

Community Building Approach

Roles, Resources, Focus Areas, Next Steps

A **Community Building Approach** puts rural residents and local groups at the center of the process as they build their community's future in an inclusive and comprehensive way. It is centered on four **Community Building Principles**:

- 1 Go to where the people are
- 2 Start with what you know and build on what you have
- 3 Be profoundly inclusive
- 4 Keep the community at the center of the work

Real and lasting change wells up from the community since the community is the best positioned to know its own needs.

Community Building Approach **Roles** are some of the ways the Ford Institute can support you as you increase connections, build capacity and take community-led action. Doing this work takes purpose, passion and persistence.

The Ford Institute for Community Building is here to learn and partner with you.



Ford Institute Roles

Support will look different based on your community's needs. There is no cookie-cutter approach to community building. While the specifics of the work vary from place to place, we always follow the **Community Building Principles and Practices** (see diagram). We can serve in four basic roles:

- **Participant:** Being in the room and providing an outside perspective. Invite us to a community gathering to listen and learn more about your work or project.
- **Practitioner:** Offering experience from the community-building field. Arrange a time to discuss a challenge or opportunity,





and to help you make connections. Sign up for our Facebook Group and our monthly e-newsletter, the Community Builder eXchange (CBX).

- **Learning Partner:** Bringing a willingness to listen, learn and innovate. Join (or help us initiate) a group to explore learnings on community-building topics, such as online engagement, community visioning and catalytic community organizations.
- **Funder:** Providing financial resources and due diligence. After a relationship is established between the Ford Institute and a community group, a next step may be funding. Community Building Approach funding supports work in our three focus areas:

- Increasing **CONNECTIONS**
- Building **CAPACITY**
- Taking **COMMUNITY-LED ACTION**

Examples of funding: convenings; group process and engagement; community data collection and listening work; local project coordination; coaching; and facilitation.

COMMUNITY BUILDING GRANTS typically range from \$2,500 - \$25,000 per year. While there are exceptions, we can fund up to 50% of a proposed budget. We support single and multi-year efforts.

Ford Institute Focus Areas for **FUNDING**

Increasing CONNECTIONS:

By *Increasing Connections*, communities foster more supportive, caring, inclusive and lasting relationships among people and across groups. The Ford Institute looks for *Connections* with a clear purpose—ones that are likely to lead directly or indirectly to community-led action. We seek to support communities as they:

Organize a Local Gathering: Bring people together to start or restart a conversation. These gatherings can be small and informal. They are a good way to begin community building. Also consider larger gatherings that are inclusive and address priority community opportunities, challenges or needs.

Engage the Hard to Reach: Create goals and take coordinated actions to ensure all voices are engaged to work on priority community topics.

Maintain and Strengthen Relationships: Support efforts that keep conversations going, continue to build and strengthen relationships, and unite and celebrate the community.

Building CAPACITY:

Capacity is the ability to move community work forward efficiently and effectively. Acquire a new skill set, use data for decision making, have enough and the right people-power, or expand the ability to access and develop funding and other resources. By *Building Capacity*, rural communities gain power to shape their future. We seek to support communities as they:

Organize Just-In-Time Learning: Learn a new skill right when you need it. This effort may include targeted trainings, workshops, forums or learning exchanges that will help you take action.

Branch Out: Bring new and diverse leadership and participants into a project or effort. This work may include succession planning or including more sectors of the community.

Access Expertise: Engage local and/or external expertise to facilitate, coordinate or coach community-building efforts.

Use Data and Stories as Learning and Working Tools: Assess, collect and interpret the data and stories you need to make well-informed decisions, monitor progress, be responsive to new conditions and document your journey.

