United Way?

- Is this a one-year program that will be over and forgotten soon after?

- Are there strings attached to your investments here?

- Are you just here looking for donors? Will you be competing for already-scarce resources? Why should we help you or give our money to you?

- And, if things go well,you eventually may be asked by other rural communities why you are not working with them!

In conclusion...

Knowing the difficult, surprising and true answers to the above five Step 3 questions can help you weigh rural program options, learn what you still need to learn, and build the organizational capacities you may need to build.

Your commitment to every question in this "discovery stage" of research and analysis will signify to your program partners and beneficiaries that your foundation is taking a thoughtful, long-term approach—rather than replicating some new grantmaking fad. In addition, Step 3 will introduce you to the obvious and not-so-obvious community leaders and resources that will help you design, implement and sustain your rural program and/or grantmaking in ways that improve rural livelihoods now and in the future. And it will prepare you to take Step 4!

If the board and staff leading your rural program and/or grantmaking strategy understand Step 3 and return to it periodically, they will also begin to recognize the high stakes and hard but rewarding work involved in attempting to improve rural livelihoods. Moreover, they will ensure that your foundation continually learns and improves your efforts every step of the way—no community will ask for anything more than that.
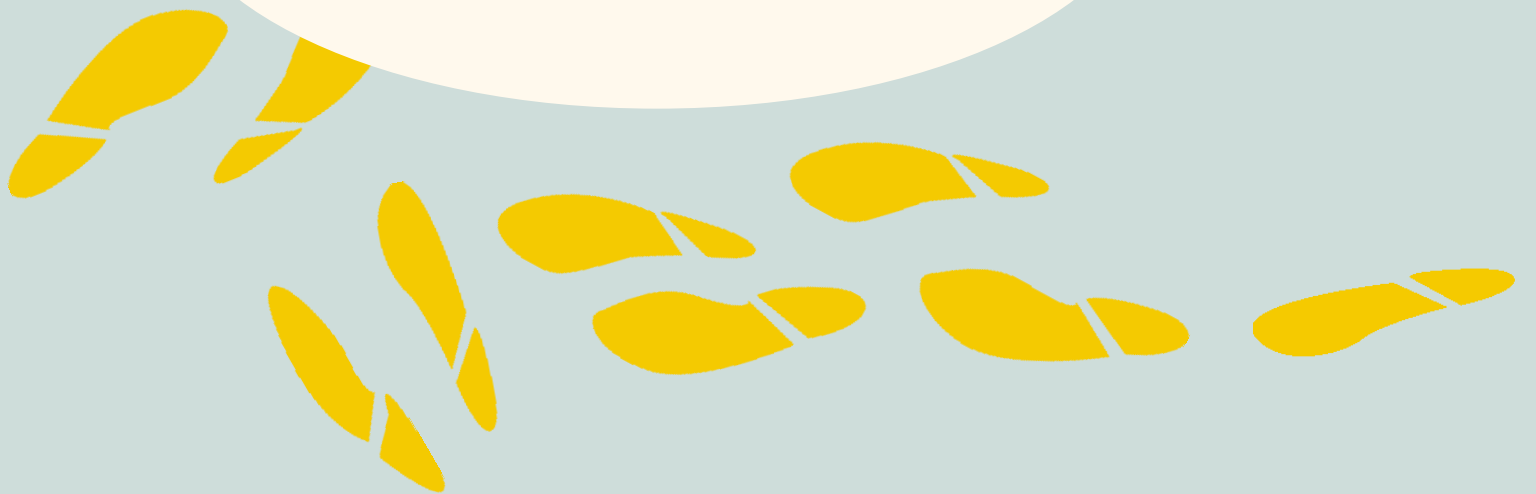
Step 4: Navigate the RDP program design circle

STEP 4

Navigate the RDP program design circle

Your RDP Focus: How will we utilize our program and grantmaking efforts to enhance the economic security of low-income rural families and the communities where they live?

There are many ways you might answer this question. But knowing what you know about your community foundation and your region (based on your work in Step 3), some answers will make more sense—or more impact—in your situation.

Once you do "know yourself," traveling the RDP Program Design Circle will help you determine what is best for *you* to do in *your* situation. It will help you narrow your options, and recognize both your motivation and what it is you really want to accomplish—and that's no small thing!

Based on RDP practice and learning, the Circle poses eight questions to ask yourself—and *answer*, of course—to design an RDP program or grantmaking effort. If you answer all of these, design and deliver your program, and then reflect on your progress and answer them again as you design your next phase of RDP effort, we think you will regularly improve your impact over time. Before we begin to navigate the circle, there are a few key things to consider:

■ **Like politics, all RDP program design is local.** The answers to each "stop" on the RDP Program Design Circle will vary from foundation to foundation. That's because your motivations, your regions, and your foundations' track records all differ.

■ **The path you choose through the circle is local.** For the same reason, the order in which you navigate the Circle will be unique to you, because what is obvious or "given" in one foundation or region or program design situation may be a real puzzle elsewhere. The starting and ending

questions are always the same, but you may answer the "Middle Six" questions in the order that best suits you, based on what you know (or don't know) for certain.

- **Every step you take will produce (and reduce) your options.** The answer to each Circle question likely will affect the possible answers to the remaining questions. This can actually be a helpful thing—as long as you are conscious of it!

Before we get into the intricacies of your path around the RDP Design Circle, let's just look at the circle itself.

To navigate the circle...

There's no real trick to navigating the Circle—just start with what you know. The best way to travel is to answer *first* the questions for which you *know* the answers. Have your RDP program/grantmaking design team:

- **Enter the circle by identifying your RDP catalyst (question/worksheet #1)**, and the influence that catalyst may have on your next steps around the Circle.

- Now start to **travel the circle by answering whichever middle six question you are most certain you can answer**. This becomes Question/Worksheet #2.

- **Continue to answer the next middle six questions** in the order of your own confidence, taking into account how your answers to the prior questions affect your choices. (In other words, how you answered your first question might limit the options available as answers to #2, and so forth.)

- When you get to any **middle six questions for which you do not have a clear, certain answer** yet, determine the information you would need to develop and compare some options. Then list the pros and cons related to each option. (Pros and cons can relate to staffing, budget, impact, visibility, your catalyst, board considerations, reach, level of difficulty, leveraging potential, and so forth.)

1

Enter the Circle...

QUESTION 1:

Catalyst?

Identify your motivation for doing this work.

What is the catalyst that is motivating you to do RDP program and grantmaking activity? What energy and shape does that give to your effort?

2-7

Travel the Circle (in any order)...

Where?

Choose a rural place in which to work.

What particular rural region or set of places do you want to target with your RDP program and grantmaking effort?

For whom?

Choose a rural people/population to target for impact.

What, if any, specific economically distressed rural population do you want to target for special impact through your RDP program or grantmaking?

Which resources and how much?

Determine the source, type and amount of resources you can/will commit.

What staff, board, program, operational and grant resources will you commit to your RDP effort? What resources from your funding or action partners can you bring to the rural effort or leverage from inside or outside the region?

What?

Choose a rural development approach or strategy.

What particular change will improve the economic security of low-income rural people and the viability of their communities in your region?

How long?

Choose a period of time over which you plan to sustain the effort.

What is the length of time to which you will commit funding and support for your RDP program effort?

With whom?

Choose an institution(s) to work with.

With whom will you work to help produce and deliver the goods—that is, to help make sure your program and grantmaking meets its goals?

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Question 8:

Coming Full Circle

So what?

Determine your specific realistic outcomes, how you will track indicators of those outcomes, and the process by which you will reflect and act on your learning.

Based on the design that emerges from your journey around the Circle, what are one or two realistic short- or medium-term outcomes that you are driving to achieve for rural communities and families through your RDP program or grantmaking effort? What indicators would tell you you are getting there? Who and how will you measure them? What process will you use to reflect on your progress? Who will be responsible to apply your learning and correct your course the next time around?

■ Have your foundation's design team begin **WEIGHING AND MAKING CHOICES ON THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**, taking into account your pros and cons as well as the impact you wish to achieve. When you answer one question, then move on to another unanswered question, and see if your options there have been affected by your most recent answer.

■ **CONTINUE UNTIL YOU ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS.**

■ **COMPLETE THE CIRCLE (AND COME FULL CIRCLE) BY ANSWERING QUESTION 8: SO WHAT?**

Take your final list and use it to detail what it is you plan to do. Once you have done this, *then* consider the various ways you can best structure a grant or use your program or dollars to make your design happen.

Question 1: Catalyst?

Identify your motivation for doing this work.

QUESTION 1: CATALYST?

Identify your motivation for doing this work

What is the catalyst that is motivating you to do RDP program and grantmaking activity? What energy and shape does that give to your effort?

In most cases, community foundations take on the challenge of program and grantmaking to improve rural livelihoods because something or someone is pushing them to do it. Knowing and naming this catalyst is always Question 1 because the nature and intent of that catalyst may influence what you fund in rural, where you fund in rural, and what you must do to sustain a rural effort.

So no need to start your RDP program design in a vacuum! Better to clarify your catalyst and determine at the start how that catalyst might affect your answers to the Middle 6 questions—and your ability to sustain the RDP program effort.

Catalysts fall into one of two general categories:

■ **Internal:** Your foundation's full board, individual board members, staff, or a combination of them all.

■ **External:** Local donors, migrated donors, private foundations, rural leaders

For each catalyst, there are two additional factors to clarify:

■ **Their RDP care:** What is the rural mission, issue or area that the Catalyst cares about—that is, what rural-focused concern brings them to the community foundation's program and grantmaking table?

■ **Their RDP action:** What action are they taking to nurture RDP program and grantmaking through the community foundation?

What's your motivation?

Instructions: Under this flap, you'll find a matrix that offers a list of typical catalysts, cares and actions. Reflect on it with your community foundation's RDP efforts in mind, and then move on to the worksheet on the next page.

Find your internal or external catalyst for a specific RDP program or grantmaking effort. Then in that catalyst's column, check off both their **PRIMARY RDP CARE** and their **RDP ACTION**.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER	RDP PROGRAM AND GRANTMAKING CATALYST								
	INTERNAL				EXTERNAL				
What does the RDP Catalyst care about?	CF board and staff	CF board	CF board member	CF staff	Private/ corporate/family foundation	Rural community leaders	Rural donor	Metro or out-migrated donor	Substantial bequest/gift (donor deceased)
The CF's role as a leading—or the *only*—regional institution; thus wants to strengthen and tie the region together and/or seek greater CF participation and impact in rural issues and areas.									
A specific issue that relates to rural poverty and/or rural community economic development									
Rural places in general									
A specific rural place									
A specific rural institution/organization									
Other: _____									
What action is the RDP Catalyst taking?									
Demands that CF set aside portion of its unrestricted (or CED issue-restricted) grant-making for CED grantmaking in rural areas									
Offers rural endowment challenge to state-wide or regional CF, accompanied with mandate to expand its rural CED grantmaking									
Establishes donor-advised/pass-through (non-endowed) funds for rural community or area									
Establishes donor-advised/pass-through (non-endowed) funds for CED issue that is relevant in CF's rural areas									
Endows a specific rural community or area									
Endows field of interest fund on CED issue that is relevant in CF's rural areas									
Other: _____									

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The catalyst worksheet: Question #1

Name your catalyst:

What is the catalyst's RDP care? _____
_____
_____

What is the catalyst's RDP action? _____
_____
_____

Now answer below: Does this catalyst clearly determine or restrict your answers to any of the middle six RDP program Questions? If yes, in what way?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
For whom?			
What?			
With whom?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will the conditions of this catalyst likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name your RDP program/grantmaking catalyst and to reflect on how that catalyst might affect your answers to the ensuing RDP design circle questions. In the best of all possible worlds, your catalyst would leave you free, open and unrestricted to use your best judgment on designing your RDP program strategy, but that is rarely the case in the real world. So why not start by naming what you do know, and then advance from there?

