

Northwest Rural Philanthropy Days



Listening Tour Report

August 2013

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Rural Philanthropy Days (RPD) is a statewide program coordinated by Community Resource Center (CRC), which brings together rural Colorado communities and Front Range funders to discuss regional need and opportunities for collaboration. At a 2012 Rural Funders Forum hosted by Sue Anschutz-Rodgers, funders identified a desire to better understand regional needs, and current local initiatives addressing those needs, prior to attending RPD. The concept of a Listening Tour seeks to address this information gap, so that grantmakers arrive at RPD better prepared to collaborate and support local needs. The Colorado Northwest¹ Rural Philanthropy Days ('RPD') Listening Tour ('Listening Tour') was conducted from July 30- August 2, 2013 in order for funders to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing communities in Northwest Colorado.

The Northwest RPD Listening Tour was co-chaired by Tim Schultz, CEO of the Boettcher Foundation, and Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President of the El Pomar Foundation. Additional participants included senior leaders from ten Front Range foundations, representatives from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, a representative from the Office of Governor Hickenlooper, representatives from the Community Resource Center, and the Co-chairs of the Northwest RPD Steering Committee (see Appendix A).

The goal of the Listening Tour was for funders to hear an open discussion by community leaders about the character of the Northwest region, existing needs, and current local initiatives to address them. Two primary questions were asked at each meeting: 1) How would you describe the personality and culture of your community?; and 2) What do you see as a key issue or need in your community?

Leadership from various Northwest Community Organizations organized the Listening Tour travel itinerary (see Appendix B) and selected community leaders across all sectors (government, nonprofit, and for-profit) to attend (see Appendix C). The Listening Tour delegation met with 96 people across the Northwest region in five, two-hour meetings. This report summarizes the community characteristics, issues and needs that were heard in those meetings. This is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all regional characteristics and needs.

¹ The Northwest region includes five counties: Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt.

II. Northwest Regional Characteristics

The five-county region includes Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt counties, and is characterized by:

- An abundance of natural resources particularly coal, oil shale, oil and gas and water. There is great concern about fossil fuel regulations and water being diverted to the Front Range. In particular, the Yampa River is the last free flowing river in Colorado.
- Tourism is one of the top industries with an abundance of skiing, hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities offered year-round. The Northwest region is home to the “Moose-viewing capital” (Walden, CO) and “Elk hunting capital” (Craig, CO) of the world.
- A common identified need is a lack of technological infrastructure, specifically a broadband internet network that is both redundant and consistent. Each community considers broadband “the life blood of industry:” critical for healthy economic development, schools, and hospitals.
- The largest employers in the 5-county region are government, school districts, and one or two industries.
- Communities in Northwest Colorado are diverse, flexible, strong, energetic, resilient, and engaged. They have the ability to collaborate when needed, and are collaborating in new ways due to the recession of 2008-2011. There is a sense of family within, and occasionally transcending, county lines. Regionalism is common among issues such as water, economic development and workforce. Much of the area can be characterized as middle class working communities with roots in agriculture, extractive services, tourism, and service industries.
- Northwestern communities describe themselves as friendly, accepting, supportive, loyal, and hardworking, with a pioneer spirit and a determined “true grit.” Individuals are fiercely independent which can lead to both stubbornness and a “do it yourself” attitude. A traditional “pioneer spirit” has evolved into contemporary entrepreneurship.
- People living in the Northwest love where they live and find it a great place to raise kids. They are passionate about civic issues and employ bright, thoughtful, knowledgeable people to work on local issues and make smart, sensible decisions. Sustainability is important in terms of investing in children.

- Volunteerism is exceptional in Northwest Colorado, although a few individuals will often carry many community leadership roles. The communities are rich in tradition, and often conservative ideologically. They stretch dollars while remaining extremely generous and giving. There is a sense of caring for one another and the community at large.
- People of the Northwest region are passionate about outdoor recreation in the beautiful surrounding environment. They integrate lots of recreation into their lives and feel this supports a great quality of life. Grand County's slogan is "Colorado's favorite playground," and all five Northwestern counties feel that this applies to the whole region. Communities strive to be good stewards of the natural environment, and the landscape provides an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities for them, and for the tourists that they attract.
- Economically, the Northwest region is a tough place to live. "If you're not working 3 jobs, you're underemployed," was a common sentiment throughout the Listening Tour. Many people work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Additionally, living in a small community implies not only several jobs but also volunteer opportunities on a school board, a nonprofit board, or a youth activity. The smaller the community, the more responsibility individuals carry to support a high quality of life.

