



Final Report:
'Vital Conversations' on Rural Philanthropy in Nova Scotia
The Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia (RCF)



VitalConversation



RURAL COMMUNITIES
FOUNDATION
of NOVA SCOTIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia (RCF) celebrated Canada's 150th Anniversary by hosting a series of conversations with Nova Scotians about rural philanthropy. These conversations were made possible with financial support from the Community Foundations of Canada's Vital Conversations initiative. This report summarizes what we heard in these 'vital conversations', and what we learned from them.

The conversations happened on two levels:

Local: Hosting four individual regional conversations in rural Nova Scotia communities;

Provincial: Bringing together leaders in rural philanthropy and the non-profit sector in Nova Scotia for a roundtable conversation

The aim of these vital conversations was threefold:

1. To examine the state and nature of rural philanthropic activity in rural communities across Nova Scotia
2. To examine the role RCF and other community organizations can play in community development in rural areas to support revitalization and sustainability
3. To consider strategies relative to fund development and endowment building that increase awareness of RCF in rural communities, and ultimately its potential to sustainably influence and support rural revitalization

This work was also intended to provide the basis for participating in a wider national conversation about philanthropy in rural Canada.



BACKGROUND: HOW WE GOT HERE

With the second biggest landmass of any country, and one of the most urbanized populations in the world, Canada faces huge economic, environmental, demographic, and social issues that are rural in nature. These include, but are not limited to, natural resource depletion, climate change, demographic shifts and Indigenous title.

In 2004, Foundation for Rural Living, with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation brought together twenty-eight philanthropists and leading experts from a range of organizations and institutions for a round table discussion, with the aim to “improve understanding and raise awareness, (and) stimulate investment toward rural concerns...”. Discussion centered on existing initiatives to advance rural philanthropy. It was based on the assumption that, While philanthropy alone will never adequately address these issues, it had the potential to play a key role in all of them.

The 2004 Roundtable report summarized outcomes within two categories: (1) Key Plenary themes, including clarification of the meaning of rural, such that it is clearly understood by both rural and urban funding sources; funding that reflects rural realities; enabling approaches that acknowledge and utilize local resources; addressing rural capacity; and, having rural non-profits foster a culture of philanthropy. (2) Strategies for Change, including a range of specific measures such as developing a rural funders affinity group, challenging rural philanthropy through strategic grant making, and building a common case for Rural through mapping and research.

In 2016 RCF board members initiated conversations about rural philanthropy with other community foundations, and national-level foundations. The report of this Rural Philanthropy Roundtable provided important background for this discussion. Despite the passing of many years since this report was issued, its essence seemed instructive as RCF moved forward to act on the challenge of rural philanthropy

Initially, because RCF deliberations pointed to the need for a national forum on rural philanthropy, two Board members attended the CFC Conference in Ottawa in May 2017, where had informal conversations about rural philanthropy with representatives of other rural community foundations. Subsequently, the Board decided that the place to start was with rural communities in Nova Scotia- to engage local citizens and rural organizations in dialogue on philanthropy, what philanthropy meant to them, and what it could mean; and how RCF might meaningfully engage communities in its work. It was RCF’s belief that these perspectives could help us understand our own role and a way of



working that was a good fit with the needs of communities, as articulated by many of their representatives.

Subsequently within RCF an ad hoc working group (listed in Appendix 4) was formed to explore how to move the project forward. The working group did an initial scan of research, and had further discussions with rural researchers and CFC staff.

Subsequently, RCF applied for, and received, a CFC Vital Conversations grant to host a series of conversations about rural philanthropy. The following questions about rural philanthropy guided the vital conversations:

- What is the difference between rural and urban philanthropy?
- What is the role of philanthropy for rural transformation?
- How do we build endowments in a rural context?
- What are the most effective approaches to grantmaking specific to rural communities?
- What strategies are working now in rural philanthropy, and how can they be shared?

THE CONVERSATIONS: OUR METHODS & APPROACH

Our goal was to gather as many observations and insights about rural philanthropy as we could, relating not only to Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, but also to the work of community foundations in general. To achieve this goal in a relatively short time, we asked our Board members to host conversations with people from their communities who brought a wide range of perspectives. As a result, the conversations included individuals with experience with non-profits, charitable fundraising, learning institutions, local philanthropic initiatives, social enterprise, and rural development. Likewise, in terms of the format and setting of the conversations, rather than set up a series of similar focus groups, we encouraged them to hold the conversations in various informal settings, and with different groups of different sizes: a one-on-one meeting in an office, a group discussion over a dinner, or with two or three people getting together for a coffee.

In all, there were five conversations: four on the local level and one on the provincial level. The local conversations took place in the Strait region, Annapolis Royal, Digby and Kentville. The Provincial level meeting took place at the Membertou First Nation, in



conjunction with the Nova Scotia Community Sector Council's *Many Hands, Many Voices* conference.