Of course, you may have many catalysts for your various types of RDP grantmaking. You can fill in one of these charts for each major catalyst, or for new ones. For our purposes—that is, to practice navigating the RDP program design circle—choose one of your catalysts that you think is quite important or challenging (use the catalyst table to spark your thinking), and then fill this out.

The CATALYST WORKSHEET:

What catalyst(s) is/are motivating your community foundation to do this RDP program & grantmaking activity? What energy and shape does that give to your effort?

The middle six/question__: Where?

Choose a place in which to work.

QUESTION [ ]: WHERE?

Choose a place in which to work.

What particular rural region or set of places do you want to target with your RDP program and grantmaking effort?

Is there a particular rural region or set of places that you want to target with your rural CED grantmaking—or that you *must* target because of your answer to one of the other RDP Design Questions? What are they and why are these rural places suited for your rural program/grantmaking?

Overall, you have five main choices for *where* to place RDP program and grantmaking work in your community foundation's region. You can place it in:

- One rural community/area
- Several or all rural communities within a sub-region
- A sample of rural communities/areas selected from the entire region
- Every rural community in your region
- The entire region (as a region—not individual communities)

Geography does matter. In any funds-distributing initiative, there is enormous pressure to distribute resources across the landscape in a geopolitically equitable or representative manner. Community foundations' RDP geographic choices tend to try to seek some balance between proximity and spread.

- **With proximity:** You get critical mass and ease of access. If a community foundation chooses grantees in a limited sub-region, it may get a critical mass of communities in close proximity, easing the opportunity to get them together, support, push and learn from each other. It can build a sense of the region's economy, break down meaningless enmities, and form sensible regional partnerships. It can also aid intensive endowment building efforts when the foundation has a geographically limited fund or affiliate-type governance structure. This option is generally easier to staff. The drawback is that you cover less than the state/region, and thus may get

less diversity, visibility for the CF, and breadth of learning. Moreover, creating multi-community sub-regions is tricky business: There are economic regions, political or jurisdictional regions (often irrelevant), regions of communities that share a common history, regions defined by geographic features that act as literal or figurative barriers to interaction (hills, rivers, tracks). If a sub-region is poorly defined—for example, if it does not comprise an economic sub-region, or involves pieces of several—it may thwart your efforts.

■ **With Spread:** You get diversity and coverage. If a community foundation plants seeds in diverse environments across a wide range of territory, or covers the whole state/region, it gets more diversity and a broader range of economic learning. Moreover, it can establish its own presence as a statewide (or regionwide) entity, leaving no question about the boundaries of its "community." But in thinly populated regions, having far-flung grantees can be an administrative, budgetary and logistical nightmare. Maintaining oversight, providing technical assistance, conducting training or cross-project learning, and keeping up regular communication are all extraordinarily difficult. It creates more pressure and demands on the staff or intermediary to make up the difference—and adds to their travel time.

Many considerations might affect your choice of geographic coverage:

■ **Organizational priorities.** Choices made about the geographic coverage of grantmaking tend to reflect the organizational structure/evolution of the choosing foundation. For example, the well established New Hampshire Charitable Foundation recently chose to strengthen a relatively new regional division and concentrated some rural grantmaking in that region; the younger Montana Community Foundation chose to reach every corner of the state with a new rural program; when it was not well known, the New Mexico Community Foundation initially chose to focus some new rural grant resources in the neglected southern part of the state, while doing open participation activities for rural nonprofits across the entire state to raise its rural visibility.

■ **Staffing.** Wide dispersion may not create more work for staff on site—but the work will require extra time, wear and tear from staff for travel,

and for the necessity to get to know more than one economic area very well. (Of course it may be that closer proximity requires just as much staff time because they are expected to show up more often.)

■ **Choice of intermediary/TA provider.** Geographic proximity or location may have an impact on the choice of a technical assistance or training intermediary partner to work with communities. *(See With Whom?)* For example, must a partner intermediary be located within the region? When communities are far apart, is it possible for an effective intermediary to serve them all? What special supports will be required to service dispersed grantees?

■ **Remember: Less may be more.** The need or demand will always be greater than resources. So be selective for impact: where you go is a function of resources, development approach and opportunity

Other considerations that might affect your choice include:

■ Who will you work with in this location(s)? Who makes decisions about the program design for each place? How are these decisions made?

■ How will your staff best reach and maintain regular contact with this place(s)? What other kinds of wear and tear will it place on your operations?

■ Do you want to go broad or deep?

■ Do you want to work in areas of the greatest rural need? Do you want to "ensure" success by working in those rural areas considered most likely to succeed?

■ If you work in more than one place, how can you foster contact and learning among them?

■ What kind of future RDP mileage can you get from this choice?

Where will you work?

Instructions: Under this flap and on the facing page, you'll find the **where choices table,** which lists examples of each of your five choices for where to place your RDP program and grantmaking work. These two pages also offer a smattering of potential RDP benefits and challenges related to each choice. Reflect on the table, and then move on to the **where worksheet.**

Place your RDP program and grantmaking effort in the best-fitting "where" category, and think about the related benefits and challenges.

THE WHERE CHOICES	EXAMPLES	POTENTIAL RDP BENEFITS	POTENTIAL RDP CHALLENGES
One rural community/area	**The community Foundation serving coastal south carolina** New donor sponsored significant new rural CED grantmaking in rural area where CF had not been active.	■ Can "go deep" or pilot rural grantmaking in a receptive community and learn tough lessons to apply in other places (correcting missteps in process or strategy before going to scale) ■ By focusing resources deep in one rural area, might produce sufficient impact to affect local economy and quality of life. ■ Building a comprehensive success story can spark efforts/donors in neighboring communities ■ Staff demands: Low to medium	■ What works in one place may not work in another—difficult to transfer lessons because places are different ■ With only one story to tell, may be difficult to promote RDP program and endowment building ■ If CF board or staff (as opposed to donor) chooses the community, may make communities that were not selected unhappy with or critical of CF. ■ Area may become dependent on the CF.
Several or all rural communities within a sub-region	**North carolina community foundation** Now piloting rural CED grantmaking in their western region affiliates	■ Also allows "pilot" effort, but with more differentiation, and thus more learning potential across sites that will be useful for larger effort ■ Might encourage economic or cultural sub-region to connect and "gel" around key regional issues ■ Easy to convene grantees for skill-building and to learn from each other. ■ Engages healthy "can do" competition among neighboring communities ■ If sub-region has particular CED issue, good way to spark field of interest effort ■ Staff demands: Medium (increased travel and variation)	■ May have to get past ancient basketball/football rivalries of neighboring communities to get them to work with each other. ■ Decisionmaking and leadership style may vary from community to community, creating more demands on staff. ■ If CF board or staff (as opposed to donor) chooses the sub-region, may make other sub-regions that were not selected unhappy with or critical of CF.
A sampling of rural communities/areas selected from the entire region	**Montana cf** Provided rural CED grants in three single communities/counties across state **Maine cf** Supported selected rural CAP agencies in reinventing themselves to get families out of poverty	■ Allows the entire variation within region to be represented. ■ Allows broadest learning opportunity because of variations. ■ If selected by RFP, may surface the grantees with most energy/experience, which might favor successful efforts. ■ Seems to place communities on equal footing for selection ■ Produces many stories useful for marketing ■ May be a good way to get maximum mileage on a particular rural CED issue focus	■ If selected by RFP, may surface the grantees with most energy, rather than the rural areas with the most need. ■ Makes convening grantees/communities for learning difficult because of distance and cost ■ Decisionmaking and leadership style may vary from community to community, creating more demands on staff. ■ Staff demands: High (travel, variation, maintain connections with number of spread-out grantees)

THE WHERE CHOICES	EXAMPLES	POTENTIAL RDP BENEFITS	POTENTIAL RDP CHALLENGES
Every rural community in the region	**New mexico cf** Provided circuit riding non-profit skills training to rural nonprofit service providers **Wyoming cf** Supports community visioning assistance to state's rural communities	■ Offering program services to all gets CF's name out and helps rural areas (and potential donors) see value of CF ■ If CF area faces a particular rural challenge, good way to get comprehensive and focused action underway ■ If focused on an issue or skill, might be a good opportunity to partner with or build the capacities of a needed non-profit partner in the state or region—which can be the CF's exit strategy ■ May be good way for CF to get to know entire region	■ Tends more toward skill-building efforts; impact will be broad, but less likely deep ■ Can create demand for "More!" from rural communities that is impossible for CF to meet. ■ Staff demands: High (travel, variation, number of grantees) unless a partner is involved
The entire rural region (rather than to individual communities)	**Humboldt area foundation/create foundation (ms)** CF created entity to draw together rural CED actors from the entire region to produce regionwide CED information, goals and agenda. **West central initiative** Sponsored infrastructure needs and maintenance study for entire Minnesota region	■ May position CF as the go-to organization for rural/regional innovation and development—attracting additional funding resources ■ Makes the region look coherent and together to outside funders ■ Can build healthy exchange and competition among region's communities ■ Can create new data and peer advisors useful to RDP efforts of individual communities in the region ■ Good way for CF to get to know region	■ May position CF as the go-to organization for rural/regional innovation and development—creating too much demand for CF to meet with available resources ■ Tough to fund over time ■ Staff demand: High (travel, level of coordinating effort, "no one else will do it right," resolve disputes, become the regional referral service)

Where will you work?

(continued)

The WHERE worksheet:

What particular rural region or set of places do you want to target with your program and grantmaking focused on rural CED?

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name where you want to target this particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

The where? worksheet: Your question #_____

Your target area choice	Details, if any (e.g., community or region name, if known)
One rural community/area	
Several or all rural communities within a sub-region	
A sample of rural communities/areas selected from the entire region	
Every rural community in your region	
The entire region	

Now answer below: Does this where choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, how?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
For whom?			
What?			
With whom?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will the conditions of this where choice likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

THE MIDDLE SIX/QUESTION ___: FOR WHOM?

Choose a rural people/population to target for impact.

2

QUESTION [ ]: FOR WHOM?

Choose a rural people/population to target for impact.

What, if any, specific economically distressed rural population do you want to target for special impact through your your RDP program or grantmaking?

One way that community foundations can target their RDP efforts is to focus on particular rural people or population segments that suffer economic disadvantage or would particularly benefit from strategic community and economic development opportunity. In fact, community development history shows that efforts targeted at improving the economic livelihood of a community's most struggling "have-nots" usually raises the quality of life for all over the long term.

There are many ways to categorize people or populations that may experience a high incidence of economic stress in a region. For example:

By population type

- **Employment/occupation groups:** Can you identify a category of workers or jobs in your region's industries that pay poorly or offer no benefits?