III. Common Regional Themes

Healthcare, Transportation, Self-Sufficiency, Childcare, Environment, Capacity Building, Education

Healthcare

Senior Home Healthcare

- In general there is a lack of affordable assisted living and home health care in the region. While the Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurses Association (NWCOVNA) is an active service provider to populations in Routt, Moffat, and Jackson, they are not able to cover all facets of specialized healthcare. Currently there is no home health care, hospice, or assisted living available in Jackson, and there is no assisted living in Rio Blanco. The tough living situations facing senior populations are often invisible to the community at large.

Behavioral Health

- The suicide rate in Northwest Colorado is higher than the state average, and behavioral health is woefully underserved. Individuals that commit suicide have often seen a primary care provider in the last 30 days, indicating that there are opportunities to connect these individuals with behavioral health resources. Mental health issues remain invisible to the public and difficult to address.
- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health crisis of some kind at some point in their life, and this holds true in Northwest Colorado. The Routt 24/7 crisis response system responds to upwards of 600 mental health emergencies a year. When people *are* involved in treatment, it is effective. Mental health professionals assist hundreds of people a year to get the level of care that they need so that they can be well and function optimally. Routt saw 322 unduplicated clients per month in 2012, Jackson saw approximately 24 unduplicated clients per month, and Rio Blanco saw a total of 124 (Meeker 57 and Rangely 67.) Moffat County saw 800 clients last year, 173 which were under 18 years of age. Almost none of the people who commit suicide are involved in mental health treatment.
- The other area of great need is substance abuse treatment, specifically, detoxification. There are two types of detoxification; 1) medical detoxification where going through withdrawal could kill client and 2) social detoxification. The closest social detoxification center to the Northwest region is 3 to 6 hours away, and there are only two medical detoxification centers in the state. MindSprings Health (formerly known as Colorado West Regional Mental Health) has served over 90 people in detoxification services in the past 12 months, losing over \$40,000 on detoxification in the last fiscal year. More funding must be secured if

this beneficial service is to continue. Currently, local police departments spend money and officer's time transporting clients to Grand Junction or Denver to admit to a detoxification facility. Usually clients are kept in the local emergency room until they are sober, and this takes necessary beds away from local medical emergencies.

- Access to psychiatric services is limited in the Northwest region. When people are put on psychiatric hold, it takes up to 3 days to acquire a bed, which are anywhere from 3 to 6 hours away. Tele-health is a new way for clients to access behavioral health services over Skype. One doctor in Moffat County is available two days a week, as well as offering Skype tele-psychiatry services.
- There is a need to differentiate 5 distinct areas of care: child, adolescent, adult, geriatric and forensic.

General Health

- Long distances between rural communities poses a threat to community healthcare access. Low income individuals work multiple jobs and cannot afford to take off a full day if the drive to a medical appointment is six hours round-trip. In some cases, the closest dentist can be up to 60 miles away.
- The dearth of affordable housing in Northwest Colorado impacts retention of quality medical service providers. According to the National Hospice Association, a community cannot have hospice without a pharmacy. Jackson County has tried to attract pharmacists, however the quality of housing stock is poor and the land is very expensive. This creates both a challenge to recruit and retain pharmacists, and a barrier to implementing hospice care in Jackson.
- The nearest healthcare for veterans living in Northwest Colorado is in Grand Junction. Local veteran healthcare is almost nonexistent here.

Transportation

- Transportation affects healthcare, economic development, and access to basic needs. Doctors, other medical appointments and shopping are a great distance (50 to 150 miles one way). The only public transportation service in the Northwest region is inside the city limits of Steamboat Springs.