Each conversation started by posing the same set of questions as a general guide for the discussion:

- What is unique about rural philanthropy, and how does it differ from urban philanthropy?
- What are the fundraising barriers faced by organizations engaged in rural philanthropy?
- What kinds of philanthropic grantmaking can make the greatest impact in rural communities?
- What is the role of rural philanthropy in rural development?

These questions provided a common framework for the conversations. At the same time, each conversation had its own emphasis and perspectives on rural philanthropy.

THE CONVERSATIONS: WHAT WE HEARD

Although the five conversations were different in terms of their settings and perspectives of the participants, several common themes emerged. These roughly fell under five headings:

- philanthropy and rural Nova Scotia
- endowment building
- fund development
- grantmaking
- philanthropy and rural development

The main insights, observations and suggestions that emerged from the conversations sorted under these five headings. Other valuable points were made in addition to these, and the reader is encouraged to read the reports of all the conversations in Appendices 1 and 2, to appreciate the richness and thoughtfulness of the discussions.



Philanthropy and Rural Nova Scotia

Each of the conversations touched on the overarching theme of philanthropy and rural communities in Nova Scotia. The one recurring issue they all identified was *lack of awareness*. Rural Nova Scotians are not generally aware of RCF, community foundations or philanthropy in general, and how it relates to their communities. This lack of awareness is even more striking, given that rural communities are constantly engaged in philanthropic activities at the most local level, whether it be fundraising for a child in need of medical care, or Christmas Daddies, or Chase the Ace, or re-building a family's house that has burned down.

The problem is clearly not that rural Nova Scotians are not generous and philanthropic—quite the contrary. It is rather that rural Nova Scotians are not aware of the ways that community foundations can support their work they are doing to create the future they want.

In several of the conversations, participants offered strategies for addressing the gap in awareness.

Some suggested developing more ***focused communications strategies***:

- RCF needs to have and promote a clearer statement of what it does, whom it serves and what it stands for;
- RCF needs to create more direct ways to tell its stories of the successes. These stories should highlight how RCF and other philanthropic grantmakers have supported rural development in Nova Scotia.

Another suggested strategy related to ***building effective partnerships and collaborations at the local level***. This could be done by:

- working with other rural networks and coalitions
- assisting grantees to find ways to do effective storytelling about their successes at the local level
- creating a greater RCF presence across the province through community partnerships with municipalities, band councils, and local community organizations
- working with existing community funds to raise awareness about how philanthropy can support local organizations



- involving local grantee organizations in fund development, giving a 'local face' to the RCF's work

Endowment Building

Endowment building is the cornerstone of every community foundation, and it was discussed in all the conversations. Two key themes emerged:

- 1) ***building relationships with donors over the long term***, and
- 2) ***donor confidence***: potential donors to the endowment must be sure that the community foundation is reliable, accountable and has a solid track record.

Some additional conversations also identified another factor, one that may be more specific to the rural Nova Scotian context: the more local and specific the philanthropic work, the more a donor will be likely to relate to it and contribute to endowment building. Or, conversely, the more geographically generalized and abstract the community foundation's mandate is, the less likely it will resonate with major donors in localized rural areas. Rural Nova Scotians identify with the specific places where they live and work, whether it is a town, village, county or region. In addition, these places are often culturally defined. They include communities and regions with populations that identify themselves as Mi'kmaq, Acadian, African Nova Scotian, or of German or Scottish descent. When asked about where they are from most people will respond with a particular place name or region, rather than just 'rural Nova Scotia'. Such allegiance to place and locality is likely to be true as well for prospective donors.

Participants offered a number of strategies to address this barrier by creating a more 'local face' for RCF. These included:

- developing collaborative funding approaches, with municipalities, bands councils and other local sources of funds
- enlisting grantee organizations as local 'ambassadors' of the community foundation
- having board members foster one-on-one relationships with potential donors in their own communities
- working with estate planners at the local level

One aspect of endowment building that may be uniquely rural is the potential of receiving gifts of parcels of land. This came out strongly in the Kentville conversation. There is currently a major intergenerational transfer of land in Nova Scotia, which is the only province where the vast majority of woodlots are in private rather than Crown

ownership. Land can be used as an investment that generates ongoing funds for grantmaking in the same way as a financial endowment, converting property assets to financial assets through rents, forestry operations, or other uses. In addition, using land as a fund-generating asset opens up further possibilities for rural innovation. These might include:

- developing new housing models on donated land
- attracting professionals with temporary rent-free housing;
- holding a home in trust for the local physician, or to attract young people with attractive skills to return to their home base;
- re-purposing buildings to be used for various community-based services and organizations;
- creating demonstration projects to promote innovative small-scale forestry practices.

Fund Development

Fund development differs from endowment building in that a community foundation is seeking to bring in financial donations for a specific fund or grant program, as distinct from monies for an invested endowment. These can include ‘flow-through’ grant programs focused on particular goals and impacts, and specific populations. Fund development may therefore require approaches to potential donors that differ from those used in endowment building.