- **Gender groups:** Do women or men in your region or sub-region experience higher rates of unemployment or need for assistance?

- **Ethnic/racial groups:** Are there particular ethnic, racial or immigrant groups that experience higher rates of poverty, unemployment, injustice, or need for assistance?

- **Geographic groups:** Do you have geographic pockets of poverty where helping services are ineffective or inaccessible?

- **Family status groups:** Do single mothers or fathers, or divorced people, or families with dependent parents experience particular economic hardship?

- **Age groups:** Are children or seniors at serious risk in your rural areas?

- **Disabled groups:** Do you have a significant rural population that is physically or mentally challenged?

- **Disaster-struck groups:** Has a flood, fire, hurricane or other disaster suddenly impoverished some rural residents?

Likewise, your target group could be typified by the condition that appears to cause and/or perpetuate their economic disadvantage. For example, you could target:

By condition

- **Income-poor groups:** People who do not earn enough income to make ends meet.

- **Asset-poor groups:** People who have no prospect of acquiring assets—education, a home, a business, a car—that will help them and their children get out of poverty over the long-term.

- **Benefit-poor groups:** People who do not receive health, disability, and retirement benefits; who cannot afford to pay for them or for insurance; and/or who cannot access health services.

- **Lack employment opportunities:** People who have no job prospects in the region.

- **Lack employment ladder:** People whose occupations do not allow for advancement.

- **Lack employment supports:** People who cannot access transportation, skill development, and other help they need in order to obtain and hold a job.

- **Lack dependent services:** People who cannot hold a job because they cannot afford or find child care or elder care.

The for whom? table

RURAL POPULATION CATEGORY	CONDITION THAT CAUSES OR PERPETUATES RURAL POVERTY							
	Income-Poor	Asset-Poor	Benefit-Poor	Lack Employment Opportunities	Lack Employment Ladder	Lack Employment Supports	Lack Dependent Services	Other:
Employment/Occupation Groups:								
Gender Groups:								
Ethnic/Racial Groups:								
Geographic Groups:								
Family Status Groups:								
Age Groups:								
Disabled Groups:								
Disaster-Struck Groups:								
Other:								

Instructions: Look at the conditions and populations choices in this table. Think about what you know about your rural populations, conditions and areas. Use the boxes to try to identify in some way your patterns or niches of economic distress for your rural populations. You can check off a whole column or row to target, or you can check off specific boxes where you know you have a particular challenge. Or you can write in the names of rural places where you know you have condition challenges with specific rural populations. (For example, in lincoln county, there might be some folks who "live across the tracks" (a geographic group) from a high-amenity rural area who are particularly asset-poor.) Or you can place question marks where you think you need more information.

For whom?

The for whom worksheet:

What, if any, specific economically distressed rural population do you want to target for special impact through your your RDP program or grantmaking?

Instructions: Under this flap, you will find a matrix that juxtaposes the two for whom categorizations—by population type and by condition. Think about what you know about your challenged rural populations based on step 3: know yourself. What conditions and incidence of disadvantage challenge rural populations in your areas? Reflect on the table with your community foundation's RDP efforts in mind, and then move on to the for whom worksheet.

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name for whom you want to target the particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

The for whom? worksheet: Your question #___

Your rural population choice(s) _____

_____

_____

_____

Your condition choice(s) _____

_____

_____

_____

Now answer below: Does this for whom choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, how?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
What?			
With whom?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will this for whom? choice likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The middle six/question__:
What?

Choose a rural development approach or strategy.

QUESTION [ ]: WHAT?

(CHOOSE A RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH OR STRATEGY.

WHAT PARTICULAR CHANGE WILL IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF LOW-INCOME RURAL PEOPLE AND THE VIABILITY OF THEIR COMMUNITIES IN YOUR REGION?

What kind of development must happen to improve the economic security of your rural people and areas? The answer to What? signifies your underlying development hypothesis, your theory about what change is needed to improve rural livelihoods in your particular rural community(ies) and context(s).

It is typical for program and grantmaking designers to start with What? because it seems tangible and looks like a solution. But, over the years, many Whats? have been funded in search of a For Whom and Where and With Whom. This is typical in the field of community and economic development, where a new idea might seem like the right one, and where donors and funders like to support the new (or next) best thing. For example, when they were in vogue, how many business incubators were organized, built or funded in communities where there was insufficient demand for business incubation services? The "If you build it (or provide the service), they will come" theory doesn't always work. (And when it does, it is likely that Step 3 (Know Yourself) was really well executed.)

Community foundations engaged in RDP have fielded many dreams with their rural CED program and grantmaking practices. A review of this practice surfaces six main Whats?—or community and economic development STRATEGY choices—that CFs have pursued in RDP program and grantmaking efforts. They are:

1. Improve employment
2. Strengthen families
3. Strengthen non-profits
4. Increase civic capacity

5. Steward natural and cultural resources

6. Address potential necessary conditions (to enable the prior five)

On pages 62-63, you will find a table that lists these Six Whats? and offers multiple examples of specific *tactics* or approaches that community foundations have supported or conducted in their RDP program and grantmaking efforts to effect that particular What? strategy.

In general, the What? you support in your RDP program and grantmaking should be chosen to address the context of the conditions of the economically challenged rural people and communities you are targeting. But sometimes What? does come first—for example, when a donor designates what she wants to fund, or when a community foundation is asked by local leaders to fill a gap.

There are a few things to keep in mind when you choose the RDP What? you want to support:

■ **Your impact on rural families and economies is likely to be once-removed.** Some grantmaking itself does not have *direct* impact on economic livelihoods of the rural poor. Rather, it is the expected eventual outcome of what you fund. For example, you might be strengthening non-profits that provide essential services to low-income workers to help them gain and maintain employment. In evaluation terms, this means your grant outcomes (stronger non-profits—with more resources, better staff, and well-crafted employment services and systems) are not necessarily the same as your grantees' outcomes (serving more low-income rural people with better employment services that actually help them get and keep jobs over the long term)...but you do want to learn over time that one will lead to the other!

■ **Your grant's impact on the rural families and economies is determined more by approach than by scale.** Some $1,000 grants can change the world, and some $500,000 grants don't. Numbers do not count as much as your choices—*and* the community's—about what difference will make the most difference. Sometimes a small grant that offers a new way to do something will change local thinking enough to alter

the attitude and behavior of an entire community. You can constantly plug holes, but the holes will still be there when the plugs wear out...is there something you can fund which will bypass the holes altogether?

■ **All ced is local: What looks like community and economic development varies by community.** Firehouses, education, day care, youth recreation centers, extended care facilities for seniors, arts programs, community celebrations? These may not sound like CED projects. But in some communities, they might be key levers to turning things around—while in others, they are window dressing. Your community foundation must figure out a low-maintenance, even-handed way to draw a flexible line in your RDP grantmaking design that allows some local determination and justification for what is done, but keeps front and center your RDP intent of improving rural livelihoods for the least fortunate.

■ **No matter what you fund, civic capacity building is always in order.** You might be funding the strengthening of rural families or steward-ship of natural resources, but there's always room for building civic capacity. Indeed, RDP grantmaking that builds civic capacity in tandem with another What? strategy helps sustain the impact of community and economic develop-ment. It pays to intentionally design your RDP grantmaking or program work to help build the capacity of the grantee to establish new (unprecedented) conversations across class, race, political and historic boundaries; develop shared knowledge and vision for the community's economic future; and generate fundable ideas that will help achieve that vision.

■ **Program design ripple effects are as important as project impact effects.** To build on that last point, the new conversations, connections, relationships. trust, ideas and ways of thinking that your grants produce likely will matter more over the long-term than whether the specific economic development objectives of a funded project are achieved. Pay close attention to the design of your grant or program and how it asks your grantees or community partners to work in and across interests, entrenchments and cultures.

All of this said, reflect on The Six Whats table with your community foundation's RDP efforts in mind, and then move on to the What Worksheet.

THE SIX WHATS? OF RDP PROGRAM AND GRANTMAKING

Strategy 1: Improve employment

- Identify worker training needed by local businesses and workers

- Provide or package worker skill training specified to region's needs

- Match workers with employers

- Improve benefits options for working poor

- Provide or package business hiring incentives for under-employed or unemployed workers

- Increase viability/competi-tiveness of businesses/ sectors that employ the working poor

- Increase viability of micro-businesses

- Develop market connections between goods producers or suppliers, business users of those goods, and the end consumers

- Conduct regional develop-ment visioning, planning, information, monitoring

- Other:

Strategy 2: Strengthen families

- Help low-income families and individuals develop financial assets

- Redesign social service pro-vision around meeting the holistic needs of low-income families (as opposed to de-livering services in "silos")

- Improve and increase con-nections between parents, children and extended family

- Improve quality of and increase access to health care for the underserved and uninsured populations (including physical, mental, preventative and wellness health services)

- Address domestic violence

- Provide emergency eco-nomic and crisis assistance

- Connect the community's generations

- Other:

Strategy 3: Strengthen non-profits

- Provide grants for non-profit operations

- Provide project grants to key rural non-profits that build their capacity, reach or impact in providing essential or transformational services to rural communities and families

- Improve or increase profes-sional development of non-profit staff and board

- Improve information systems and analysis capacity of non-profits

- Provide organizational development assistance (strategic planning, mentoring)

- Serve as network hub/knowledge broker for area non-profits

- Establish a revolving loan fund for non-profits

- Match donors with non-profits

- Establish agency endowments and donor advised funds

- Other:

STRATEGY 4: INCREASE CIVIC CAPACITY

- Provide community visioning services
- Engage a broad range of community residents in leadership development programs
- Build community endowments (one-fund/many donors)
- Offer community crisis intervention
- Develop youth philanthropy initiatives
- Establish rural advisory committees/task forces
- Sponsor and/or host community celebrations, festivals, arts and culture events
- Mount community beautification projects
- Increase participation of traditionally underserved, uninvolved in community activities and decisionmaking
- Involve target beneficiaries in design of programs
- Other:

STRATEGY 5: STEWARD NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Convene resource stakeholders for constructive purposes (including those perceived as responsible users, abusers, preservers or conservers)
- Build local business capacity to add value to local resource-based products and services
- Support recycling and conservation and resource trust organizations/ efforts
- Conduct environmental education and awareness
- Preserve and nurture traditional and indigenous cultures
- Host community conversations about resource development values and tensions
- Other:

AND... STRATEGY 6. ADDRESS POTENTIAL NECESSARY CONDITIONS (TO ENABLE THE OTHER 5 STRATEGIES)

- Water/air quality and availability
- Sewers
- Telecommunications availability and access
- Information and research

- Development districts (e.g. Main Street)
- Schools/training systems
- Effective Associations
- Transportation
- Finance

- Government programs
- Childcare
- Eldercare
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Other:

The WHAT worksheet:

What particular change will improve the economic security of low-income rural people and the viability of their communities in your region?

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name what community and economic development strategy you want to pursue with the particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

The what? worksheet: Your question #____

Your what? strategy choice(s)	Your tactic/approach choice(s)

Now answer below: Does this what choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, in what way?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
For whom?			
With whom?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will this what? choice likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The middle six/question__:
With whom?

Choose an institution(s)
to work with.

QUESTION [ ]: WITH WHOM?

