

The Wisdom of Communities

How the Ford Institute helps rural people
achieve their own vision of vitality



Tom Gallagher

The Wisdom of Communities

How the Ford Institute helps rural people achieve their own vision of vitality

BY TOM GALLAGHER

FOREWORD

What does a rural, forest community of 2,400 residents do when a 500-year flood damages many of the town's homes, commercial and public buildings, infrastructure and schools? With damage so vast, some questioned the town's very existence as a relic of a past lumber era and not worth saving.

Even the town newspaper dismissed proposals to replace the schools as too risky, as "gambling." But the town didn't die, and the schools didn't close, although students met in modular units and some were bussed to other communities, the nearest 30 miles away.

Fast forward less than five years: The community holds a grand opening for its new K-12 school, a LEED-certified building that serves as both a school and community center and draws heavily on the community's forest heritage and surroundings for its curricula, programs, and even its heat source.

A thousand residents join teachers and students at the event and hear tributes from the governor and other elected officials, federal and state agency heads, and leaders in philanthropy. In its next edition the local newspaper apologizes for its negativity and for not believing in the people.



CHRIS UPDEGRAVE

In 2007, catastrophic floodwaters cut Vernonia off from the rest of the world and caused more than \$30 million in damages. Town residents defied the odds and rebuilt their school and community with a groundswell of ideas, energy and resources from a network of community leaders.

What happened in those four-plus years is not a simple story of an insurance company replacing the buildings or a federal emergency agency moving the project forward. What happened was a groundswell of ideas, energy and resources from a network of community leaders who would not let their town die or their youth live without a school—leaders who understood that there was risk in moving forward.

Yet, they understood that the network of leaders, representing all sectors of the community, was the

major variable in controlling the risk and making sure their investments were wise.

This story of what transpired in Vernonia, Oregon, from December 2007 through August 2012 provides a prelude to the larger story of the programs of the Ford Institute for Community Building that helped make the Vernonia recovery a success.

Of course, many of the leaders were already active in the community when the Ford Institute arrived with its leadership classes and other capacity building in 2005, and many were already playing leader-

ship roles in local government and with community organizations.

A network of leaders

But when the flood struck, those leaders attributed their success to the network of more than 50 graduates of the Ford Institute leadership classes that included youth, elders, elected officials and common citizens. The network responded to the flood as it happened, mobilized the clean up after the flood, and crafted the long-term redevelopment of the community.

As evaluators emphasize, causality — the absolute proof of cause and effect — is hard to prove in this type of situation where there are so many variables. Yet the evidence is growing in the form of scientific data, informed opinions and real-world stories (such as Vernonia), that Institute programs are helping to build the vitality of those rural communities it serves.

These programs do not strive to help a community fix a specific issue, nor do they propose a quick fix to community challenges. Rather, these programs invest in building capacity so that the community can take the lead in defining and achieving its own measure of success. Its own place.

Places—the people and landscape—are the stage on which the life of a community plays out. Building capacity is about taking the slower but more effective path to success; it is about responding to a flood in a way that draws on the wisdom of the community to not only fix the physical damage, but to develop the resilience for the community for years to come.



In 2009, Vernonia residents celebrated the passage of a \$13 million bond measure to help fund a new school. Less than three years later, a LEED-certified building opened. It serves as both a school and community center.



With the Institute's flagship program, the Ford Institute Leadership Program, completing its tenth year it's time to tell the Institute's story

P R E F A C E

Over the past 15 years the Ford Institute for Community Building has grown from an idea, through concept design and program development, to implementation and full operation and evaluation. Today in 2013, the Institute has engaged in its classes virtually all of the rural communities it serves in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. There are nearly 5,000 graduates of its primary class, Leadership Development, and as many more rural residents who have participated in other Institute training, grants and resources, and those numbers are growing by about 1,000 each year.

The purpose of the Institute investments is to build the capacity of communities to define and achieve their own vision of vitality. More specifically, the Institute investments are expanding the base of community leaders, strengthening community organizations and promoting collaboration within and across communities — all so communities can be more engaged and effective in shaping their own future.

The Institute has experienced much good fortune — from the founding concepts developed by Kenneth Ford and Charlie Walker, to board members and a president — all who have provided the resources to develop substantive programs, to staff and contractors who have executed the programs effectively

and with a comfortable style appropriate to serving rural people. The programs of the Institute are a mix of training, assistance grants and resources that are original in their combination and scale.

There is no proven path for the Institute's work but the Institute has followed basic principles that are hard to challenge: that community leaders are the foundation of community success, that local government and organizations are how communities harness the power of people, and that collaboration at many levels is how a community comes to define a shared vision, set priorities and get things done. Underlying these principles is a firm conviction that communities have the necessary wisdom to define and achieve their own future.

With the Institute's flagship program, the Ford Institute Leadership Program, completing its tenth year at the close of 2012, it is the right time to tell the Institute story, to share its relatively short but complex and robust history. The story is an attempt to capture in one document the binders of information from board meetings, staff meetings and reports, and the institutional memory of key individuals, particularly Tom Gallagher, the director from early 2003 through 2011.

The audience includes individuals and organizations who may wish to develop their own community capacity program and would benefit from an inside look at what transpired in the Ford Institute over the decade.

The story is divided into four chapters related to major periods of growth in the Institute. The fifth chapter gathers in one place the several lessons learned and key concepts discovered along the way. Rounding out the story are three major appendices, or sub-stories on the curricula, budget and evaluation.

The purpose of the Institute is to build the capacity of communities to define and achieve their own vision of vitality.

Table of Contents

Chapter One The original concept of the Ford Institute for Community Building, 1997-1999. **Page 6**

Chapter Two Formation of the Institute, 2000 through 2002. **Page 8**

Chapter Three Development of the Leadership Program, 2003 through 2007. **Page 10**

Chapter Four Refinement and growth, 2008 through 2011. **Page 17**

Chapter Five Lessons learned and key concepts. **Page 22**

Appendices

A. Curricula. **Page 25**

B. Budget. **Page 30**

C. Evaluation. **Page 33**

Chapter 1

The Original Concept: 1997 through 1999

The Institute is one of two initiatives—long-term investments—of The Ford Family Foundation of Roseburg, Oregon. The other is Scholarship Programs. Each initiative is guided by a director and has assigned staff, a separate budget and its own board committee. The Foundation has a third major unit, Grant Programs, which has its own staff and board committee and has been guided by the Foundation’s founding president, Norm Smith. The Foundation has developed and managed a number of other specific projects over the years, including The Chalk-



E. LINDSAY, FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Loggers fell a snag on a fire line in the Siskiyou National Forest in October 1936.

When communities have capacity, the potential impact of investments by foundations, agencies, non-governmental organizations and businesses goes up, way up.

board Project (chalkboardproject.org), and it is presently growing its knowledge of and support for Early Childhood Development, a possible third initiative.

Kenneth Ford, the founder of Roseburg Forest Products, established the Foundation prior to his death in 1997. The Foundation’s mission began as “...to help individuals through organized learning opportunities to be contributing and successful citizens, and to enhance the vitality of rural communities.” The board ultimately shortened this mission to “successful citizens, vital rural communities.”

The timber industry in Oregon grew very rapidly from the 1920s to the 1970s and buoyed the success

of Roseburg Forest Products. Ford was aware that a large mill with hundreds or thousands of employees had a strong effect on small towns, often creating a version of a “company town” where company leadership also served as community leadership.



Kenneth Ford

In such a town, workers tended to give deference to their employer in matters related to their community. Ford, however, could see that his workers could be much more self-reliant and responsible for the welfare of their community. Mostly they needed to believe they could

Service Area

The Ford Family Foundation serves communities with fewer than 30,000 residents not in or adjacent to a metropolitan area in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. The single California county is included in the Foundation’s service area as Roseburg Forest Products has a mill in Weed, California. Throughout this story, Siskiyou County is included when reference is made to the area served by the Foundation, most often referred to only as rural Oregon.

do it and then have the knowledge and skill to make it happen; they needed capacity.



Hallie Ford

Ford and his first wife, Hallie Ford, had a long record of charitable giving dating back to the 1950s. In 1994 he began a college scholarship program guided by then-pres-

ident of Linfield College Dr. Charlie Walker. That initial program has grown over the years into four major scholarship programs, referred



Charlie Walker

to collectively as Scholarship Programs, with more than 1,000 scholarship recipients in higher education at any time.

The notion of a “Ford Institute”

developed in discussions between Kenneth Ford and Walker during these early years. Bonnie Ford, Kenneth Ford’s second wife, has shared how Ford conceptualized the Institute idea in broad terms, and Charlie put it into words and took it before the board.

The first formal mention of the Institute in Foundation records is found in a proposal from Walker to the board dated April 30, 1998. He wrote that the “successful citizens” element of the mission was being addressed with scholarship programs and recommended that it was time “...that the Foundation develop a major initiative intended to address directly the second key purpose of strengthening smaller communities.”

He continued, “The overarching purpose of the Ford Institute is to provide Oregon with a permanent facility and ongoing conference programming dedicated to strengthening livability throughout the State, especially in small- and mid-size communities.”

The Ford Family Foundation Mission: Successful citizens and vital, rural communities

He suggested three programming areas: strengthening community leadership, strengthening non-profit leadership and strengthening Oregon as a community.

Board approves the concept of the Ford Institute

In early 1999 the board approved the Institute idea, and the year was spent learning from others about existing models and concepts. The first major activity was a workshop hosted by the Foundation that brought experts in community building from throughout Oregon together with several nationally recognized authorities.

Charles Bray, past president of The Johnson Foundation, presented the keynote address. He offered 10 guidelines for the Institute, which began to shift thinking about the Institute outside of the traditional philanthropic model of short-term investments to address a specific issue.

1. Development of community leadership is essential
2. Funders should avoid dependency among grantees
3. “Sticking with it” is essential; three-year investments are “delusional”
4. Building community assets trumps assessing community needs
5. Communities need a powerful, widely shared vision to take action
6. Build community capacity rather than experiment with programs
7. Try decentralization of funding
8. Encourage creativity and entrepreneurialism
9. Expand networking and collaboration among individuals and organizations working on common problems
10. Measure success and insist on accountability

Participants, through a facilitated process, proposed the Institute invest in four areas: fostering of networks, building leadership capacity, creating a community investment fund, and investing in youth.

Following up on this gathering, Foundation President Norm Smith,



Norm Smith

key staff person David Mattocks and three board members, including Walker, took a summer fact-finding trip. They visited the Blandin Foundation in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, which had a widely acclaimed rural community leadership program; the Northwest Area Foundation, which

The Ford Family Foundation Portfolio of Initiatives and Grant Programs

MAJOR INITIATIVE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS	MAJOR INITIATIVE FORD INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING	GRANT PROGRAMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ford Scholars - Ford Opportunity - Ford ReStart - Sons and Daughters of Employees of Roseburg Forest Products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership Program - Technical Assistance - Resources 	<p>PROACTIVE GRANTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chalkboard Project • Early Childhood Development • Post Secondary Education • Visual Arts Program <p>RESPONSIVE GRANTS</p>

had a program designed to address poverty in rural communities in part through capacity building; and the Search Institute, which had substantial research and practical background in youth development.

Smith also visited the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University where he met with senior staff members of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute. They offered the following advice that provoked continued thinking outside the traditional philanthropic model of focused funding on select issues:

- Shift foundation thinking from charity to investment
- Nothing new is learned from a deficit survey
- Focus on an asset survey: “You will never know what you need until you know what you have”
- Beware of approaching a community as if it is “poor” — poor communities will go out of their way to prove their deficits
- When investing in a community, be sure to transfer expertise to residents

Chapter 2 Formation of the Institute: 2000 through 2001

The gatherings and road trip provided a great deal of information and guidance for development of the Institute. Charlie Walker presented an “Interim Report for Discussion,” which outlined four major activities for the Institute.

“Foremost, the Institute will be a catalyst and key advocate for community building, housing statewide gatherings of local leaders and community teams, distributing information and success stories.

The Institute Mission: “to help community leaders learn how to implement local solutions based on principles of effective community building.”

—David Mattocks

“Second, it will encourage and support training in leadership and planning, offering scholarships to existing programs and possibly starting our own leadership program.

“Third, it will be a major investor in local community-building efforts, helping to pay for consultant/advisory services and helping to support a limited number of communities as they implement their plans.

“Fourth, there needs to be a heightened emphasis on community building with scholars, of their individual responsibility in building the communities where they live after they graduate, with possible assistance in community-building efforts in which they take key leadership roles.”

A timeline for the development of the Institute, prepared by Norm Smith, identified next steps, including hiring a director, program design and development, and planning of conferences through the next year. The initial staff person assigned to move the Institute concept forward was David Mattocks, then a program officer in Grant Programs.