Participants in the conversations touched on fund development frequently. As with endowment building, they said that fund development might be most successful when it is most specific. In describing a particular fund, there is a better chance for success if the fund has a tangible and specific goal. For example, rather than just having a fund that supports environmental work in general in rural communities, it might be more specifically designed to support innovation in woodlot management. This issue can also be addressed by creating geographically defined funds. The Community Foundation of Nova Scotia has had notable success with the development of local community funds across rural Nova Scotia.

One barrier to fund development mentioned was that other potential donors that are foundations and philanthropic bodies are often reluctant to make a donation that will then be re-granted as part of a grants program. Since they are themselves primarily direct grantmakers, they will require a clear rationale for donating to another grantmaker that would be in a sense between them and the grantee. One such rationale might be that a community foundation like RCF has knowledge of, and relationships with, small local community organizations that might never be on the radar screen of a



large foundation. And, it is exactly these kinds of organizations that can make a big difference in our rural communities.

Some possible approaches to fund development that might address these issues were suggested in the conversations. These included:

- launching an 'Invest Local' campaign similar to 'Buy Local'
- finding innovative ways to mobilize local wealth for local philanthropy
- having an active and effective fund development committee with a well laid out long-term strategy
- developing 'flow-through' grants programs that target donors with interests in specific population groups and issues.

Grantmaking:

Several of the groups identified grantmaking as an area where RCF can focus on the specific needs and aspirations of Nova Scotia's rural communities. In the Digby conversation, it was pointed out that community foundations have the ability to offer grant programs in ways that government grant programs cannot. For example, community foundations can offer grant programs

- that are more flexible than government grants, allowing for more adaptability and opportunities for organizational learning by grantee organizations
- that have common sense reporting and accountability requirements, with an emphasis on who benefitted and how, rather than on 'bean counting'
- that offer flexible small grants for rural NS non-profit organizations, i.e. they require less 'padding' than restrictive government funding
- that are nimble and responsive enabling rural non-profits to address short-term and emergency issues
- that support learning by covering costs for workshops, conferences or providing resource people.
- that support ancillary services such as childcare, food, energy and transportation for clients, since existing grants often do not allow for this kind of expense.

In several of the conversations participants encouraged RCF to maximize its ability to offer flexible and responsive grant programs.



Philanthropy and Rural Development

In several of the conversations participants identified ways in which community foundations can relate to rural development by responding to issues that are uniquely rural. For example, on the most obvious level, distance is one feature that sets rural communities apart from urban communities. Transportation is therefore a recurring issue. The difficulty of simply accessing services and programs of all kinds, including health, education, justice and employment services, is a barrier for many rural Nova Scotians. A small grant program to rural non-profits to offset this barrier would improve access to range of programs and services that foster rural development.

Another aspect of rural development is the importance of natural resources to social, economic and environmental life of the community. Community foundations like the RCF can develop funds that are specifically attuned to natural resource stewardship and development.

Rural philanthropy can also connect to rural development by focusing on impacts upon specific populations. For example, youth out-migration was mentioned several times as a critical issue facing rural Nova Scotia. A grant program focused on engaging youth in rural towns could help to address this issue. Likewise, almost all Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia are rural. For RCF this means not only ensuring that Mi'kmaq community organizations have full access to all its grant programs but also developing innovative approaches to Indigenous philanthropy by partnering with the emerging philanthropic work being led by the Ulnooweg Learning Centre. Common to these and other examples of focused grantmaking is that they are developed in response to the priorities that are identified by the communities themselves, and are based on a commitment to listening to communities.

In the end, rural development is about supporting citizens in rural communities in creating the future they want to see. Community foundations can support this process through grant programs that invest in local priority issues and convening, planning and visioning at the community level.

Finally, in some of the conversations there was a clear sense that, in order for philanthropy to effectively support rural development, it must see itself as part of a continuum of financial support for rural economies that includes government funding programs, local fundraising, and social finance investment. Only if all these funders and investors are working together toward commonly shared needs and impacts will there be adequate support for transformation of rural Nova Scotia. This means RCF working in



close collaboration with organizations, municipalities, bands, agencies, businesses and institutions that are providing these kinds of financial support. It also means connecting with new and emerging forms of philanthropy, including:

- crowd funding
- local initiatives like 100 Women Who Care
- innovative micro-grants, like those provided by the Awesome Foundation
- web-based philanthropy, like the Aviva Foundation

THE CONVERSATIONS: WHAT WE LEARNED

Community foundations like RCF need to understand the aspirations of the communities they serve in order to be responsive to them. CFC's Vital Conversations program, has given RCF an opportunity to listen and reflect on the nature of rural philanthropy from the perspective of rural Nova Scotians.

It is important to note here that the conversations did *not* tell us that rural philanthropy is fundamentally different from urban philanthropy. Many of the observations and ideas that emerged will be equally familiar to what we know people who work in community foundations that serve cities. There were however comments by the participants that pointed towards aspects of RCF's work that are, and should be, uniquely rural.