(CHOOSE AN INSTITUTION(S) TO WORK WITH.

WITH WHOM WILL YOU WORK TO HELP YOU DELIVER THE GOODS—TO HELP MAKE SURE YOUR PROGRAM AND GRANTMAKING MEETS ITS GOALS?

Community foundations always have partners with whom they work to make their program and grantmaking effort work. No matter what you are funding or doing, you likely have *at least* one of three kinds of partners in the structure of your RDP efforts:

- **GRANTEE PARTNERS.** You may have grantee partners at the community level who are doing the work you fund on the ground.

- **DELIVERY/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERS.** You may have partners at the community or regionwide level (who may be grantees, contractors or just part of a partnership effort) who provide services or technical assistance to your grantees and/or other community-level organizations.

- **RESOURCE PARTNERS.** You may have other funders, donors or community leadership organizations with whom you share "ownership" and decisionmaking in your RDP initiative(s).

The partner choices you make here are crucial. No matter how well designed the rest of your program and grantmaking strategy, your partners need to know what you expect them to do. And you must be able to work together to make decisions, reflect on progress, and act together on what you learn.

Community foundations can choose the intensity of their partnerships as well. You can partner from a great distance, with little contact beyond writing a check and reading a financial report. You can be hands-on and in the thick of it, making decisions with and building capacities of your partners to make RDP impact. Or you can land somewhere between those two extremes. Where you do land on the intensity scale will likely depend on what you are asking your partners to do, where, and for whom—as well as your foundation's preferences for its levels of involvement and role in the community.

Reflect on these selection assistance questions and partnership/design issues....

| PARTNER TYPE	SELECTION ASSISTANCE QUESTIONS
Grantee Partners (at the community level)	■ What organizations currently work with the RDP populations, strategies and/or communities you targeted in What, Where or With Whom? ■ What type, quality and quantity of programs and services do they currently offer? ■ How well are they positioned in the community? Do they involve representation of the whole community—including informal leaders and low-income people—in their efforts? ■ Taken the above into account, will you work with an existing organization, or will you use your RDP program/grants to spark a new and/or broader representation of community leaders and volunteers? *(See also The With Whom for What and Where Choice Spectrum on the next page.)*
Delivery/technical assistance Partners (at the regionwide or RDP initiative-wide level)	■ What regional organizations *currently* connect with the local non-profits and leaders that address the RDP populations, strategies or communities you targeted in What, Where or With Whom? ■ What type, quality and quantity of programs and services do they currently offer? ■ Is there an able institutional partner(s) already at work in your region that is not but *could* be assisting rural non-profits and leaders in addressing the RDP populations, strategies or communities you targeted in What, Where or With Whom? ■ Does your RDP initiative offer an opportunity to build the long-term capacity of an existing or new region-wide institution to better serve the development needs of economically distressed rural communities and/or rural non-profits?
Resource Partners	■ What other resource providers have a stake in improving rural livelihoods in specific communities or in your region? ■ What, if anything, are they currently supporting or funding in your area? ■ What is their history or record of working with you and others?

POTENTIAL RDP PARTNERSHIP/DESIGN ISSUES

- What kinds of skills, resources or new capacity will our grantees need in order to carry out the planned RDP work? How can we structure that into the grant or the RDP initiative as a whole?

- What is the prospect for the grantee to sustain and strengthen the work beyond the grant period? How can we design sustainability into the grant or the RDP initiative as a whole?

- How and how often we will maintain regular contact with these grantees over the course of the grant? Site visits? Reports? Telephone calls? Meetings?

- Does it make sense to convene groups of these RDP grantees to build skills together, learn from each other and develop networks?

- How will we assess and evaluate progress, learning and our partnership relationship?

- Who will make decisions about mid-course corrections in the partnership, using what process?

- Will we partner with them by giving them a grant, contract or fee for service?

- How will we/they structure a way for the grantee partners to have a say in, choose and best access the TA services they most need?

- How and how often we will maintain regular contact with these partners over the course of the grant? Site visits? Reports? Telephone calls? Meetings?

- Can we structure their assistance into peer learning sessions that build connections among grantee partners and across the region?

- How will we assess and evaluate progress, learning and the partnership relationship—between the CF and the TA partner, and between the TA partner and grantees?

- Who will make decisions about mid-course corrections in the partnership, using what process?

- Which of us will provide what resources to the partnership?

- What relationship will this partner have with the grantees and TA partner? Are they the lead or are we? Or is it shared in some way?

- Who will make decisions about design and course-corrections in the RDP effort and partnership, using what process? Do we seek to maintain "equal voices" in the decisions or do we have some other calculus? How will we maintain that?

- How will we assess and evaluate progress, learning and the partnership relationship—between us resource partners, and between the resource partners and the grantee and TA partners?

The With Whom for What and Where Strategic Choice Spectrum—Thinking about the variety of rural grantmaking design options chosen by RDP practitioners, it strikes us that one way to think about a CF's choices in doing strategic rural grantmaking—that is, grantmaking that will have legs, as well as impact on the communities and the community foundation—might be to place it on a spectrum. If you have some sense of what you want to fund and where you want to fund it, you can use this table to help you assess your with whom? partnership possibilities.

This spectrum has three main "options" on it—although there might be many points in between. The options are described in program design terms—specifically what your foundation's role would be in an RDP effort or partnership. But each of these options, in our opinion, implies a different degree or type of CF staff, board, time and resource involvement. As you can see from this table, there may be some cases where there is no partner—or no better partner to take on an RDP activity than the community foundation itself! But if you don't want to reinvent rural development wheels, you might want to consider your other options first....

INFLUENCE OR CHANGE

DESIGN/ MANAGE/ FUND

SUPPORT AS IS
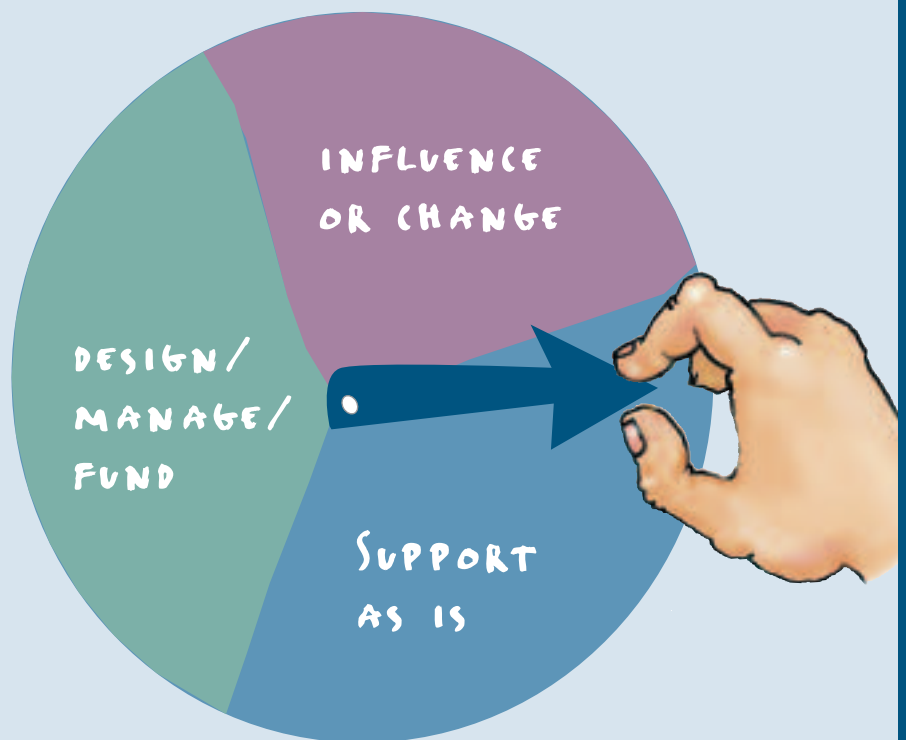
Another way to think about why and whether to partner on your RDP efforts...

THE WITH WHOM FOR WHAT AND WHERE STRATEGIC CHOICE SPECTRUM			
YOUR SPECTRUM CHOICES	**Fundamental question in making the choice**	**Level of CF effort/ involvement**	**Examples**
Support as is existing rural CED/ anti-poverty activities/projects/ institutions	Is some activity/pro-ject/institution already doing the job—and only needs financial support to expand?	Light (to medium)	Greater New Orleans Foundation—Supported regional ECOnomics Institute to expand its efforts to con-nect struggling rural produce growers and fishers to lucra-tive urban and niche markets in the region.
Influence or change existing rural CED/ anti-poverty activities/projects/ institutions	What value can the CF add to this activity/ project/institution through its RDP work that will last beyond it?	Medium (on up to heavy)	Maine Community Foundation—Funded and par-ticipated in peer-learning and planning/operations grants to rural Community Action Programs to change their mis-sions *from* "efficiently distrib-uting services and benefits to poor rural people" *to* "getting rural families out of poverty."
Design/ manage/fund brand new rural CED/ anti-poverty activities/projects/ institutions	Would this activity/ project/institution exist or be happening without the CF's RDP program doing it?	Heaviest	Community Foundation Serving Coastal South Carolina—Created and ran ini-tiative to learn about and edu-cate regional non-profits, community leaders and resi-dents leaders about how African Americans can retain rights and ownership to their "heirs property."
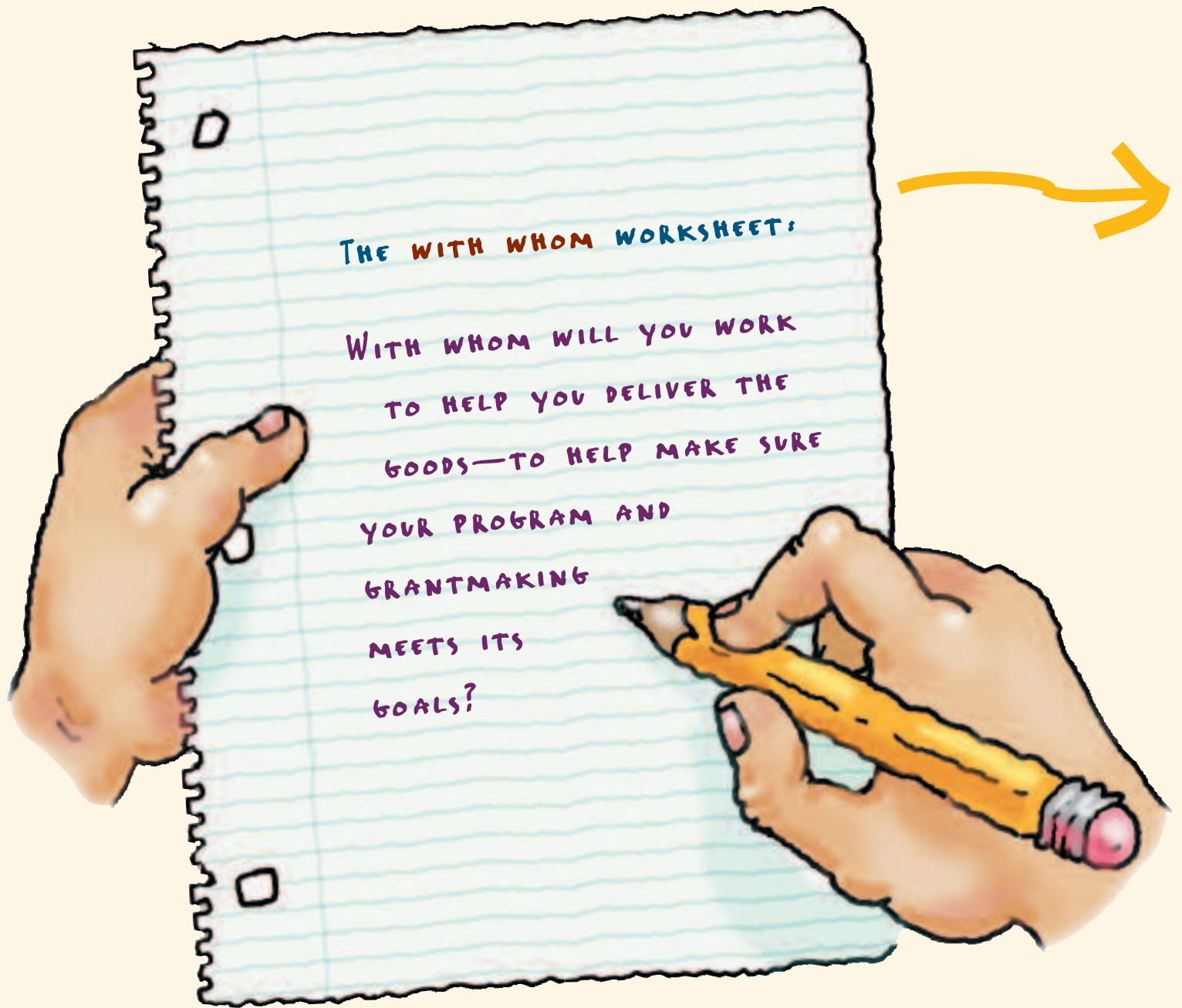
The WITH WHOM WORKSHEET:

With whom will you work to help you deliver the goods—to help make sure your program and grantmaking meets its goals?

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name WITH WHOM your community foundation will work to pursue the particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

The with whom? worksheet: Your question #___

List any insights you have on how your **with whom?** choice may affect how you will select your partner or design the grant/program details.

Your **with whom?** choice(s)	RDP program design implications
Name the specific—or type of—Grantee Partners (if any) with whom you will work at the rural community level:_____ _____ _____	
Name the specific—or type of—Delivery/ Technical Assistance Partners (if any) with whom you will work with at the regionwide or RDP initiative-wide level: _____ _____ _____	
Name the specific—or type of—Resource Partners (if any) with whom you will work with at the community or RDP initiative-wide level: __ _____ _____	

Now answer below: Does this with whom choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, how?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
For whom?			
What?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

WHAT EFFECT WILL THIS WITH WHOM? CHOICE LIKELY HAVE ON THE
SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUR RDP PROGRAM EFFORT OVER THE LONG TERM
(OR ON YOUR EXIT STRATEGY)? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The middle six/question __:
How long?

Choose a period of time
over which you plan
to sustain the
effort.

QUESTION [ ]: HOW LONG?

Choose a period of time over which you plan to sustain the effort.

What is the length of time to which you will commit funding and support for your RDP program effort?

How long will you sustain this specific RDP program? One year? Six months? Three years? As long as it takes? Indefinitely? Will this strategy become part of your organization's very DNA—your core business? Or will you carry out this strategy for a set period of time, dictated by a private foundation's (a Catalyst's) funding period?

The period of time over which an RDP program and/or grantmaking effort is implemented can influence its depth of impact, the opportunity for lasting partnerships and the very success of a program. Unfortunately, there is no magical length of time … or we wouldn't need to include this section! While grantees might say "more time, more time," funders often say "less time, less time." The fact is, no generic length of time can be considered ideal. Once again, the key is to match the length of time with your own unique circumstances—some of which may already be settled because of your catalyst, program partners, geographic location or resource stream.

At the same time, rural development takes time. Sometimes, the nature of a project is such that it is not meant to end. Even if that's the case, however, you will still need to consider when you might expect to see measurable change or progress toward outcomes. So, whether deciding when and how to end a project or when you will note progress, you will need to address issues of time and designate a timeframe for your RDP efforts.

At the beginning of a design process, it is often difficult to really know or to even consider an ending point for a new program or initiative. Everyone is so focused on gearing up that predicting how you will some day gear down seems almost counter-productive. Nevertheless, successful programs often

achieve that success because from the very beginning, program designers consider whether and how they will someday transition their efforts to a conclusion, into the hands of another lead organization, into the capacity of a grantee, into the core business of their foundation—or to no one, because progress has obviated the need to continue any effort.

Again, establishing a timeframe in which you expect to have impacts and during which you expect your organization and its program partners to be highly engaged, energetic and committed can help you evaluate progress at meaningful intervals, recruit and maintain volunteers, ensure a sense of immediacy and raise the stakes for acting now. Moreover, it is the responsible thing to do. It is best for grantees and your region's rural actors to understand from the outset your timeframe intentions so that they can plan accordingly. Otherwise, they might become uncomfortably dependent on you, making it difficult for you to ever exit, or they might be left in the lurch if you do so without notice.

How long, relativity and other timeframe issues

As in all things, when it comes to time and RDP programs and grantmaking, Einstein had it right. Time is relative. As with other design elements, "how long" is very often directly related to other design circle factors. *(See How Long? Relative to Other Program Design Circle Questions on the next page.)*

	TIMEFRAME		
	Short Term	**Middle Range**	**Long Term**
Catalyst	Donor offers pass-thru funds to aid low-income rural victims of hurricane in rebuilding their homes.		Individual donors and community leaders in six different rural towns create endowed area funds to be held, grown and managed by the foundation to support local CED projects in perpetuity.
Where?		New state law requires every community to submit a zoning/land use plan by 2004. Lack of resources and conflicts among economic developers and environmentalists have hindered the rural communities in the foundation's service area. Working in these towns as a neutral convener and as a broker with state agencies, the foundation helps the towns meet the deadline while building greater civic capacity.	West Ruralton has been told that in 5 years, its military base will close—the base represents *the* population, economic and educational base of the town. Over the next 5 years, the foundation will fund West Ruralton's efforts to create a post-base community vision and a community-building plan.	
For whom?	Immediate and small grants awarded to case workers to cover emergency healthcare, transportation or other social service needs of income-poor and support-poor individuals.		Foundation adapts development pitch and program strategy of scholarship program to include an "educational loan forgiveness" program that will encourage rural youth to pursue higher education *and* return to work in rural communities.
What?	Foundation funds a one-year study of rural region's employer needs and existing skills to equip economic developers and policy makers with the information they need to improve employment.		Foundation incorporates and staffs a physical nonprofit resource, meeting space and grants information center into its rural headquarters to build the region's non-profit capacity.
With whom?		Seed money and technical assistance to help a nonprofit provide revolving loans to rural entrepreneurs.	Foundation develops partnership with other regional agencies serving low-income residents to encourage collaboration and joint initiatives.
Which and how many resources?	Annual meeting (covered by annual operating budget) is used as an opportunity to present a rural CED speaker and to specially invite and meet rural CED actors.	Private foundation provides 3-year capacity-building grant and pass-thru funds to support foundation in training rural affiliate grant advisory committees make more effective rural CED grants.	

How long will you sustain the program?

Instructions: The table under this flap offers just a small illustration of how other design elements or intentions—that is, your answers to other RDP design circle questions—can influence your answer to "how long?"

Having considered the ways context can influence and even dictate timeframe, it is important to note a few other caveats, alternatives and admonitions. While natural disasters, short-term resource streams and geographical "opportunism" can obviously constrain or expand your timeframe, the variable of time is never something to be ignored or left to chance and circumstance.

Once you've identified whether and how "external" factors will dictate the timeframe of your RDP efforts, you must also consider whether that timeframe itself might influence the overall effectiveness of your RDP program and grantmaking. Remember, your efforts are aiming to enhance the economic security or low-income rural families and the communities where they live. If either an externally or a self-imposed timeframe is keeping you from that ultimate goal, adjust your expectations and establish shorter term outcomes within a longer time horizon.

When considering the ways How Long? might influence "how effective," ask yourself: Is it really now or never? Realistically speaking, sometimes it really is now or never—natural disasters and unexpected bequests don't work on our schedules. But, if the timeframe is less rigid, might you work with a donor, your board or a private foundation to establish a more realistic timeframe for accomplishing your shared goals?

To better decide upon or negotiate a program timeframe, explore some of the key factors that often work to expedite or stall your RDP efforts.

■ **Organizational capacity—will your project's success rely upon a series of critical deadlines, fundraising goals and deliverables?**

This is the time to honestly consider your organizational strengths and weaknesses. Do you have a reputation for meeting deadlines? Do you have experience raising funds in a short time period? Have programs ever withered away because funds were not raised in time to cover salaries and project expenses? If this is a concern, consider raising two-three years worth of program funding before beginning the RDP project. This might add a full "fundraising year" to a program before community projects can begin.

But this foresight might also ensure that when the project starts gaining momentum, adequate funds will be there to support it.

- **Long distances—have you had experience carrying out programs in areas that require long-distance, rural travel? Are face-to-face meetings your preferred way of working?**

If you are used to traveling across town for a Rotary Meeting and now must travel three hours one way, it will be a dramatic change and will alter the scale of your program goals and strategies. If meeting with a grantee requires an overnight stay, these meetings will have to be scheduled far in advance and are likely to occur less frequently. Hiring local representatives—even on a part-time basis—can alleviate some of the slower pace and strain that long distances will no doubt trigger.

- **Staff resource—will your project place short- or long-term pressure on your small staff? Can temporary staffing help?**

A summer intern might be able to help, but once summer is over, the intern will be gone. A staff person can be hired to implement a single program initiative, but it may take time to find a staff person with the right skills and experience. A short-term staffing plan will also influence how well and how deeply the project will be integrated into the rest of the organization. It may also affect (for good or ill) the quality of your relationship with program partners.

- **New skills—will the project require you to become experts in rural CED?**

You might hire new staff with CED skills or provide your current staff with new skills. Either way, you will need time to complete these preliminary tasks.

- **Grantee and/or community capacity—will your project rely upon a local nonprofit or an ad hoc group of community leaders to carry out the "on-the-ground" work? If so, is the organization or are these individuals ready and willing to take on this effort?**

When relying upon a lead grantee or volunteers to achieve scheduled programmatic outcomes, having an idea of local capacity and local control

will be critical to predicting how long a project will take achieve its goals. A local nonprofit's communication and technological systems may or may not be ready for the project. A change in staffing, leadership or community priorities can quickly alter a nonprofit's ability to carry out its promises. Community leaders may have tremendous passion and energy, but may surprise you with their lack of follow-through. Administrative tasks that you might take for granted (such as meeting minutes, agendas and alerts about cancelled meetings) may not be the norm for the community in which you are working. How will these differences affect the efficiency of your efforts? Will it be worth it to try to build these skills in volunteers?

■ Partnerships with other organizations—does your project require partnering with other nonprofits?

Relationships take time (like, years!) and relationships leading to collaboration, sharing of resources and long-term accountability take even longer.

■ New core business—will the effort be integrated into the foundation's core business?