Taking COMMUNITY-LED ACTION:

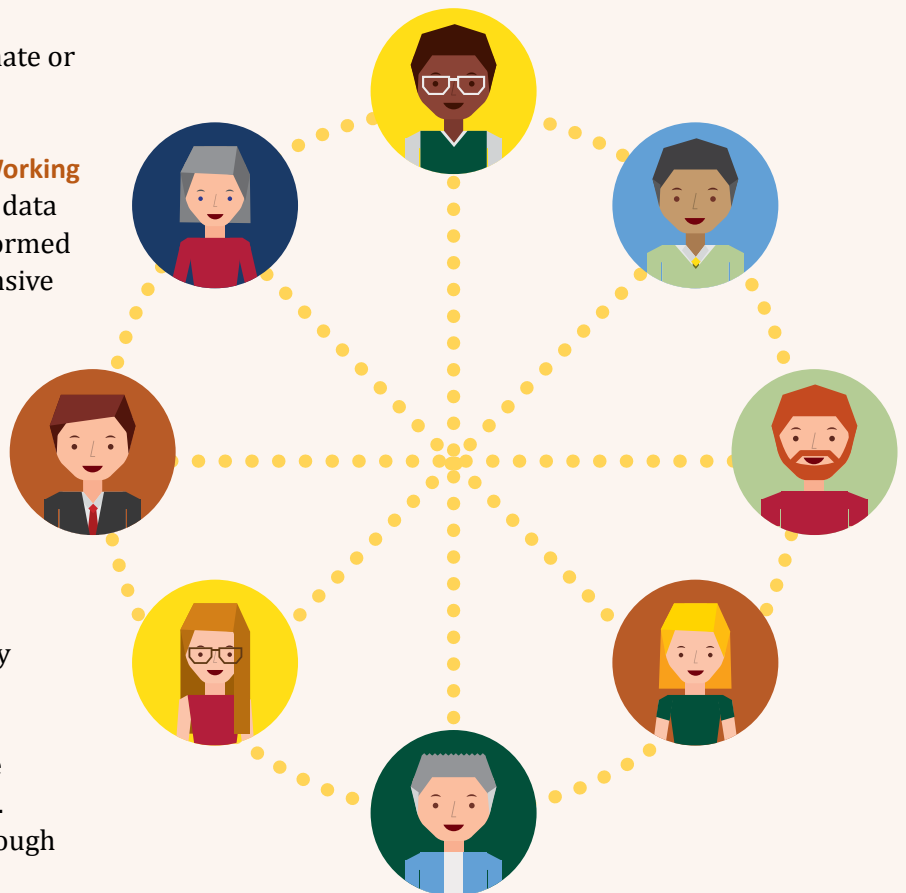
Action is often the most visible form of community building. It can create powerful results when done inclusively and in alignment with community values and vision. Sometimes Action is tried and true. Other times there are risks, experimentation and innovation. *Community-led Action* can be done through a small project that links to something

bigger, or it can be a comprehensive project. By taking *Community-led Action*, rural residents catalyze change and maintain the momentum. We seek to support communities as they:

Develop a Vision: Facilitate a long-term and inclusive community vision and plan. Unite all the smaller efforts, synthesize them, and build in processes for success.

Plan and Implement: Engage and mobilize people with a shared actionable goal to build the community's future. Gain confidence and experience to take on more comprehensive efforts in the future.

Align and Stabilize: Coordinate the project to keep the work moving, the various parts aligned, and the wider community engaged.



Next Steps:

1 Imagine the best fit for your community's needs with these roles and funding resources. Remember, Ford Institute resources are focused on a community building approach. Consider resources and grants from other Ford Family Foundation departments: Children, Youth and Families, Postsecondary Success (including scholarships), and Community Economic Development.

2 Connect with us. Call Yvette Rhodes (541) 957-2571, or email fordinstituteprograms@tfff.org, or reach out to others you may already know at the Ford Institute. You don't need to have everything figured out before contacting us. We are happy to explore ideas and next steps with you through an informal conversation.

3 Take the lead in mobilizing your community and moving its priorities forward.

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The Ford Institute for Community Building is one of five departments of The Ford Family Foundation.



The Ford Institute is well known for the **Ford Institute Leadership Program**, which launched in 2003 with a goal of reaching 5,000 community leaders in 80 hubs around rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. The goal was exceeded 13 years later — 6,000 graduates in 88 community hubs. In 2016, the Ford Institute began to transition from leadership development to community development.



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