Insights about rural philanthropy were of two kinds. The first was about ***how to look at endowment and fund development in a rural context***. The participants offered two perspectives about this aspect of our work:

1. Endowment Building: Perhaps the most important of these was the idea that, in order to build endowments and funds that serve rural communities, RCF must find ways to show that the community foundation is place-based; that is, to make the connection to local community-based non-profits an explicit part of how we present ourselves to prospective donors. Rurality is essentially about place, and, to be effective, rural philanthropy should follow suit. For RCF, this means talking about the particular communities we have helped, as opposed to "rural Nova Scotia" in general.

Another very promising suggestion for endowment development was about building our capacity to receive donations of land and property and converting them into financial assets that can then be a source for grant programs.

2. Grantmaking: The conversations also had some important suggestions about how rural philanthropy can do grantmaking that is uniquely rural in nature. They talked about how we can design and deliver grants in a way that is most useful for rural Nova Scotia. In the view of some participants, rural community foundations have the ability to create grant programs that address issues that are specifically rural, such as transportation, natural resources and environmental stewardship.

The Path Forward for RCF

As well as learning about the nature and potential of rural philanthropy, we also gained some important lessons about how RCF can proceed.

Collaboration: A general finding and message from this study is that rural philanthropy must be located within a broader continuum of funding and investment programs that support local rural development. The most pressing issues that rural communities face- youth outmigration, depletion of natural resources, climate change, reduction of services, access to health care, among others- are too overwhelming to be addressed by philanthropy alone. However, working in conjunction with a diversity of other organizations and agencies (e.g. municipal governments, not for profits), rural philanthropy can find that particular place where its intervention will have the most impact. Discovering these ‘acupuncture points’ will therefore be an essential element in our work of maximizing the impact and sustainability of rural giving and philanthropy.

As RCF moves forward we see the benefit and potential of having undertaken this study:

- 1) The project has positioned us to actively participate in a national conversation on rural philanthropy, in partnership with CFC, researchers and other community foundations that serve rural communities across Canada.
- 2) Based on what we learned from the conversations, RCF will review and renew its communications, fund development and engagement strategies, with a view to creating a more ‘local face’. In the short-term, our communications strategy is perhaps the most critical of these, since it was clear in all the conversations that many of the participants did not know about RCF or our work, even though these were the kinds of people we would have thought most likely to have heard of us. Raising our profile clearly must become a top priority.



The project has helped us gain insight into local knowledge, values and ways of working when it comes to giving and philanthropy. It informs the role RCF can play at a very local level in leveraging wealth to address rural issues. These conversations have the potential to enhance our capacity to engage meaningfully with the communities that we serve. Using the methodology developed for these conversations, RCF is now able to see a way to engage with local organizations in an ongoing manner. Essentially, this means asking Board members to host informal conversations with people from local organizations and agencies in their communities in order to listen to their ideas and feedback about how we can best support the best non-profit work in rural Nova Scotia. We can also do this on the provincial level, working with our counterparts in networks, organizations, councils, and especially the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia, the Ulnooweg Financial Education Centre and our sister organization, the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia.



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APPENDIX 1

REPORTS ON THE LOCAL CONVERSATIONS

A. STRAIT REGION

Report to Board of RCFNS re some Thinking about Rural Philanthropy

Following is a brief account of some key points raised during a dinner-time discussion on June 2 with three individuals who have experience with circumstances relating to rural philanthropy in NE Nova Scotia. Maureen Coady and Teresa MacNeil convened the meeting, prepared this report, and are willing to report more fully to the Board's next meeting, if the Board so wishes.

Discussion took place against a background of information about what has been done, is being done, and needs to be done to increase the granting ability of the RCF. It (discussion) attended to the experience of the participants both with respect to Rural and to fund-raising. There was conversation about the relative value and success of fund-raising in localized situations where the contributors participate in “chance” opportunities that promise some return for themselves while contributing to a recognizable charitable or service undertaking (e.g., as is usually the case with tickets, bingo, Chase the Ace); and, to straightforward contributions in support of a specific cause, or to endowment funds where the direct beneficiary is not immediately known to the donor. It was clear that support is most likely when the cause is well understood locally. People want to support something local; if that something is not defined, then what are they going to support?

Endowment Building is the more difficult of the various approaches to fund development, due mainly to the lack of clarity about the benefits that will be derived from the contributed funds. Thus follows the importance of having the Foundation recognized as a valid, important, reliable source of funding for particular and significant outcomes for the donor. The work of the RCF is primarily, although not solely, dependent on building its Endowment Fund. It is likely that if people cannot see where their money is going, how it is being managed, or know immediately what it is going to contribute, they are less likely to respond to our requests to support the endowment. This imperative requires the RCF to ensure that its purpose and procedures are well understood and appreciated by a wide public. The question then becomes one of whether RCF has sufficient “brand recognition” to achieve its required investment of funds. How can this be tested?