Your foundation's core business has no doubt been established for some time and likely was based on a generic community foundation model. If you plan to integrate some aspect of rural CED into your core business, it will take time and buy-in from your entire organization to work out the kinks. As for an "ending point," there won't be one! This work will be part of your organizational identity forever. Be quite sure that this effort can blend into your core—and is not the whim of one staff or board member.

■ Seed funding—will your RDP project provide seed funding for emerging RDP projects? How firmly will you hold to your "no second-year funding" edict? What is your exit strategy as a funder and what is the grantee's strategy for dealing with your exit?

Seed grants are by definition meant to initiate projects that you believe will be capable of sustaining themselves after you're gone. As a responsible seed funder, you must consider and you must help the grantee consider what will happen after the "seeding" stage is over.

■ **Financial acumen**—will your RDP program effort require a diverse and sustainable funding base? Will it rely upon one significant funder over several years? Have you developed a strategy for concluding or diversifying your funding base to continue the program?

In the best of all worlds, one would be prepared for a program's conclusion while at the same time developing new funders to carry the program forward. What often happens instead is a program that has just hit its stride after several years of significant funding is suddenly left with none when that funding cycle comes to a close. As important as it is to build self-sufficiency in your grantees, it is equally important to consider how your RDP efforts can transition or conclude without hanging your program partners and beneficiaries out to dry. It is especially important to avoid the irony of prematurely ending a program aimed at enhancing economic security because you've run out of funds!

Each of these timeframe issues have the potential to either stall or expedite your RDP program and grantmaking efforts in ways that are separate and distinct from other steps in the RDP Design Circle. As a planning tool, it will be useful for you to take a quick, but honest look at whether the timeframe you are hoping to work within is actually realistic. Have you determined that many more of your timeframe issues could potentially stall—rather than expedite—your efforts? Does that one-year timeframe to end rural poverty still seem do-able? Of course, some timeframes are obviously unrealistic. More often, one is already knee-deep in a multi-year effort when one realizes nothing has been accomplished lately. These issues may or may nor have been predicted, but a review of these timing issues (as presented on the How Long Worksheet) can help you think about—and later diagnose—the relationship between these timeframe issues and the success of your RDP program efforts.

Finally, always remember the parable of the tortoise and the hare...slow and steady can win the race!

The **how long worksheet:**

What is the length of time to which you will commit funding and support for your RDP program effort?

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name how long you want to carry out the particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

See instructions on facing page...

The how long? worksheet: Your question #____

Timeframe Issues	Not a Factor	Likely to stall or expedite your efforts								
		Stall								Expedite
Organizational Capacity										
Long Distances										
Staff Resources										
Grantee and/or Community Capacity										
Partnerships with Other Organizations										
New Skills										
New Core Business										
Seed Funding										
Financial Acumen										
Other?										

Now answer below: Does this how long? choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, how?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
For whom?			
What?			
With whom?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will the conditions of this how long? choice likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The middle six/question __:
Which resources, and how much?

Determine the source,
type and amount
of resources you
can/will commit.

QUESTION [ ]:
WHICH RESOURCES AND HOW MUCH?

Determine the source, type and amount of
resources you can/will commit.

What staff, board, program, operational and grant resources will
you commit to your RDP effort? What resources from your funding
or action partners can you bring to the rural effort or leverage
from inside or outside the region?

Dedicating and developing resources is where the rubber meets the road in
your RDP efforts. Let's face it: Staff, communities, board members and
donors know you're serious about something once you begin allocating
resources for it. Whether launching a new RDP program effort or building RDP
into the very core of your community foundation's operations, questions
regarding resources—what, whose and how much—inevitably surface.
Moreover, even the most well-designed, inspiring and globally significant
program in the world might amount to nothing more than good intentions if
the human, financial and physical resources are not there to back it up.

Not surprisingly, the question of Which and how much? is more complicated
than finding a donor or foundation willing to bankroll your efforts. In fact, the
Which and how much? question offers you an opportunity to explore the
resources already in place for your RDP program or grantmaking, and to
consider what kind and how much additional resources you might need to
redirect or develop. Many issues related to figuring out Which and how much?
might be predetermined or influenced by your catalyst or by the other
questions along the RDP Design Circle—particularly your timeframe and what
CED approach you decide to take. Still, your foundation's ability to critically
analyze the resources you will need to *adequately* implement and sustain your
RDP program could prove to be your crowning achievement—or your fatal
flaw. Needless to say, when it comes to Which and how much?, the stakes are
pretty high!

This section will not necessarily steer you effortlessly to the cash cow that will make all your RDP program dreams come true. What it will do is help you think through three things:

1. The resources you will need to implement your program
2. The resources you already have within your organization
3. The resources you may need to locate outside your foundation (or redirect from within)

Again, your own unique situation and choices (especially on the other spokes of the design circle) will provide the depth and color for answering Which and how much? This section will simply help guide your thinking about your resources in broader terms than just dollars and cents, taking into account how the mix of human, financial, physical—and something we call "good will"—resources will gird your efforts.

Mapping your RDP resources

When designing a program or grantmaking effort with community foundation resources, it is often the *financial* resources that one considers most critical and critically—and with good reason! Nevertheless, when identifying resources, it "pays" to consider the range and types of resources that might help you implement an effective RDP program. Moreover, it helps to consider the resources you may *already have* at your disposal.

Resource mapping is a process of brainstorming what you need and then comparing it to what you've got "in-house" and what you will venture to find. When designing your RDP program, this quantitative and qualitative mapping can help you assess and then augment your assets. Resource mapping is just another way to imagine your project plan and budget—it will not replace, but rather will add texture to both those processes.

Resources come in all shapes and sizes. Whether you already have them or will need to find them, it helps to delineate among four general types of resources: human, financial, physical and something we call "good will." Good will matters because much of a program's success or failure will hinge upon

the sentiment you invoke in the communities in which you work. It is worth tracking this resource as a potential win, loss or draw.

To help you imagine mapping, here is an example, using a situation in which the catalyst, program details and timeframe are established. Of course, your situation may vary greatly from this example, depending on your catalyst and all the other questions on the RDP Design Circle. For the purposes of illustration, however, walk through the following Which and how much? exercise with its imaginary context:

1. Example of an RDP program catalyst, aim and timeframe:

To do a resource map, begin with your program/grantmaking catalyst and aims and the resources you believe will be necessary to achieve them.

- **Catalyst:** Your Statewide Economic Development Council (SEDC) reports that rural nonprofits in your foundation's area lack the capacity to raise philanthropic dollars to support rural CED programs. The SEDC challenges rural communities to increase the level of philanthropic dollars invested in their CED efforts by 20% over the next three years.

- **Your RDP effort:** Your foundation perceives that many rural non-profits could improve the impact of their CED programs, and thus attract more foundation dollars to their efforts. You determine you could help improve rural CED and increase rural philanthropy if you provide rural nonprofits that are doing CED with: mini-grants, monthly peer meetings, and one-on-one technical assistance to do program evaluation and outcomes measurement during the first year of the three-year SEDC challenge period.

- **Outcome:** By the end of three years, nonprofits will regularly use evaluations and thus develop stronger CED programs; as a result, they will leverage additional funding from private foundations and donors.

2. Examples of resources needed:

- Expertise in evaluation
- Publicity and marketing of program to encourage nonprofit participation ($500)

- "Incentive Grants" of $3,000 awarded to operating budgets of 7-10 nonprofits that apply and are selected to participate ($21,000 to $30,000)
- Staff travel expenses for one-on-one TA meetings ($2,500)
- Meeting facility
- Meeting expenses
- Administration and program staffing (Equivalent of 1.5 FTE = $60K)
- External, objective project evaluator to assess how foundation's program helps meet SEDC's goal

3. Examples of possible "in-house" assets:

Now it's time to list your foundation's in-house assets. Remember, you should include the human, financial, physical and "good will" assets! Try to include only the assets that are relevant to this project—your board of Fortune 500 CEOs may be a significant asset for some projects, but will it be an asset for *this* project? But, don't be too narrow either—might the former board member who is now mayor of the town in which you hope to work be a "good will" asset?

- Staff's 15 years of program evaluation experience
- $10,000 in discretionary grants for start-up of program
- New computer systems and software for tracking grantees
- Board member is president of local college and has offered free meeting space
- State Economic Development Council has offered to partner with the foundation and cover the expenses of an outside evaluator to follow the program over the next three years
- Flexible and timely disaster relief funds provided to rural areas by foundation a decade ago have helped establish trust and good will among rural residents and nonprofits
- A well-respected, connected donor with a commitment to the region's economic development has offered $10,000 from advised fund to support the project

4. Making the connections

Now juxtapose your assets and your resources needed. Looking at your assets and your resources needed columns, draw a line connecting the "in-

house" assets and the "resources needed" that they might fulfill or at least contribute to. In other words, if your project is going to require staff with expertise in peer learning—and you have a staff with that expertise, draw a line between these columns. Continue down the columns in this manner.

"In-House" Assets	Match?	Resources Needed
■ Staff's 15 years of program evaluation experience		■ Expertise in evaluation
■ Board member is president of local college—has offered free meeting space		■ Meeting facility
		■ Meeting expenses
■ Flexible and timely disaster relief funds provided by foundation a decade ago have helped establish trust and good will among rural residents and nonprofits		■ Publicity and marketing of program to encourage nonprofit participation ($500)
		■ "Incentive Grants" of $3,000 awarded to operating budgets of 7-10 nonprofits that apply and are selected to participate ($21,000 to $30,000)
■ Well-respected, connected donor has offered $10,000 from her advised fund to support the project		
■ $10,000 in discretionary funds for start-up of program		■ Administration and planning (Equivalent of 1.5 FTE = $60K)
■ New computer systems and software for tracking grantees		■ External, objective project evaluator to determine foundation's role in helping to meet Economic Development Council's goal
■ Economic Development Council will be a partner and will cover expenses of outside evaluator to track the program		■ Staff travel expenses for one-on-one TA meetings ($2,500)

Now check it out. Are any of the "resources needed" not connected to an "in-house asset"? Is there an in-house asset that will contribute, but not completely fulfill the resources needed? If so, now is the time to add a final column where you determine the outside human, financial, physical and "good will" resources you will need to implement your RDP program. To continue with the sample worksheet:

"In-house" assets	Match?	Resources needed	Match?	Resources to find

"In-house" assets
- Staff's 15 years of program evaluation experience
- Board member is president of local college—has offered free meeting space
- Flexible and timely disaster relief funds provided by foundation a decade ago have helped establish trust and good will among rural residents and non-profits
- Well-respected and connected donor has offered $10,000 from her advised fund to support the project
- $10,000 in discretionary funds for start-up of program
- New computer systems and software for tracking grantees
- Economic Development Council will be a partner and will cover expenses of outside evaluator to track the program

Resources needed
- Expertise in evaluation
- Meeting facility
- Meeting expenses
- Publicity and marketing of program to encourage nonprofit participation ($500)
- "Incentive Grants" of $3,000 awarded to operating budgets of 7-10 nonprofits that apply and are selected to participate ($21,000 to $30,000)
- Administration and program delivery (Staff time is equivalent to 1.0 FTE = $40K)
- External, objective project evaluator to determine foundation's role in helping to meet Economic Development Council's goal
- Staff travel expenses for one-on-one TA meetings ($2,500)

Resources to find
- Only .5 FTE of qualified staff available—must supplement with new staff or consultant
- $500 in printing/publicity costs—using rural printer to support local business
- $10—20,000 in pass through grants from donors or foundations
- At least $30,000 in additional operating, discretionary or donor gifts
- $2,500 in operating, discretionary or donor gifts

This exercise is *not* meant to replace a detailed project budget. It is simply a way to analyze your resources, map your assets and *then* (if necessary) hit the pavement to fill the gaps—or decide to redesign, cut back, or alter your timeframe. The key to this exercise is to be as specific as possible and to

explore the range of resources needed to successfully implement your RDP program. If you need $12,000 more dollars in start-up funds, write that down along with some ideas about donors, private foundations and corporate partners that might be the sources of those funds. If you have staff skills that will help you avoid training or additional personnel costs, write those down as well.

