Gaining Wealth Creation Traction in the Wider World

BUILDING TOOLS FOR MORE PLACES TO BUILD RURAL LIVELIHOODS

Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group
March 2012
The Aspen CSG WCRL Mandate

• Translate the WCRL approach into a set of tools and materials that are **useful** and **used** by community and economic development actors outside the Ford constellation of grantees.

• Do so with more than an eye toward making the “wealth creation” approach a strong and **widely accepted and practiced alternative** to the more prevailing, over-emphasized and under-performing business recruitment economic development approaches.
The Aspen CSG WCRL Mandate: Context

- So far, the named WCRL approach has been developed via Ford grantees.
- The approach has evolved during more than three years of work, and continues to evolve.
- Most on-the-ground Ford-grantee actors to date have received extensive TA and some funding as part of an initiative.
- For the approach to have “legs,” other people must be able to “pick it up and run with it” without that level and type of support.
- Useful news: Other places have pursued the approach – absent Ford instigation. Ideas and lessons can also be drawn from them – along with some “can do” inspiration.
Structure of Aspen CSG’s Work

- Review all WCRL materials and tools as they emerge
- Interview a wide range of WCRL actors
- Convene a **Product Design Advisory Team** (PDAT)
  - Fifteen people plus CSG
  - Range of actors from Ford initiative – plus other potential users
  - Convening three times over 15 months
  - PDAT provides perspective on product direction, target audiences, product drafts, and roll-out options
- Develop and beta-test products
- Identify potential initial roll-out strategies
Product Design Advisory Team

- **Keith Bisson:** Coastal Enterprises / Maine
- **Kelly Cain:** St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development / Wisconsin
- **Rosalie Sheehy Cates:** CDFI Community Investment Initiative / Montana
- **Mario Gutierrez:** RUPRI Rural Human Services Panel / California
- **David Harris:** Iowa West Foundation / Iowa
- **Marilyn Hoke:** Community Resource Group, Inc. / Arkansas
- **Deb Markley:** RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship / North Carolina
- **Robbie McGhee:** Poarch Band of Creek Indians Tribal Council / Alabama
- **Rich Pirog:** Center for Regional Food Systems, Michigan State University / Michigan
- **Shanna Ratner:** Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. / Vermont
- **Mikki Sager:** The Conservation Fund / North Carolina
- **Connie Stewart:** California Center for Rural Policy, Humboldt State University / CA
- **Thomas Watson:** Rural Support Partners / North Carolina
- **Dennis West:** Northern Initiatives / Michigan
Aspen CSG Work to Date

- Twenty initial interviews
  - Within the initiative: Project Leaders, Resource Team, Grantees, Consultants and Coaches
  - Outsiders doing similar work

- Examined and examining:
  - All materials prepared by Project Leaders and Coaches
  - What people are using
  - What is working
  - What is challenging
  - Ways people have adapted to the challenges
  - What people want or need to do their work better
  - Other ideas, tools and frameworks that people are using
Aspen CSG Work to Date (continued)

- Conducted first Product Design Advisory Team meeting
  - Built a common understanding of WCRL initiative and its approach to building rural livelihoods
  - Identified priority action constituencies
  - Pinpointed key products and product characteristics that must be in WCRL toolbox for those constituencies

- Helped organize and facilitate 2011 RWCL Conference
  - 305 applications for 170 practitioner, researcher, policymaker, intermediary and funder slots
  - Harvested information about practice, policy and research action
  - Gleaned a wide range of perspectives about and reaction to currently used ways of discussing WCRL approach
Aspen CSG Work to Date (continued)

• Collaborating with RUPRI-CRE to create the WCRL National Community of Practice
  ▪ NCP will serve as a prime connector and idea-exchange tool
  ▪ Market- and audience-builder for WCRL toolbox

• Collecting wisdom from on-the-ground coaches and actors on what works well for whom and how
  ▪ Attending occasional WCRL-related gatherings
  ▪ One-on-ones with key actors

• Digesting, Distilling and Designing!
  ▪ Next Target: PDAT meeting early May
• We must find a way to catalyze people into pursuing this approach absent the Ford Foundation “hook” or “carrot.”

• We cannot lead with the most complex ideas or concepts.

• We must connect to people’s existing experience and knowledge to effectively transfer this approach.

• We must demystify and convey core concepts in an order that aligns with people’s sense of logic, learning and action.
We have to create WCRL language that:
- Avoids ambiguous jargon
- Avoids unnecessary confusion with existing terms in the field
- Appeals to the values of target users

Contrasting stories are a huge help.

Improving the livelihood of low-wealth people, businesses and places likely will *not result from using the WCRL approach* unless it receives an intentional and consistent focus.
1. For Catalyzing Products
   - Anybody who might influence or support the creation of a value chain

2. For Implementation Products
   - Value-Chain-Constructing Intermediaries
Understand who we need to catalyze
- Know what you want them to do
- Understand what they value
- Understand their negative hot buttons / Most likely objections

Introduce stories (with data) they can identify with
- That connect to sectors they know
- That connect to their roles
- That connect to regions that look like theirs
- That “message” the stories in terms of what they value
- That avoid their negative hot buttons
- That counter their most likely objection(s)

Be clear about the “ask” and connect it to what they value
Key Selling Points for anybody

- You get something you value
- It’s development that works
- The value lasts
- It connects you to a larger pie

Extra Selling Points for Community-focused Players

- It produces a local-control economy
- All the players have a voice
- Produces benefits for low-wealth people and businesses
- Cares for and about place
Draft Action Framework

Organizing structure for bringing along motivated intermediaries

1. Understand wealth(s)
2. Understand demand
3. Connect to meet demand
4. Find and share value to build multiple wealths
5. Own and control
1. Understand Wealth(s)

Critical Action Questions

- What is wealth?
- How is wealth different from income?
- What types of wealth are there?
- What is the relationship between wealth and livelihood?
2. Understand Demand

Critical Action Questions

- What are your people, businesses and places doing or making?
- What else could they do or make?
- What is the nature of current or potential market demand for these things?
- Which of these markets has/have the most potential for benefitting your low-wealth people and places?
3. Connect to Meet Demand

Critical Action Questions

- Who in your region can help you meet or build demand?
- How can low-wealth people, businesses and/or places fit into the circle of connections?
- Who else do you need in your circle to meet or build demand?
4. Find and Share Value to Build Multiple Wealths

Critical Action Questions

- What can you do together that provides **sufficient** value for each?
- How can you do this without degrading any stocks of wealth?
- How can you do this and add to as many stocks of wealth as possible?
- How can you do this so that it improves livelihoods for low-wealth people, firms and places?
Critical Action Questions

- How can you retain as much local ownership of the resulting wealth as possible?
- Where you can’t retain local ownership, how can you ensure that local people have influence on decision-making about the wealth?
- How can you structure ownership or control so that low-wealth people and places can establish and maintain a fair share – or more?
- How can you design your efforts so that no player can usurp control over time?
Your Turn

Please offer your perspective/best answer to any of these:

1. What is the one product you most wish you had as an intermediary to advance your work?
   - Who are you trying to “move” / or what are you trying to accomplish with the product?
   - What do you want to become true because you used the product?
   - Which bullet or question, if any, does it help address in the draft Implementation Product Action Framework organizing structure?
   - What “form” would you like for the product?

2. What ONE BIG THING is missing in the organizing structure of the draft Action Framework?