Perhaps the most salient point of the discussion was not mentioned directly, but was implied. It is the fundamental point that there is no common understanding of implications associated with the term “Rural”. Even when we looked at communities in Cape Breton we saw great differences among them. In some cases communities are entirely emptied of youth, while in others there are many new, young families. Needless to say, their respective rural concerns differ yet there are recognizable cross cutting concerns. Then there is the point that rural communities located near urban centres differ considerably in terms of access to amenities from those more remotely located. Each would require different policy considerations (e.g., with respect to health, education, social services). While these are obvious variations, they bear the same “rural” label. There was agreement that there is not a trace in the provincial government right now for rural. What is needed is to have Nova Scotia’s rural scene described in a way that acknowledges these variations and cross cutting issues. Rural can then be accurately and popularly understood, allowing financial appeals to rural to be made in very specific, locally meaningful ways.

Our Take-Away

Perhaps the way for RCF to proceed is to tackle its circumstances with respect to fund development in the following order:

- (1) Achieve confidence that the Foundation is widely recognized in the province for what it is and what it does.

This will likely require more than print/website communication measures. While these are necessary, it is also important to relate to the public in more direct, local ways to gradually build awareness of what the Foundation does and how it is funded. This requires a systematic building of relations throughout the province. It can be done by Board Members when organized in a way that does not call for inordinate amounts of time and travel.

- (2) Assist the nascent Rural Coalition to do what is required to develop a reliable description of what we are calling “Rural” in Nova Scotia, along with a popular understanding of the issues confronting “rural” in its various, local forms.

- (2) Pursue ways of building rural philanthropy within the context of (1) and (2) above by having an active Fund Development Committee, chaired by a Board member, responsible for implementing

B. ANNAPOLIS ROYAL

MEETING NOTES

Conversation on Rural Philanthropy

Oct. 18th, 2017, Annapolis Royal

SUMMARY

These notes are a summary of a conversation about rural philanthropy between Arthur Bull and Jean Ward of the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia (RCF) with Jane Nicholson and Adele MacDonald of the Annapolis Investment in Royal Opportunity (AIRO) on October 18th, 2017 in the AIRO boardroom at the former Annapolis Royal train station. This conversation was part of the RCF's Vital Conversations project about rural philanthropy. The conversations began with a series of questions on rural philanthropy. These questions were answered by focusing on AIRO's work, as an example of innovation in rural philanthropy.

BACKGROUND

Arthur gave a brief description of RCF's history and work. He also outlined the Rural Philanthropy Project, which consists of conversations at local, provincial and national levels regarding the role and potential of philanthropy in rural communities.

Jane and Adele gave an overview of AIRO, including that AIRO

- was founded in July 2016
- has a mission to stimulate entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County through research, funding and collaborative action.
- Has vision of making Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County the place of choice to work, live, play, and thrive in Nova Scotia.
- is set up as a private company, and does not have a board
- provides loans and grants to local businesses
- is about rural development based on local assets, especially remote working and affordable real estate
- is non-bureaucratic, and locally based in all its work

AIRO'S WORK

Jane and Adele described AIRO's work to date:

- Loans to small businesses
 - between \$5,000- \$10,000 to small businesses
 - for new businesses and expanding existing businesses
 - They 23 have been approached by 55 businesses, have funded 23, directly



supporting more than 40 jobs

- Small grants
- Community engagement
 - AIRO produced *Local Logic*
 - Based on interviews with 33 local residents, representing a cross section of community
 - Analysis of local issues and assets
 - A collective vision for sustainable growth, including attraction of new people and business opportunities
 - Recommendations for the future, including internet access, marketing campaigns and bringing youth back
- Collaborations (municipality, ACOA, The Awesome Foundation)

AIRO's PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

Jane and Adele described AIRO's approach and philosophy of community development:

- Non bureaucratic nimble
- Accountable base on common sense and local knowledge
- Combined different development models-business investment, philanthropy social enterprise- into a single, locally-based approach
- Locally driven, responsive listening to local visions an aspirations

The AIRO approach requires a person in the community who

- 1) has the money to finance it
- 2) has the passion for the community
- 3) is fed up with gong to meetings and endless talk about rural community development etc.

NEXT STEPS

There was a discussion about what role RCF could play in supporting this kind of initiative. One possibility is that, as a way of sharing AIRO's approach. RCF's board might be able to facilitate this process. Arthur and Jean agreed to bring this suggestion the RCF at the next meeting.

In addition, the results of this conversation will be included in the report in to RCF's Vital Conversations Project on Rural Philanthropy, so that the AIRO model

C. DIGBY

NOTES

From Conversation between Rhonda Fraser of Juniper House and Arthur Bull and Jean Ward of RCFNS

At Juniper House office in Digby on December 6, 2017

Rhonda gave us a sense of her working background. She is currently on staff with Juniper House a Transition House, working with rural women who are experiencing violence. In addition she brings both an executive director and a frontline worker perspective to this discussion.