Aging/Veterans

- Veterans cannot access benefits and are underserved because they cannot get around and they are too proud to ask for a ride. In Moffat, senior housing is on the edge of town with no public transportation, trails or sidewalks leading to the city center.
- There are some shuttles that transport seniors to and from medical appointments but the problem is they are run by volunteers only, or staff capacity is extremely limited with the local council on aging. In Moffat, United Way is the only funding source for medical appointment transport for seniors and the funding does not cover the need.

Youth

- Moffat County School District loans their buses to the Boys & Girls Club during the summer months, however young residents could benefit from transportation options during the school year.

Economic Development

- Companies are reluctant to relocate to the Northwest region due to its geographic isolation. Employees must have cars to drive to work. A growing sector of business and employment is location-neutral employees and businesses. This sector would grow if air transportation became more reliable. Currently, the cost of gas round trip to Denver is roughly \$70.
- The railroad in Moffat and Routt counties represents untapped infrastructure, but it is currently very expensive.

Self-Sufficiency

Basic Needs

- Low income populations in Northwest Colorado must work several jobs to afford shelter, food and daycare. Leaders in the community realize that a proactive response is required to address this cyclical poverty. Routt County has an active Bridges out of Poverty program that targets situational and generational poverty through a series of educational workshops. The basic tenant of this program is to help individuals and families become self-sufficient. Moffat County will be starting a Bridges program in the next year.
- In resort communities, service workers are often invisible to others in the community. The self-sufficiency standard is inflated in the Northwest region: for an individual to receive assistance in Routt County they must be at or below 130% of poverty level. In Routt, there is a “cliff effect,” where people make between 130% and 300% of the national poverty level, disqualifying them from benefits but leaving them with basic needs unmet. This cliff effect penetrates housing, food, and other basic needs assistance.
- Adult education and literacy are a concern. Adults need to read and write to apply for jobs, which often require online skills and computer access.

Housing

- There is a paucity of affordable housing for low income and middle class residents of the Northwest region. There is a great need for affordable rental units, single-family homes priced under \$500K, and housing accessible for the elderly.
- In Jackson County, over 50% of the housing in Walden was described as “absent ownership,” and the lack of maintenance regarding these properties is a burden on the community. Additionally, much of the housing quality is poor. For example, a tenant in Jackson might pay \$600 per month to rent a home with no foundation and bad electrical wiring and water system. This is a problem for both professionals (school and government workers) and low income families.

- There is a lack of affordable housing for school and college age students across Northwest Colorado.
- Housing is particularly an issue in Rangely as both students and educators struggle to find an affordable place to live. It is difficult for this community to hire or retain quality teachers because they cannot find an affordable place to live.

Childcare

- It is difficult to align childcare schedules with a parent work schedule that includes more than one job.
- The Northwest has many qualified childcare providers who struggle to meet the licensing standards. In Jackson County, visits from a state licensing agent are few and far between.
- The region has more infants and toddlers than can be served within daycare capacity. Daycare costs are high because it costs more to serve childcare in a remote region, and daycares must pay their staff more due to the high cost of living.
- There are no early learning centers in the counties of Rio Blanco and Jackson.
- Most programs like the Boys & Girls Club take 6 years old and older, and don't offer service for infants and toddlers. This means that families with young children often decide on one parent to stay at home to provide childcare. There are an increasing number of single parents who have a difficult time paying for childcare while they work.

Environment

- Across the 5 counties, water conservation is a major concern.
- Resource extraction is described as “the lifeblood” of many Northwest communities, and thus there are significant concerns about energy regulation as well as maintaining stable and vibrant communities throughout the “boom and bust” associated with the oil industry.
- Grand and Routt counties are trying to become mountain bike capitals in order to spur regional economic activity. Headwaters Trail Alliance in Grand County has succeeded in making their trail system an economic driver.

Capacity Building

- Overall, capacity building in the communities was a topic of concern. While some counties identified that they could benefit from capacity building workshops (Jackson, Grand, Rio Blanco), others are actively collaborating and need support to take their coalitions to the next level (Routt, Moffat).
- There are excellent examples of collaborations throughout the Northwest region. Since the recession, more collaboration has taken place. For instance, in Routt County there is an arts coalition, early childhood coalition, youth coalition and human service coalition.