David Mattocks

Through the spring of 2000, he articulated an Institute mission “to help community leaders learn how to implement local solutions based on principles of effective community building.” He identified five program areas for the Institute:

1. Community leadership
2. Organizational development
3. Community training and assistance
4. Community awareness, including a *Community Vitality* publication
5. Community grants

He also noted the importance of a training facility, the potential to host conferences with scores of participants, the need for four or more community coaches located around the state, and the need for a business plan — proposed for late 2001. The board accepted these proposals, and Mattocks was appointed as the first Institute director effective June 1, 2000, thereby making the Ford Institute the second official initiative of the Foundation.

In May 2001, the Institute hosted a second, much larger gathering with more than 150 selected guests and 20 speakers, including several from the Kellogg Foundation, who would help guide development of the Institute’s programs.

That gathering galvanized a suite of programs that were to shape the future of the Institute. Mattocks wrote to the board that “...there is a demand for practical training, no-nonsense educational resource materials, and technical assistance around community building.”

He proposed and the board approved preparation of a business plan to move toward development of actual programs. He completed the business plan, with board approval, in late 2001.



The Institute's publication, *Community Vitality*, launched in 2002. Published twice yearly, it contains a mix of best practices, success stories and resources.

***Community Vitality* publication launched in 2002**

In early 2002, he led completion of two educational resources, the Institute's first issue of a periodical called *Community Vitality* and a free book program called the Select List (later Select Books).

The 12-page periodical (which grew to 16 pages in 2004) was to be published twice yearly and contain a mix of best practices, success stories and resources. The Institute contracted development of the periodical to Nora Vitz Harrison, an Oregon-based consultant.

The Select List, which was managed in-house, contained about 30 titles related to community de-

velopment and youth development. Individuals from the area served by the Foundation could request complimentary copies of one book at a time.

Through 2002 Mattocks moved forward on development of an in-house "Ford Community Leadership Program." He contracted with Tom Gallagher, then the part-time Leadership Development Specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service, to guide the overall leadership program design. Mattocks subsequently contracted with the Heartland Center for Leadership Development in Lincoln, Nebraska, for development of a leadership curriculum.

Recognizing that the Institute was greatly expanding the work of the Foundation, the Foundation board met at a retreat to develop a set of strategic directives. Notes from that retreat include:

- Develop and invest over time in specific methods through which we get to know our communities well.
- Invest in specific, local methods through which we identify leaders. This is the most critical factor in assuring the success of our mission.
- Know how we assess the viability of a community.
- Commit deeply to communities we a) know well, and b) believe in their capacity for growth.
- Customize our services to meet different needs of different communities (different sizes, different levels of development; but concentrate on doing selected things very well instead of providing broad, general support and service to everyone).
- Support local efforts to sustain leadership after our interventions and trainings.
- Fuel our mission by identifying and strengthening connections between our grant making, our Institute and the Ford Scholars program.
- Be strategic in all our communications to assure people know about us and can easily find an entry point for the Foundation.

These strategic directives provided the Institute with key ideas that were to move it farther from the standard philanthropic model of top-down, issue-focused giving. Rather, the directives were bringing forth Kenneth Ford's concern that communities decide what matters, and that the Institute and Foundation would know communities well so they could customize services to each community.




In 2002, the Institute engaged the Heartland Center for Leadership Development to create a curriculum for the Institute's leadership program.

Chapter 3

Development of the Leadership Program: 2003 through 2007

In late 2002, David Mattocks resigned from the Foundation, and Norm Smith asked Tom Gallagher to serve as interim director (becoming director in April 2003). His first major decision was to outsource the proposed leadership training as opposed to adding to the Institute's staff.

The challenge was to find an organization that already had the capacity to deliver community leadership training. Within weeks, the contract for the leadership class delivery was awarded to Rural Development Initiatives.



The non-profit organization, headquartered in Eugene, Oregon, was known primarily for rural economic development, but it had also created and delivered a highly regarded rural leadership program called "Rural Futures Forum."

While waiting for the Heartland Center for Leadership Development to complete the curriculum, the design team (consisting of Gallagher; his assistant, Yvette Rhodes; the executive director of RDI, Kathi Jaworski; and an RDI senior staff member, Craig Smith) quickly made a number of major decisions drawing on

the board's strategic directives for guidance:

- **Hold classes in the community**, not at a retreat center. This meant additional cost for staff travel but reduced cost and provided easier access to classes for community members. Plus, by visiting communities, staff would get to know communities better than if they came to a retreat center.
- **Define "community" broadly** to include, in some cases, several small communities and all the space between them. The team needed a name for these "districts" and chose to call them hubs. Ultimately, there were 80 hubs in the Institute's service area with the number of residents ranging from 1,300 to more than 50,000, the median being about 8,000 residents.
- **Fill classes with people from the same hub** with the goal to create a network of community leaders within and across communities. Strive to involve a cross section of citizens in terms of interests, cultures and situations.
- **Set initial class size at 18** to test the curriculum and prepare the trainers. Expand that number to 25, as trainer skill increases, to reduce the cost per participant.
- **Include participants of many ages** from early high school (age 13) to seniors (age 65+). Ask seniors to bring the history of the community and to talk about past successes.
- **Include participants with a diversity of leadership** experience including known, emerging and potential leaders. Always strive to engage elected and appointed officials. Ask known leaders to mentor others.
- **Engage four hubs each spring and fall** so each year there would be eight communities taking the leadership class. With 80 hubs the Institute set the goal to engage all within 10 years.
- **Select hubs, in part, on geography** so that each semester there would be classes in different parts of the state, a model which fit well with RDI's practice of locating staff in different regions of the state.
- **Select hubs to take the leadership class based on readiness**, which was determined with three questions: Is there a cadre of existing leaders who can help us promote our class? Is the community already moving forward without assistance? And, is there any crisis or factor in the community, such as a recall of an elected official, which might undermine our investment? Typically, Gallagher would meet with community leaders over lunch or dinner to make the readiness decision.

Thus, the Institute did not have a formal community selection process, but rather it let the word of the program spread informally around the state, such as through the League of Oregon Cities and Association of Oregon Counties.

Individuals in communities with an interest in the program were asked to write a letter to the Institute responding to the three questions. The strategy worked well as there were always several communities in the queue for the program.

Not assessing any fee to community or participants was the subject of much early discussion, but

The decision to **not** charge a program fee generated much discussion, but, ultimately, the "fee" for participants was their time, energy and commitment.

ultimately no fee was established for either a community or participants. The “fee” for participants was their time, energy and commitment.

Providing food and other support for class participants

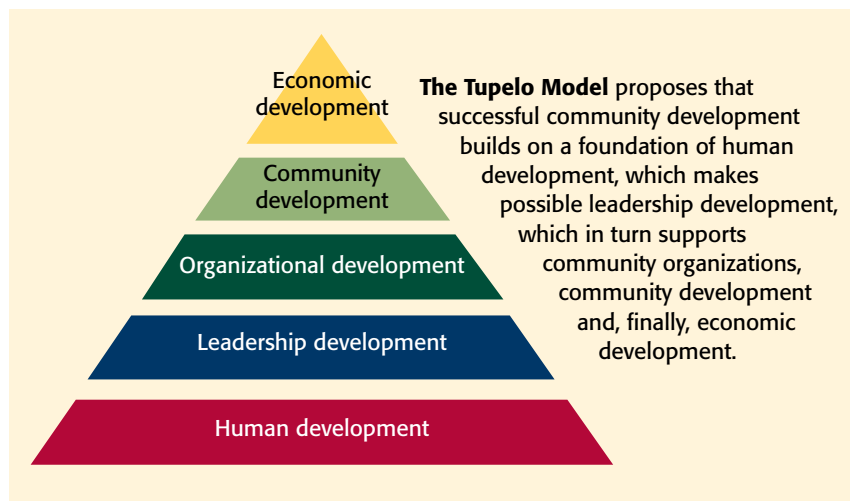
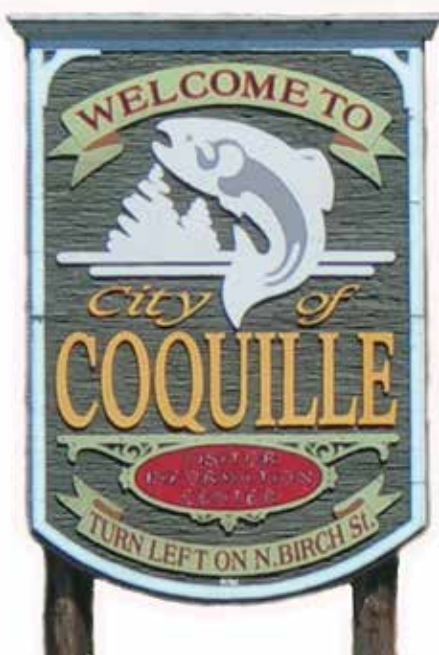
A major decision by the team was to design the training around a catered meal so participants would have time to talk with each other outside of curriculum activities. A difficult decision at this time (influenced by legal issues, cost and organizational challenges) was to not provide day care.

The design team did not want to miss offering classes in the spring semester of 2003, so the team scheduled the first Leadership Development class, using a draft curriculum from the Heartland Center, for late January 2003.

The team selected the Coquille Valley as its first hub as it was near Roseburg and was familiar to both the Institute and RDI. The valley included the municipalities of Coquille, Myrtle Point and Powers, as well as other villages and the dispersed residents between them.

The first leadership class was held in late January 2003 with 18 participants ranging in age from late

Coquille Valley was selected as the first hub for the Leadership Program in Spring 2003.



teens through seniors in the county council chambers in Coquille.

The team was also active in January selecting three additional hubs to begin the Leadership Development class in February — Lakeview, South Douglas County and Yreka.

The completed Heartland curriculum arrived in February. More information about the content and delivery of the classes can be found in Appendix A: Curricula.

The value of the Tupelo Model

As the design team became familiar with the Heartland curriculum, there was increasing recognition of the value of a concept built into it called the “Tupelo Model.” The model proposes that successful community development builds on a foundation of human development, which makes possible leadership development, which in turn supports community organizations and economic development.

The ideas in the model were very similar to those developed by Charlie Walker and David Mattocks. The model provided a structured way to think about building capacity at several levels to achieve the Foundation’s mission of vital rural communities.

The Institute was committed to leadership development but the Tu-

pelo Model raised the question: Do we also hold classes that promote organizational development and community development? We could approach these subjects with grants and resources, but the team agreed that training in the form of classes, as done with leadership development, was the surest way to build this capacity.

Effective Organizations and Community Collaborations

With this decision, two additional classes were born: Effective Organizations and Community Collaborations.

To develop and deliver these classes the Institute invited two other entities, Technical Assistance for Community Services (now Non-profit Association of Oregon) and Human Systems (both of which had considerable knowledge about these topics), to join the design team. Non-Profit Association of Oregon is a Portland-based, non-profit organization that could present the classes in the northwest region of the state.



Human Systems, a for-profit consulting service comprised of two consultants from Ashland, provided technical assistance services to non-profits in southwest Oregon for many years and came with strong references. They joined the group to offer the classes in the southwest counties of Oregon and Siskiyou County.

The Institute selected RDI, which also had considerable experience in these two subjects, to deliver the classes on the east side of the state. Each region included about one third of the 80 hubs.

The actual content of the two curricula is discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

Name changed to Ford Institute Leadership Program

By the close of 2003, the Institute had decided to provide communities with three classes formally titled Leadership Development, Effective Organizations and Community Collaborations, which it proposed to offer to each of the hubs. With experience from this first year, the name of the training program was changed from the Ford Community Leadership Program to the Ford Institute Leadership Program. The new name better articulated the role of the Ford Institute — not di-

About 10 percent of all leadership class graduates volunteer to become Community Ambassadors, building their capacity as leaders and placing the capacity to move forward in the community.

rectly The Ford Family Foundation and definitely not The Ford (motor car) Foundation.

The design team was excited about the three-class series, something that to its knowledge had not been seen in any other program in the nation. The proposal by the Heartland Center to build the program around the Tupelo Model had played out in actual classes and investments.

The team, however, was concerned that one leadership class, limited to 25 participants, was not sufficient for a typical hub of 8,000 residents. The consensus was that three classes would create the critical mass of 75 leaders necessary for a community to move forward.

Built into this assumption was a “rule of thirds”: expect one third of the class graduates to be good or great leaders, one third to occasionally be good leaders but often good followers, and the remaining third to head off to college, move

away, become infirm or disengaged, and some — given the elders in the classes — die.

Class series defined

After much discussion of alternative patterns for delivering the five classes, the team decided to offer three leadership classes intermixed with the other two classes in sequence (see graphic, next page).

The class series made possible a dynamic where each class served to promote the next. The participants in the first leadership class completed an asset-mapping exercise that created a list of all types of organizations — local government, government agencies, non-profits, institutions and membership groups — in their hub which became the invitation list for the Effective Organizations class.

As the organizations class had open enrollment with no maximum number of participants, a typical class would include many who had been in the first leadership class as well as many who had not. These

Roi Crouch of Human Systems leads a Community Collaborations class in Roseburg in 2012.



