Project Impact:

A self-directed evaluation of
the impact of the Ford Institute
for Community Building

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THE Ford Family
FOUNDATION

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Executive Summary

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Evaluation Approach

During the fall of 2018 through the winter of 2019, nine Ford Institute for Community Building staff members and four community members who have been involved in the work of the Ford Institute convened a self-study evaluation of impact. The project was guided by Dialogues in Action.

The project team worked through three movements of evaluation: (1) Intention: What is the difference we are intending to make? What are indicators of progress? What are the principles underlying our theory of change? (2) Inquiry: What insights are revealed from qualitative data? What insights are revealed in quantitative data? (3) Implication: How should we respond to what we have discovered? What proves our impact? What should we do to improve our impact?

Two primary questions guided the evaluation:

1	What kind and quality of impact are we having in rural communities?
2	What is causing or contributing to the impact?

The team designed and implemented a mixed method approach to data collection. For the qualitative inquiry, the team designed an interview protocol, identified a sample of interviewees using purposeful stratified sampling technique, convened 59 in-depth interviews with approximately 15 men and 44 women lasting typically between 45-60 minutes, analyzed the data from the interviews, and developed themes from the entire data corpus. For the quantitative inquiry, the team designed a survey that was deployed in both English and Spanish to people who have been involved in the Community Building Approach through the Ford Institute during the past three years. The survey yielded data on Ford Institute outcomes from 60 respondents (out of 91, a 66% response rate).

Key Evaluation Findings

AREAS OF IMPACT

The evaluation demonstrates the significant impact of the Ford Institute in the work of community building in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif.

CONNECTIONS

Community builders report overwhelming progress in their ability to create meaningful connections with others in their community as a result of the Ford Institute. Through the work of the Community Building Approach, they are gathering people together, talking to people they would not normally reach, breaking down walls that divide groups within communities, holding community events to involve diverse and varied people from the community, and seeking to reach the hard to reach. One interviewee said: **"The biggest impact [of the Ford Institute] is the bridges and relationships with rural Latinx communities. Ford Institute's efforts to connect us with other communities and those communities with others; it seems we interconnected like a web."**

Perhaps the most significant impact is the focus of community builders on involving the "hard to reach." One interviewee said: "The hard to reach are still the hard to reach." Survey data reveal that this is the most challenging aspect of building connections for communities. Survey data also reveal that the practical application of reaching the "hard to reach" is the area that the Ford Institute has not yet impacted as much as other dimensions of connections.

KEY FINDINGS

Growing community relationships

Strengthening partnerships

Increasing involvement across sectors

CAPACITY

The evaluation shows that community builders are being given useful tools through the Ford Institute. They report being equipped in new and helpful ways through the Ford Institute's Community Building Approach work in their communities. One interviewee expressed the sentiment of many: **"The support and training has provided a platform for groups to talk to each other. This feels new."** The Ford Institute is also tapping into the resourcefulness of rural residents and helping to release and channel that toward community improvement. As a result, community builders report a significant change in their ability to find solutions within their community. On the survey, nearly half of the respondents (48%) declared that the Ford Institute made "very much" positive difference in their ability to get community building work done. Amidst the progress, community builders continue to struggle more often with being able to gather resources from outside of the community. This is an area where the Ford Institute is reportedly building capacity, but it remains more of a struggle than other dimensions of capacity for community builders.

KEY FINDINGS

Skilling people up

Tapping into strengths

Maximizing the potential of people

COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

The evaluation reveals that communities are growing in their ability to take action as a result of the Ford Institute. Both quantitative and qualitative data from this evaluation identify this outcome as the least fully developed of the four Cs in communities, however. Interviewees were able to talk about their intent and

KEY FINDINGS

Helping people take initiative

Unleashing people to take action

Catalyzing planning efforts

sense of empowerment to take action more than they were able to report clearly on a robust set of actions the community has been able to take together. The survey data show that, in particular, taking action on long-term, critical and complex issues is lagging the other dimensions of community action.

Interviewees describe the development of a substantial drive toward action as a result of the Ford Institute: "We don't need to be saved." **"We can take it on ourselves. We can figure it out. We are up to any challenge."** "If we do nothing, nothing will change." They attribute much of the change in their drive to the Ford Institute, with close to half of the survey respondents (44%) reporting that the Ford Institute has made "very much" positive difference in their sense of empowerment to take action in their community.

CULTURE

The data from the evaluation reveal a tremendous positive change in the community building culture among those who have been a part of the work of the Ford Institute. Perhaps most surprising in the interviews was the strength of view about personal growth and transformation through community building.

KEY FINDINGS

Increasing hope and pride

Nurturing civic responsibility

Connecting people to what's important

Many interviewees described clearly and compellingly the way community building has developed within them a sense of civic responsibility and care for the community.

Through the Ford Institute, pride is being strengthened in communities, a new kind of hope is growing within communities, and people are taking active roles of involvement in their communities in new kinds of ways. One interviewee said: "We are a valid group in the eyes of the city and the county. They are asking us to take leadership in the vision." Another said: **"People are starting to believe that things can be different."**

By The Numbers

A closer look at the numbers from our outcomes survey reveal the following:

3 out of 4
community builders report Ford Institute has had "quite a bit" or "very much" impact in the ability to...

➜ have energized and inclusive community events

➜ exchange ideas across groups of people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs

➜ initiative multiple active collaborations and partnerships

➜ get community building work done

➜ community planning turns into action

➜ take action

CONNECTIONS

80% say FICB has significantly helped them work well together as a community.

85% say FICB has significantly helped them build relationships across differences in their community.

CAPACITY

90% say FICB has given them substantially more tools for community building.

COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

88% say they are significantly more actively involved in community building in practical ways because of FICB.

88% report they are significantly more committed to community building because of FICB.

CULTURE

80% say FICB has significantly helped them feel more optimistic and hopeful about the future.

60% report FICB makes a significant difference in the ability of the community to have a shared vision for their community.

Ten Causal Factors

The evaluation revealed 10 critical causal factors attributed to the Ford Institute for Community Building's work by the interviewees.

1. **Exposing to enough dosage over enough time.** Survey data show that those who are extremely involved in the Ford Institute report a substantially better adoption of the Community Building Approach principles and habits than the moderately involved.

2. **Committing to the ongoing-ness of it all.** The data show that change takes time and requires attention and support over time. Taking a long-term approach is essential.

3. **Seeing and celebrating the progress** Community building needs periodic celebrations to mark the progress and encourage momentum within communities.

4. **Making steps real and tangible.** The data reveal that progress is made best when steps are clear and concrete.

5. **Activating the beneficent spiral. T**he evaluation shows that not one but many elements of the Community Building Approach, working together and leveraged to sustain momentum, are needed for progress to be real and durable.

6. **Affirming and validating.** Community builders found the affirmation of the Ford Institute to be a critical validation and affirmation of their work, encouraging them forward.

7. **Elevating the conversation of the community.** Subjects of the evaluation identified an essential role of the Ford Institute to change the nature and content of the community's conversation and focus of attention.

8. **Bringing people together to learn.** When the Ford Institute brings people from different communities together, community builders are encouraged, inspired and enriched.

9. **Encouraging what is emerging.** The posture of listening and fanning into flame the spark of energy and interest from within the community is helping to advance the community building work.

10. **Sparking the action.** Community builders attribute much of their progress to the function of the Ford Institute to initiate community action.

Four Challenges for Communities

In addition to the challenges discussed in the primary findings, interviewees identified difficulties in making progress toward community building. These were not the only barriers revealed in the interviews, but these represent the most salient among the struggles articulated by the interviewees.

1. **Challenges of Strategy**
   - Learning and adaptation
   - Gaining shared vision
   - Making the Community Building Approach clear
   - Communicating to everyone

2. **Challenges of Momentum**
   - Sustaining momentum and pacing
   - Building structure to sustain the work

3. **Challenges of Inclusivity**
   - Practicing profound inclusion
   - Working together
   - Sustaining participation

4. **Challenges of Resistance**
   - Engaging the establishment
   - Dealing with resistance

Four Responses for the Future

To respond to the discoveries of the evaluation, the Ford Institute team and community partners will work on the following:

1. **Activate the multiplication of communities to communities** – To leverage the wisdom and experience of communities to multiply the work in additional communities.

2. **Develop strategies to embrace the hard to reach** – To increase the ability of communities to be profoundly inclusive.

3. **Build long-term supports for community building efforts** – To keep the work moving forward using minimal Ford Institute intervention so that communities can focus on the work

4. **Clarify the confusing aspects of community building and the Community Building Approach** – To remove barriers and increase energy to take initial and subsequent community building action.
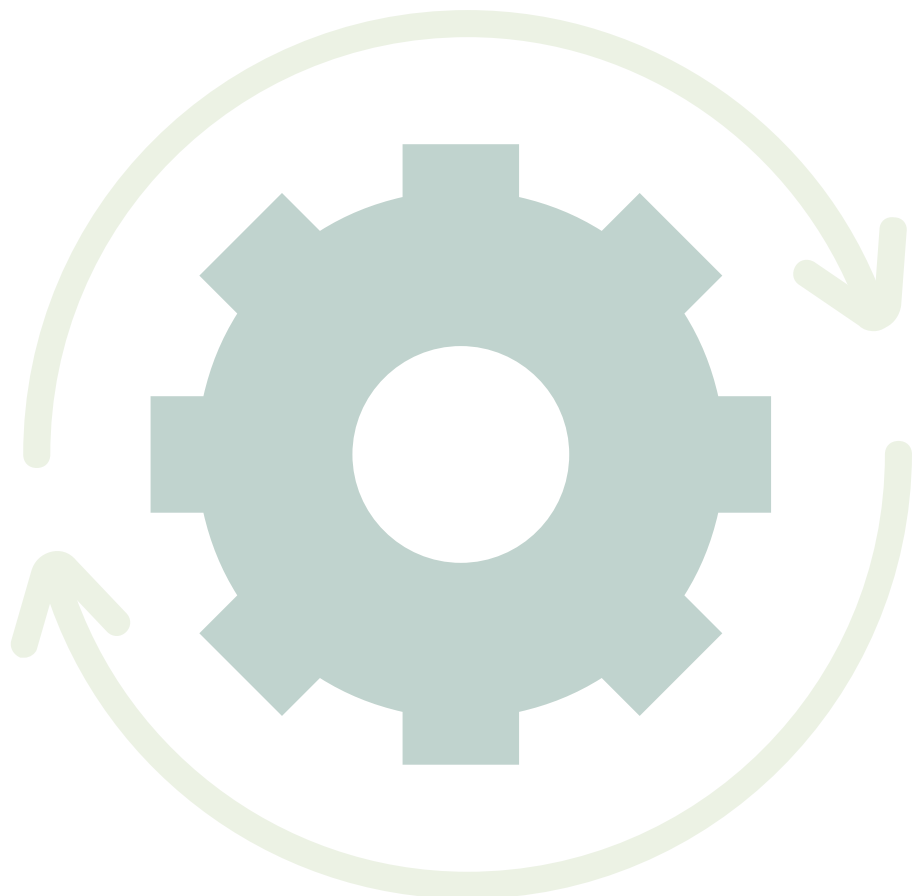
Introduction to the Ford Institute for Community Building

The Ford Institute for Community Building (Ford Institute) plays a key role in achieving The Ford Family Foundation's mission of "successful citizens and vital rural communities."Launched in 2002, five years after the creation of the current Foundation, the Ford Institute began its work by investing in leadership development across rural Oregon. After the arrival of the current Foundation president, Anne Kubisch, in 2013 and the Ford Institute director, Roque Barros, in 2014, the Ford Institute began transitioning to a new approach to community building.

