

Getting to Know Your Rural “Wealth”

Identifying & Working with Rural Gatekeepers

Presented by

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The Approach

Yes, We Can Take Sheep.



Description

Just Do What it Takes.

Premise: Gates open when keepers see your work as understandable, relevant & useful.

Strategy: Know the community before entering. Identify the most logical opportunities and local partners.

Rationale: Folks generally accept outsiders who sincerely work to meet needs and who respect local people as partners.

Why This Approach?

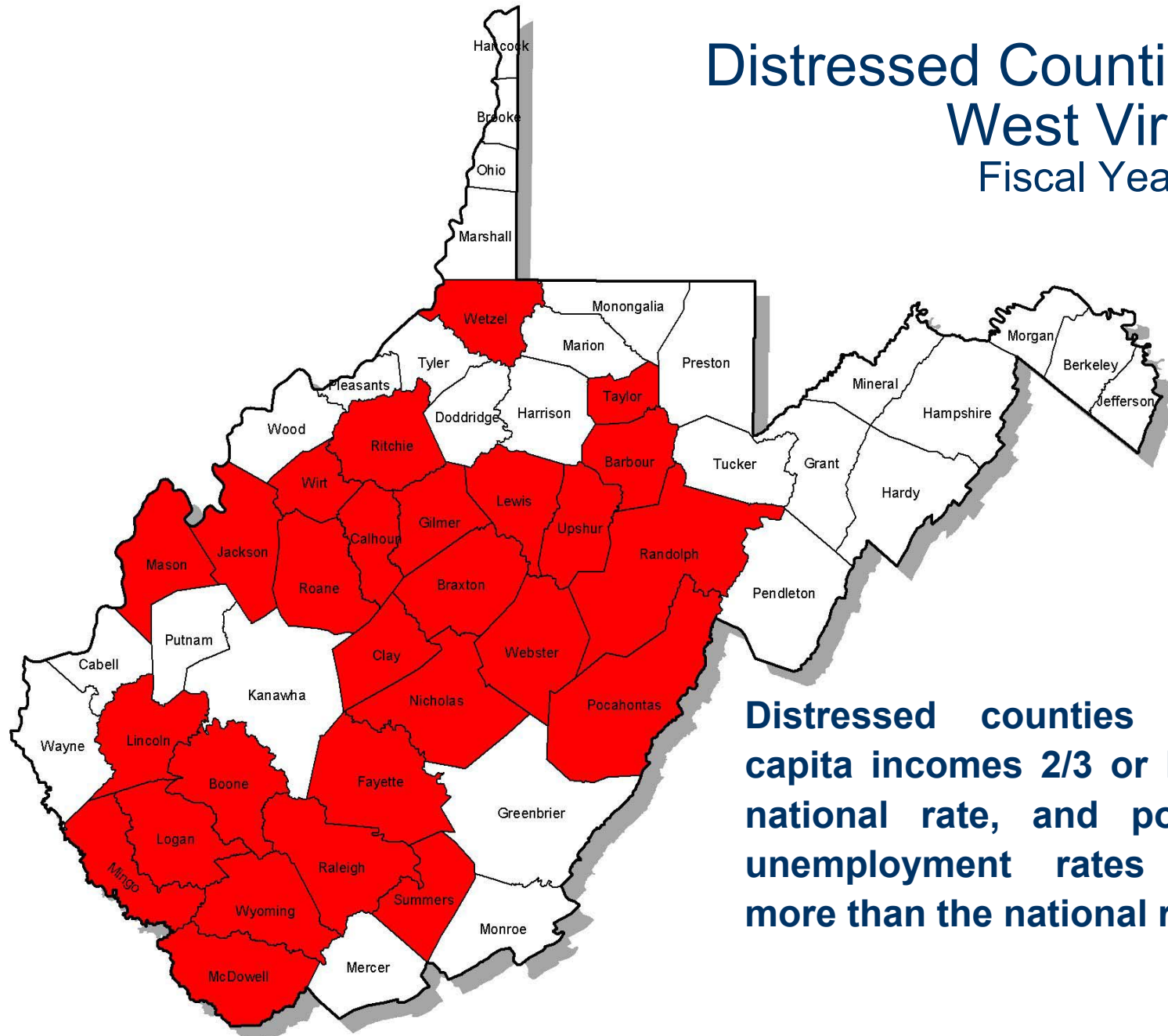
Because of who we are:
WV's Community Foundations

- 17 “Growing” – assets <\$8,000,000
- 4 “Expanding” – assets \$8-25m.
- 1 “Reaching” – assets >\$25,000,000

Because of “who” West Virginians are:
1.8 million widely dispersed folks
(Pretty darn rural. And, darn low wealth.)

Distressed Counties in West Virginia

Fiscal Year 2002



Distressed counties have per capita incomes 2/3 or less of the national rate, and poverty and unemployment rates 150% or more than the national rate.

When You're Rural

It's All About Perspective



The Approach

Yes, We Can Take Sheep.



Why – What Results?

Since 1999 in PACF:

- ◆ \$1,000,000 of new endowment dedicated to rural, contiguous counties using affiliate relationships;
- ◆ Four fledgling affiliate foundation operations;
- ◆ Fund growth - 130 in 1999 to 243 in 2003;
- ◆ Thrills, money and heart warming tales in between occasional county-to-county friction.