FORD INSTITUTE PHOTO

Ford Institute Leadership Program Series of Trainings



new people seeded the second leadership class, which was filled by nominees submitted by graduates of the first class.

The Community Collaborations class was open to all graduates of previous classes and served as a sort of reunion for all past graduates. This class also had open enrollment and typically included a host of new individuals who had not been in a previous class who then seeded the third leadership class. Graduates of the earlier classes would help fill this class, if necessary, with nominees.

Graduates of the organizations and collaborations classes would often take the leadership class next. Thus, participants took the classes in different orders, which formal evaluation has shown is not an issue.

Community Ambassadors

To reduce the cost of offering the leadership classes, graduates of the classes, following a qualifying two-day workshop, could help RDI professional trainers deliver subsequent leadership classes. RDI took the lead in developing and managing the workshop to qualify “community trainers” (later called Community Ambassadors) who would work with RDI professionals to promote, coordinate and facilitate the leadership classes.

The three tasks permitted graduates to support the additional classes in their community in a way that was most comfortable for

them. About 10 percent of all leadership class graduates volunteer to become Community Ambassadors.

Initially, the justification for the Ambassadors was their value in reducing the cost of the additional classes. Quickly, however, the Ambassadors became recognized as a valuable group of highly qualified community leaders. The Ambassador program also followed advice offered years earlier to transfer expertise to the community.

As noted in Appendix B: Budget, the Ambassadors reduce the cost of the second and third, and future leadership classes, markedly. As this is written, there are more than 400 Community Ambassadors, creating a reservoir of talent,



Tatiana Havill and Sara Worl attend a two-day workshop for Community Ambassadors in 2010.

engagement and key contacts.

Thus, in 2003 the Institute had gone from offering a draft curriculum in a single community to having a proposal before the board to offer five classes, on three subjects, in each of the 80 hubs. Despite the growth in number of classes, the design team stayed with the schedule to have four hubs start the first class in the series each spring with four more starting in the fall.

Each of these hubs would then move through the five-class sequence, which meant that in 2007 there would be 20 classes each semester: 12 leadership classes and four each of the organizations and collaborations classes.

The Ford Institute’s ‘standing army’

The board stepped forward to fund this growth, which would engage all rural communities by 2012. Gallagher boldly stated to the board that in 2012 there would be more than 5,000 graduates of the leadership class alone (the actual number is about 5,200).

These graduates would provide an exceptional base of thoughtful community leaders who would support existing and future Foundation programs. One board member called them the Institute’s “standing army” — ready to take action as needed. Through their training, the graduates were familiar with the Foundation’s scholarship programs and could spread the word in their community. Indeed, several score of Institute class graduates have earned Ford scholarships, and many more have gone to people who became familiar with the scholarship program through the Institute’s presence in the community.

Conference of Communities

In 2003, in addition to delivering eight leadership classes and graduating 153 community leaders,

the Institute brought the four classes in session in each semester together in a two-day “Conference of Communities,” which included four workshops from national-caliber trainers and opportunities for community members to learn from each other. In 2003 the Institute continued its assistance grants program, awarding 48 assistance grants with a value of more than \$260,000, its *Community Vitality* publication with two editions, and its Select Books, distributing over 400 books.

Leadership curriculum shared with Sherwood Trust

In late 2003 the Institute allowed board members of the Sherwood Trust of Walla Walla, Washington, to sit in on a class in a neighboring Oregon community. The board members asked to borrow the curriculum to use in their service area of the greater Walla Walla River valley. The Trust, working with RDI, presented the leadership curriculum in rural communities but also presented it in urban, often Hispanic, neighborhoods. The experience, reported through its board chair, Jock Edwards, helped to inform and improve the Ford Institute program in many ways. In early 2004, as the Ford Institute Leadership Program entered its second year, the board learned how the strategic directives they had set 18 months earlier were being applied in the program:

- We have come to know our selected communities very well, working with them intensely over five years.
- We have built on our investments, developing leaders first and then effective organizations and collaborations in the same community.
- We have customized our services to each community using the initial class graduates as our guides.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RDI

A Leadership Program participant checks out the table displays at the Conference of Communities in 2008.

- We have shifted the role of capacity building, in part, from the Institute to the community, creating a team of local trainers and local awareness of resources both within and outside the Foundation.
- We have engaged all communities and people between communities through the “hub” strategy.
- We have created a critical mass of trained leaders and effective organizations — in communities, in a region, and in the state — that can take the initiative in building vital rural communities.
- With this critical mass of leaders and organizations, we have provided the standing army for a new generation of Institute and Foundation programs in the future.

As the Institute moved forward, what was unique about the

Institute’s programs, as noted in a report to the board, was its very uncommon community leadership program: It engaged both youth and elders; it offered multiple leadership classes in the same community; it offered classes on the three Tupelo subjects; it backed up training with an assistance grants program, and other resources including a periodical, a free book program and conferences. Further, the large scale of the Institute investments and the intention to saturate the state in little more than a decade was unheard of in the philanthropic world.

Clearly, the Institute programs were novel, complex and very robust — a grand experiment that so far was producing expected results.

The years from 2004 to 2007 were extremely active as the Institute programs grew to “build out” — to the full operation at 20 classes per semester. In 2007 a new three-

year business plan was completed and approved. The plan continued the intensive training schedule of the Ford Institute Leadership Program, the assistance grants program and the resources program, and the plan added some new tasks to complete.

Metrics established to measure the Institute's success

One key task was to establish a set of metrics to measure the Institute's success. Increasingly, board members wanted to see changes in indicators of community vitality. To identify these indicators, a contract was awarded to the faculty in the Rural Studies program at Oregon State University.

The contract outlined two tasks: identify a set of best vitality indicators and create a database to measure changes in those indicators. The indicators contract was completed in early 2008 with the identification of 30 indicators covering the triple-bottom line of economics, society and environment.

The database emerged as "Rural Communities Explorer"—a comprehensive source for information about rural communities.

A second key task was to develop the Institute's evaluation program beyond the foundational work to date. To do this work, the Institute contracted with faculty of the Department of Family and Community Development at Oregon State University. A full discussion of the work under this contract is provided in Appendix C: Evaluation.

The new business plan also highlighted that the Institute was moving quickly through the 80 hubs, and the board was reminded that the early hubs were completing their last class in the fall and eight more communities would complete the five-class series each year.

Spanish-language curriculum added

The Institute was beginning to face the new challenge of keeping fresh the strong relationship built with each hub and sustaining and using the capacity built. The plan introduced two ideas for the future which had been recommended by many class participants: First, continue the classes on a request basis to keep the relationship fresh and to sustain, if not further increase, capacity; and second, develop a new

support program to help communities use their capacity to move to action.

Also in 2007, the Institute beta-tested a new 12-hour leadership development curriculum called Cultivando Comunidad (now called Cultivando Liderazgo) offered in the Spanish language. The class was developed and delivered by RDI. The Cultivando class has since become a regular offering by the Institute, often as a prelude to the main class to promote Latino participation.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF POMEGRANATE CENTER

Volunteers in Walla Walla, Wash., built this park structure as part of a leadership program sponsored by the Sherwood Trust. The curriculum for the training was borrowed from the Ford Institute Leadership Program. Inset: Neighborhood residents volunteered to help make the park a reality.



POLK COUNTY ITEMIZER-OBSERVER

The annual Hop Fest attracts as many people from Monmouth as it does from Independence, which hosts the celebration. Collaboration is on the upswing after residents from both communities came together in the Ford Institute Leadership Program.

Two cities, one community

Independence and Monmouth residents find more reasons to connect and collaborate

Independence and Monmouth are sister cities in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Despite their proximity, they are very different towns. Independence grew up as an agricultural town, and today it has a large Hispanic population. Missionaries from Illinois founded Monmouth as a college and separatist community; today the town has a large educator and student population.

Those differences are still present, but now some residents are finding more reasons to cross the street, meet neighbors and work together. Ford Institute Leadership Program graduates credit the program with bringing them together.

"The Leadership Program gave everyone the permission to say 'collaboration is okay and in fact it's better,'" says Independence resident and

city councilwoman Marilyn Morton.

Despite sharing a school district, fire department and chamber of commerce, collaboration between Independence and Monmouth did not come naturally.

Morton was a member of the area's first Leadership Program cohort in 2005-06, which brought Independence and Monmouth leaders together. Monmouth resident Cec Koontz says those old divisions were an issue the first cohort wanted to address.

The group is slowly erasing old lines while honoring each community's pride in their roots. Morton says there is a long history of competition and difference between the two cities, yet there are elements ripe for collaboration. The cohort aimed to make those connections.

Koontz, a Monmouth city councilor, says now it's not unusual for people to see her out at lunch with the economic developer of Independence or

other leaders from both towns.

"Eight or 10 years ago it would not have been a common sight at all. Now we talk about how interesting it was that we've multiplied our connections through that class," she says.

Morton calls this community-bridging "cross-pollination" and says the increased collaboration has branched out among the community's subsequent Leadership Program cohorts and beyond.

Her biggest barometer for the collaboration is the annual "Ghost Walk" held in Independence. At the end of summer, residents and tourists gather downtown for a free walk through what is purported to be a haunted area of town.

Morton says she's always recruiting guides to take history buffs and thrill seekers around town. Prior to the Leadership Program, about 90 percent of the guides came from Independence. Last year, guides were drawn evenly from Monmouth and Independence. Attendance has tripled since 2002.

"The collaboration opened the gate so wide. The folks from Monmouth are just as eager to be engaged as the people in Independence," she says.

*—Excerpted from
Community Vitality, Spring 2012*

"The Leadership Program gave everyone the permission to say 'collaboration is okay and in fact it's better.'"

*—Marilyn Morton
City Councilwoman
Independence*

Chapter 4 Refinement and Transition: 2008 through 2011

The new business plan had set in motion a subtle but profound shift in the Institute strategy — from building capacity to sustaining and exercising capacity and moving to action. It also set in motion a shift from high production to high quality. Evidence from class evaluations through 2007 was very favorable with participants rating the class content and presentation highly. The Foundation, however, lived with a value to always strive to do better.

Greater attention within the Institute to quality was made possible in part by the appointment of Joyce Akse, previously a program officer in the Foundation's Grant Programs, as the Institute's first associate director. She brought considerable experience in staff management and quality assurance from her previous career in health management, and the task of continuous improvement fell in her portfolio.

Retirement of Tom Gallagher

Early in 2008, with an associate director on board, Tom Gallagher announced he would retire at the end of 2011. The early announcement gave young staff members an indication of when they might move up, and it gave Foundation President Norm Smith and the board time to coordinate with other expected retirements, including Norm Smith's and that of board members. The early announcement also gave the contractors who delivered most of the Institute programs notice that they would be working with a new director.

Gallagher's work in 2008 focused heavily on accomplishing several major tasks launched earlier — in particular, the contract



Rural Communities Explorer, an online database on rural communities, was an outgrowth of work by Oregon State University to identify indicators of community vitality.

with the two OSU departments. He worked with Rural Studies faculty to complete the community vitality indicators project and presented a set of 30 of the best indicators to the board.

Then he assisted the faculty with realizing the full potential of the Rural Communities Explorer database, which grew both in scope (with more than 30 sources of data) and in ease of use. Class trainers learned to embed use of the database in various modules, and OSU staff made trips to communities to help them use the database.

The site offered “one-stop shopping” for anyone who wished to understand a community or issue, write or review a grant, or measure changes in an indicator of vitality. The initial database was only about Oregon, but Siskiyou County, California, was added within two years.

At the April board meeting, the fifth anniversary of the Ford Institute

Leadership Program, it was noted that 44 hubs had taken one or more classes, and that those hubs represented 60 percent of the land area of Oregon and Siskiyou County. The Institute had delivered 67 leadership classes with 1,459 graduates of whom 180 had volunteered and been qualified as community trainers. Of the graduates, 269 were youth from 13 to 20 years of age and of these, 12 had been qualified as community trainers and 10 had gone on to win Ford scholarships.

By the close of the year, the Institute had also developed and piloted a new Native American leadership curriculum; presented *Cultivando Comunidad* in six communities; awarded 50 assistance grants with a value of \$330,354; distributed two more editions of *Community Vitality*; distributed 1,403 Select Books; held one regional conference and two sub-regional conferences; and provided support for an RDI website that provided a place for community networks to meet online.

Through the spring of 2009 Joyce Akse worked with RDI to develop a new form of youth leadership program in Siskiyou County. That program, called Camp Ford Leadership Adventure, brought together 25 eighth graders with about as many high school and adult leaders for an eight-day camping and rafting experience at a site on the wild and scenic lower Klamath River. Institute class graduates from the several hubs in the county nominated participants. The event, which involved collaboration with the Siskiyou Family YMCA and a local river outfitter, was con-

Greater attention within the Institute to quality was made possible in part by the appointment of Joyce Akse ... as the Institute's first associate director.



AMY GABRIEL

Held each summer since 2010, Camp Ford Leadership Adventure brings together 25 eighth-graders for an eight-day trip down the Klamath River.

sidered a huge success by participants, their parents and staff.