The Ford Institute for Community Building works to create and support vital rural communities. Across rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif., the role of the Ford Institute is to ask open-ended questions, help communities recognize their assets, foster new connections, encourage planning and visioning, provide funding support at appropriate junctures, and perhaps most importantly, honor the pace and agency of the community.

The approach of the Ford Institute is to support rural residents and local organizations as they take the lead in building their community's future. The Ford Institute's work is guided by the principles of the Community Building Approach (CBA).

Intended Impact

More specifically, the impact intended by the Ford Institute for Community Building is to develop, establish and sustain connection, capacity, community-led action, and community building culture in rural communities in Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. The dimensions of these four domains are as follows:

CONNECTIONS	CAPACITY	COMMUNITY-LED ACTION	CULTURE
We are building supportive, caring, lasting relationships	**We identify, build and use our shared power to shape our future**	**We catalyze change and maintain momentum**	**We are united for the future of our community**
• Caring neighbors • Communications and sharing • Active collaboration • Intentional inclusion	• Energized leadership • Informed decisions • Responsive organizations • Resourcefulness and support	• Greater good • Adaptive planning • Local ownership • Visible impact	• Welcoming spirit • Community pride • Working as one • Resilience

Evaluation Aim

In an effort to understand more fully the effect the Ford Institute for Community Building is having on communities and community building, an evaluation was designed and implemented in 2018-2019 by a team of Ford Institute staff and community partners.

The aim of the evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact the Ford Institute is having in the rural communities in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. To understand this, the team explored two broad research questions:

1	**What kind and quality of impact are we having in rural communities?**
2	**What is causing or contributing to the impact?**

Over the course of the project, the team (a) developed and refined its ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed-methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for strategy going forward.

Methodology

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, the team designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from the Ford Institute's presence and work. The interview team consisted of 11 participants: nine staff and field coordinators of the Ford Institute and four representatives from communities where the Ford Institute has been working. The interview team convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour.

The evaluation team used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population the Ford Institute serves. The sampling strategy was to gain representation from the following subsets of the population:

- Regional representation (Eastern Oregon, Northern California, Oregon Coast, Southern Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley, Gorge, Central Oregon)

- Length of years involved since 2015

- Sector (nonprofit, government, business, faith-based, education, and other)

- "Hard to reach" (Tribal, Latino, low socioeconomic status, no higher education, youth, Asian American, immigrant, and other)

Over the course of three months, the team completed 59 interviews, with 15 men and 44 women participating as interviewees.

Interview data were collected both through audio recording and written notes during the interviews. Those who wrote notes filled them in with the dynamic equivalent of the conversation immediately after the interview to obtain a substantive rendering of the interview content.

Interviewers analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. They first implemented the three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes and identifying themes) for each interview. The interviewers analyzed the raw data by reviewing each interview four times through each of four lenses to illuminate different aspects of the data. The data were then gathered into four categories to serve as an initial set of codes. Then, intra-interview themes were generated based on the pervasive insights from the data. This process allowed them to interpret the meaning and significance of the data from each interview.

Next, the team brought all of the data analyses and initial themes together and implemented the next two phases of thematic analysis (reviewing themes, defining and naming themes). The initial themes were reviewed as a team to identify the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of the data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. The team mapped these themes visually and examined them in various ways to gain greater definition of the features of the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were

revealed in the data. The team then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

QUANTITATIVE DATA AND ANALYSIS

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, the team designed a questionnaire to collect data on the quantitative indicators of impact. The survey was deployed in both English and Spanish, with 57 responses from the English version and three responses from the Spanish version for a total of n=60. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. The team identified key insights, patterns and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings. The most significant findings from this evaluation are described in the following narrative.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to the evaluation are primarily evidenced in the characteristics of representation of respondents, both qualitative and quantitative. The most consequential are the following:

- The data reflect a primarily White/Caucasian perspective. For the qualitative data collection, the team completed six interviews with Latino communities out of the 59 total interviews. Of the survey respondents, 83% identified as White/Caucasian.

- The data reflect primarily an older demographic perspective. 68% of the survey respondents were older than 50 years old. The qualitative interview sample skews to an older demographic as well.

- The data reflect a mostly female perspective. The selection of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys are mostly from female community builders.

- The data reflect the limitations of "rich source" selections. Most of those who were identified for interviews and survey had been substantially involved in Ford Institute community work. This was by design. It provided the team with enriched conversations. The data, however, represent the perspectives of those who have been heavily involved and not the lightly involved or uninvolved. Further inquiry is needed to discover the perspectives of those who are related less closely to the work.

1 The Impact of the Ford Institute

The data from the evaluation provides evidence of the kind and quality of impact the Ford Institute for Community Building is having in rural communities.

CONNECTIONS

Relationships are the genesis: Relationships are growing through the Community Building Approach and leading to all other successes.

The interviews show that relationships are foundational to community building. The data reveal that strong relationships inspire hope, trust and a renewal of energy toward the community. Communities rally around the commitments of people to the community, and these commitments are fostered through interpersonal relationships. When people are relationally connected, they work together better. They develop a shared vision. They are drawn to community building. They become more skilled community builders through relationships. Even unexpected participation is inspired.

The interview data show that people perceive strong and diverse relationships to account for most of their community-building successes. In the minds of many interviewees, these relationships were fostered through interaction with the Ford Institute staff and programs. One interviewee said: "The biggest impact [of the Ford Institute] is the bridges and relationships with rural Latinx communities. The Ford Institute's efforts to connect us with other communities and those communities with others; it seems we interconnected like a web." With the opportunity provided by the Ford Institute, new relationships were developed to energize the work, and older relationships evolved and matured to deepen the impact of the work.

Data from the survey show that community members who have been involved in the Community Building Approach work with the Ford Institute attribute a great deal of positive change in relationships to the influence of the Ford Institute. Three out of every four respondents indicate that the Ford Institute made "quite a bit" or

"very much" positive difference in three areas: (1) an energizing and inclusive community, (2) exchange of ideas across groups and people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs, and (3) multiple active collaborations and partnerships. These responses signal a strengthening of connections resulting from Ford Institute involvement.

Not every kind of relationship was equally beneficial, however. The interviews revealed that proximal relationships were more effective than ones from a distance. When relationships were face-to-face, there were more opportunities to engage diverse people and build connections across organizations. Closely experienced relationships also helped people know and share each other's success. These shared successes motivated people and kept the momentum going. Relationships maximized the community-building power of communities.

Better together: Community builders are becoming more committed to doing community work together.

Through the work of the Ford Institute, community members realized that working with each other was vital for community building success. The data show that sharing talents and abilities throughout the community was essential to successful community building. One said: **"I do the things I'm good at, and they do what they're good at. We share skill sets."** Interviewees revealed that community members were embracing the differences in each other and understanding that no one could do it alone. One participant said: **"I need a team of all-stars around me."** For many communities, the Community Building Approach has resulted in "unexpected people working together."

Survey data continue to reveal that community builders attribute the Ford Institute to a great deal of their

progress in building connections. Over 75% of survey respondents (see figure 1) report either "quite a bit" or "very much" to the statement, **"We have active collaborations and partnerships."** Nearly three in every four survey respondents (73%) ascribe the Ford Institute's influence as being "quite a bit" and "very much" in the community's ability to have energized and inclusive community events (see figure 2).

FIGURE 1. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders in the item, **"We have multiple active collaborations and partnerships."**
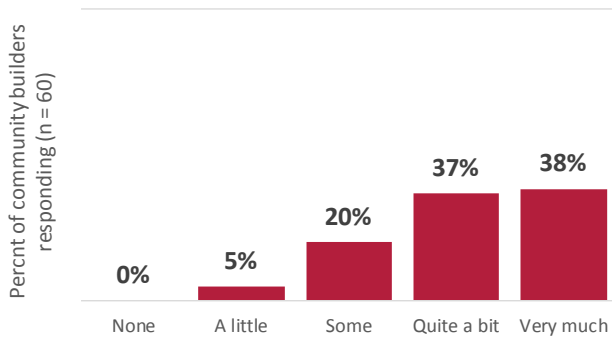
FIGURE 2. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders in the item, **"We have energizing and inclusive community events."**
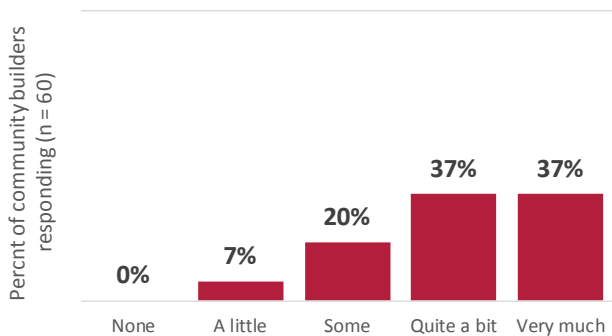
Community builders recognized the importance of working together but also identified critical challenges. Lack of follow-through, working with people's egos, and the dwindling number of volunteers over time produced obstacles to fostering and maintaining collaborative efforts. Despite these challenges, community builders were becoming increasingly more committed to working together. One community builder reflected: **"People working together can be exhausting, but it leads to better long-term results."** Working with diverse

groups of people, though daunting at times, encouraged community members to actively seek to understand the ideas of others and to work to implement those ideas. Another said: **"I've learned to look for the nugget in what people say, the ideas that they have, and how we can apply that."**

Recruiting and sustaining the involvement of volunteers from throughout the community was also reported to be tremendously difficult at times. For some interviewees, it seemed there were always the same people at the table. Others were concerned about the lack of follow-through when involving youth and local businesses in the community. Data from the survey reveal considerable variability in responses about the involvement of volunteers from all levels of the community. This variability indicates that there are difficulties getting people from a broad spectrum of the community interested and involved in community building.