Philanthropy and rural non-profits

Rhonda pointed out that philanthropic funding from community foundations has the ability to provide funding support in ways that are different from government grantmakers. This includes:

- *Common sense accountability requirements*, as opposed to detailed 'bean counting'. Community foundations can emphasize narrative about how people benefitted, instead of unnecessarily accounting.
- *Flexibility*, in terms of outcomes. Other grants often make it hard to learn from projects, because they lack flexibility. If something is not working it is often difficult to tell the funder and adopt another approach. Community foundations have the ability to offer this kind of flexibility, which allows for more learning from projects.
- Flexible *small grants* can have as much impact as larger grants, because their budgets do not need to be 'padded'. In rural Nova Scotia, a grant of \$5K to \$10K can have a major impact
- Flexibility in terms of approaches to research, i.e. you can design a project as a learning opportunity and hire someone with participatory research skills that involve community members as subjects, rather than objects

Building an endowment for rural community foundations

Rhonda offered a number of suggestions for endowment building.



- Endowment-building will come from long term relationships with potential donors, especially at the community or regional level
- Grantees could be 'ambassadors' fro RCF at the local community level, as part of their grant agreement
- A clear short mission statement on outreach materials could be sent to grantees
- Connecting to estate planners at the community level
- An '*Invest Local*' campaign, along the same lines as '*Buy Local*'.

What kind of grantmaking would be most effective for RCF to offer?

Rhonda identified some kinds of grant programs that would benefit the kinds of non-profits she has worked with.

- *Transportation*- Distance is one of the factors that defines rural communities, and transportation to and from services is an on going challenge for non-profits, especially since many grants do not allow it as an eligible cost.
- *Emergency funds for clients*- including childcare, food and heating.
- *Short-Term* mini-grants with a quick turn around that could support immediate needs such as attending conferences and other learning opportunities, bringing in a resource person or facilitator.

D. ANNAPOLIS VALLEY

Themes Emerging from Conversations on Rural Philanthropy

Participants- Representatives from:

- Rural Communities Foundation of NS
- NSCC
- Kentville Fund
- Flower Cart and Common Good Solutions
- Grapevine and Hardware Gallery
- Valley Hospice Foundation
- Valley Regional Hospital
- L'Arche
- Public Health

Questions #1- What are the key issues/opportunities (social, economic, demographic etc) in our area (Kings County)? This question was asked to contextualize the conversation...

- Post-secondary opportunities in Kings County reverse the traditional “out migration”- people come to study and stay
- Kings County focused on youth engagement and it now has two young councilors - their message- stop guilting young people into staying...let them go and they will return(if there is something to return to)
- Use technology to engage with young people
- Why do people move to rural areas? Quality of life BUT they need hubs, good coffee shops, high speed internet, recreation options
- Other people will locate to rural areas if there are good medical services, housing, transportation, employment opportunities
- Poverty Coalition put forward a resolution that was accepted by the Union of NS Municipalities to discuss with the province issues that are different in rural areas than in urban and that result in, or contribute to, poverty
- Engage Nova Scotia is looking at highlighting the quality of life in rural Nova Scotia- the “have not” conversations are becoming passé
- We need to ask young people for solutions
- Rural organizations need to develop skills- fundraising, crafting the story, learning to ask for help
- There is a lot of competition for the \$\$ and older people are inundated with mail requests for contributions. Older people still find mail requests attractive and they have disposable income
- There is a huge difference between generations- young people both buy online and make decisions based on social impact
- It is hard to compete with national fundraising departments BUT rural folks are not always impressed with urban strategies (why are you spending money on that?)
- In rural areas you build relationships with your donors and your donors are your neighbors
- The idea of buying local needs to be embedded into the way that everyone makes their purchases
- CEDIF is a model that has allowed rural people to divert financial assets to local businesses that might have otherwise left NS
- The demographics of boards needs to change- who is at the table is important
- Social media is a double-edged sword- people “share” a story and think they have done something- how many people actually donate or volunteer?
- With the decline of the church who is picking up the slack? How is that informal giving happening now? Schools!



What strategies support rural philanthropy? This question was designed to focus on promising practices