Education

- Having a centralized higher education campus is a benefit to local communities and both Colorado Mountain College and Colorado Northwestern Community College have shown they can be community players. Grand and Jackson lack this access to higher education.
- Increased access to early education is a great need, especially for young children who speak Spanish at home.
- The Rio Blanco school districts are in a financial crisis. A new education foundation group has been formed to help address this crisis. All school districts in the region acknowledge the change in state legislation and have had to backfill the shortfalls.

Youth

- There is a general concern surrounding where regional youth spend their time outside of school. In Steamboat Springs, the Boys and Girls Club, the ski resort, the City of Steamboat Springs, and some nonprofits do have summer programs for kids, but the capacity of these programs is limited and does not meet the outstanding need. Jackson does not have any kind of summer program for youth, and Rio Blanco could use more activities.
- The free and reduced lunch program helps to feed children during the school year, but there are no programs to keep these kids fed over summer vacation. The Boys and Girls Club does provide some meals, and they saw a 25% increase in number of children in their 2013 summer program.
- With the increase in single parent households and the odd-hours nature of the energy industry, there is an increase in leaving children vulnerable to bad influences and without proper nutrition and supervision.

IV. Next Steps

Information collected on the Listening Tour is being used to structure the second day of the Northwest Rural Philanthropy Days Conference². There will be a stronger emphasis on facilitated conversations focused on identifying collaborative solutions to pressing regional needs.

At the beginning of the second day, all attendees will participate in Town Hall Table Talks focused on two of the seven preceding common themes identified as regional priorities. Participants from all sectors will be encouraged to attend these facilitated conversations. Foundation representatives that attended the Listening Tour will guide the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interest, while government officials will host county tables. In a 90-minute session, participants will start in their own county to discuss and summarize the regional challenges for their assigned focus area. Then participants will transition to two focus areas and will compare and contrast the needs and resources from each county to identify areas of collaboration towards solutions.

In the afternoon, there will be a community solutions action planning session where funders, government officials, community leaders and select nonprofit executives will come to together work on an action plan for realistic solutions.

The workshops are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors. Information gathered through the Community Solutions workshops will frame an afternoon funder session focused on finding collaborative funding solutions to address some of these pressing regional challenges. At that time, recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

² The 2013 Northwest Rural Philanthropy Days conference will take place Sept. 25-27 in Winter Park, Colorado.

APPENDIX A: Listening Tour Delegation

Anschutz Family Foundation

555 17th St., Suite 2400
Denver, CO 80202

- Debbie Jessup, Executive Director
- Kumella Aiu, Program Officer
- Abel Wurmnest, Program Officer

Boettcher Foundation

600 17th St., Suite 2210
Denver, CO 80202

- Tim Schultz, President and Executive Director

Caring for Colorado Foundation

4100 E. Mississippi Ave., Suite 605
Denver, CO 80246

- Chris Wiant, President and CEO

Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Northern Mountain Region

- Greg Winkler, Regional Manager
- Joe Carter, Regional Assistant

Community Resource Center

789 Sherman St., Suite 210
Denver, CO 80203

- Maria Fabula, Interim Executive Director

Daniels Fund

101 Monroe St.
Denver, CO 80206

- Bill Fowler, Senior Vice President of the Grants Program
- Todd Lewton, Grants Program Officer - West Region