Ford Community Fellows Program

Joyce Akse also moved forward with an idea that had been floated around the office for several years: to hire or contract a number of “community liaisons” who would help the Institute sustain its relationships with the growing number of communities that had finished all five classes. Part of the culture of rural areas, the staff argued, is that relationships are long term, and it is important to be there when needed.

A Ford Community Fellows Program was developed that would be similar to an arts fellowship program established by the Foundation with funding from Hallie Ford’s estate in 2008. The fellows would be nominated by RDI and other trainers; they would come largely from the Community Ambassador pool. A panel made up of Institute staff and non-Institute participants (with experience in community development) would select five fellows for

the first year, each of whom would receive a \$1,000/month stipend for a year. Their fellowship, which could be extended for two more years, required them, in their own way and own place, to “practice the art of community leadership.” There were, of course, some obligations, such as developing a plan of activity and attending several meetings with other fellows and Institute staff. In 2012, an additional eight fellows were selected. In subsequent years, the number is expected to grow to 20 Fellows at any given time.

As the year came to a close, conversation centered on the support program, named Stage Two (the five-class series being Stage One). Conceptually, the class series that made up Stage One was prescriptive in character; it was what the Institute offered and communities could take it or not. Stage Two, in contrast, was intended to be responsive in the sense that it would be set in motion and guided by the community. The Institute expected that class graduates, the

Community Ambassadors and the Fellows would be there to help the community move forward. The Institute’s role would shift to providing the support that would meet the community’s specific need. How the stages would work after 2010 would be the subject of a new three-year Institute Business Plan.

Institute Business Plan approved

Early in 2010 the board reviewed and approved the third Institute Business Plan for the period from 2010 to 2013. The document was structured around four main goals: grow capacity, spark action, bolster communication and inform decisions. The board was interested in the growing Institute budget, which would continue to grow while a full schedule of Stage One offerings overlapped with new Stage Two elements. This overlap would create a “hump” in the budget during the period of the plan before an actual decline might begin in 2013 (see Appendix B: Budget).

Also in 2010 a new type of grant, called an “action grant,” was proposed. This grant would be provided specifically to communities that had moved forward in Stage Two and had developed a clear vision and priorities. This grant idea followed from ideas that were presented by Charlie Walker and David Mattocks ten years earlier about special grant funding for communities where the Institute had built capacity.

The grants were not to be advertised widely but to be brought forward by staff when a community met the criteria.

The first applicant was from Lake County, which had one of the Institute’s oldest and largest cadres of leadership class graduates. The community had formed the non-profit Lake County Resources Initiative to promote its vision of being “Oregon’s most renewable energy county.”

Class graduates were now distributed through the organization and involved in its success in many ways. They requested funds to pay a partial salary for an engineer with renewable energy expertise to help the community understand what was possible in terms of available renewable energy resources, systems to access those resources and ways to get projects done. The board approved a \$40,000 action grant in 2010 and a second grant of the same size in 2011 to help the community build capacity in the specific area of renewable energy to achieve its vision.

A visit to the Blandin Foundation

In mid-December 2010, Tom Gallagher and Joyce Akse decided to visit the mecca of community leadership programs, the Blandin Foundation in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Craig Smith and Heidi Clark of RDI joined them. The group flew to Minneapolis and then drove to

Blandin’s office in Grand Rapids. The weather was typical for Minnesota at that time of year with wind and snow, but the reception was warm and the president of the Blandin Foundation acknowledged that the visitors must be “real people” because they came in the winter. Most visitors, he noted, came on Friday in the summer on their way to recreation areas farther north. Blandin had been engaged in leadership training for nearly 25 years and, although the Institute program had grown to be quite different than theirs, both organizations had much to share and learn.

Perhaps most interesting is that both were newly engaged in evaluation, and both were working to develop a support program for leadership class graduates.

Both were using conferences and other gatherings to keep relationships fresh and build further capacity, and both had developed a leadership program for Native Americans.

The leadership training methods, although substantially different, probably produced similar results — more community leaders with the knowledge, skill and motivation to make a difference.

Grant supports Lake County’s renewable energy efforts

Early in 2011 the Lake County Resources Initiative prepared a report to the board on how it used its action grants. The report noted that the Institute had invested about \$331,000 in the community in classes, and there were 104 graduates of the leadership class and 44 graduates of other classes who did not attend a leadership class. These individuals were found throughout the LCRI staff and board, among elected and appointed decision-makers and with numerous organizations in the community.

The LCRI report identified 80-plus renewable energy projects that were being considered in the county — from new large multi-megawatt geothermal and biomass projects to small retrofits of homes and businesses, from fuel oil or propane furnaces to geothermal, solar or even biomass. The Institute investments were turning into multi-million dollar improvements in the community.

Much activity this year centered on the Institute evaluation program. OSU faculty made major reports to the board reporting positive findings, highlighted in Appendix C.

A comparison of leadership programs (2010)	Blandin Foundation	Ford Institute for Community Building
Years of operation	25	8
Number of leadership graduates	5,500	4,000
Leadership classes per year	10	24
Number of participants per class	24	25
Classes on organizations per year	0	8
Classes on collaborations per year	0	8
Number of communities served	3,500	700
Percent of communities served	25	60
Class participants	Mid-career	Youth to elder
Location of training	Conference center	In the communities
Format for classes	5 days plus followup	Eight 6-hour days
Project	Each graduate pursues	One project
Trainers	Individual contractors	RDI
Community Trainers	No	Yes



PHOTO COURTESY OF PACIFIC POWER

In 2010, the Lake County Resources Initiative was awarded the Institute’s first action grant to explore the region’s renewable resources. The south-central Oregon area has become a renewal energy frontier for geothermal, biomass and solar power. In 2012, Pacific Power installed solar panels in Lake County, which are generating enough power for 400 residential customers.

Other activity centered on the Stage Two program design, now known as “Pathways to Community Vitality,” which the key contractors were helping to develop. Joyce Akse reviewed the emerging Pathways design with the board and noted that, due to the continuing weak economy, the Institute would focus the articles in *Community Vitality* and regional conferences on economic vitality.

Tom Gallagher’s pre-retirement review

In a pre-retirement meeting with the board, Gallagher offered three closing thoughts. First, he noted that he had been too optimistic about moving communities to measurable impacts on community vitality. He had proposed in the first years that after 10 years most communities would be showing substantive improvements in vitality. He noted that the weak economy had stalled much rural community growth, yet at the same time it had — as demonstrated by Vernonia and Lake County — created situations which had encouraged communities to move forward. He added that

communities, more than ever, recognized that they could not wait to be saved, but needed to galvanize their own resources.

Gallagher asked to amend his earlier prediction that communities would, on average, make significant progress in ten years to 20 years. That said, he refined his prediction by saying he expected that in 10 years (from the time a community held its first class) one third would make significant progress toward vitality, one third would make some progress, and one third would make little or no progress.

Second, he described how the Institute was being validated across the region by other organizations. Some, such as the Sherwood Trust, borrow the curriculum to support their communities and report back their successes. Others, such as Philanthropy Northwest, Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington and the Jefferson Funders Forum, have made capacity building and rural grant-making a focus of their conferences. Other philanthropies, particularly the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Oregon Community Foundation, have accessed Institute

leadership class graduates — its standing army — on a regular basis to help them with rural projects.

His third comment was to encourage the board to take time to have more direct contact with communities and community members, to visit them and see things for themselves. Gallagher noted that board members had seldom attended Institute classes or conferences, or visited with graduates outside of class activities. He indicated a deep concern that such real-world experience was necessary to give a face to the data from the OSU evaluation program and to prevent not appreciating or misunderstanding the profound impact the Institute investments were making on individuals, organizations and communities.

Gallagher closed his career as director of the Ford Institute with a grand “thank you” to the board for their unparalleled support (authorizing expenditure of over \$20 million in nine years) to build the capacity of rural communities; for their faith in him, his staff and contractors; but most heartily for their faith in rural people, in the wisdom of rural communities, to define and achieve their own vision of the future.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIP CITY RIDERS

Rip City Riders, a motorcycle club, raises money to benefit the children of Klamath Falls. Effective Organizations training from the Ford Institute is helping the group manage a popular three-day Fun Run & Festival.

Stronger, effective groups

Training shows positive impact on organizations' development, strategic and management plans

When Jeff Bush started the Rip City Riders in Klamath Falls, he had a dual purpose: to change the sometimes negative image people had of motorcycle riders and to raise money to benefit the children of the Klamath Falls community.

The group decided to concentrate on one big fund-raising event each year, to include crowd-pleasing bike events, an outdoor concert, vendors and activities for the kids. It proved to be a recipe for success,

with the group raising more than \$40,000 over the last four years for groups that benefit children.

This July, the group will host the 5th Annual Summer Fun Run & Festival. With the popular event drawing up to 1,600 people a day during its three-day run, it's a much-needed boost for the Klamath Falls economy as well as for local youth.

As members of the group's board of directors watched the event grow in popularity, they realized that they needed a little help.

"We're a bunch of old bikers," Bush

says with a laugh. "We were breaking new ground and doing new things. None of us had been on a nonprofit board before. We wanted to make sure we were doing the right things and doing everything legally."

Members of the board decided to participate in training from the Ford Institute for Community Building. Trainers Roi Crouch and Mary Ward took the board through the Institute's Effective Organizations training, which focuses on strategic planning, organizational leadership and resource development. A follow-up coaching session focused on board recruitment, organizational structure and fund-raising strategies.

The Ford Institute training is built on the premise that strong organizations help create and maintain strong communities. In a 2011 Oregon State University evaluation, participants in the Effective Organizations training reported that they leave the training highly likely to implement many of the strategies discussed there. They were most likely to improve the functioning of their boards, update their organizations' strategic plans, and improve the development and management of human and financial resources.

"Thus, the trainings have a demonstrable impact on participants, and they are likely to carry out the actions necessary to creating and sustaining an effective organization," the report concludes.

Bush says the board of the Rip City Riders is now more confident of its processes and strategies, and is well positioned to deal with the burgeoning event. Three of the group's volunteers have gone on to grant school.

"It was really worth it," Bush says of the training. "If it comes back around, we'll do it again." ■

—Excerpted from
Community Vitality, Spring 2012

"We're a bunch of old bikers. We were breaking new ground and doing new things. None of us had been on a nonprofit board before. We wanted to make sure we were doing the right things and doing everything legally."

—Jeff Bush
Rip City Riders

Chapter 5 Key Concepts and Lessons Learned

While the success of the Ford Institute is still being assessed, there is much formal evidence, informed opinion, as well as stories and anecdotes that suggest it is achieving its goal of helping develop the capacity of rural communities.

Key Concepts

Along the way the Ford Institute staff and the broader consulting team have come to agree that several key concepts work.

- **Define the hub:** The focus on capacity building should not be on a specific community, but rather on a larger hub defined by a watershed, school district or county boundaries. People have a sense of the boundaries of their “place,” and it was important that the Institute defer to their sense of the best boundary for their hub.
- **Create a critical mass:** The 75-plus graduates of Institute classes in one hub create a critical mass for the most common hub of from 2,000 to 10,000 residents. This number recognizes that only about one-third of graduates will be good to great community leaders. There is some question as to whether 75 is the right number for larger hubs but evidence is mounting that the Institute program is working in larger communities, too.
- **Include age diversification:** Youth and elders change the character of the leadership classes in very positive ways. The youth bring energy and a civilizing tone to the classes, while elders bring the history and values that have



One of the key concepts that works in the Leadership Program is including age diversification. Youth and elders in the same class change the character of the experience in a very positive way.

made the community what it is. Elders who serve as mentors have exceptional value to the classes.

- **Include food:** Food is important. The Institute has found that if you hold two sessions and provide a meal between them it gives people time to talk outside the discussion in the lessons. The concepts of providing food and building network are closely linked.
 - **Focus on assets:** Asset mapping and appreciative inquiry are very powerful tools that can quite literally shift a community from “woe is us” to “let’s make something positive happen.” Both tools are part of early curriculum sessions.
 - **Recognize all volunteers:** All community organizations matter in rural places. There are often few non-profits to receive funds or, for that matter, write grants. Local government is often missing or very distant. Rural communities and their organizations are operated almost entirely by volunteers. Foundations that require professional responses to
- their requests for proposals and program guidelines are bound to exclude rural communities.
- **Tap the local talent:** Community members, however, can take on professional roles, such as serving as community trainers. There is tremendous talent in rural communities to accompany the high level of volunteerism.
 - **Team with partners:** Contractors that do the work should be thought of as partners. They are on the ground and have the real world experience to make things better. The Institute’s partners are a large part of its success.
 - **Train in the community:** Travel is exhausting, but holding the classes in the community means getting to know that place and its people much better than if classes were held at a retreat center. A retreat center, located in the mountains or near the ocean, promoted idyllic visions, but the right decision was to take the training to the community.