These challenges of involving and sustaining the involvement of a diverse group of people and partners reportedly slowed the pace and, at times, frustrated the progress of getting things done.

One interviewee from the Latinx community said: **"I feel motivated when I see that there are other people motivated to keep going and make change. At the same time, I feel discouraged when I see that there is low participation."**

Despite the challenges, the data show that the hard work of community building, when it is done with people working together, unlocks the power of the whole community. One interviewee explained: **"We are in a time when no single person can hold all of the skills. Building teams who hold the skills is the new way of working."** Another said: **"Before [Ford Institute] I felt I had more conflicts. Now, I must think that the other person always has the best intentions. I try to understand that we are all valuable; that we all have much to teach."**

This focus on building community expanded to reach people who previously were uninvolved. One said: **"People who didn't know us before showed up."** Similarly, community organizations found the work compelling and joined the effort. One community builder noted, **"Community powerhouse agencies started**

to take note and join in." As a result, participants in the Community Building Approach learned to value the partnerships that resulted. One interviewee said: **"I've come to understand that I need to have partners. Don't go in alone."** The data show that the Community Building Approach has resulted in a stronger, larger and more diverse community of people working together toward common goals.

Inclusive is elusive: Progress is being made to reach the hard to reach and involve them meaningfully and sustainably in community building, but being inclusive is still proving to be a significant challenge.

For many interviewees, the primary take-away from the Community Building Approach is to focus on being profoundly inclusive. For those, the central impact of the Ford Institute has been to develop a new awareness of the "hard to reach." There is a growing realization that everyone is needed for community building, even those who are often overlooked. Those who have been involved in the Community Building Approach recognize the importance of inclusion. However, people are still wrestling with how to implement profound inclusion in action. They know the value but struggle with the application.

Through much of the Community Building Approach work, there was significant effort dedicated toward involving people who are not typically involved. One said: **"[CBA] has made me realize how important it is to invite everyone in the community."** Others noted that the work had helped them to "embrace the differences." For example, through the CBA work, one had become a committed advocate for reaching out to unincorporated areas. There is growing recognition that it is good not just to move the community forward, but to move the community forward with profound involvement from throughout the whole of the community.

Progress toward inclusion is challenging, despite the best of efforts. As one interviewee put it: **"The hard to reach are still the hard to reach."** Survey data also show that work to engage the hard to reach is a challenge,

even though progress is being made. The majority of respondents report that they have done "some" work on engaging the "hard to reach" (see figure 3), a lower strength of response than for most elements. The survey respondents also rated themselves lower, relative to other responses, on their ability to exchange ideas across groups and people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs (see figure 4).

FIGURE 3. Survey responses to the item, **"We work to engage the hard to reach people in our community."**
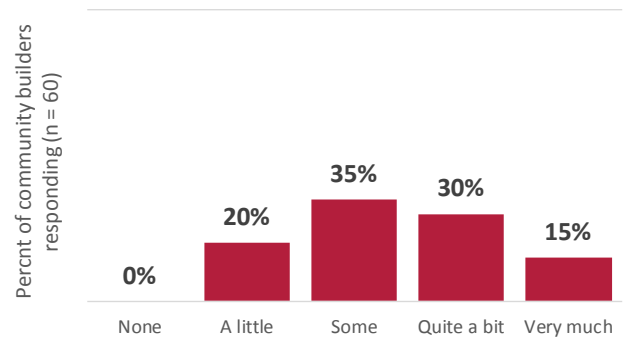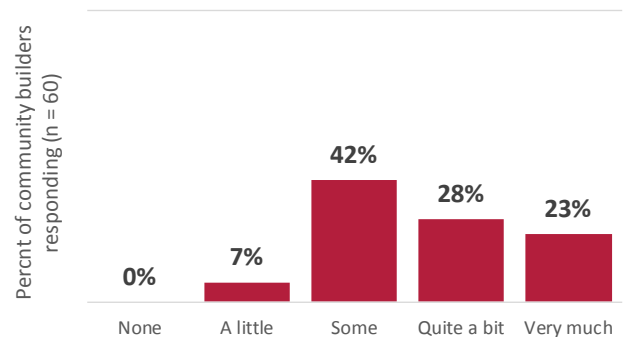

FIGURE 4. Survey responses to the item, **"We exchange ideas across groups and people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs."**

The data reveal, however, that the Ford Institute making a difference in this area for communities (the mean response is 3.8 on a 5-point scale[1]), but it is less influential than other indicators of community connection. Interviewees identified poverty ("It seems people forget that economics create a divide."), age ("The 55 and older group is a hard-to-reach population."), and the experience of being unsheltered among the many factors that make outreach difficult. The amount of exposure to the Ford

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1   In each of the survey items, a response of 1 is designated "none," and a response of 5 is "very much."

Institute appears to make a difference in the ability of community builders to reach the hard to reach in their community. About the item, "We work to engage the hard to reach in our community," 66% of extremely involved respondents to 53% of moderately involved respondents identified Ford Institute impact as being "quite a bit" and "very much." The work of the Ford Institute has prioritized the need for communities to reach the hard to reach. However, there is still much progress needed in developing the ability of community builders to fulfill this need.

CAPACITY

Tapping into collective boot-strappy-ness: The rural mindset of grit and resourcefulness are being directed toward community building.

The interviews show that through engagement with the Community Building Approach, the mindset, strength, initiative, and grit that characterizes so much of the rural communities in Oregon and Northern California are being translated into a force for community development. Interaction with CBA has helped to unleash the capacities already present within the culture of communities – those features of capability, resourcefulness, pride and tenacity. CBA has activated the boot-strappy-ness of rural residents and focused it on opportunities for growth and development of rural communities. People are seeing that what they already have in their DNA as rural residents can be applied to the practices of CBA.

The interview data reveal that work with the Ford Institute has given people a way to talk about their resourcefulness in a broader, shared, and coordinated sense of community building. It has provided them with a common framework. The lexicon is now a shared language. The tools are now shared methods. In this sense, the CBA work has provided a kind of verification of existing resources within communities and a way to unleash them for community building. The survey data show that 79% of respondents respond either "quite a bit" or "very much" to the statement, "We are able to gather resources and support from within the community." This response demonstrates a widely held belief among community builders in their capacity to find and focus the energy and resourcefulness within the community.

Tooling up: The Community Building Approach gives people the tools they need to make the progress they want.

The data show that the passion for community progress stirred by the Community Building Approach is accompanied by the practical capacity to take action. Before CBA, some interviewees expressed that they were unable to accomplish what they wanted in their community due to lack of skill. But now, many have a sense that they can do it. One said: **"The support and training has provided a platform for groups to talk to each other. This feels new."** In the past, they may not have known what to do; now, they have a roadmap. In the past, they may not have known that they had the tools; now, they are organized and have the tools in their tool belt. One said: **"I love the techniques [Max and Roque] use. I love showing my family how the Ford Institute works."** For many, there is a growing belief that community building can happen because they now see that they have the means to do it.

Some of the tools learned through the Community Building Approach have been applied by interviewees to other areas of life and community work as well. One said: **"I've taken some things I've learned through the vision and CBA process and applied them to my work at my organization."** Another said: **"I incorporate and then offer solutions that include what people are considering to move the conversation forward."**

The survey data also reveal a strong positive response to the item, "We feel we have the ability to get community-building work done," with 77% claiming "quite a bit" or "very much." As well, survey respondents claim that the Ford Institute has had the most significant impact on the same indicator of capacity. Responses average at 4.2 on a 5-point scale, with close to half (48%) attributing the Ford Institute to being the cause of "very much" positive change in their ability to get community-building work done (see figure 5).

FIGURE 5. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders **feel we have the ability to get community building work done.”**
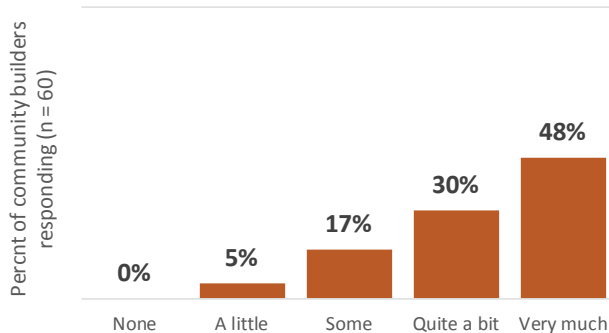
The potential of people: The community is embracing its potential to make change.

Interviewees were under no illusion that community building is easy or effortless. Countless challenges threaten to inhibit progress. The data show, however, that what used to be keeping people from moving forward is being overcome with a renewed sense of community power. People are not letting the past get in the way of the future. They are now considering how to engage their future even despite structures and systems that inhibit progress. In many cases, they are learning about systems in order to work within the system and not just become a community bystander.

Interviewees talked about how they used to be timid and careful about disrupting the status quo of the community. Now, through this work, they are getting more comfortable pushing forward into pockets of resistance. In their view, naysayers, active resisters, and people who seem to be standing in the way are among the most difficult to deal with, but not impossible. As a result of the Community Building Approach, they are taking persistent steps to challenge what needs to be challenged in their communities.

The Community Building Approach has given people the tools to make a difference in the power dynamics in their community. They are now renegotiating their relationship with people in power and systems of power to overcome the barriers to community progress. There is a growing belief that with persistence, things will change and that they can influence that change. This belief indicates a shift from previously held assumptions that, as one interviewee described, **“change will never happen because the people or system won’t allow it.”**

In a way, the “bottom” of the community – the place without traditional positions of power and privilege – has become the new “top.” Those who are often perceived as being at the bottom of the community power structure are embracing their power in new ways. One said: **“I realize that the community is capable of tackling hard issues if enough people are passionate and believe in it.”** This renegotiated perception of power is helping community builders discover a new kind of agency and confidence that is strengthening community resilience and self-determination.