NW Rural Philanthropy Days Steering Committee Members

Gretchen Van De Carr, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

Jen Fanning, Grand County Rural Health Network

Renny Fagan, Colorado Nonprofit Association

Kate Nowak, Yampa Valley Data Partners

El Pomar Foundation

10 Lake Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

- Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President of Grants

History Colorado

1200 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203

- Cynthia Nieb, Deputy Director of the State Historical Fund

The Colorado Health Foundation

501 S. Cherry Street, Suite 1100
Denver, CO 80246

- Suzanne White, Senior Program Officer – Health Care

The Colorado Trust

1600 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203

- Gay Cook, Vice President of Strategy and Philanthropic Relations

The Office of Governor Hickenlooper

136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

- Karla Maraccini, Director of Community Partnerships

The Women's Foundation of Colorado

1901 E. Asbury Ave., First floor
Denver, CO 80208

- Denise Delgado, Program Coordinator

Xcel Energy Foundation

1800 Larimer Street, Suite 900
Denver, CO 80202

- Shanda Vangas, Manager of Corporate Giving

APPENDIX B: Northwest Listening Tour Itinerary

Tuesday, July 30th

3:00pm - 5:00pm : Listening Tour hosted by: **Grand Foundation**

- *Mountain Parks Electric – 321 W. Agate Ave, Granby (Community Room)*

5:30pm – 8:30pm: Reception/ Heavy Appetizers

- *Devil’s Thumb Ranch – Timber Room – 3530 County Road 83, Tabernash, CO*

Wednesday, July 31st

8:30am - 9:45am: Travel time to Walden

10:00am - 12:00pm: Listening Tour hosted by **Jackson County**

- *River Rock Café – 460 Main St., Walden*

12:00pm – 1:00pm: Lunch with the Northwest RPD Steering Committee

1:00pm - 2:30pm: Travel time to Steamboat Springs

3:00pm – 5:00pm: Listening Tour hosted by **Yampa Valley Community Foundation**

- *Bud Werner Memorial Library – 1289 Lincoln Av., Steamboat Spgs.*

5:30pm – 7:30pm Dinner/BBQ- hosted by Marsha and Doc Daughenbaugh

- *Rocking C Bar Ranch – 41505 Routt County Road 44*

Thursday, August 1st

8:00am – 2:30pm: Free time in Steamboat Springs/Drive to Craig

3:00pm – 5:00pm: Listening Tour hosted by **Colorado Northwestern Community College**

- *College Campus – 2801 W. 9th Street, Craig*

6:30pm: Dinner and Debrief

- *Carelli’s Italian Restaurant – 465 Yampa Ave, Craig*

Friday, August 2nd

8:00am – 9:30am: Drive time to Meeker

10:00am- 12:00pm: Listening Tour hosted by **Pioneer Medical Center**

- *Mountain Valley Bank – 400 Main Street, Meeker (please park on north side of Main Street)*
- Funders on own for lunch

12:30pm: Drive back to Denver

APPENDIX C: Listening Tour Attendance by County

Grand County

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Gary Bumgarner	County Commissioner	Grand County
DiAnn Bulter	Economic Develop Coordinator	Grand County
Bob Casals	Consultant, Spanish Translator	Casals Financial
Duane Dailey	Veterans Officer	Grand County
Jennifer Fanning	Director	Grand County Health Network
Jerry Grosword	Founder, Consultant	Grand Foundation
Roger Hedlund	President	Oslo Foundation
Merrit Linke	County Commissioner	Grand County
Jeff Miller	Business Owner, VP, Board	Red Mountain RV
Drew Nelson	Town Manager	Town of Winter Park
Catherine Ross	Executive Director	Winter Park/Fraser Chamber
Deb Ruttenberg	House Bill 1451 Coordinator	Grand County
Helen Sedlar	Executive Director	Mountain Family Center
Tom Sifers	President	Board of Education
John Kacik	President	Grand Cty County Library District
Joe Pandy	CEO	Mountain Parks
Rob Young	President Representative	Spur Companies

Jackson County

Deb Alpe	Extension Agent	Colorado State U Extension
Jane Berry	Town Administrator	Town of Walden
Jane Bingham	Program Coordinator	Colorado West Reg Mental Health
Betsy Blecha	Project Manager	Owl Mountain Partnership
Jamie Brown	Director	North Park Chamber
Chris Bradshaw	EMT	Jackson County Sherriff Office
Kenna Clements	Certified Addiction Counselor	Colorado West Reg Mental Health
Glenn Chambers	Director	Jackson County Social Service
Pepper Canterbury	District Wildlife Manager	CO Parks & Wildlife
Deb Heeney	Walden Field Office	US Department of Agriculture
Becky Rizor	EMT	
Jim Rizor	EMT	
Matt Shuler	Owner	Jackson County Star
Amy Ward	Principal	North Park School District RE-1
Tish Wilcox	Treasurer	Jackson County