Lessons Learned

Over the years there were several lessons learned — in addition to the major lesson noted earlier that **it takes more than 10 years for most communities to move measurably toward vitality**. Others are:

1. Don't select a community that is not ready. If there is not a cadre of existing leaders to help promote the program, as well as evidence that the community is already working together at some level, don't go there. A leadership class is not the right intervention to fix a community in crisis or to galvanize a community that is disinterested. Some communities do not want change, and it is their privilege to stay their course.

2. It is very important to engage elected and appointed officials in the classes. The class will form its own network, and if that network does not include elected officials, the class network may engage in projects that create fiscal, legal or other concerns for the community.

3. Expect to annoy those who don't want change or don't want any help running their town. As

strange as it may seem, the Institute has learned that some people question what benefit comes from having more people vote. Of particular concern are city managers, many of whom have their own agenda for the community. Such personal agendas may also be found among elected officials and sometimes a gang of "usual suspects" who pass elected offices among themselves to sustain control.

4. The Institute has not done enough to clarify its intentions for investing in capacity. There is always some skepticism in rural places about the agenda of outside organizations. The fact that the Institute does not have an agenda or have a particular issue to address needs to be made explicit early on in the conversation to engage a community in the Institute programs.

5. The Institute's and the Foundation's values are closely related. The Foundation board states that its core values are integrity, stewardship, respect, independence and community. The Institute translates these values into programs that build capacity of communities to identify and follow their own values. As noted earlier, the Institute has no

specific interest in public matters, other than it values a broad and diverse base of community leaders, strong community organizations of all types, and strong collaborations within and across communities.

6. It is difficult to develop and sustain successful collaborations with other organizations that share the Institute's interest in rural communities. As noted earlier, the Institute has engaged faculty at Oregon State University in studies and evaluation. It also has provided yearly funding for the University of Oregon RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) Program, which underwrites a portion of the cost of having interns in rural communities. Other organizations with which the Institute has had positive relationships are SOLV, Sustainable Northwest, Oregon Solutions and the Oregon Watershed Council, each of which may be a strong ally in the future. For several other organizations, particularly the Extension Service, a strong relationship did not develop. Extension serves rural communities from offices in each county seat, providing expertise in agriculture, forestry, energy and marine sciences, as well as the home in Oregon for the 4-H youth program. No doubt part of the problem of developing this and other collaborations is that the Institute is "on a mission," and it is hard to link up with other organizations that are on their own, albeit related, mission.



The Institute has found that if two sessions are held, it's best to provide a meal between them. It gives people time to talk outside the lessons.

7. It has also been surprisingly difficult to develop collaborations across the three units within the Foundation.

Scholarship Programs operates with limited overlap with the Ford Institute, and much of what does occur is not intentional — e.g. the Institute preparing youth and others to be better qualified to compete for scholarships. The early admonition from Charlie Walker made over a decade ago, that: "...there needs to be a heightened emphasis on community building with scholars, of their individual responsibility in building the communities where they live after they graduate, with possible assistance in community building efforts in which they take key leadership roles" has never been acknowledged.

Grant Programs also operates with very little overlap with Institute investments and what overlap existed has declined. In 2011 the board worked through a process with a major consulting firm to identify issue areas on which to focus grants. The result was definition of four existing grant categories found on the website, three related to youth well-being and one for capital improvement of "convening places." The challenge for the Institute is that these categories represent but a small fraction,

The Institute is a work in progress, moving rapidly with conviction and a plan, and striving to learn and adjust as it grows.

perhaps 10%, of the issues a rural community may define as a priority to achieve its vision. Hence, the Foundation's grant resources are largely unavailable to the Institute's rural communities.

The blame no doubt falls on both units, each intensely focused on its own mission, having its own database, staffing and even (in the case of Scholarship Programs) located in different offices in different cities. The value lost from not collaborating is potentially substantial while the cost of a "fix" could be little more than a change in attitude.

Concluding thought

The Institute is a work in progress, moving rapidly with conviction and a plan, and striving to learn and adjust as it grows. It is a "grand rural experiment," and there is no place more appropriate to experiment

than in Oregon, a state known for taking its own path on many issues.

On the Oregon Trail back in the 1840s, it is reported that at a juncture in Wyoming there were two signs: The one pointing south to California said "Gold Seekers." The one pointing north to the Oregon Territory read "Hard Cases."

I suspect that the rural people in Oregon and Siskiyou County might qualify as hard cases. They are independent yet community-minded, critical yet creative, and action-oriented yet preparing for the long term. It is appropriate that a grand rural experiment be tested in this place, and in the hundreds of communities spread across the diverse landscape of Oregon. Each of these places is unique, and it is appropriate, as Kenneth Ford wanted, for communities to draw on their own wisdom to define and achieve their own vision of vitality.

munity. It is intended to take no more than 20 hours for each participant outside of class time.

Meyers Briggs Type Indicator (Keirse Temperaments)

Another decision that needed to be made quickly concerned how to present human personality styles as they relate to leadership in the curriculum. There are a number of typologies for human personality and for leadership preferences, but Gallagher's preference was for the Meyers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), arguing that it is very good at helping people understand how they and others approach making decisions.

In the dominant culture, decision-making follows what has been called the rational model with the steps: define the goal, gather information, create alternatives and act on the best one. Often these steps occur several times or cycles, leading to a series of incrementally more detailed plans, which architects refer to with words such as schematic, draft and final. What is not often recognized is that MBTI types differ in the emphases they place on each of the steps and where they enter the cycles.

In the search for a simple tool to explain this concept to people, the Institute opted to use the model developed by David Keirsey and described in his book, *Please Understand Me*. Stephen Montgomery's book *People Patterns* is used as the reference for the classes and as a Select Book because it is easier to read.

The four major temperaments

Keirsey's and Montgomery's works identify four major "temperaments": the Idealist who focuses on goals, the Guardian who focuses on information, the Rational who focuses on alternatives, and the Artisan who focuses on action.



PHOTO: CORBIS. USED WITH PERMISSION.



In his book *People Patterns*, Stephen Montgomery uses characters in popular culture to define the different talents of the four temperaments. In the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is the Guardian who just wants to go home; Lion longs to be the courageous Artisan; Tin Man, the Idealist, nurtures his companions with his (yet-undiscovered) heart; and Scarecrow fits the Rationalist mold with his brain preoccupation. The book is used as a reference in the Leadership Program to help participants understand human personality styles.

These four types align nicely with the steps in the architect's rational decision-making process.

Idealist: Looking at the official data from the 2011 OSU Evaluation report, the Idealist, which makes up about 15% of the general population, made up 42% of the class participants, about three times what one would expect. They are the group that is most committed to making a

better world for people and perhaps most likely to step up to community leadership roles. They are willing to participate in hours of training to move their concern forward.

Rationals: The next most common type in the classes was the Rationals at 25%, compared to about 12% of the population. Thus they are about twice as frequent in classes as one might expect. They, too, are

interested in change but for a world that works better, that is more creative and resourceful, more effective and efficient if not equitable. They are willing to participate in training if it moves their interest forward.

Guardians: Guardians are the most common type in the general population at about 40%, but made

and very risk tolerant are excellent learners through experience and are very good project volunteers. Hence, trainers are encouraged to have those types who do participate in classes reach out to identify and engage Artisans in the class projects. This “Tom Sawyer” strategy has often succeeded beyond expect-

Weekend One

Orientation, appreciative Inquiry
Meyers-Briggs
Catalytic leadership
Community building tools, asset mapping

Weekend Two

Communication skills
Working in a group
Project selection, stakeholder analysis
Effective meetings

Weekend Three

Managing conflict
Project action planning
Resource development
Marketing your project

Weekend Four

Social capital
Effective relationships and groups
Growing volunteers
Personal plan, graduation

Keirsey’s and Montgomery’s works identify four major “temperaments”: the Idealist who focuses on goals, the Guardian who focuses on information, the Rational who focuses on alternatives, and the Artisan who focuses on action.

up 21% of class participants; thus, they are about half as frequent as one might expect. They can be very community minded but are not so change oriented as the first two types. They can be risk averse and will not support change that they do not see as having clear value. They are somewhat less willing than the previous two groups to take time out for training but will do so in a dutiful way.

Artisans: The fourth type, Artisans, are another common type in the general population, at about 35%, but made up just 12% of class participants. There are two possible reasons they don’t participate. One is that they don’t value all of the planning that is embedded in the class work and would rather move right to action. The other is that they don’t like being in a chair that long and would rather learn by doing. There is strong evidence that this type does not participate well in formal education, often dropping out of high school or college. That said, Artisans, being very action oriented

tations with class projects finished largely by non-class members.

MBTI gets highest rating from class participants

The MBTI is woven through the curriculum, with relationships drawn to such diverse topics as volunteer management and project planning. Class graduates give the MBTI module the highest rating for value, reporting it helps them understand themselves, their families and friends, and community members. However, there is reason to be concerned that the module receives these ratings because the class is filled with people with a particular perspective. Additional analysis of MBTI and participants is provided in Appendix C: Evaluation.

Curriculum modules and evolution

The initial Heartland Center curriculum had 16 three-hour modules, a format that has been retained although the specific modules have changed. Initially the modules were:

Subsequent to the close of the spring semester classes, all RDI trainers and staff meet with evaluators to review the year, suggest changes to the curriculum and mentor trainers on improving their performance.

Through this annual review, the document evolved under the guidance of Jane Barth Brass, a curriculum specialist contracted to RDI; and Nora Vitz Harrison, the Foundation and Institute’s graphics contractor.

The curriculum has evolved each year. The major change in 2012 was to move the topics of Making Presentations, Marketing Your Project and Growing Volunteers to follow-up sessions; the first follow-up session was scheduled four to six weeks after the last regular class. The goal of delivering these topics later was to reduce the load of materials in the main class so Friday sessions could be shortened.

In addition, it has been beneficial to provide this information to classes at the time they were developing their projects.

The consistently high scores from participants on the content and presentation of the curriculum speak well of the qualifications and hard work of the consulting team. In 2011, the curriculum had the sessions outlined in Table 1.

Class structure

The decision to hold classes in the community meant that staff and consultants would have to travel considerably, thus the schedule was developed to offer class modules in clusters. This clustering brought people together for a long enough duration that they could share a meal together.

After many trials and errors, the best strategy was to hold a session on Friday afternoon and another that evening with a catered meal between, followed on Saturday with morning and early afternoon sessions, again with a catered meal between. Such Friday/Saturday sessions would be held about once a month with the actual weekends selected by class members to avoid conflicts with community events.

This schedule worked for many youth who were already out of class on Friday, and it provided a length of time together to concentrate on the topics. The month between sessions gave people time to think about what they had learned, to talk with others about their new knowledge and to prepare for the next session.

Conference of Communities

To encourage people to learn from and network with people from other communities, the Institute gathered the four hubs engaged in their first leadership class at a Conference of Communities. It was held between the third and fourth weekends, which in the spring is in early May and in the fall is early November. The conference was hosted by the Institute, organized by RDI and located at a rural venue that was

KICK OFF (meeting)
Program overview
Program background
SESSION 1
The practice of leadership
Community vitality
Community development
SESSION 2
Communication
Working in groups
Managing conflict
Running effective meetings
SESSION 3
Class project selection
Impact and stakeholder analysis
Resource development
SESSION 4
Project management
Action planning
Next steps
FOLLOW-UP MINI SESSIONS (2)
Class project progress
Making presentations
Marketing your project
Growing volunteers

Table 1: Curriculum outline as of 2011

most equal in distance from the four hubs. Participants arrived for a dinner program on Friday, participated in several sessions on Saturday, were engaged in additional programs on Sunday and headed home in the early afternoon.

For some participants, this meant a drive of eight or more hours. Participants paid for all of their own travel expenses while the Institute covered all conference expenses including lodging and meals.

The conference program involved three major training sessions: Peter and Susan Glaser on communication; Margo Helphand on mentoring; and David Landis on negotiation.

Each module was selected to complement the main curriculum, and the trainers were selected for their national-caliber reputation. The conference program also included two presentations by community members, one on their community (an opportunity to brag and invite others to visit) and one on their class projects.

In 2011 the project presentation was discontinued as changes in the curriculum meant it was not sufficiently developed to present at the conference.

Regards to Rural conference

Due to cost, the complexity of scheduling the speakers and staff limitations, the Institute offered this conference only to the first cohort in each hub. As an alternative for graduates of second and third cohorts, the Institute hosted several regional conferences each year in different parts of the state and encouraged participation in Regards to Rural, the premier rural conference in the Pacific Northwest hosted by RDI and supported in part by the Institute.

Effective Organizations curriculum design

While all leadership classes were contracted to RDI, the Institute contracted with three organizations — RDI, Non-profit Association of Oregon and Human Systems — to deliver the Effective Organizations training. Each was given a region of the state to serve, and each brought a somewhat different experience to the class and to the proposed delivery. Each is allowed to teach the class in its own manner as long as the four main topics are covered: vision, leadership, resources and management.