- Effective partnerships
- Sometimes partnerships result in different ways of doing things including fundraising
- Students at Acadia have moved from supporting national Shinerama to supporting local L'Arche homes
- Having more diversity on boards
- Focus on the End of Fundraising (Social Enterprises). Creative Social Enterprises employ local people and buy local products to meet social needs. For example, the change of the school lunch program, on the South Shore.
- We need to acknowledge when things are broken- older models of fundraising need to be re-examined
- We need to lobby government- the more organizations do the less government has to do...
- Public discourse shapes the political agenda- we need to learn to shift the public discourse
- This problem is fueled by the 4-year election cycle
- Donations of houses and land is something that rural organizations should take advantage of. They could be supporting the development of new housing models on donated land or attracting professionals with temporary rent-free housing. This has happened in communities that has held a home in trust for the local physician. Annapolis County has bought a home that is to be used to entice young people with attractive skills to return to their home base.
- Re-purposing buildings is seen a very attractive option by both young and old people
- Funding opportunities that require voting (Aviva for example) put rural areas on a level playing field with urban areas
- We need to focus on sustainability and move away from the charity model- donations of land allow us to do this....
- Recognize that the donation of land and houses is more than the value of those things
- Getting together with other people to raise \$ to make an impact on the community(the Physicians Philanthropy Fund and 100 Men Who Give A Damn)
- Young people can make pitches to places like the Awesome Foundation- they then become both the donors and the people who create the messages

Barriers to Rural Philanthropy- To look at what we need to change or work around...

- Donor fatigue
- Government doesn't always understand what the sector is about
- Skills need to be refined
- You need to create a brand so your cause stands out
- In rural areas we survive on relationships and while you respond to the plight of the community or neighbors you may not respond to a standard campaign
- Demographics on boards need to change
- Value Village is the wrong model- it comes from outside and drops on the community
- Social enterprise and innovation is the direction we need to move
- Those people who used to do the heavy lifting (the Lions, Churches, The Knights of Columbus) are fading away
- We haven't been sharing the stories of "impact" - we need to talk about changed lives
- A lot of the good that happens in rural areas is hidden- we try not to stigmatize those who are receiving help because they are family and neighbors.
- Education and general economic challenges affect rural philanthropy
- We need to be talking about rural issues over coffee or Scotch not just at board tables
- Create messages that are relatable and attractive to rural people
- People with money don't know about the out of the box options or even how to have the greatest impact on their own community
- Investment companies have nothing to gain by supporting local initiatives
- Lawyers are the better bet for providing potential donors with information about local options
- What about organizations that have \$\$- where are they investing- what if they could invest in social impact bonds or something that would benefit from the community rather than sending their \$ to Bay Street?
- Micro-finance is another option that could be explored in a rural areas. Decisions about loans from banks are being made outside the rural area....



What kinds of projects would you not want to see supported by matching funds?

- Large organizations
- Anything that markets unhealthy lifestyles
- Projects that are outside the rural areas
- Organizations that have not got support from other funders
- Organizations that can already access funds from other sources
- Organizations that have a long history
- Organizations that do not have the capacity to access federal funds
- Organizations that are not using social impact goals
- Initiatives that use a charity model- no freezers for the Food Bank but funds could go to a community garden

Fund programs where you are digging the problem out by the roots



VitalConversation



APPENDIX 2

REPORT FROM THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL CONVERSATION HELD AT MEMBERTOU FIRST NATION

Report from "Vital Conversation" at Community Sector Council
Conference
October 2, 2017

RCFNS Directors Present: Arthur Bull, Brenda Wallace-Allen, Chris Atwood, Ben Haighway, Maureen Coady (recorder), Jayne Hunter (resource to Board)

Invited Participants: Angela Bishop (Community Foundation of Nova Scotia), Lauren Sears (Common Good Solutions), Leslie Wright (The Philanthropist), Steve Skinner (Unity), Deanna Cardinal (Unity), Laurie Cook (Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia)

Process:

Participants had been given the following questions to consider before coming to the meeting.

- How can we mobilize wealth in support of Nova Scotia's rural communities?
- What if the best way to distribute philanthropic funds to rural communities?
- What is the best role for the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia to play?

Purpose: The purpose was to draw on the experience of those present relative to share their views on: a) rural issues that can be named that require money for which philanthropy can be a resource; b) factors or

conditions that motivate local people to contribute monetary resources to improve rural communities; c) what is important to do to attract local contributions (mobilize wealth) d) What are the best ways to make connections between the issue and the potential donor; e) what role can RCFNS play in supporting the mobilization of wealth.

The conversation flowed mostly around issues (contextualized) and how they can be addressed (solutions) and the role of RCFNS and related foundations in mobilizing wealth to address rural issues (support). The conversation was audio recorded and can be transcribed. The following list of issues and solutions is taken from the conversation notes (flipcharts).

Rural Issues: The Challenges

Population/demographics

Aging
 Uneven distribution of population (rural/urban)
 Low income dwellers located in rural communities
 Outmigration (people/wealth)
 Intergenerational successions (transfer of assets: land, businesses)
 Poverty

Transportation

Narrative [Limiting Values and Beliefs]

Loss of hope
 Culture of defeat – stuck in the past thinking
 Limited insights on a way forward – longer term solutions to mitigate rural issues
 Failure to recognize assets/ potential (supporting emergent small businesses)
 Attitudes toward newcomers (Ivany Report) and new business development

Access to Services

Centralization of services/supports (provincial government)
 Limited access to services (health, education etc.) leads to outmigration/increased poverty
 Failure to

Leadership

Weak generally on rural issues (local/provincial politics)
Failure to lead/collaborate on rural issues
No vision for a vibrant rural economy
One size fits all policies
Regulations that constrain rather than enable rural growth & prosperity

Digital Infrastructure

Overemphasis on supporting/investing in technology start-ups (not necessarily a community solution, need to think about rural issues and solutions as interconnected)
Failure to be responsive to/support new business opportunities in rural communities (millennials and internet businesses)

Business Development

Regulatory environment constraining/ no incentives to invest in rural businesses.