Routt County

Carol Atha	Individual Philanthropist	Community Agriculture Alliance
Ben Beall	Former County Commissioner	Yampa River Legacy Project
Lisa Brown	Executive Director	NW CO Visiting Nurse Association
Vicki Clark	Director	Department of Human Services
Paula Cooper Black	Board Member	Yampa Valley Comity Foundation
Tim Corrigan	County Commissioner	Routt County
Jay Fetcher	North Routt Rancher	Representative for Senator Udall
Kent Foster	Recreation Program Manager	US Forest Service

Routt County

Name	Title	Organization
Gina Toothaker	Director	Steamboat Mental Health
Todd Hagenbuch	Extension Agent - Agriculture	CSU Cooperative Extension
Deb Hinsvark	City Manager	City of Steamboat Springs
Liz Finnagan		Yampa Valley Medical Center
Brad Meeks	Superintendent	Steamboat School District
Ginger Scott		City of Steamboat Springs
Kenny Reisman	City Council Representative	Steamboat Springs City Council
Kelly Stanford	Director	Routt County United Way
Gretchen Van De Carr	Director	Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
Deb Werner	Director of Human Resources	Ski Corp

Moffat County

Amanda Arnold	Community Impact Coordinator	United Way
Lisa Brown	Director	NW CO VNA
Renee Campbell	Business Manager	Craig Daily Press
Terry Carwile	Mayor	City of Craig
Audrey Danner	Interim Director	Craig Moffat Economic
Development		
Becky Dubbert	PIO	CNCC
Dana Duran	Director	Boys and Girls Club
Jim Ferree	City Manager	City of Craig
John Kinkaid	County Commissioner	Moffat County
Lisa LeFeure	Controller	CNCC
Michael Melneck	Grant administrator	CNCC
Sam Nichols	Foundation Intern	CNCC
Kate Nowak	Executive Director	Yampa Valley Data Partners
Christine Oxley	Director	Craig Chamber of Commerce
Corrie Ponikvar	Director	Moffat County United Way
Jennifer Riley	Chief of Organizational Excellence	The Memorial Hospital
Joel Sheridan	Retired Assistant Superintendent	Moffat County School District
Lyndi Smith		RDH Dental Coalition
Chris Smolik	CEO	The Memorial Hospital
Craig Thornhill	Director	Colorado West Mental Health
Melody Villard	Executive Director	Moffat County Tourism

Rio Blanco County

Tim Webber	Administrator	Western Rio Blanco Rec District
Mike Weinbrecht	Operations Executive Director	Eastern Rio Blanco Rec District
Mary Strang		Meeker Education Foundation
Lisa Hatch	Town City Council	<i>Town of Rangely</i>
Peggy Rector	President	CNCC Foundation
Mardi Walsh	Executive Director	<i>Upper CO Enviro Plant Center</i>
Bill Lake	Board Member	<i>Upper CO Enviro Plant Center</i>
Katelin Cook	Executive Director	Meeker Chamber
Vicky Pfennig	Code enforcement	Town of Rangely
Jeff Eskelson	County Commissioner	Rio Blanco County
Mandi Etheridge	Mayor	Town of Meeker
Iris Franklin	Meeker Center Coordinator	Colorado North Community College
Bob Amick	Volunteer Citizen	Meeker Arts Council

Rio Blanco County

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Ken Harman	CEO	Pioneers Medical Center
Lorieanne Hayes	Civic Leader	
Mike Hayes	Business Owner	Hayes Petroleum Co., Inc.
Sandy		CNCC Foundation
Tawny Halandras	President	Mountain Valley Bank
Margie Joy	Development Director	Pioneer Medical Center
Russ George	President	CNCC
DonColmbs	Volunteer	Rangely Welcome Center
Becky Dubbert	PIO	CNCC/Rangely Chamber
Mike Nolte	Grants	CNCC
Steve Kracht	Finance Director	Rangely School District