These core subjects sometimes frustrated community organizations that came to the training expecting to hear about how to write a grant to The Ford Family Foundation. UI-

The decision to hold classes in the community meant that staff and consultants would have to travel considerably, thus the schedule was developed to offer class modules in clusters.

timately, most participants came to realize that they had to master these subjects before writing a grant and, indeed, before their fund raising would be effective.

The organizations the Institute invited to send representatives to this class were identified in the asset-mapping exercise in the first leadership class. The mapping identified local government and its various divisions, 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, membership groups such as churches and service organizations (e.g. Lions, Rotary), and institutions such as schools and clinics. In many small communities there are few or even no formal charitable organizations, so the decision was easy to invite all organizations to this class.

To encourage organizations to actually apply what they learned in class in their organization, the Institute agreed to underwrite the cost of 60 hours of consulting by the trainers to organizations that participated in the class. This strategy permitted the Institute to provide a great variety of consulting services outside of its assistance grant program, which was very burdensome in Foundation staff time compared to the number of dollars distributed. The strategy also permitted the Institute to help organizations that were not 501(c)(3) or local government organizations, the only two the Institute could support with assistance grants.

Enrollment for this class was open and averaged about 25 partic-

ipants, the same as the leadership class. Trainers soon learned, however, that many participants wore several hats, with many serving in five or more organizations. No doubt the free consulting provided after the classes to participating organizations served a need that might have been met with an assistance grant. The consulting, when not sufficient to address an organization's need, led to particularly strong assistance grants.



Young people lend a hand in Mitchell for the Wheeler County class project. Holding the class sessions Friday afternoons and Saturdays allowed youth to participate.

Community Collaborations curriculum design

The Community Collaboration's class was structured around four key topics: community vision, collaboration, complex issues and policy development. As the class was implemented by the consultants two things happened.

First, it was evident that communities were in quite different places in terms of readiness to discuss vision and priorities and collaboration on action.

And, second, the large number of graduates of Institute classes was available to guide how this class should be offered.

Some communities felt they were not ready for the collaborations class and wanted to repeat the organizations class while others wanted to work on a specific issue. The contractors took the lead in working with past graduates to define how best to use their 20 hours. Thus, this class looks to the wisdom of the community about where it is and what it needs to move forward, and begins the transition to the Institute's new Pathways to Vitality program (see page 20).

Appendix B Budget

Prior to 2003, the Institute operated a technical assistance grants program and offered several resources including *Community Vitality*, the Institute's biannual publication, and Select Books. The annual budget was about \$250,000. With the development of the leadership training classes, programs were formalized to be delivered using a matrix with programs on one axis and the three levels of capacity building from the Tupelo Model and the Ford Vitality Model on the other. The matrix provided categories for the Institute investments (Table 2).

From \$400,000 to \$4 million

From 2003 to 2012, the Institute budget grew from about \$400,000 to about \$4 million. Almost all of that increase was a direct result of additional programming, particularly the addition of more training from 2003

to 2007. The distribution of costs in the matrix became fairly stable by 2007, and since then the budget has increased modestly each year.

Not included in the matrix are the Institute's direct operating costs of personnel and travel. From its founding in 2000 the Institute has had low internal operating costs with just two staff members (the director and a staff assistant).

Today, it operates with four staff members (the director, an associate director, a program manager and an administrative assistant).

Most of the Institute budget has been for contract services to deliver the various program elements. The contract amounts are set at a level that is competitive for the contracting organizations to attract and retain a stable group of quality contractors, as good as the Institute could hope to retain as employees. To that end, the Institute worked with each contractor when the first contract was drafted to make sure that they could pay a competitive salary as well as health and retirement benefits.

Thus, the first leadership class, which was instructed by two professional RDI trainers, cost the Institute about \$72,000. That figure included RDI staff participating in community selection, managing the participant nomination, finding and contracting for space and catering, instructing the class with all out-of-class contact, supporting the class project

which could extend for a year beyond the last class meeting, gathering for annual review, updating the curriculum as needed, and all travel costs. It also included health and retirement benefits, office rental and operating costs, support staff, and such activities as staff meetings and training.

Per-unit measure

In an effort to provide information to the board that would justify the budget, staff often provided unit measures — such as the cost per one leadership class graduate. The first cohort leadership class, with a cost of \$72,000 for 18 participants, had a per-person cost of \$4,000. When the number of class participants increased to 25, the unit cost dropped to \$2,880. There was incentive to move toward even larger class sizes, and several were tried, as most costs were fixed and those that fluctuated, such as curriculum binders and catering service, were minor. Comparable leadership classes offered by other entities operate at a similar or higher cost.

Benefits of Community Ambassadors

One of the major benefits of the Community Ambassadors is that they reduce the cost of leadership cohorts 2 and 3 in a community by about \$20,000, bringing the per-person cost for a class of 25 to about \$2,000.

Table 2:
Institute programs are delivered using a matrix with programs on one axis and the three levels of capacity building on the other. Percentages of the Institute's budget are shown for each program or resource.

Programs	Levels of Capacity Building		
	Individual	Organization	Community
Training Classes Total: 75%	Leadership Development Classes 52%	Effective Organizations Classes 12%	Community Collaborations Classes 11%
Assistance Grants Total: 10%	Leadership Development Grants 2%	Effective Organizations Grants 5%	Community Collaborations Grants 3%
	Resources		
Resources Total: 15%	(supporting development of capacity at each level) Conferences 8% • <i>Community Vitality</i> publication 3% Select Books (complimentary books) 2% • Web site 2%		

Typically, two to five ambassadors support a class, meaning that each has a value of several thousand dollars. Given that it costs about \$1,000 to qualify an ambassador, they are a very good investment, particularly those who serve in multiple classes. Some Ambassadors have increased their value by volunteering to work in neighboring hubs, and several have become contract trainers with RDI. At least one is now on the RDI staff.

Dollars per resident each year

In working with foundations in other states, the per-unit measure was discussed in a different way — dollars per resident each year.

Oregon and Siskiyou County have roughly 4 million residents of which about half are rural by the Foundation definition of rural (communities of less than 30,000 residents). Thus, the Institute, with a budget of \$4 million, is spending about \$2 per rural resident per year.

Such a program in a state with a smaller population, such as Montana with 800,000 residents, whom would all be considered rural under this definition, might cost \$1.6 million a year. It is not essential, however, that a program be as robust in terms of number of classes or rate of saturating the state, thus, a cost of \$1 per person per year may provide sufficient resources to run a solid program that did not suffer serious faults.

Return on Investment

Through the years staff members have approached the question of return on investment on several occasions without getting a firm handle on it. Published articles about ROI in the business world do not help because as one commenter said, “Non-profits are like businesses in all unessential ways.”

Published articles about ROI in the non-profit world come closer to

While the Institute holds on one hand that vitality is measured by a set of 30 indicators, the Institute holds on the other hand the belief that how the community defines vitality is even more important.

helping where there is a specific issue that has measurable social cost, some of which can be given dollar value (monetized). But they are not close to helping put a monetary value on the development of community capacity.

Indeed, the effort to monetize benefits pushes foundations toward investments in discreet issues with defined solutions, referred to as best practices, that almost always eliminate the voice of the community in problem or solution definition.

One strategy of calculating ROI is to compare the amount invested in an organization or community with the sum of the grants received by the organizations and community from philanthropy and agencies. The problem with this comparison is twofold. First, grants received would not include the value invested by the community in a worthy project; and second, grants received may not link closely to a community's vision of vitality, but rather could serve the interests of a specific funder or non-profit organization.

An underlying concern of the Institute is that many philanthropic grants don't fit the community need or situation and are, in effect, seeds dumped on sterile ground. In the worst case, a grant with a positive ROI could actually hurt overall community vitality as defined by the community. With this concern in mind, the Institute encourages organizations and communities to get their vision and priorities in order, and then to go after grants that are well supported by the community.

Worth the investment?

Despite its limitations, ROI is a worthy formula to pursue, if only because it begs the central questions: “Is what we are doing worth the investment, and who makes that decision?”

Part of the answer is going to be found in comparing dollars to dollars, such as when leaders through their organizations and collaborations promote a community's economic development with measurable economic gain in jobs, for instance.

But another part of the answer is going to be found in accepting that some important returns on investments cannot be monetized. For example, one of the lessons learned from the evaluation by Oregon State University is that community leaders report that since the Institute training their communities are more vital. Why? Because they have more leaders, more motivation, more hope, stronger networks and greater use of local resources.

While the Institute holds on one hand that vitality is measured by a set of 30 indicators, the Institute holds on the other hand the belief that how the community defines vitality is even more important. The tension between metrics and non-metrics in assessment is the topic of the next appendix.



DOROTHY DELINA PORTER

Lane County Commissioner Faye Stewart used his leadership skills to help residents of the Dorena and Culp Creek areas in Oregon create a water district to tap water from the Row River.

From reactive to proactive

Leadership Program transforms individuals, motivating them to seek leadership positions

As an elected official, Faye Stewart must listen to voters, understand their perspective and find a way to navigate contentious issues. Stewart, of Cottage Grove, says those skills are integral to his job as a Lane County commissioner. He says he learned those skills in the Ford Institute Leadership Program, which he attended before running for election in 2004.

"I really believe I wouldn't be as an effective commissioner without the skills I was taught in that course. I may not even have been elected," he said. "[The Leadership Program] helped me with running, speaking, preparing my thoughts, organizing — a lot of skills that I didn't have before the class."

The county commissioner post is the first elected position Stewart has held; he just completed his seventh year. Stewart says the skills he learned in the Leadership Program

helped him with conflict resolution, understanding how people think and learn, assessing situations, collaborative planning and implementation and listening.

Those skills have been especially helpful during emotionally charged meetings in Lane County, and he says they helped him assist people outside Cottage Grove develop a new water district. The community was at odds with the city after it announced it would discontinue service to rural users.

"When I arrived, I had a community that was really upset and spending most of their time in turmoil with the city," he says. "I was able to set the turmoil aside and say, 'This is where we are and here are the options.'"

Aided by the county, community members formed the Row River Valley Water District and received a grant to build the treatment facility that began



Faye Stewart

operating and serving people in the Dorena and Culp Creek areas in October 2010.

Sutherlin resident Jacinda Sullivan joined the Leadership Program in 2006 and also attributes some of her personal achievements to it. Sullivan says it helped her make connections in the community and, through the Meyers Briggs Type Indicators, she learned about different personalities and learning styles.

Though the Leadership Program never addressed it specifically, she says her experience motivated her to pursue her own education. "I've always been a highly motivated person. But as a single mother, college goals took a backseat."

In 2005, while working full time as director of information technology for the Sutherlin School District, she began studying for her associate's degree at Umpqua Community College. She then earned a bachelor's degree in business at Eastern Oregon University online, followed by a master's in business administration, which she completed in August 2011.

Today, she works in her "dream job" at a high-tech company. "So it changed my life from a very personal perspective," she says. ■

—Excerpted from
Community Vitality, Spring 2012

"I really believe I wouldn't be as an effective commissioner without the skills I was taught in that course. I may not even have been elected."

—Faye Stewart
Lane County Commissioner

Appendix C: Evaluation

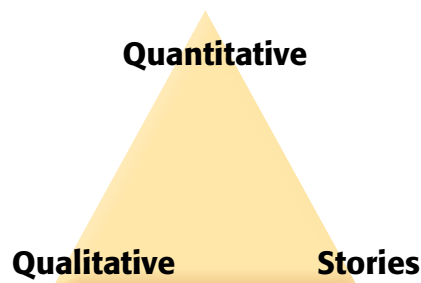
At its inception, the Institute programming was sufficiently original in its design that there was no strong example from the philanthropic world that it could borrow for its program design and subsequent evaluation. There was, however, substantial academic study and professional literature and practice upon which program elements and their evaluation could be built.

In 2003, the Institute contracted with Cathie Dunlop, PhD, with the evaluation unit at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, to guide the Institute's evaluation program development.

She had worked with community building efforts in British Columbia and had worked for the Kellogg Foundation on evaluating community-training programs. She provided a practical method for having class participants score the class content and presentation, and she provided feedback to trainers on their performance.

Dunlop also helped the Institute anticipate what demographic data to collect for anticipated major evaluations in the future — a formative evaluation in 2007 and a more comprehensive summative evaluation in 2012.

Perhaps as important, she helped the Institute and board understand that evaluation was not just about formal metrics, but that a mix of metrics (quantitative data in measurable indicators) and non-metrics (qualitative data measured with Likert-scaled perceptions, content analysis), combined with stories, case studies, anecdotes and testimonials were all important. She called the use of these three sources of information “triangulation” and argued that none of the



Evaluation is not just about formal metrics. A mix of metrics (quantitative) and non-metrics (qualitative data), combined with stories (case studies, anecdotes and testimonials) are all important.

methods alone told the whole story. Further, she noted that boards may say they want metrics, but they need the other forms of data, particularly stories, to bring the data to life.