Since your assets are listed just two columns over, you have clearly mapped how your in-house assets can assist you in finding and leveraging new resources. For example, you have a well respected and connected donor who has already committed $10,000 to this effort. Would this donor work with you to identify and speak with three or four other donors to share why she decided to support this project? Is your economic development council connected to private foundations or state funding streams? This exercise can prepare you to share all the "in-house" assets you are already committing to this project—it is, in effect, a picture of the pitch you can someday make to outside funders.
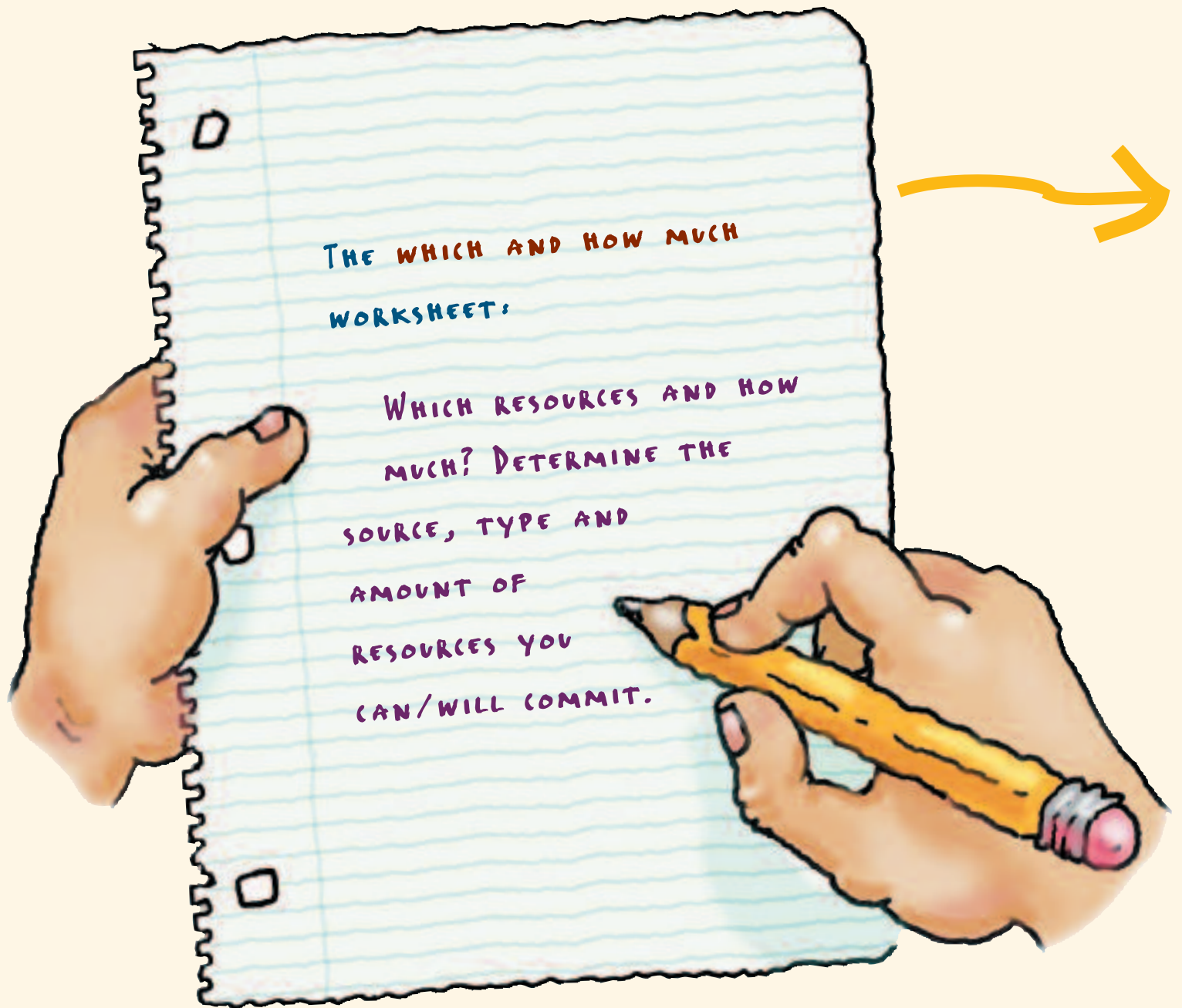
One last thing!

While Resource Mapping is a useful resource development and management tool, it is just the first step of a longer journey! You will travel this challenging road yourself by staying on top of new donor prospects, researching the private foundations that might best complement your efforts, and using your current assets to convince new funding partners that your foundation's efforts will be successful.

Remember, over time, both your assets and resource needs can change. Try to assign your "resource managers" to track, update and evaluate your progress with managing the assets you already have, not just with finding new resources.

Your resource map can help you clearly track how unexpected expenses and assets emerge over time. If you regularly map and re-map your resources carefully, you will develop a picture that answers the question of Which and how much? it takes to implement your RDP efforts. What's more, your map will help you and your program partners visualize how your wide range of human, financial, physical and "good will" assets can be (and have been) leveraged to sustain your RDP efforts over the long term.

The which and how much worksheet:

Which resources and how much? Determine the source, type and amount of resources you can/will commit.

Instructions: This worksheet asks you to name which resources and how much you want to commit to carry out the particular RDP program/grantmaking effort you started working on in the catalyst worksheet and in any prior middle six worksheets, and to reflect on how that choice might affect your answers to the remaining RDP design circle questions (if any).

The which and how much worksheet:
Your question #____

What staff, board, program, operational and grant resources will you commit to your RDP effort? What resources from your funding or action partners can you bring to the rural effort or leverage from inside or outside the region?

Catalyst: _____

Your RDP effort: _____

Outcomes: _____

"In-house" assets Manager: _____	Match?	Resources needed	Match?	Resources to find Manager: _____

Now answer below: Does this which and how much choice clearly influence or restrict your answers to any of the other middle six RDP program questions? If yes, in what way?

Question	No	Yes	If yes, in what way?
Where?			
For whom?			
What?			
With whom?			
How long?			
Which and how many resources?			

What effect will the conditions of this which and how much? choice likely have on the sustainability of your RDP program effort over the long term (or on your exit strategy)?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 8: So what?

Determine your specific realistic outcomes,
how you will track indicators of those
outcomes, and the
process by which
you will reflect
and act on
your learning.

QUESTION 8: SO WHAT?

Determine your specific realistic outcomes, how you will track indicators of those outcomes, and the process by which you will reflect and act on that learning.

What are one or two realistic short- or medium-term outcomes that you are driving to achieve for rural communities and families through your RDP program or grantmaking effort? What indicators would tell you you are getting there? Who and how will you measure them? What process will you use to reflect on your progress? Who will be responsible to apply your learning and correct your course the next time around?

You have worked carefully through the RDP Program Design Circle. Now, based on the design that emerged from your journey, you are ready to specify the impact you seek through your RDP program and grantmaking, how you will assess it, how you will ensure you reflect on that assessment, and what you will do with what you learn.

Everyone agrees that measuring impact is important, but typically it gets put on the back burner as the "urgent" takes over. Sadly, RDP practitioners often tell us late in the game that they wish they had thought through a measurement and learning plan at the outset of designing their program or grantmaking effort. Indeed, successful program design emerges from a learning process, and this learning should be informed by a measurement plan focused on outcomes—and by actual reflection on what that measurement tells you.

So here is your chance to do just that—devise your own *measurement and learning process* as part of your RDP program design. If you do so, you may reap multiple benefits. For example:

- With a clear idea of the outcomes you are trying to produce through your RDP effort and how you will measure them, you can work with your

grantees or program participants during the course of a grant or program period to figure out "if we are getting there." If not, you can make mid-course corrections along the way—which sure beats finding out at the end of a program that "There was no 'there' there."

- You can paint a clear picture for the community and donors of the specific good you are trying to produce with the resources they have entrusted to the foundation.

- You can better and more easily report to donors and the community the specific change your community foundation has helped produce.

- If your funded efforts have fallen short of your expectations, you likely will be able to explain why.

- No matter your level of success, you will be able to describe how your learning from this effort will be applied to design more effective RDP grants and programs in the future.

Taken together, all this clarity, honesty, and strategic intention make the donor and community members feel good about placing their trust and resources with the community foundation. Moreover, they make your staff and board feel good about getting better at what they do, and making a bigger difference as their learning leads to greater impact over time.

So what?
Four components of an RDP measurement and learning process

Your measurement and learning process has four main components:

- Outcomes
- Indicators and Measures
- Tracking Plan
- Reflection Process

Below you will find a quick description of each of these components. Reflect on it with your community foundation's RDP efforts in mind, and then move on to the worksheet

Component 1: Outcomes

To avoid jargon jungles, let's do the vocabulary thing first: What *are* "outcomes"?

Outcomes are significant changes in the lives of people, communities or organizations through your RDP program or grantmaking.

Outcomes are the end results that your community foundation is *taking responsibility* to achieve through this RDP program or grantmaking. An outcome indicates your true impact, it is *not* simply activities that happened in your program or the resources you committed to it.

Two outcome levels. In devising an impact and learning process, community foundations (and other grantmakers) can (and should) identify two levels of outcomes.

■ **Community-level outcomes:** These are the end results/changes/impacts you ultimately seek for rural communities and families that your grantees, partners or program participants will produce. Your grantees, partners or program participants are the ones responsible for producing these—using your funding and other program supports.

■ **Community foundation-level outcomes:** These are the end results/changes/impacts you seek for your grantees, partners or participants that will enable *them* to achieve the community-level outcomes. This is what your community foundation takes responsibility for producing. Even if these outcomes are achieved, your grantees or partners or participants might not achieve the community-level outcomes; in that case, something may be wrong with the theory of change embedded in your program design—which indeed is a signal to redesign!

Identifying your outcomes is a tough first step, because people often confuse these two levels. Indeed, it can be hard to separate the outcomes that your community foundation wants to achieve from the outcomes you want your grantees to achieve. So, first of all, you need to think about what *you* are trying to accomplish.

One way to do this is to think about what it is you *really can* be responsible for making happen with your program or grantmaking resources. In general, although it is certainly a goal you share with society over time, your foundation's outcome for a particular grantmaking effort will *not* be to "end rural poverty." As we said earlier in With Whom?, your distance from *that* impact is likely to be once or twice removed. Rather, you might take responsibility—for example—for strengthening a particular class of nonprofits (and/or funding the study that produces the information they need) to provide unemployed or underemployed rural workers with employment training that matches available local jobs. In this case, the *grantee's* outcomes will focus on whether rural folks come to their redesigned programs and get the available jobs, *yours* will focus on whether the nonprofit grantees changed their training approach and content, and adjust it as the local economy and demographics change.