While there is a change in attitude, there are still pervasive struggles. One said: **“People have the best intentions, but fear change.”** Another said: **“You can teach old dogs new tricks, but it takes longer.”**

The survey data reveal greater confidence in the ability of community builders to find and mobilize resources from within the community than from outside of the community (see figures 6 and 7). Despite the challenges, the work of CBA is resulting in a sense of prevailing empowerment for many communities. One said: **“There are people like myself who, no matter what it takes, will step back and look down at the whole picture, regroup, and try to reach out to those who are important and say, ‘There has to be a way to work together.’”**

FIGURE 6. Survey responses to the item, **“We can gather resources and support from within the community.”**
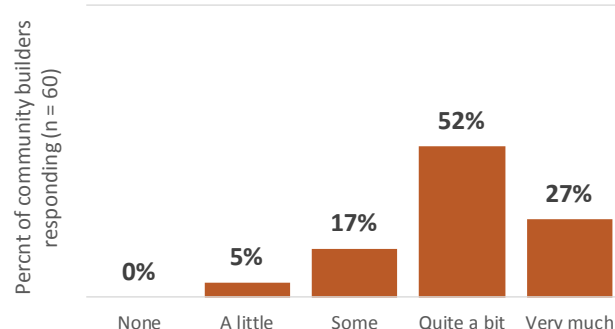
FIGURE 7. Survey responses to the item, **"We can gather resources and support from outside our community."**
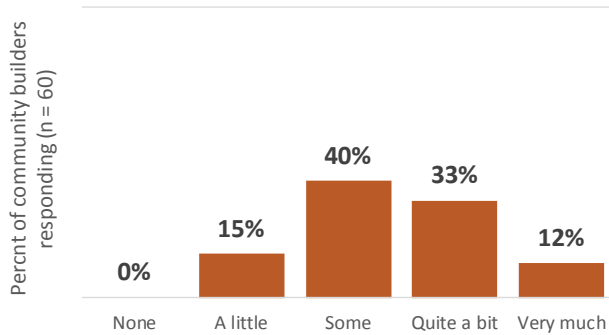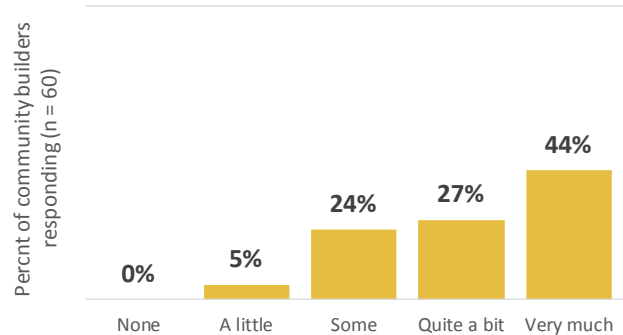

FIGURE 9. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders **feel empowered to take action in our community.**


COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

Taking the initiative: Communities are realizing that they can and should take control of their future.

The interview data show that people are not only believing in their ability to create the future they want to see, but they are taking new steps toward achieving their community vision. The interview data signal that people are realizing more fully that they can lead their community, and they actually want to do it. Some report losing their fear of organizing community gatherings. One said: "People feel really empowered to make the change and do the thing that they want to see." In response to the survey item, "We feel empowered to take action in our community," 70% of respondents claim "quite a bit" or "very much" (see figure 8). Slightly more (72%) attribute a positive change in their ability to take action to the work of Ford Institute (see figure 9).

FIGURE 8. Survey responses to the item, **"We feel empowered to take action in our community."**
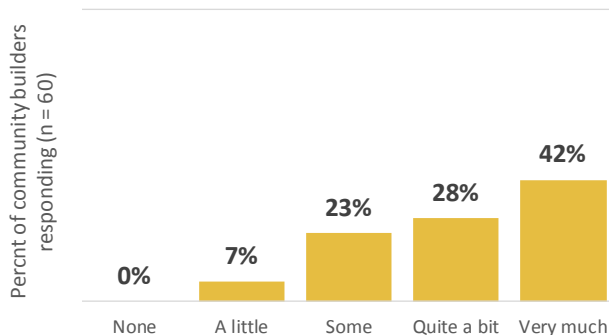
Through the work of the Community Building Approach, there is a growing strength of desire among community builders to take the initiative to meet the challenges in their community. Interviewees clearly expressed an increasing sense of responsibility to take the initiative. These are examples of their views: **"We don't need to be saved." "We can take it on ourselves. We can figure it out. We are up to any challenge." "We can take this on ourselves. We can figure out how to deal with any challenge." "If we do nothing, nothing will change."** These perspectives, while encouraging, are not naïve perspectives. One said: "It's exhausting to be the cheerleader for community self-esteem, but it's worth it."

Finding the strength within: A sense of community agency is being strengthened through the Community Building Approach.

For many, the work of CBA is helping to shift the focus of the community away from seeking external help and resources and toward finding and utilizing internal community resources. For example, one said: **"I'm a bit more radical than I realized in the sense that I'm discovering that I have less and less patience for the idea that some outside group is going to affect change."** Instead of waiting for an external prompting, the community is taking hold of what is possible through the community's own action.

Community members appreciate and are animated by the idea of moving forward with their own ideas instead of ideas from those outside of their community. They are

defining who they are as a community instead of having it defined for them. One community builder said: **"I see more people realizing that it's not up to just the government or the schools or some bureaucracy to take on the care of the community. I guess it is [up to] me."** Rather than being dependent on others, participants are learning the importance of being driven from their internal strength. Another interviewee said. **"I think we're told in a lot of institutional ways that we should wait to hear what we should do or ask. And there's no such thing as an outside group telling you what to do."** This recognition that progress is dependent on those within the community shifts the locus of agency inward.

One interviewee from the Latinx community expressed this impact being evidenced in her work. She said:

We had a misunderstanding with the school district and the after-school program in the apartments. But the parents have organized to go and ask for an explanation [and to] explain about what they want for their children. They can now organize themselves. They have the ability and also know that it is their right.

Empowered to act: Communities are better able to plan and follow through on community plans.

The data from the interviews also reveal progress in the communities' ability to asses, plan and take steps of action based on that plan. One said: **"We are asking questions now like, 'Where are we? Where do we want to go?'"** The data from the survey show an exceptionally high level of response to the idea that communities are feeling empowered to take action, responding on average 4.1 on a 5-point scale (see figure 8). The perceived influence of the Ford Institute on the same item is also at a very high average of 4.1 on a 5-point scale (see figure 9). Community builders are finding less success developing a shared vision for their community, with nearly half of all respondents (43%) reporting "a little" and "some" (see figure 10). However, the Ford Institute is still having a substantial impact on the progress that is being made toward a shared vision, with 60% of respondents reporting "quite a bit" and "very much" when asked to rate the influence of the Ford Institute (see figure 11).

FIGURE 10. Survey responses to the item, **"We have a shared vision for the future of our community."**
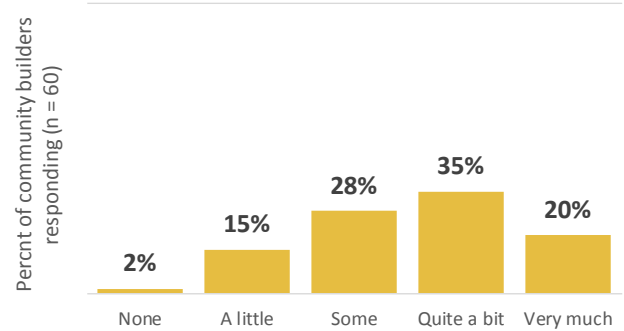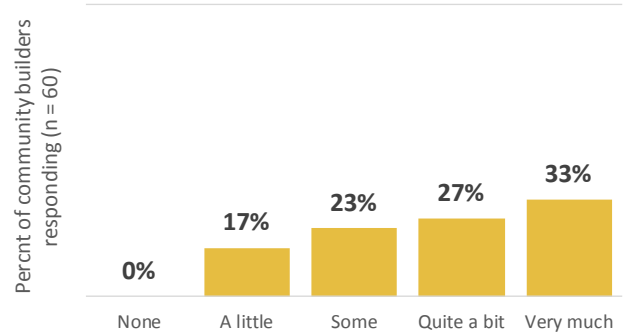

FIGURE 11. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders **have a shared vision for the future of our community.**

However, the survey data show that communities struggle the most taking on long-term, critical and complex issues in communities (responding with an average of 3.5 on a 5-point scale, see figure 12). From the survey data, it appears that the influence of the Ford Institute on elements of community action is lagging in the same dimension. Of any of the Cs, the category of community-led action records the most substantial differences in Ford Institute impact between those who were extremely involved and those who were moderately involved. About the item, "We have a shared vision for the future of our community," 64% of extremely involved respondents to 48% of moderately involved respondents identified the Ford Institute impact as being "quite a bit" and "very much." About the item, "We take on long-term, critical and complex issues," 61% of extremely involved respondents to 48% of moderately involved respondents identified the Ford Institute impact as being "quite a bit" and "very much."

FIGURE 12. Survey responses to the item, **"We take on long term, critical and complex issues."**
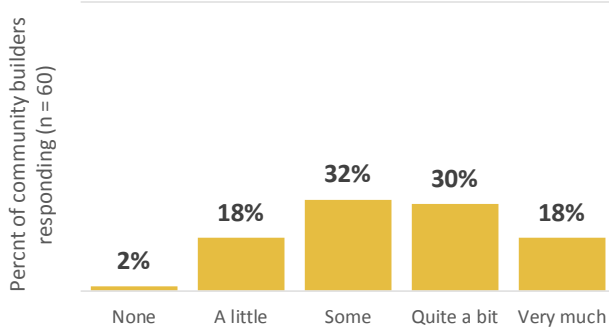
Given the challenges of mobilizing and sustaining significant projects directed toward long-term aims, it is not entirely surprising that survey data showed this element as lagging others. Survey data also reveal stronger responses from the items referring to a general sentiment about community-led action than for those items referring to concrete and tangible applications. This might signal more energy than action, more intention than follow-through, and more desire than implementation.

CULTURE

Hope awakens: A new kind of hope, confidence and belief is emerging and filling the community with energy.

The findings show that the Community Building Approach work strengthens a sense of community hope. As a result of working with the Ford Institute, interviewees felt more hopeful about the future and adopted the belief that change is possible. For many, this has signaled a shift toward a new kind of energy and expectation within the community. One described that their community is now seen as "the little community that could."

In a way, community building stirs communities out of slumber and into a new wakefulness and awareness about the potential for the future. One interviewee said: **"There is a spark in people's eyes."** Optimism is growing. Another interviewee said: **"Our job is to be hopeful, to remember and never forget how far we've come."** Said another: **"We are proud of the work being done**

and focus on being part of it. The community is taking note."