She helped the Institute clarify the logic of its programs so that it could devise strategies to test that logic. Fortunately, the Heartland Center had embedded the Tupelo Model within the leadership curriculum, providing the logic for Institute programs.



The Tupelo Model

The Tupelo Model (see diagram, page 11), using the jargon in the field of evaluation, is a “theory of change” or theory of “what causes what?”

Thus, in the Tupelo Model lower levels of the pyramid need to be satisfied before upper levels can be achieved. In practice they can be

developed simultaneously or even in reverse order, but the theory says human development is the foundation for success and the best place to start.

The theory of change concept helps to clarify what action and resources to invest, and what changes to expect. The plan of action and expected outputs, outcomes and impacts is known in evaluation as a “logic model.”

The Ford Family Foundation had developed elements of a theory of change at the time the Foundation was formed when it identified its two mission objectives, successful citizens and vital rural communities. Its logic model was to invest in Scholarship Programs to promote successful citizens and in the Ford Institute to promote community vitality.

The Ford Vitality Model and Dimensions of Vitality

The Tupelo Model did not fit the Institute situation exactly and, following a series of in-house strategy sessions, staff developed what they called the Ford Vitality Model.

This model fit the Institute work well, recognizing the Institute's investments at the three levels: individual, organization and collaboration. The model also replaced the ultimate purpose — economic vitality — with six dimensions of vitality: economy, environment, safety, health, education and arts/culture. Staff also proposed that there was an overlay of two other variables — physical infrastructure and human infrastructure — for each of the dimensions.

The anticipated evaluation in 2007 envisioned with Dunlop did not develop, in part as the staff and consultants were very busy delivering the class series and had interesting, if not sufficient, information coming in from the class evaluations. Instead, in 2007 the Institute wrote

Dr. Emery Castle

During the discussions about dimensions of vitality, the Institute introduced the theoretical and applied research of Dr. Emery Castle, professor emeritus of economics at Oregon State University. Castle had developed a model for investments in rural communities called “total rural capital” which emphasized looking at community success as built on many factors, not just economics.

Six dimensions: His approach provided the logic for the Institute’s six dimensions of vitality and the overlay elements. It also provided the logic for making one investment over another (not all investments have equal value), to create a more productive balance of factors (some balance may be necessary for a dimension to be useful), and for targeting research on a particular issue to better understand how to invest to address that issue.

Castle’s model noted the importance of recognizing that people mattered in defining the worth of a place, making it a short step to argue that the balance of dimensions should be determined by the community – of course with input from others being appropriate to enrich the discussion.

For the Institute, it was critical that the entire framework for investments in community capacity building be built on the best available theory drawn from decades of practice.

... people mattered in defining the worth of a place ... the actual balance of dimensions should be determined by the community ...



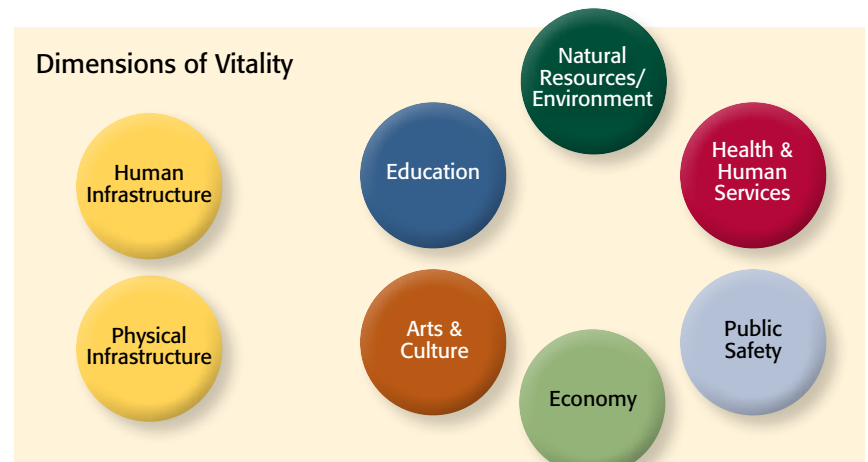
a small contract with the faculty in Family and Community Development at Oregon State University to develop a draft design for the major evaluation anticipated in 2012. The goal was to have a design in mind so that the Institute could identify and collect the needed data.

Data management system

The Institute was fortunate that the Foundation had a major data management system developed for its Grant Programs, called GIFTS, which staff had adapted to capture information about Institute programs and participants. The situation was not ideal, but overall the system proved acceptable despite the challenge of adding more and more bits of information about

more and more people and program activities. In the early years of the Institute, the 2012 evaluation seemed very far off, and it was hard to justify so much work on something so far away.

The OSU faculty, however, did not draft a design for a 2012 evaluation as contracted, but made a counter-proposal. The senior member of the group was Dr. Clara Pratt, an emeritus professor and recognized authority on program evaluation. She argued persuasively that a better strategy was to conduct a sequential, iterative evaluation which would provide information to improve the program as it moved forward. This strategy would help the Institute focus evaluation on different levels of change as they were



Note: Physical and human infrastructure are common to all six dimensions. All ages are represented in each dimension.

Adapted from Total Rural Capital, by Emery Castle and based on “Rural Community Explorer,” Oregon State University data.

expected (following the logic of the Tupelo Model).

Further, it would provide continuity in the staffing of the evaluation. The OSU unit proposed to conduct \$70,000 worth of evaluation each year for five years, which compared favorably to a one-time expenditure of \$300,000-plus in 2012.

This proposal was presented to the board; it was noted that having a local contractor that would stay with the project over many years had a “continuity value” that was critical. The package of Institute programs had become sufficiently complex that few understood how all the parts fit together.

Ultimately, the Institute wanted an evaluation program that linked its investments to changes in leaders, organizations and collaborations, which in turn led to changes in indicators of the dimensions of vitality.

In effect, the Institute wanted proof that the Ford Vitality Model, as executed by Institute investments, was working from first investment through the years.

Causality difficult to achieve

OSU faculty cautioned that this level of causality is very difficult to achieve in the Institute’s type of work given the great number of variables at play. The Institute had already recognized the negative impact of the recession that started in 2008 on rural communities. Given the power of the outside world to impact rural communities, the question of the value of the Institute programs



MIKE STOUTE

Demographic Highlights of Leadership Program evaluations

From the 2008 report:

Women: 63%

Age range: 13 to 84

College educated: 73%*

Lack a high school diploma: <1%**

From the 2009 report:

Average number of years of residency in the community: 14 years

Employed for pay: 89%

Self-employed: 29%

Retired: 16%

Unemployed: 3%

White: 84%

Biracial: 7%

Native American: 5%

Latino: 3%

* compared to 58% statewide in Oregon

** compared to 30% statewide in Oregon

to help communities seems always relevant.

However, it is because the outside world can have such a large impact on communities that people need the capacity to be resilient and to make the most of their specific situation. They cannot wait to be saved, and no one can save them without their help.

2008 Evaluation Report

In May 2008 the OSU faculty delivered their report of work completed in 2007. The first analysis was of the demographics of leadership class participants. Analyzing 1,279 graduates from 63 classes they found that 63% were women, the age ranged from 13 to 84, the average age of individual classes ranged

from 37 to 55, 73% of participants had some college education (compared to 58% in Oregon), and less than 1% lacked a high school diploma (compared to 30% in Oregon). The number of years in the community was almost equally divided between less than 10 years, 11 to 20 years, and greater than 20 years.

The second analysis was of the quality of training, where participants scored the classes overall at 4.3 on a five-point Likert-scale. After the class, participants reported that the class had increased the number of community leaders (82%), would likely create a better future for their community (85%), helped them appreciate community assets (89%), expanded their network and resources (90%), and helped them work more effectively in teams (92%). Participant responses also identified the need to be clearer about how the participant selection process worked, about the project selection criteria, and about the link between the leadership class and the organization and collaboration

Graduates were more engaged civically, reporting that they were more likely to vote, support organizations, serve others, participate in governance and collaborate.

—2009 Evaluation Report

classes, which were taught by different contractors in two of the Institute's three regions.

2009 Evaluation Report

The next report, which covered work done in 2008, noted key outputs: 53 hubs engaged; 2,131 leadership class graduates; 210 community ambassadors; and 2,000-plus participants in the organizations and collaborations classes. At a board meeting that spring, the faculty presentation, led by Dr. Sally Bowman, first reviewed the evaluation vocabulary of inputs, outputs, outcomes (immediate, intermediate and late) and impacts.

The evaluators had expanded the demographic study and reported number of years of residency in the community (average 14); employment (for pay 89%, self-employed 29%, retired 16%, unemployed 3%); race (84% white, 7% biracial, 5% Na-

tive American, and 3% Latino); education (29% college graduate compared to 15% rural Oregon); and, volunteer hours per participant (14 hours per month serving 2.4 organizations).

They then reported that the leadership classes were achieving their intended immediate outcomes of increasing leadership knowledge (competency), increasing leadership skills (behaviors) and increasing motivation to be a community leader.

They also found that potential leaders gained the most from the class, followed by emerging leaders and then known leaders. At the end of the class, the large gap between known and potential leaders had largely closed in terms of these three immediate outcomes.

For intermediate outcomes, they reported that the leadership class graduates were applying their new leadership capacity in volunteer organizations (87%), family (86%) and workplace (81%). Graduates were more engaged civically, reporting that they were more likely to vote, support organizations, serve others, participate in gover-

nance and collaborate.

While it was too soon to expect much in the way of late outcomes (how these actions made a difference in the community), class graduates reported they felt their community had increased capacity following the class and that their class project had measurably improved the community physical environment.

Variables that made a difference to outcomes included pre-training level of competence (lowest increased the most), the number of years working with community organizations (higher years gained the most), that the dosage of Institute interactions was positively correlated with motivation, and that the second leadership class gained in project management skill by talking with graduates of the first class.

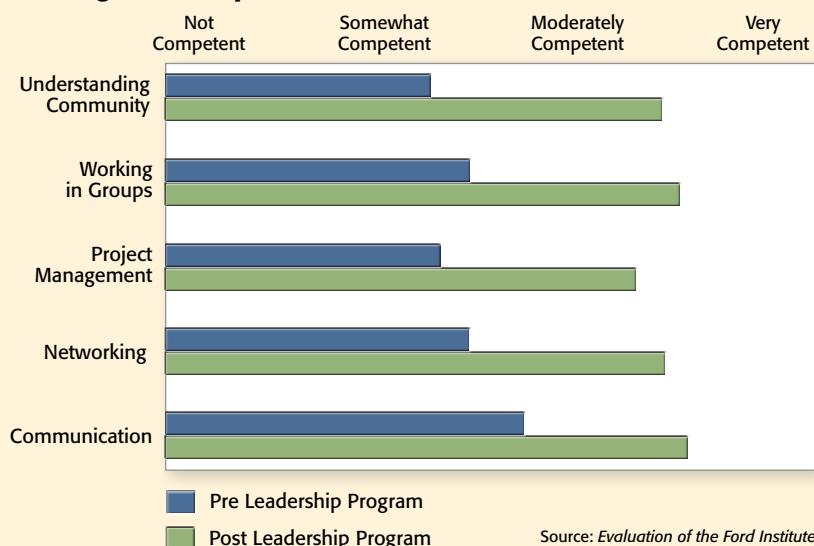
The presentation also provided an overview of how, ultimately, the evaluation would examine "impacts" which would be measured with 30 indicators of vitality measuring six dimensions, with data drawn from the Rural Communities Explorer database to provide data to measure changes in the indicators.

Participants in the Ford Institute Leadership Program noted significant positive changes in their competency levels for five leadership skills, according to the Oregon State University 2010 Evaluation.



FORD INSTITUTE PHOTO

Changes in Competence



Source: Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

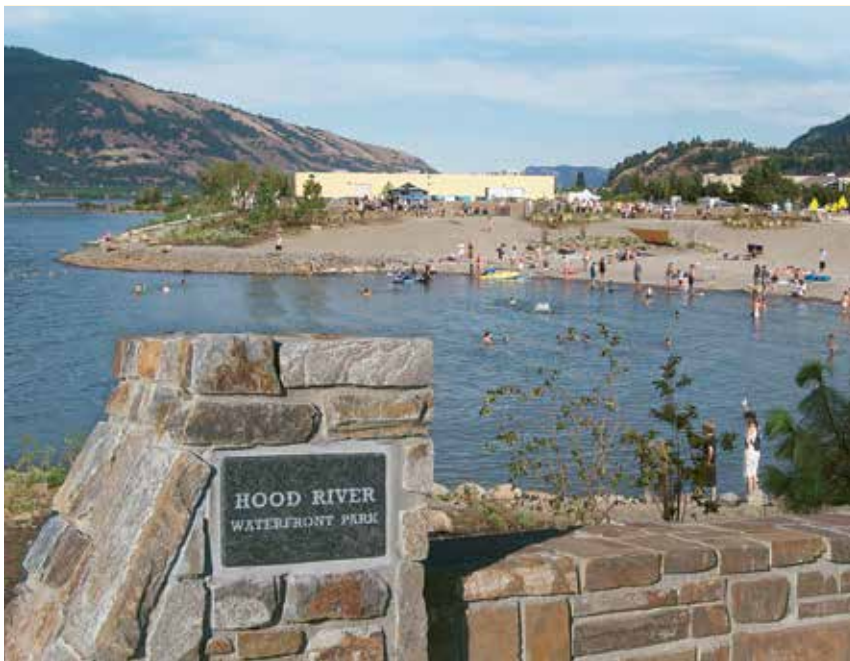


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Proponents of the Waterfront Park envisioned it as a year-round community gathering place, and their vision has been amply rewarded.