Poverty

Statistics speak for themselves (<https://nsadvocate.org/2016/11/03/poverty-rates-in-nova-scotia-exceed-national-average-are-highest-in-maritimes/>)

Demographics: Who lives in rural communities and why? (limited access to resources of employment/education/transportation etc.)

Interconnects with all other rural issues and contributes to poor health outcomes

Rural Issues: The Solutions (How can we mobilize wealth to address rural issues)?

Build a base of support for change.
Start with shifting the narrative.

Help people be more open and welcoming and to shift and expand thinking to a more hopeful scenario. Emphasize community successes and existing assets and growth: Small business is growing in rural communities (despite the constraints). Tell their story.

Focus on the interconnectedness of all of these issues and the potential in addressing them, in order to strategically address others to enhance rural living and vitality;



Consider how we can help local leaders to dream and to be more strategic in leveraging local wealth to address/mitigate rural issues. Help them realize assets and potential, to advocate/collaborate for digital infrastructure, social (enterprise), and for other diverse forms of business development including supporting private/family businesses. Help them to create enabling conditions for growth that will mitigate negative rural issues. Ask them what they want and how we can support them.

Engage in strategic communications to tell this story to potential donors who exist along a continuum from individuals with wealth, to local or regional investment organizations, to larger corporations and government. Need to be communicating at all of these levels.

Focus on long-term vision/planning. Policy with intentional focus on creating conditions for business development in rural communities.

Role for RCF in Leveraging Wealth in Rural Communities

Greater success for RCF lies ahead when we build on what already exists and when we collaborate.

RCF can work smarter if it works strategically and collaboratively with others to tell ? highlight community resilience and successes. Donors will stand behind successes they see in their own community. Need to build this network and start the conversation on working together.

Small grants provide a catalyst to support the mobilization of local wealth when we emphasize community successes. We have seen this and we need to tell their story across Nova Scotia more than we do. Could have some impact in the longer term for RCF building endowment.

Narrow our target audience. For example, to work with existing community funds to see how our work can support their work and leverage wealth in their communities. The success in these community funds lies in that enable decisions about how the wealth they leverage is spent. Are there lessons here for us in terms of how we support local initiatives? Another example to help narrow our focus is to maximize opportunities to work with our existing municipal partners. Over the longer term this enhances people's awareness of RCF and its work in their local area and would have some impact in the longer term for RCF building endowment.





Create a greater RCF presence across the province by working more directly with local communities and municipalities. Go out to their events. Educate our base by highlighting successes and track record, a demonstrated understanding of rural issues, and that we are collaborators. Demonstrate both our and their successes

Tell our story in the “Philanthropist” (<https://thephilanthropist.ca/category/journal/>)

Next steps: Continuing the “Vital Conversations”

As part of the continuing the RCF “vital conversations”, RCF directors will continue these purposeful conversations on local philanthropy in meetings in their regions using the following related questions as a guide:

1. What does rural’ philanthropy mean to you? How does this exist in your community? (provide overview of RCFNS goals/history and grant making track record).
2. What are the key issues (i.e., social, economic, political) unique to your rural community? Nova Scotia?
3. What is the role/ potential (?) of rural philanthropy in rural development?
 - a) What strategies (assets) are working now in rural philanthropy that support rural development, and how can they be shared?
 - b) What are the barriers faced by organizations currently engaged in rural philanthropy in your communities (e.g. hospital foundations etc.)
 - c) What kind of grant making can make the greatest impact in your rural community? Nova Scotia?
4. What actions by RCFNS will best support the growth of rural development in Nova Scotia and in Canada?



APPENDIX 3

FURTHER READING/RESEARCH/RESOURCES

Aspen Institute <http://www.aspenccsg.org/rdp/resources/frameworks.php>

Foundation for Rural Living *Cultivating Rural Prosperity: A Case for Rural Investment, Inspiration and Innovation* (2004)

Gibson R. Missing Key to Rural Development: The Intersection of Philanthropy and Regional Development in Canada (2014)
<http://ryangibson.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Missing-Key-to-Rural-Development-Gibson>

Gibson R. & Barrett J. Fostering Sustainable Futures Through Philanthropy? (2013)
<http://philanthropy.ruralresilience.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/PhilanthropyandRegionalDevelopment.pdf>

APPENDIX 4

AD HOC WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Arthur Bull, Chair, RCF

Maureen Coady, Director, RCF

Teresa MacNeil, Past Chair, RCF