The confirmation of others helps to build and strengthen hope and belief. One said: **"We are a valid group in the eyes of the city and the county. They are asking us to take leadership in the vision."** Another said: **"People are starting to believe that things can be different."** Like an echo that grows louder over time rather than fading, the feedback of success builds on the strength of hope and belief.

With new hope has come a new sense of community pride. One said: **"It made the kids stand up straight, with their shoulders back."** Another noted **"an uptick in pride – individual and community pride."** People are beginning to believe that change can happen and that they can achieve their vision for their community. One said: **"I realize that the community is capable of tackling hard issues if enough people are passionate or believe in it."** One interviewee from the Latinx community said: **"What excites me is that the Ford Institute has given me a lot of hope, and it excites me because I know that by doing [this work] I am helping my kids, my family and my friends that are around me and will also benefit and will become motivated to enact change."**

Data from the survey reveal that the Ford Institute is having the most impact on the extent to which people are feeling hopeful and optimistic about their future, with a response on average of 4.1 on a 5-point scale (see figure 13). Of the respondents, 80% report "quite a bit" and "very much" when they consider the level of influence the Ford Institute has had on the development of community hope and optimism (see figure 14).

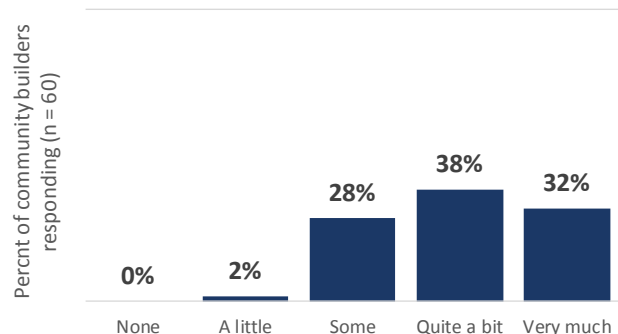**FIGURE 13.** Survey responses to the item, **"We feel hopeful and optimistic about our future."**
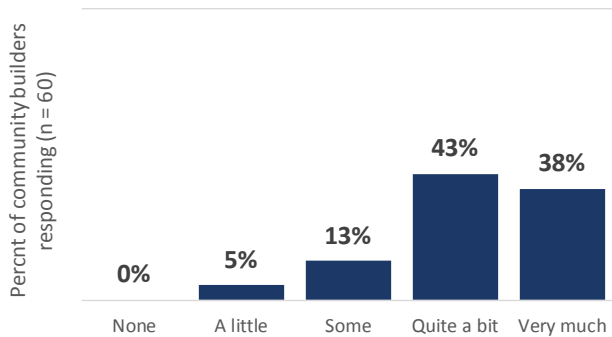
FIGURE 14. Survey responses for the degree to which FIBC has helped community builders **feel hopeful and optimistic about our future.**

Percent of community builders responding (n = 60)

None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
0%	5%	13%	43%	38%

Personal evolution into civic responsibility: *Community builders are finding a stronger and more vibrant personal identity for civic responsibility.*

The data reveal that the Ford Institute and the work of the Community Building Approach are strengthening civic responsibility in people. People report a stronger personal connection to their community that goes beyond family ties. They see their role not merely as an observer, but as a community creator. They report that they are embracing new roles and stepping into new spaces as a friend, neighbor and community builder. They are beginning to put community at the center of their thinking. One interviewee said: **"The biggest value for me has been in the expanded frame of reference beyond what is right in front of me. I think it has made me a more sensitive person with a bigger heart, more mindful of others who aren't just part of my little locale."** Another said: **"Community building has awoken a feeling of civic pride and duty in me."**

The interviews show that this kind of community involvement and ownership is inspiring in people a sense of personal dignity and self-empowerment. One said: **"Our work makes me so proud I live here."** Another said: **"For the first time I see myself as functioning within the community wheel."** CBA work is instilling a sense of commitment to community improvement that is not dependent on personal recognition. One interviewee

said: **"I don't want to be recognized, but I want to make a difference."**

The imbuing of CBA is less about doing different actions and more about an identity shift. One said: "The work is a part of who I am." Another said: **"I didn't know how much I cared about community until I started with CBA."** Over time, and with enough exposure, CBA becomes part of the DNA of those doing the community building.

Through CBA, people are also experiencing a revitalization of a sense of attachment and care for their community. One said: **I've never been someone who's been, "go community" or "I love this town." And now I totally say that "[my community] is wonderful." I think I could feel that way about any community now because I've learned that when you get to know people, when you make community together and what you want it to be, you do fall in love. It's a love of your community and also a love of community.**

Another from the Latinx community talked about how the Ford Institute has promoted a sense of leadership: **[I've] learned to delegate better, listen better, and experiment more on the things that have helped me a lot for the future. [Additionally, it has] strengthened my philosophy about being a leader that can lead from all angles and not necessarily by being at the front.**

Development of such strong community affinity and attachment makes the hard work of community building worth it for CBA participants and inspires further commitment and effort to go deeper. The data from the survey reveal that 82% consider themselves "very much" committed to seeing improvements in their community. Another interviewee from the Latinx community spoke of a newfound ability to push through fear to engage the community. She said: "The people motivate me. We are scared as immigrants, and I feel responsibility to guide people and tell them that everything can be accomplished by doing things honest."

Pulling back the curtain on what's important: *Community builders are experiencing personal growth and a re-orientation to what is important for their lives.*

Interviewees described how community building has helped them grow personally. They talked about how the Community Building Approach work has made them a better person – more gracious, more patient and more caring. Being involved in community building is helping people become aware of the biases and perspectives that are holding them back from relating well to others. It is helping people to have difficult but productive conversations in their community. Through community building, people are more aware of how to interact with people who are unlike them. One said: **"I am a better listener to others' perspectives."**

Some interviewees have developed a new orientation and care for the people in their community. One said: **"Projects are important, but it's about the people."** Another spoke of a change of perspective from the self to the community,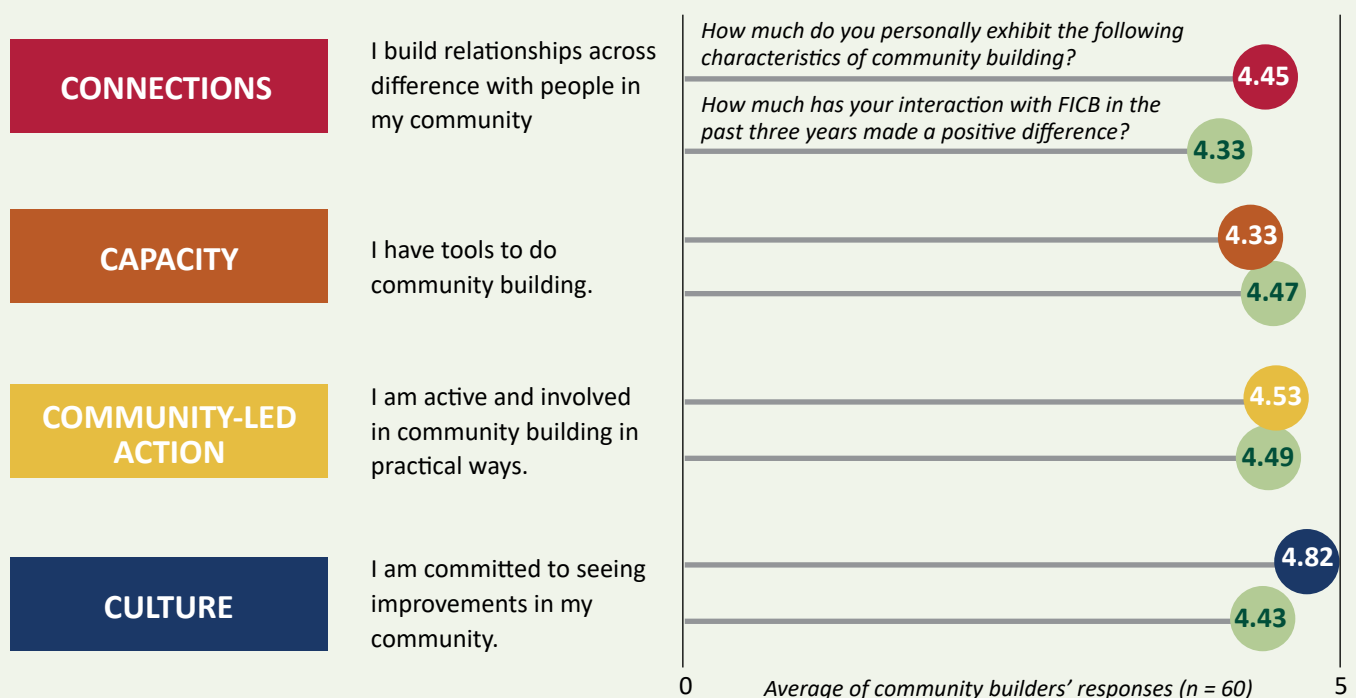 saying: **"I've shifted my barometer** of success. It's not just about numbers, analytics, or right and wrong. It's about community goals." Another interviewee confirmed this perspective, saying: **"I have interest in doing work that benefits the community beyond my job."**

The data reveal that through the investment of the Ford Institute and the activity of community building, people experienced personal empowerment, not just community empowerment. They develop a deeper belief that they can overcome their personal inertia of frustration and inactivity. One said: **I have definitely stepped out of my shell quite a bit. I'm still shy, but it has been shown to me that there can be change, and it has helped me push myself a bit and grow beyond my own focus.**

Improving perceptions of personal strength and self-efficacy led to a greater commitment by community members.

Survey data show that for the four Cs of impact, personal growth and development in community building is rated most highly by those who have been involved with the Ford Institute for Community Building (see figure 15). Community builders consider themselves to be advancing considerably in their practices of the four Cs. Community builders also attribute their progress to be highly affected by the Ford Institute in each of the four Cs.

FIGURE 15. Survey responses to person **assessment of the four Cs and the degree to which the Ford Institute for Community Building is making a positive difference in personal growth of the four Cs.**

CONNECTIONS	I build relationships across difference with people in my community	*How much do you personally exhibit the following characteristics of community building?* 4.45
		How much has your interaction with FICB in the past three years made a positive difference? 4.33
CAPACITY	I have tools to do community building.	4.33
		4.47
COMMUNITY-LED ACTION	I am active and involved in community building in practical ways.	4.53
		4.49
CULTURE	I am committed to seeing improvements in my community.	4.82
		4.43

0   *Average of community builders' responses (n = 60)*   5

2 Causes and catalysts to progress

The interviews revealed insights about how progress in community building is made.

