THE ASPEN INSTITUTE Community Strategies Group

Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
energizing entrepreneurial communities

A partnership working to advance Community Development Philanthropy

Aspen CSG and the Center partner to help community foundations play new and stronger roles building family, community and regional prosperity.

Leaders across the country are finding, creating and embracing new opportunities to use their local resources in ways that generate better economic prospects for their regions. This is a welcome sign as we emerge from the Great Recession. But too many families continue to struggle to make ends meet, and the opportunity gap between the rich and the striving continues to widen. This raises real questions about how broad-based any new prosperity will be.

Among regional institutions that hold the vision of a prosperous economy for all, **community foundations** – often joined by regional family, health-conversion and private foundations – have a unique position and mission to ensure that regional development efforts produce prosperity that is more broadly shared. These foundations, rooted in place, naturally hold a longer-term perspective on and commitment to their regions. Many cover a region where there are numerous political jurisdictions, and the foundation is one of the few, and at times *only*, institution that spans the region and can bring it together. Close to the ground, they see the intricate connections between people, place and business, and how they affect each other – and, through their work, have relationships across the economic spectrum.

These foundations prosper when the region prospers, so they have a broader sense of what qualifies as a true economic development approach and outcome. For example, besides traditional economic measures, they also consider: How many families are doing better, and entering the economic mainstream? Are our natural resources being used in a way that will make them last for future generations? Are new jobs going to local people, and are local people prepared – from early childhood on – to hold them? Are decisions being made about people *with* or *without* their participation in the decision-making?

Community and regional foundations also bring a wider range of assets and tools to the table than the average organization. They have networks, convening power, endowed and non-endowed funds, investment resources and savvy, wide-ranging leadership connections and influence, deep knowledge of the community, the ability to make grants, loans and investments – and to run programs when no one else is there to do it. They can use those assets flexibly to help generate a local economy that is driven by the many for the benefit of the many.

For several decades, the leaders of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group (Aspen CSG) and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (CRE) have engaged as learning and action partners with foundations in rural and urban places across the country. We have supported and witnessed the impact that place-rooted foundations can have when they embrace what we call Community Development Philanthropy (CDP).

Foundations practice Community Development Philanthropy when they address critical community issues and play integrating or missing roles to advance regional development in ways that build enduring prosperity and livelihoods for all, especially those at the margins.

Aspen CSG and CRE have made a commitment to partner to advance Community Development Philanthropy, with the goal of more community and regional foundations practicing CDP with excellence and success. Through decades of experience on the ground with foundations, we find that those that succeed – in small or large ways – at Community Development Philanthropy have used a similar process. We've extracted this into a set of *Design Elements for a CDP Effort*. We are committed to seeing more communities achieve broad-based

and lasting prosperity, and so we want to help place-rooted foundations become important "prosperity partners" by incorporating these Design Elements into their work.

Together, Aspen CSG and CRE have tools, resources and services to help. Whether you are ready to…

- *Learn about CDP – Our Advancing Economic Success workshop (March 16-17, 2015 in Washington DC) is a great place to start!*
- *Take steps to understand the process and tools for undertaking CDP*
- *Adopt CDP as a core strategic practice of your foundation*

For more information about the partnership, contact Don Macke, CRE (don@e2mail.org) and Janet Topolsky, CSG (jt@aspeninst.org).

The **Center for Rural Entrepreneurship** helps community leaders build a prosperous future by supporting and empowering business, social and civic entrepreneurs. With our roots and hearts in rural America, we help communities of all sizes and interests by bringing empowering research together with effective community engagement to advance community-driven strategies for prosperity. Our focus areas include entrepreneurial communities, new generation partnerships and community development philanthropy. We work to empower community leaders to find their own answers to the economic development challenges and opportunities they face. For more information about the Center, call (402) 323-7336 or visit http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org.

The **Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group (CSG)** connects, motivates and equips local leaders to build more prosperous regions and advance those living on the economic margins. We do so by designing and facilitating action-inducing peer learning activities among community leaders, providing strategic guidance to sharpen focus and strategy, building networks to spread good ideas, and producing tools, frameworks, analysis and stories to help local leaders advance families and economies. Our key focus areas include regional wealth building, family economic success and community development philanthropy. For more information about Aspen CSG, call (202) 736-5848 or visit http://www.aspencsg.org.