Identifying Gatekeepers

Four Basic Strategies

- ☐ Understand Local Needs BEFORE Chasing Gatekeepers
- ☐ Use Inclusive Terms
- ☐ Be Ready to Address Fears
- ☐ Chase Down the Gatekeepers

1. Assess Local Needs

1. What exists? 4-H, extension service, churches, public ed. - higher ed. structures, businesses? (If there are no non-profits, for ex., skip pushing agency endow.)
2. What needs are expressed? What appears important? Read local papers, scan public bodies' meeting minutes. Check local wills at the Courthouse, watch obits – what causes do local folks currently address and who is writing most of the wills?
3. Examine existing grant requests. Are you already making any grants, and for what? Note Board members' names for those organizations.

2. Bulbocodium Conspicuous

Use Inclusive & Understandable Language

The Community Foundation, OUR CF, etc.

Watch language/print materials – skip “Area” or “Greater” angst – neither works (and an outsider always smells like one anyway)

Understand value for place

Get local feedback

Use toll free numbers

Place materials before entering - public libraries; farm bureau - hairdressers – dentists – doctors offices and building supply locations.

3. Be Ready to Address Fears

Most Potentially Laden Statements ...

“You’re not from here are you.”

Well, no, but I wasn’t from Parkersburg either ...

“You’re here to take money out of our local banks and out of OUR county.”

Well yes & no. We don’t offer savings accounts, loans, or checking, or mortgages or car loans. Strategies: Hype trust services, get a banker on board, threaten with NY gift funds getting a toehold.

“You’ll take our money to spend on THAT OTHER COUNTY, or you’ll use OUR money in some misguided way.” No, your money will be permanently locked up for your causes; thereby forever keeping it from THAT OTHER COUNTY and then only in accordance with your charitable intent.

4. Go Find the Gatekeepers

Use Your Friends

Ask existing ...

Donors from that area for help identifying the reputable advisors, as well as those who might need you;

Get Members of your board to connect you – realtors, car dealers, doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc. all have professional relationships generally with neighboring area peers. Get them to take you to lunch with a local.

Area educational professionals for an entrée to the next county's Board or higher education staff meeting to discuss scholarships.

Ministers from your area and local govt. officials for intros.

Make Life Easy for the Gatekeepers

- Identify frequent use attorneys and visit (from the wills!) Offer a disk with your fund agreements. Let them help or offer to help them!
- Check high school award lists for non-endowed scholarships – contact folks and invite to consider making a permanent commitment, enlist the high school staff by showing how you can make their life easier managing the donor contacts required.
- If other non-profits serve the area, visit their staff to explain how an endowment would build resources for them and enlist their help in identifying logical approaches.
- Make philanthropy fun – offer to do the Rotary, Farm Bureau, etc. circuit. Help acknowledge community milestones.

Help the Gatekeepers be Successful

Help them shine in their community by bringing in the goods for them:

Some examples -

- Attorney general's vitamin settlement grant. 83% free & reduced – we hold, we re-grant, they shine
- Coalition of CFs for Youth - \$1500 Fathers Matter & Take Learning Home – call a school or agency and talk projects, you partner, they shine
- Many economic development and municipal beautification projects are easy examples of potential grant partners.

Keep Memories Alive

- Encourage Anniversary Clubs
- Create Books of Honor & Memory
- Don't forget the effect of school consolidations – gone but not forgotten!

A Compelling Tale



Supporting Capacities

- ◆ **Financial – (cash, in-kind) ---** Both – use local sponsors, newspaper tabloids, avoid paying for space. Mileage and phone bills increase, use calling cards and toll free numbers, promote web communication.
- ◆ **Staffing ---** Ability to spend a lot of time developing relationships – we are all generalists; no specialists. Watch staff loyalties. Can spend a lot of energy managing.
- ◆ **Board ---** Board must value rural and cannot pursue rural expecting to get rich overnight; long term outlook.
- ◆ **Expertise-policies ---** Ability to take non-cash gifts quickly; “you become the expert”
- ◆ **Relationships ---** Can become strained at times as each entity still naturally pursues self-interests first.
- ◆ **Other ---** Staff, Board, etc., must sing from a common song sheet or misunderstandings are easy to encounter.

So What?

Outcomes & Lessons


Great for building funds;
Smaller funds come first;
Very difficult on staff – spreads very
thinly.

3 Lessons Learned

- ◆ 1000 hours spent in designing the approach beat 40 hours; next time we'd take more time to think it through more thoroughly.
- ◆ You can't convince everyone. Some folks will still hang on to their parochialism even when it hurts their community.
- ◆ After planting the seed, don't over-water it. Sometimes it takes some natural time to take root and your eagerness can impede its growth.


3 Nuggets of Wisdom

1. Don't jump on the Affiliate bandwagon overnight. Clarify expectations before jumping into Affiliations. It's hard on the Affiliate to try to "tack to the wind."
2. It will take time --- it's all about building trust and trust is difficult to build overnight.
3. "This is my hometown." We're not about building empires, we're about celebrating hometowns.



Do or Do Not Do. There is No Try!

(yoda)



Finally,

Whenever you get too concerned about
things, remember that

“Hell begins, the day that God grants you
the vision to see all that you could have
done, should have done and would have
done, but did not do!”

(Goethe)