Hood River Waterfront Park brings the **community together**

In 2008, civic pride in Hood River swelled as Phase 1 of a \$3.5 million waterfront park opened.

"The Waterfront Park project has had the incredible effect of bringing the community together to work on the project," said Ann Frodel, a Ford Institute Leadership Program graduate who was instrumental in raising funds for the park.

"After the graduation ceremony of the community's first leadership

class, three people were having an animated conversation," recalls Ford Institute Director Tom Gallagher. "They represented the city, the county, and the port authority. It was their conversation that opened the door for development of a park on port land."

Ultimately, the project was a collaborative effort between the Waterfront Community Park Association and the City of Hood River, with a lot of help from other area organizations.

"The Ford leadership classes were really helpful in giving us skills and tools that we needed," Frodel said, adding that about eight of her classmates are involved in some aspect of the project.

The park was created from a six-acre parcel of degraded industrial land alongside the Columbia River. The land was donated to the city by the port in January of 2006, with the understanding that it would be developed as a community park within seven years.

That same year, a small group of park supporters came together to form the Waterfront Community Park Association. Its mission was to raise funds for the park, which was envisioned as an environmentally friendly recreational venue that would model sustainable principles in design, construction and maintenance.

Phase 1 included modifying a steep riprap bank to create a family swim beach – a top priority since the area lacked a public pool for teaching water safety. "In recent years, the community had suffered too many river-related fatalities," recalls Gallagher. The natural pool provides a place for casual swimming as well as swimming lessons and water-sport training, such as wind-surfing.

Proponents of the park envisioned it as a year-round community gathering place, and their vision has been amply rewarded.

"Even before our grand opening, the park was heavily used by recreationists," Frodel said. "It's a gathering place, and that was really our intent when we started all of this."

*—Excerpted from
Community Vitality, Spring 2009*

"The Ford leadership classes were really helpful in giving us skills and tools that we needed."

*—Ann Frodel
Ford Institute Leadership
Program graduate*



ARTHUR BABITZ

Phase 1 of the park included modifying a steep riprap bank to create a family swim beach.

A major finding from the 2010 Evaluation Report was that effects of the leadership training did not decline with time – there was no significant difference in use of skills over seven years.

2010 Evaluation Report

The methods used to collect data in 2009 included a 12-month follow-up survey and focus groups of leadership class graduates, as well as a survey of participants in the Effective Organizations class. For the leadership class graduates, intermediate outcomes included more working with others (42%), increased use of the community network (48%) and more engagement in community-building activities (59%). The report noted that larger classes were positively correlated with community-building activities, as was remoteness of the community.

Barriers to being more engaged included personal demands (58%),



Barriers of Engagement

The 2010 Evaluation Report found that barriers to being more engaged in the program included personal demands, community situation, burn out from the class project and not being interested in community issues.

community situation (38%), burn out from the class project (35%) and not interested in community issues (7%).

In the first look at the Effective Organizations classes, the faculty found 74% women, 59% employed (20% self-employed and 35% not employed or retired), 15% currently in public office, 23% with a graduate degree (compared to 7% in Oregon) and 12% minority.

About one third of the participants were representing one community organization, half were representing two to four organizations, and the remaining over five organizations. Just 14% held paid positions with an organization indicating a predominantly volunteer work force in community organizations.

2011 Evaluation Report

In 2010 the evaluation group surveyed all 1,844 leadership class graduates. Of this group there were only 45 missing or incorrect addresses, indicating a very low rate of attrition. The response rate was 53%, considered excellent in this type of survey work.

Demographics remained very similar to those reported earlier. Those surveyed used their new leadership capacity most with organizations (91%), families (89%) and at work (81%). The number of volunteer hours jumped from 14, reported earlier, to 33 per month in service to 2.4 communities.

Variables that increased use of

leadership capacity included previous leadership experience, class size (larger classes scored higher), being a community ambassador, and having a higher dosage of Institute experiences. A major finding was that effects of the leadership training did not decline with time – there was no significant difference in use of skills over seven years.

As part of the 2011 report, the faculty studied 300 Effective Organizations class participants and found that they were applying the knowledge, skill and motivation they gained from the class, reporting stronger boards and organizational plans, better teamwork, more sustainable financial resources, better connections with the community, and more collaboration with other organizations. They reported they implemented new skills in organizations, joined new organizations, took on new leadership roles, and helped to initiate new project and activities.

Looking to late outcomes, the survey asked people about how the actions of class graduates mattered in their community. More than 900 of 1,226 comments on an open-ended question were about community capacity, with many comments noting that they thought the community now had a critical mass of leaders. Others noted the infusion of new blood in leadership circles and the growing number of volunteers in general and for leadership positions.

The 2011 Evaluation reported that participants' volunteer hours jumped from 14 per month to 33 per month.

Importance of the Project

In the 2012 Evaluation Report, there was strong agreement that the class projects made a difference in the physical character of the community.

Right: Leadership class members from 2008 and other volunteers come together to plant a bioswale in Port Orford.



NANCY SCHWICKWRATH

2012 Evaluation Report

The work of the evaluation group through 2011 focused on strengthening understanding of outcomes with some attention to impacts on vitality. Working with a large data set of 1,125 past graduates, the 2011 findings confirmed that the program was developing effective community leaders who were using their leadership skills at home, with friends, at work and in volunteer work. Graduates reported they used their new skills to listen more carefully, resolve conflicts, run meetings, communicate and make decisions. Participants reported being more engaged in civic life and involved in more programs and projects in the community that should improve community vitality. Participants were almost unanimous that their community had more capacity now than before, and for many respondents this capacity was synonymous with vitality.

Concerning actual impacts, there was strong agreement that the class projects made a difference in

the physical character of the community. Unfortunately, two in-depth case studies of how the Institute investments linked to actual changes in indicators of vitality were delayed and not completed in 2011.

Overall, this report affirmed that the Ford Vitality Model is working, but more time is needed for the early investments to actually make a difference in vitality indicators.

The report also reviewed suggestions made by graduates about future Institute support. Among these were: short-format, advanced topics classes; training for individuals in elected or appointed offices; and periodic emails with motivational lessons about leadership, organizational management or collaboration. Funding for projects that developed from the leadership program was desired as was increasing the diversity of class participants. The Foundation also could help convene community members to collaborate on projects as well as help with strategic planning and visioning. These findings echoed

comments made earlier to which the Institute was already responding with its new “Pathways” program.

The right investments?

While the OSU evaluation examines whether the investments are working, it does not test whether or not they are the right investments, or the right mix of investments. The Institute expended somewhat more than 70% of its funds on classes, and of those funds about 70% was dedicated to leadership classes. Thus, about 50% of all Institute resources are spent on leadership training.

The evaluations may indicate that these classes are achieving their purpose, but they don’t answer the question of whether the purpose could be achieved even more effectively a different way, or by a different distribution of funds.

Ultimately, there is much more evaluative work to do to determine if this is the best model for achieving the same results. This type of evaluation would benefit greatly from comparison with other programs

that are doing things in a different way, such as the Blandin Foundation program in Minnesota and the Sherwood Trust program in Washington.

Kellogg Report on Leadership Program issues

Another way to assess the Institute programs was to look at them through the lens of a 2003 study of community leadership programs by the Kellogg Foundation titled “Better than Bake Sales.”

The study reports that leadership training is a powerful tool and gets results rather uniformly despite differences in class content and delivery. Generally, however, Kellogg found programs suffer from one or more of six maladies:

1. Uncertain purpose and theory
2. Fragile revenue stream
3. Limited expertise in design
4. Limited dosage and coverage
5. Lack of follow-up and sustainability
6. Limited evaluation and learning

This history of the Institute shows that Institute programs do not suffer any of the maladies to a major degree. The Institute has a very certain purpose and theory; a robust revenue stream; and a highly qualified, professional and academic designers both for original program formation and subsequent adjustment. The Institute provides a heavy and diverse dosage of programs; a broad coverage to all communities and many people within

communities; and a strong evaluation and learning program.

The single clear challenge for the Institute is the fifth malady: follow-up and sustainability. This challenge, however, is being addressed through the Institute’s new Pathways program as well as through continued classes, including a new series of Advanced Leadership Training classes, and the assistance grant and resources programs.

The yearly evaluations by OSU faculty bode well for more understanding of the impacts of this grand rural experiment that recognizes the wisdom of communities.



The town of Joseph has capitalized on cultural tourism. Bronze foundries in the area produce artistic statues sold around the world and in local galleries.

TRAVELOREGON.COM

Acknowledgments

The growth and success of the Institute represents the ideas, energy and hard work of many. I wish to first thank the board of The Ford Family Foundation, particularly Ron Parker, chair; Charlie Walker, a former member who served as Kenneth Ford's spokesman on development of the Institute, and John Sweet and Karla Chambers, who served on the Institute's advisory committee.

I also offer a hearty thank-you to Foundation President Norm Smith, who served as the liaison between the Institute and the board. On key occasions Norm reminded the board that the Institute was a long-term investment and that we were following Kenneth Ford's intent.

I wish to offer a similar hearty thank-you to the many Foundation staff members who were my colleagues over the years; our weekly staff discussions were stimulating and productive. Particular thanks go to Yvette Rhodes who, since 2002, has implemented the many Institute programs with precision and grace, and to Alicia Flory who joined the Institute more recently, and continues to keep that tradition.

And the Institute is in good hands with Joyce Akse taking on the role of director. I thank her for her ideas, energy and style when she served as my associate director.

The Institute would not be what it is today without its contractors. Rural Development Initiatives has

been an effective partner in the development and delivery of classes and conferences, and the Non-profit Association of Oregon and Human Systems deserve similar credit for their roles in designing and presenting specific classes.

Faculty and staff of Oregon State University have played a major role in developing the Institute's indicators and community information system, as well as guiding a major developmental evaluation program.

I offer my personal thank-you to Cathie Dunlop, who initiated the Institute's evaluation program in the early years, and to Nora Vitz Harrison, who designed Foundation and Institute publications (particularly *Community Vitality* and this report) that I am proud to share.

In closing, I thank Kenneth Ford and the Ford family for underwriting the cost of what is almost certainly the largest community capacity-building program in the nation. Such an investment speaks highly of their trust in the work of the Institute, but more importantly their trust in the ability of rural communities to define and achieve their own vision of vitality.



About the Author

Tom Gallagher served as the second director of the Ford Institute for Community Building from 2003 through his retirement in 2011. Previously, he was the leadership development specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service, a senior scientist with the Western Rural Development Center and a professor of public administration (natural resources) with the University of Alaska system.

He is a Kellogg National Leadership Fellow and the founder of the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

Gallagher has published more than a dozen scholarly papers and scores of reports and studies, primarily concerning cross-cultural aspects of natural resource management and public administration.

He earned a bachelor of landscape architecture from the University of Oregon, and a master's degree and Ph.D. in natural resource management at the University of Michigan.

Since retiring from the Institute, he remains active as an adviser to Philanthropy Northwest. He lives with his wife of 45 years, Cheryl, on their family farm near Independence, Oregon.



Yvette Rhodes



Alicia Flory



Joyce Akse



Ford Institute FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

About the Ford Institute for Community Building

Rural vitality starts with people who work together to develop and achieve a common vision for their community. Numerous outside forces influence rural communities but the one variable within the community's control is their own capacity to be adaptive. The Ford Institute is dedicated to empowering the citizens and the organizations in the community that must collaborate for the community to be vital in a changing world.

1600 NW Stewart Parkway
Roseburg, OR 97471-1957
(541) 957-5574

www.tfff.org

The Wisdom of Communities: How the Ford Institute helps
rural people achieve their own vision of vitality

Copyright © 2013. Ford Institute for Community Building.
All rights reserved. Published by The Ford Family Foundation.
April 2013

The views expressed by the author are not necessarily the views of the Foundation.

This publication is printed on paper which is
50% total recycled content, 25% post-consumer waste content.

Designed by Nora Vitz Harrison
Three60 Communications, www.Three60Com.com
Cover photo of Independence, Oregon: Doug Kerr



MISSION

Successful citizens and
vital rural communities

CORE VALUES

Integrity: Promoting and
acknowledging principled behavior

Stewardship: Responsibility to
give back and accountability for
resources and results

Respect: Valuing all individuals

Independence: Encouraging
self-reliance and initiative

Community: Working together
for positive change