In another example, one community foundation found that a lot of the small CED project ideas (that is, projects focused on *community-level* outcomes) they were funding through a brand new rural grantmaking program for emerging rural non-profits were somewhat marginal. It was difficult to predict which of these projects would succeed. Yet the community foundation saw its work as successful because its outcomes were about building rural organizations and a broader and wider leadership base. Over time, the CF will need to evaluate whether this work does in fact lead to grantee success at producing community-level outcomes.

HERE'S A BIG HINT: In the context of the RDP Program Design Circle, your *community-level* outcomes are most likely related to For whom? and What? And your *community foundation-level* outcomes relate most often to With Whom? and What?

To be clear: You *do* care about both levels of outcomes and you want to track both (or make sure they are tracked in some way) in order to make sure your investments ultimately lead to building rural livelihood. But your program and grantmaking is directly responsible only for the community-foundation-level outcomes.

Outcome timeframes. It is also useful to think about whether your outcomes are short-term (one year or less), medium-term (two to four years) or long-term (over five years). Typically, your short-term outcomes are necessary (but not sufficient) conditions that must be in place to achieve your longer-term outcomes. As a rule of thumb, it is good to have in mind and specify both some short-term and some medium- or long-term outcomes to track in your process.

Outcome realities: In most programs or grantmaking, community foundations care about many outcomes. It is best to choose just one or two really important outcomes to track in a learning process—doing that is challenging as it is, and tracking fewer well is better for your learning than fumbling the job with many. Also, it is wise to involve your grantees/partners/participants in determining which outcomes to track—you may learn something from them; they will know what you and your donors care about; and you will set a precedent for working together (which comes in handy later).

Component 2: Indicators and measures

Once you determine what you are trying to accomplish—your outcomes—then it's time to think about ways to determine if you (and your grantees/partners/participants) are producing them! In this case, you are looking for indicators and measures. Let's do the vocabulary again:

An indicator is one observable condition that you can measure or assess in some way to show that change in an outcome is being achieved.

Indicators are observable, measurable and specific. Sometimes an indicator is a proxy for something that is hard to measure. But no matter what, indicators

must be meaningful to your stakeholders. Always ask yourself whether movement on the indicators you select would convince your board, your grantees, or your community that you have been successful at moving toward the outcomes.

A measure is one way to quantitatively or qualitatively assess change in an indicator.

A measure should always include the "beans" you will count or assess, how you will count or assess them, and a target (that is what direction—up, down, other—you want the count or quality assessment to go in over a period of time). It may go without saying, but in order to track each measure, you must have a baseline—or start your work by developing one. Baselines define the starting value from which you calculate change.

Let's track a very simple example to explain the differences here. Let's say an outcome you care about is better teen health. One indicator of better teen health might be fewer anorexic high school girls. Some different measures of that indicator might include : Increased rate of weight gain amongst area anorexic high school girls over the next six months or Increases in positive self-image ratings among girls reported in the local high school annual teen survey. (Notice that one measure is quantitative, one is qualitative, but both can be measured.) Your baseline for the self-image measure already exists in the annual teen survey; you may have to search for the weight gain baseline or develop one with school nurses or local doctors.

A big hint and caveat: It is always easier to choose measures for which someone is already collecting data, or that are easy to track through grantee reporting, for example. But it is never worth it to track measures that have no meaning in relation to your indicator and outcome.

As with outcomes, less may be more. For each outcome you specify, identify no more than two indicators—although one indicator might help you track more than one outcome. Then do the same with measures—no more than two per indicator.

Component 3: Tracking plan

Next, you must think about how you will collect information on these measures, what kind of tools you will need to collect it, who will be responsible for collecting it, and how this data collection will fit into your program design.

To do this, for each measure, answer these questions:

1. How can we find or produce a baseline measure?

2. From whom will we collect information on the measure during the program period?

3. What tools and partners will we need to collect data on the measure over the program period—a review of our files, a survey, interviews, focus groups, access to a state database and statistical software?

4. When and how often will we collect this information? Can we design data collection to fit into the normal workflow?

5. Who will be responsible for collecting and compiling the data?

This may sound like a lot. However, it's amazing what a little creative brainstorming with your staff and grantees can do. And as many have said, "You get what you measure." If you *really care* about achieving your outcomes and improving your impact, remember this: Not to measure is not to care.

Component 4: Reflection process

Finally it's time to name the process by which you will reflect on your tracking results and act on what you learn from it. Let's say that you have identified outcomes, indicators, measures and a tracking plan. Yahoo!

But so what? If you don't stop regularly to examine your data and reflect on what it means, and then adjust what you are doing based on conclusions from

your reflection, it is all measurement (and a waste of effort), signifying nothing.

So you need an agreed-upon process for reflection, and then you must commit to following the process. Here are the elements of a reflection process.
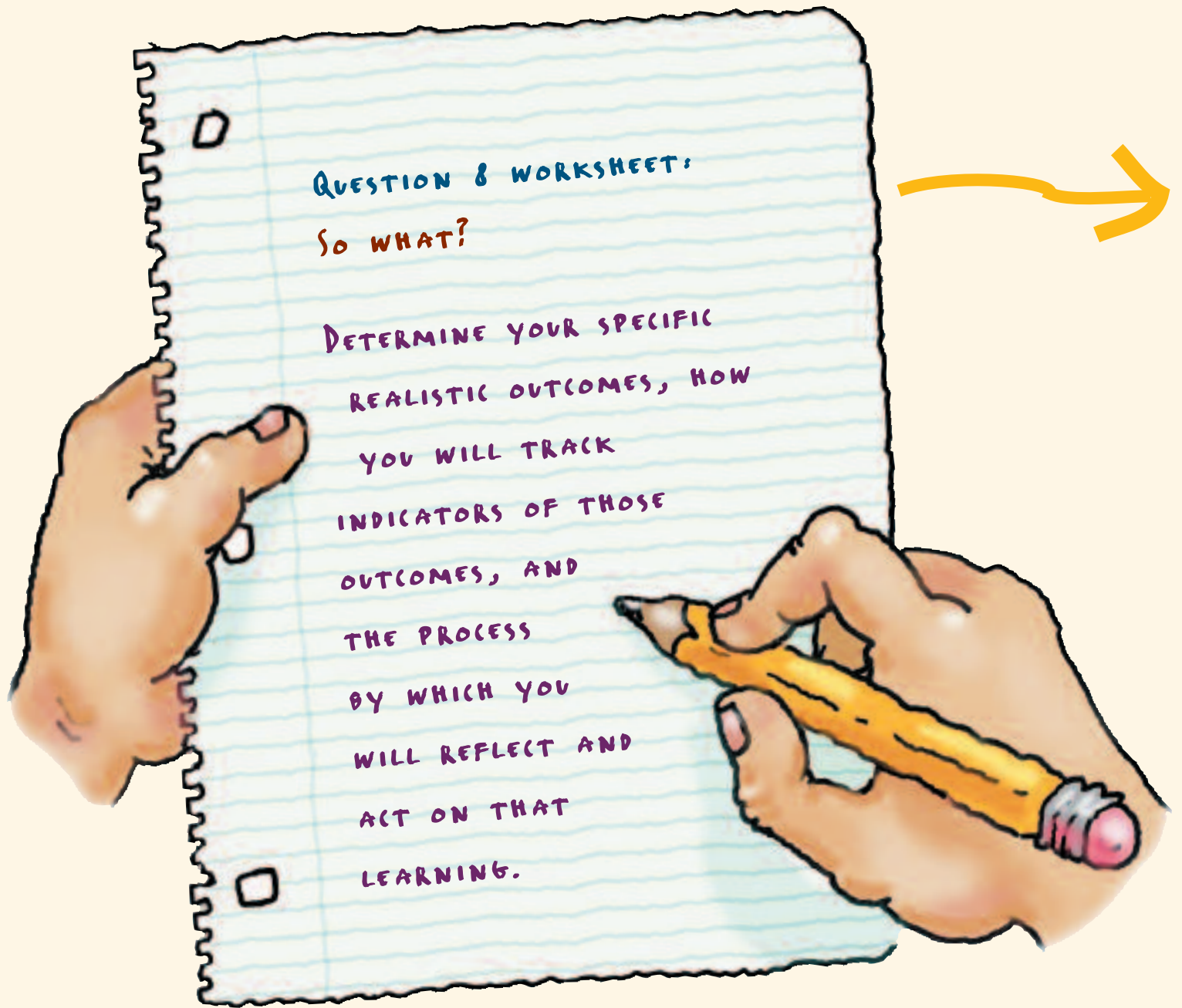
- **Who is included?** First, you will want to decide who will be involved in the reflection activities. Some community foundations include their grantees or board members or outside experts. It helps everyone who participates to build the habit of taking time to learn.

- **When will the reflection/learning activities or sessions take place?** You will also want to decide when you will take the time for this learning. It is important to get this on everyone's calendar as soon as possible.

- **What materials are needed?** The measurement plan and your answers to the program design circle questions would be required reading for all involved before any reflection activity takes place. Preparing a few targeted questions might help people think through their own experiences before any learning exchange.

- **Who will facilitate the reflection sessions or activities?** If funds are available, community foundations often ask an outside learning facilitator to help them. This frees up everyone to participate and can help keep things running effectively. But some foundations have developed staff capability and a "reflection practice" all by themselves—and the more they practice....

- **Reflection/learning sessions or activities.** Whether it is at a meeting, on-line or over coffee one-on-one, devise a way to get your learning team members to report the insights they've derived from examining the results and other program experiences.

Figure out as well what method to use to surface and agree on ideas that shared insights suggest for changes to make in the RDP program. Review your original answers to the program design questions. Some of your

answers might be different now that you have had some experience. Are these changes you can make now or the next go-round? How might they impact other programs at the community foundation?

■ **Adjust your RDP course.** Record the action steps you will take based on your learning. Decide who is responsible for those steps and when they will be done.

■ **Repeat as needed!**

QUESTION 8 WORKSHEET:

SO WHAT?

DETERMINE YOUR SPECIFIC
REALISTIC OUTCOMES, HOW
YOU WILL TRACK
INDICATORS OF THOSE
OUTCOMES, AND
THE PROCESS
BY WHICH YOU
WILL REFLECT AND
ACT ON THAT
LEARNING.

INSTRUCTIONS: THIS WORKSHEET ASKS YOU TO ANSWER SO WHAT? BY
DETAILING A MEASUREMENT AND LEARNING PROCESS RELATED TO THE
PARTICULAR RDP PROGRAM/GRANTMAKING EFFORT YOU STARTED WORKING
ON IN THE CATALYST WORKSHEET AND IN THE MIDDLE SIX WORKSHEETS.

The question 8 worksheet: So what?

	Outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Tracking plan	Reflection process
Community Level Outcomes	1:	a:	▪		
			▪		
		b:	▪		
			▪:		
	2:	a:	▪		
			▪		
		b:	▪		
			▪		
Community Foundation-level Outcomes	1:	a:	▪		
			▪		
		b:	▪		
			▪:		
	2:	a:	▪		
			▪		
		b:	▪		
			▪		