EXPOSING TO ENOUGH DOSAGE OVER ENOUGH TIME

Enough exposure over enough time promotes the internalization of the principles and practices.

The data reveal that impact is most clear and convincing after significant exposure to and practice in the Community Building Approach. A substantial and sustained dosage is needed both at the individual and the community levels. Buy-in at one level impacts the buy-in at the other. Having success in the Community Building Approach increased the openness and receptivity of people to engage more fully in using it in the future. The process is gradual and developmental. Once it begins to take hold, it can grow in a stronger way over time. Survey data reveal a substantial difference in the level of the Ford Institute's personal impact between the moderately involved (averaging 75% rating the influence of the Ford Institute "quite a bit" and "very much") and the extremely involved (averaging 95% rating the influence of the Ford Institute "quite a bit" and "very much").

COMMITTING TO THE ONGOING-NESS OF IT ALL

For community building to be enduring, there must be a long-term view and a long-term commitment.

The data reveal that community transformation requires a long-term perspective. Interviewees report that a long-term commitment and vision is produced by taking enough time, having stability in funding and resources, and knowing there are long-term support and guidance. Even the smaller steps, like a potluck, can build momentum for something more significant like addressing economic development, housing, and poverty.

Embracing the ongoing nature of it all requires a kind of patience with the community and the ability to pace local action. This appears to be one of the greatest sources of frustration for the interviewees. One said: "Change is slow," "We can't change the world overnight." Another said: "We keep plugging along." The data show a growing

trust in the process which helps communities "stick with it." Over time, communities begin to value the process more, care for their community more, and develop the ability to sustain the work over the long term. The longer people can sustain involvement, the better the chances that a long-term vision can be forged and enacted.

One interviewee expressed the uniqueness of the Ford Institute approach in providing space and opportunity for processing and engaging work over time, saying, "Not everyone is like The Ford Family Foundation, and they don't give us that space. There are internal and external pressures. It limits us in terms of how much we can do in community development."

SEEING AND CELEBRATING THE PROGRESS

Celebration of progress is a vital tool to keep people moving forward productively.

The data show that an increased ability to define and recognize community building successes positively impacted the ability of the community to have awareness, engagement and confidence in the community-building process. Interviewees talked about how acknowledging success motivates people. When people stop to see and recognize success, it encourages community members to continue their efforts. Through celebration, one said: "I could see the community being built." Interviewees also spoke of the need for partners to experience success as well. They acknowledged that the most valuable successes would be seen in the long term, but smaller successes along the way are encouraging and motivational. One interviewee said: "I know that we made an impact, and that brings me up."

MAKING IT REAL AND TANGIBLE

People need concrete ways to build community and engage in the work.

The interviews reveal that people need a clear and doable entry point into the work. The team heard that the Community Building Approach could be confusing and ambiguous. One interviewee even called it a beach ball of confusion. In contrast to the Ford Institute Leadership Program, which was clear and prescriptive, CBA is more amorphous and harder to grasp. It is also more adaptable and can lead to deeper community transformation and innovation. One said: "It was a challenge to move from leadership to CBA. A better transition would have been helpful." Another said: "I don't know the next steps. I just keep going, and somehow the little steps keep moving us forward." Said another: "The Foundation has shown simply and delightfully what a project could look like and feel like through simple energizers and community building events." Finding multiple entry points into CBA that are tangible and concrete will help people better understand CBA.

ACTIVATING THE BENEFICENT SPIRAL

Success begets success: momentum is self-reinforcing.

The data reveal that the variety and interconnectedness of community-building activities and successes are mutually reinforcing. A success here leads to a success elsewhere. Momentum requires the activation of an ecology of factors, all working together. It takes multiple people, involved at many levels and in many ways to build momentum. There appears to be a cumulative and leveraging effect when a number of strategies are taken together for community building. There is no one "silver bullet." As such, there is no one starting place.

Building momentum requires building on successes. One said: "To begin the chain of success, we must first help the community recognize their achievements so that they become re-energized, increase engagement, and build on those successes." This spiral of progress becomes self-reinforcing. One said: "I keep doing good, and it's slowly breaking down the disconnection." Another said: "More of the success deepens the commitment."

AFFIRMING AND VALIDATING

Even though the power comes from within the community, having external affirmation breeds and boosts confidence.

The data from the interviews show that a certain degree of validation from outside of the community is encouraging. One said: "The idea that a big organization like Ford cares about a measly, little run-down town is really awesome." Another said: "The meeting of the Ford Institute was the best attended by far. When you [Ford] come to town, you create a buzz." Said another: "It's also good that the Ford Institute is there to give us a boost." Through the Community Building Approach, community builders looked less for authorization but appreciated verification. Another said: "I've changed. I've improved by having more confidence. It has given me certainty that we are not working alone, that there are foundations with whom we can create alliances. And that gives me a lot of courage to continue." The presence and acknowledgment from the Ford Institute provided encouragement and verification to affirm and continue the work.

ELEVATING THE CONVERSATION

Having the presence of the Ford Institute in the community influences the quality of community dialogue.

The data reveal that the interactions from the Ford Institute help to inspire and hold space for the kind of connections that are needed for community building. One said: "The Ford Institute creates a 'third space' for communities and community members to build relationships." Another talked about how the presence of the Ford Institute is elevating the quality of interaction in the community, saying, "People have different conversations when Ford is in the room."

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO LEARN

When the Ford Institute brings people from different communities together, community builders are encouraged, inspired and enriched.

The data show that the strategy of bringing people from different communities together to learn from each other is productive. One interviewee said: "I have had the opportunity, with the help of the Foundation/Ford Institute, of meeting other people from other

communities doing the same work and being able to see the things that they implement, their models and knowledge that they implement in their community."

ENCOURAGING WHAT IS EMERGING

The posture of listening and fanning into flame the spark of energy and interest from within the community is helping to advance the community-building work.

The Ford Institute is approaching communities by coaxing into the frame of focus the energy and capacity that is already there. This approach is appreciated by community builders and is ascribed as one of the key ingredients to effectiveness. One interviewee said: "What excited me the most is receiving the support and education from the Ford Institute in a friendly and gentle way. That's how I see it, the way in which you have reached out to me is not by telling me what to do but by listening and supporting me and our needs from the perspective of the community." Some of the community builders are modeling this approach in their own work. One said: "The first step for me was accepting, having more patience, waiting and not forcing the community and not being the sole person to bring that energy. Fomenting friendships and confidence, and seeing how the community/ leadership team reacts because perhaps they are not ready or willing to act."

SPARKING THE ACTION

Sometimes an external interaction from the Ford Institute is the spark that is needed to get a community moving on their goals and vision for the future.

The movement needed for community building to happen is often sparked from the interaction with the Ford Institute. One said: "The Ford Institute can unstick folks from their habitual ways of thinking." Another said: "When the Ford Institute is in the room, it allows for a different sense of what is possible." Another spoke about how the modeling that is happening from the Ford Institute inspires the community, "[Max and Roque] are out there doing the work. I really appreciate that, and it makes me want to strive to do better." These interviewees demonstrate the critical function of an external interaction of high quality to motivate and inspire the work within the community.
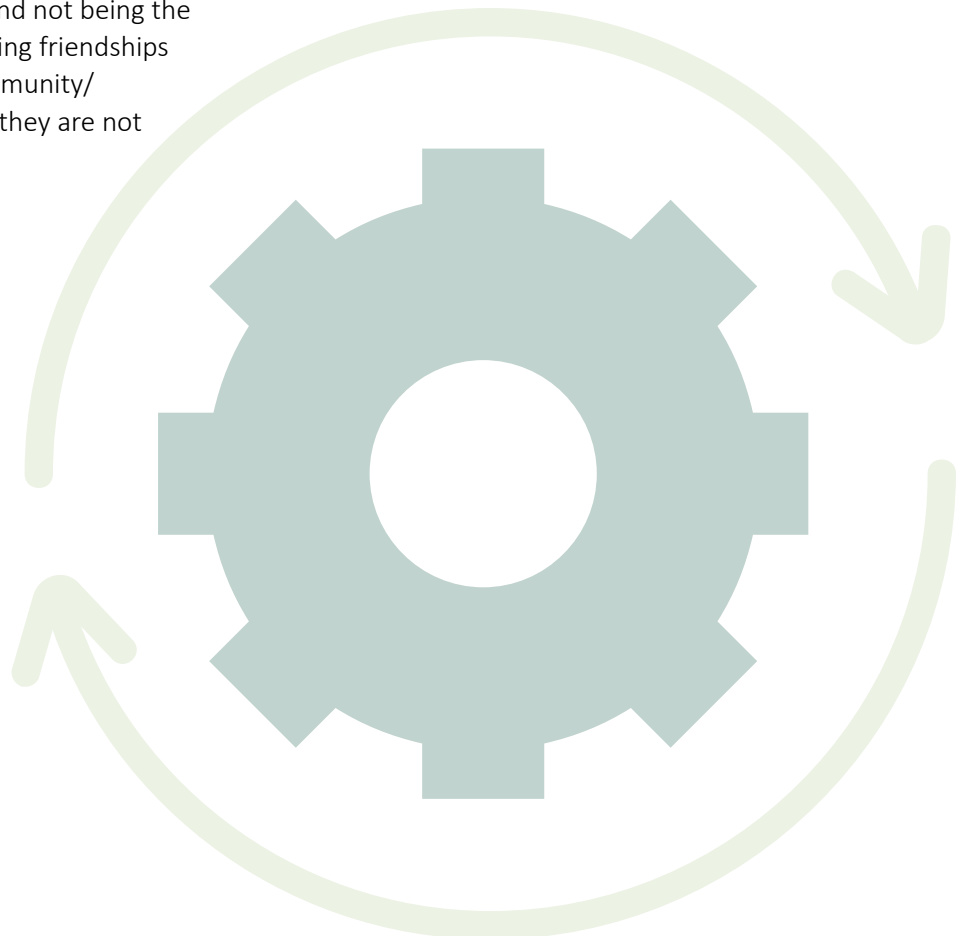
3 Challenges for Communities

The evaluation revealed a set of significant challenges facing communities as they seek to advance their community-building work.

LEARNING AND ADAPTATION

Building habits of reflection, learning and evaluation are challenging within communities. One said: "I can't stop doing the work to evaluate the work. It's like filming a movie at the same time you're filming a documentary about the movie." In addition, the progress of community building is often elusive and difficult to measure. Interviewees reflected on the difficulty of evaluating community-building work.

DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

In some cases, community builders found it challenging to overcome a mindset of discouragement and hopelessness. One spoke of it as "an entrenched sense of hopelessness." In the perspective of another, people seemed to be lost and have lost hope. For others, there was a sense of facing resistance and obstructionism from people in the community who have settled into the status quo and are unable or unwilling to move forward.

SUSTAINING MOMENTUM AND PACING

The slow pace of change is difficult to handle. One said: "It's like wait, wait, wait...then...jump on this today! It seems slow until it's not. The progress seems slow for so many who are involved in community building. Some want immediate results. Many want things to move faster." In time, some respond to the slow pace of change by cynicism. One said: "Learning that sometimes it's about planting seeds and waiting for them to grow... or not grow." The slow pace of change is a source of frustration along the way for many.

PRACTICING PROFOUND INCLUSION

The data reveal that for many, reaching the hard-to-reach is a daunting task. Some say that the hard to reach people are still the hard to reach, even after community-building work. One said: "We are inclusive, but maybe not profoundly inclusive yet." Many are still struggling to discover the best ways to engage the hard to reach. One said: "To reach hard to reach folks, workshops aren't always the best strategy." The survey data show that the design and application of strategies to reach the hard to reach is lagging other indicators of community connections. In particular, many found there to be limited involvement from the Latinx community, school-age children and their parents, and the Native American population.

Some have realized that they don't put enough effort into the hard to reach. In some cases, community builders feel awkward trying to promote inclusion, realizing that it seems sometimes forced when "they are just not into it." The survey data show that communities are struggling to have "a welcoming spirit to diverse people and points of view," with a response of 3.4 on a 5-point scale. Of the areas the Ford Institute is impacting related to culture, this element is showing to be lagging in influence.

WORKING TOGETHER

Another significant challenge for community builders is in working together with others. Some see people coming out of the woodwork and killing the momentum of the group. Some are facing the difficulty of working with people they don't like. Some are experiencing personal attacks. One said: "When differences are so broad, and when groups are actively working against each other, working in teams is not feasible." New people who join the process often add energy, but it can make people who have been doing the work for some time feel discounted or disrespected. One said: "It can be exhausting and frustrating when new people show up at each meeting, and we have to start from the beginning." The survey data reveal that "working well together" is a struggle (with 36% of respondents claiming that their community works only somewhat well together).

GAINING SHARED VISION AND CLARITY

The challenge of vision and clarity has two expressions. First, community builders find it challenging to get everyone moving in the same direction sometimes. They realize that at times, there is a lack of prioritization process, so people are confused about what is happening. One said: "I expected them to take advantage of this opportunity, but they had no vision and did not see the benefit." Second, there is confusion and lack of clarity within communities about the Community Building Approach, what steps can and should be taken, and how to engage with the Ford Institute in moving forward in community building. Some interviewees spoke of a sense of "fuzziness" about what it looks like to engage with the Ford Institute in the Community Building Approach.

SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION

Dwindling participation over time is also challenging for many. In some cases, many people at first are involved in community building, but then participation can diminish over time. Keeping a level of engagement is difficult. Many community members realize that they need more volunteers. For some, it appears that the same people show up at every event. For others, it appears that people are too busy and too tired to continue the pace of involvement.

BUILDING STRUCTURE TO SUSTAIN THE WORK

Community builders express a desire and need for structure. The data reveal that timelines are helpful. At the same time, there is often an expressed frustration to follow a procedure and convince others to do so. Still, community builders recognize that the work doesn't really happen without a central, stable place. When there is a need for seeking resources outside of the community, survey respondents indicate only moderate confidence that they have the ability to gather resources from outside of the community (with 40% reporting "some").

ENGAGING THE ESTABLISHMENT

Community builders find it challenging to involve the establishment in community building at times. Some report a lack of connection to policymakers. Others explain a lack of engagement from the business community. One expressed a desire for more involvement of the City Council. There's a perception that it's an "us against them" perspective that reveals tension and, at times, distrust of government.

COMMUNICATING TO EVERYONE

The data from the interviews reveal a need for clear, effective communication in the community. Many community builders struggle with designing strategies to connect with and communicate to the whole community. They talk about a need to figure out how to get the word out to those in the community. One said: "There is a lot going on if you know the right people. But if you're not connected, then you don't know about it."

4 Possible Responses

Among the possible responses, the following have been considered.

1. ACTIVATE THE MULTIPLICATION OF COMMUNITIES TO COMMUNITIES

Aim - Leverage the wisdom and experience of communities to multiply the work in additional communities

Elements
- Use existing capacity to build new capacity
- Develop a "human library" of resource people who can be on loan to communities
- Communities that have been doing community building adopt new communities
- Communities become community-building ambassadors
- Develop regional hubs of peer learning
- Ford coordinates roles

2. INITIATE ACTION-TAKING STRATEGIES TO SPARK AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY-BUILDING MOMENTUM

Aim - To help people not give up and to build resiliency

Elements
- 90-day planning strategy
- Build a toolkit of resources
- Provide examples of long-term momentum building
- Examining examples of why efforts of momentum died
- Identify the cycle of momentum, comfortable with the stages and know what to anticipate
- Short-term decision making with a benchmark that leads to an accomplishment
- Decision points: love it, level it, leave it, leverage it
- Look at what are the other sustaining practices (e.g., quarterly celebratory convening and gatherings to inform community
- Honor and celebrate community builders

3. DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO EMBRACE THE HARD TO REACH

Aim -Increase the ability of communities to be profoundly inclusive

Elements
- Working teams around different hard-to-reach people, catering specifically to that particular group
- Learning exchanges involving groups that have been effective (e.g., homeless, blue zones, churches), bring groups together that can teach others how they went about the process and why they were successful
- Examining the motives around inclusivity and why some people don't want to be included
- Honoring the input and ideas of the hard to reach

4. RESEARCH SYSTEMIC CAUSES WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Aim - Address the underlying cause to avoid/mitigate challenges. Proactively create conditions that the Community Building Approach can work in. Helping systems understand the barriers they create and perpetuate. Addresses power discrepancies and inequities. Engage the people in power, without them "using" their power or being perceived as using.

Elements
- Research to identify the barriers.
- Look for existing rural research on policy related to community building
- Inquire into communities to identify what they think are causing the challenges.
- Look for educational and interpersonally relevant policy research.

5. DESIGN STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE POWER LAYERS IN COMMUNITY

Aim - Engage all levels of the community to strengthen and sustain the work over time

Elements
- Acknowledge power – develop the capacity of communities to diagnose and explore power structures in communities
- Develop ways to inventory power
- Develop interventions to power
- Design methodology to map the assets of power

6. BUILD A STRATEGY FOR NEXT-GENERATION COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Aim - Increase the reach of community building and sustainability of community building for the future

Elements
- Partner with schools and youth organizations
- Hold events at schools
- Develop partnerships with adults and youth
- Identify existing programs that could use a boost
- Interact with 4H, FFA, public libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs

7. BUILD LONG-TERM SUPPORTS FOR COMMUNITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

Aim - Keep the work moving forward using minimal Ford Institute intervention so that the community can focus on the work

Elements
- Show that multi-year grants make an impact; demonstrate progress and success
- Design long-term strategies with communities
- Engage the board along the way
- Develop options for work after a project or a multi-year grant
- Focus on partnership and relationships

- Work with other foundations to also support the longer-term work
- Pilot it
- Develop a Community Development Account

8. MAKE CELEBRATION EASY

Aim - Make celebrations doable for communities, to develop community pride, foster hope and keep the momentum going, increase the sustainability of community building, and increase participation

Elements
- Celebration station
- Develop a suite of ideas to apply a spectrum of celebration ideas
- Design a celebration matrix to guide communities in timing and application
- Build a description of the Community Building Approach approach to celebrations
- Develop a "how-to" guide to celebrations
- Elevate successes in celebration as examples for communities to see

9. CLARIFY THE CONFUSING ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNITY BUILDING APPROACH

Aim – Take the "fuzziness" out of community building, clarify CBA theory in action, make CBA approachable and tangible for people

Elements
- Rework materials from the Ford Institute
- Develop roadmaps to explain and illustrate stages of progress
- Design a diagnostic or scan for communities to be able to self-assess and the focus their energy
- Provide illustrations of CBA in action
- Increase clarity about the entry point for doing CBA work

5 Steps Forward

Among the possible responses, the following four ideas will be prioritized:

MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES TO REACH COMMUNITIES

Possible characteristics of the response:

- Invest in an anchor person in each community
- Pair up a new community anchor with someone more experienced
- Attach a community member to regions that have no coordinator
- Continue to convene learning exchanges, summits, gatherings
- Build more mentoring programs
- Visit other communities (learning field trips)
- Rework the model of the Learning Exchange
- Figure out how to share person to person, community to community without the Ford Institute
- Build a "human library" of resource people
- Get out of ownership and to community-owned CBA
- Design flexible responses (from just-in-case training to just-in-time training)

BUILD CAPACITIES TO REACH THE HARD TO REACH

Possible characteristics of the response:

- Develop ways to reach hard to reach (define, map, etc.)
- Engage populations that will help us reach out to those populations – provide incentives
- Start with "listen to learn" to focus on hard to reach
- Develop materials with hard to reach in mind (including translation)
- Find a different name for "hard to reach" (disconnection)
- Go to "them"
- Find resource people to help people build relationships
- Invite people along when reaching out to the hard to reach so that they can learn

- Increase visibility in the community
- Identify common spaces that are comfortable for hard to reach
- Recruit navigators and pathfinders
- Rethink the board composition (board committee)

DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

Possible characteristics of the response:

- Work with other foundations to develop tools for grant applications, etc.
- Invite more state agencies and funders and showcase the work
- Meet with funders one-on-one
- Support other funder requests
- Help leverage other foundation, state-agency, federal dollars
- Show that long-term grants make a difference
- Establish a longer-term horizon in planning and conversations
- Show the ROI over time
- Work more with the board to develop strategies for long-term partnerships
- Power of the passenger seat (bring someone along)
- Provide safe-space for communities to think in 10-year terms
- Consider doing policy work
- Develop a strategy for community partners to step up and carry the load
- Partner with communities to promote long-term policy change
- Demonstrate what effective long-term support look like

A self-directed evaluation of the impact of the Ford Institute for Community Building

CLARIFY THE CONFUSING ASPECTS OF
THE COMMUNITY BUILDING APPROACH

Possible characteristics of the response:

- Identify what is fuzzy for communities, at what level
  and at what stage
- Develop a clear introductory path for people who are
  just showing up
- Simplify materials
- Utilize the matrix to help people know next steps
- Clarify the intersection of the fuzzy space between the
  community activity and the Ford Institute activity
- Develop strategies for responding to feedback about
  what is fuzzy
- Figure out entry points to help people connect with
  the Ford Institute
- Make an effort to connect pieces for people

Appendix

A   Suggestions from Interviewees

1. Fix the maze of resources

2. Ford Institute Leadership Program to the Community Building Approach has been a hard transition for some, provide more help and guidance

3. Some still not sure how to re-engage or re-connect, design a ramp to get them back on

4. Communicate better between departments and staff

5. "Call me" doesn't work for everyone

6. Provide a way to know how many resources have been spent in the community

7. Provide data about the Foundation involvement in the community and current volunteers involved

8. Give more funding for paid positions that are farther ahead than those of just volunteers

9. Watch that the Foundation is not being stretched too thin – worried about helping communities to a certain point, and then losing what you've been trying to accomplish.

10. Considerable lip-service to addressing all populations, provide more tools to help

11. The Community Building Approach process is unclear, provide clarification

12. Looking for help from Ford in addition to funding

13. Show how someone who is not already a part of the Ford process can step into the process

14. Give more advice about the Community Building Approach

15. Provide more ongoing coaching, not training

16. Honor the idea that not everyone wants to be included

17. Convene monthly communication process to exchange ideas

18. Don't burn people out in the grant process. Too long. Too many steps. Not clear enough

19. Ford Institute is often nudging communities along – are there ways to make it more clear (self-directed?)

20. Timing of events can be important for reaching all people (e.g., not summer when people travel)

21. Consider inclusivity from the other side (e.g., several Latinx families inviting the white community to a Latinx event)

22. Think about diversity in terms of background, schooling, geography, etc. and not just race

23. The Ford Institute misses the in-the-community trainings for youth that used to happen with the leadership classes

24. Consider income levels: people with good intentions and ideas can't participate because of their financial situation

25. Need to involve more youth in community building

Ford Institute Interview Protocol

Use the interview protocol as a guide, not as a rigid script. Adjust and reword the questions when appropriate. You don't have to use all the questions. You may ask other questions. Don't miss the "improve" questions that are underlined. Pay particular attention to the inside-triangle question in bold. Remember that this will be good for them to think through for themselves. And...have fun!

COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

(Since doing community-building work with the Ford Institute…) What has most excited you or made you most proud about your community's ability to come together around a shared goal or purpose? <u>What has felt daunting or discouraging to you?</u> → **How has your commitment to your community and community building work developed through our work together?** (Feel → Love)

(Since doing community-building work with the Ford Institute…) What have you discovered about your community's ability to take action and get things done? → How has that shifted your assumptions about your community? How has that shaped your expectations about your community's ability to tackle hard or complex issues? (Know → Believe)

CAPACITY

(Since doing community-building work with the Ford Institute…) What have you discovered about yourself as a community builder? What has most energized you? <u>Drained you?</u> What has been affirming for you to see in yourself? <u>What's been challenging for you to see in yourself as a community-builder?</u> → **We know that this work changes us as much as the community, how have your grown or evolved as a community builder? How might you see yourself differently as a community builder? As a community member?** (Know → Believe)

What skills have you picked up or honed to do this community-building work? What has been fairly easy to do? <u>What have you found to be more difficult? What have you not yet done that you are hoping still to try sometime? What kinds of things would build the capacity of your community, but you see people in the community, or even yourself, putting off and never getting to?</u> → **How has working on those skills fundamentally changing the way you approach your work? How has that changed your approach to how you work with others?** (Do → Become)

CONNECTIONS

(Since doing community-building work with the Ford Institute…) What new insights have you had about different groups and individuals in your community, including some harder to reach folks? *What do you sense that you still don't see very clearly about people in your community?* → **How has that shifted how you see your community?** (Know → Believe)

What have you done to work across differences in your community that you wouldn't have done if you weren't involved in community-building work with the Ford Institute? <u>What have you or others tried to do that hasn't gone well?</u> → **How has that strengthened the ability of the community to be a community? What has not yet been developed?** (Do → Become)

What steps have you taken to stay connected with the broader community and keep the broader community informed? <u>What steps have you not yet been able to take?</u> → **How has this strengthened the capacity of your community to connected and stay connected? How has this grown your own ability to engage others?** (Do → Become)

CULTURE

What are you most proud of about your community *(since starting this work?).* What has been most disheartening? → **How do you see that pride or discouragement being expressed in and through others?** (Feel → Love)

(Since doing community-building work with the Ford Institute...) What have you done or seen that has inspired hope in your community? <u>What have you done that you expected would inspire the community but hasn't yet made a difference?</u> → **How has that shifted how you or your group works for the future of your community?** (Do → Become)

CLOSING

What is your vision for your own personal future impact of your community-building work? What do you hope most for your community? Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Thank you for your community-building work. You have been invited to provide feedback as an active community builder and partner with The Ford Family Foundation. We are seeking to understand the kind of impact the Ford Institute of Community Building (FICB) has been having in communities like yours over the past three years and since our transition to focus on community building. Please take a few moments to respond to the following questions. Your answers will be anonymous. We appreciate your time and thoughtfulness to help us better understand what areas have been effective and what areas we might develop for the future. Thank you for partnering with us.

How much does your community exhibit the following characteristics of community connection?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We have energizing and inclusive community events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We exchange ideas across groups and people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have multiple active collaborations and partnerships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We work to engage the hard to reach people in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much has your interaction with the Ford Institute in the past three years made a positive difference in this area?[,]

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We have energizing and inclusive community events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We exchange ideas across groups and people with different perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have multiple active collaborations and partnerships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We work to engage the hard to reach people in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much does your community exhibit the following characteristics of community capacity?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We have active community-building volunteers who come from all parts of the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can gather resources and support from within the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can gather resources and support from outside our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We feel we have the ability to get community building work done.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much has your interaction with the FICB in the past three years made a positive difference in this area?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We have active community-building volunteers who come from all parts of the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can gather resources and support from within the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can gather resources and support from outside our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We feel we have the ability to get community building work done.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much does your community exhibit the following characteristics of community-led action?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We feel empowered to take action in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our community planning turns into action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a shared vision for the future of our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We take on long-term, critical and complex issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much has your interaction with the Ford Institute in the past three years made a positive difference in this area?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We feel empowered to take action in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our community planning turns into action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a shared vision for the future of our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We take on long-term, critical and complex issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much does your community exhibit the following characteristics of community culture?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We feel hopeful and optimistic about our future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have pride in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We work well together as a community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a welcoming spirit to diverse people and points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much has your interaction with Ford Institute in the past three years made a positive difference in this area?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
We feel hopeful and optimistic about our future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have pride in our community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We work well together as a community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a welcoming spirit to diverse people and points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much do you personally exhibit the following characteristics of community building?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
I build relationships across differences with people in my community..	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have tools to do community building.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am active and involved in community building in practical ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am committed to seeing improvements in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much has your interaction with FICB in the past three years made a positive difference in this?

	None	A little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
I build relationships across differences with people in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have tools to do community building.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am active and involved in community building in practical ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am committed to seeing improvements in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you describe the level of your engagement in community building with the Ford Institute over the past three years?

1. Extremely active – regular and extensive engagement in person and via email/phone
2. Somewhat active – semi-regular and moderate engagement in person and via email/phone
3. Lightly active – occasional contact, mostly via email/phone

What is your age range?

1. 20 and under
2. 21-30
3. 31-40
4. 41-50
5. 51-60
6. 61-70
7. 71 and above

What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Prefer not to say
4. Prefer to self-describe _____

What is your zip code? _____

What is your ethnicity?

1. Hispanic or Latino
2. American Indian
3. Asian
4. Black or African American
5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
6. Caucasian or White
7. Multiracial
8. Other
9. Prefer not to say

Comments or questions

A self-directed evaluation of the impact of the Ford Institute for Community Building

- Evaluate the Ford Institute's ability to support the communities' evaluation as a way of meeting their goals, especially with longer-term funding.

- Figure out some connections to the "challenges" part of the evaluation, and then find metrics to see if movement can be seen on that over time.

- Every year in the planning process do the "listen to learn" exercise, each team member doing five interviews a piece.

- Bring the Heart Triangle™ (inquiring from knowing to believing, feeling to loving, and doing to becoming) to all of the Ford Institute's evaluation work.

- As new strategies are built, consider how the learning might be applied from this evaluation.

- Convene learning meetings where field directors bring findings back to interviewees and communities and bring feedback to the foundation.

- Include more people in the interviews.

- Do a couple of interviews every year.

Rural residents taking the lead to build their community's future

Listen to Learn

Engage to Mobilize

Community Building Principles

Go to where the people are

Start with what you know, build on what you have

Be profoundly inclusive

Keep the community at the center of the work

Celebrate & Reflect

Create Change

Plan Together

Skill Up, Branch Out

Practices

Community Building Actions
Increase Your Impact as a Community Builder

These 29 actions will increase your impact as a Community Builder and **help you and other rural residents take the lead in building your community's future**.

Remember:

- Everyone practices some of them.
- No one practices all of them.
- The more you practice, the better.
- You can build community every day, anywhere, in big and small ways.
- A team approach allows for a diversity of actions.
- Building your practice takes purpose, persistence and passion.

Listen to Learn

1. Know and honor the history of the community
2. Listen actively and openly
3. Listen to all community groups
4. Listen for opportunities to engage
5. Never stop listening

Engage to Mobilize

6. Identify and engage around shared values and interests
7. Seek opportunities to work and learn together
8. Build a team around the energizers and mobilizers
9. Identify and create multiple ways to gain broad community participation
10. Engage the hard-to-reach and resisting forces
11. Never stop doing outreach

Skill Up, Branch Out

12. Learn new skills to get the work done
13. Build local relationships, partnerships and networks
14. Teach needed skills to others
15. Build regional and national relationships, partnerships and networks

Plan Together

16. Gather data and information as a learning and working tool
17. Create an inclusive vision
18. Develop goals, strategies, measures and action plans
19. Collaborate and align the work throughout the community
20. Reach your long-term goals through short-term actions

Create Change

21. Ensure the change is the change the greater community wants to see
22. Honor the pace of the community
23. Take unified action to invest in community effort
24. Stay involved over the long term

Celebrate & Reflect

25. Share stories and pay attention to the larger unfolding story
26. Identify what works and what doesn't
27. Stay flexible and adapt along the way
28. Celebrate successes and acknowledge and learn from failures
29. Find ways to renew and re-energize

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