



## APPROVED 2007-2011 STRATEGIC PLAN

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### Our Mission

To bolster the capacity and impact of community foundations to improve the environmental, economic, and cultural vitality of the communities along the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

### Our Vision

Community foundations in the Mississippi River Corridor<sup>1</sup> will work together to ensure that the Mississippi River and its tributaries are honored, shared resources that are vital, healthy, attractive, fun, and prosperous.

### Outcomes and Strategies, Part 1: The River Partnership as a Whole

#### ► Long-term Outcomes for the River Partnership as a Whole

1. Increased awareness among communities and community foundations about the River<sup>2</sup>
2. Increased capacity of community foundations
3. Existence of strong partnerships among community foundations
4. Existence of long-term investments, commitment, and ability to financially support the Partnership's mission and vision

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<sup>1</sup> The River Partnership defines the Mississippi River Corridor as a ten-state region that includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana and the tributaries located within these states.





<sup>2</sup> All references to "The River" should be interpreted to mean the River as a whole, including its tributaries.

► **Strategies to Achieve Long-term Outcome #1: Increased Awareness among Communities and Community Foundations about the River**

Core Strategies<sup>3</sup>

1. Develop communications messages and tools that underscore and document the inter-relationships between the communities along the river, including:
  - a. A PowerPoint presentation about the River that can be tailored for each participating community foundation's uses
  - b. Newsletter articles about the Partnership and the River
  - c. Brochure on the Partnership and the River
2. Develop an event template and rotating resources (such as speakers) that allow partners to hold similar events in their local communities in order to raise awareness about the River
3. Make speakers and content specialists on topics relevant to the Partnership available to participating community foundations

Non-core Strategies

1. Support projects and activities that get people to the River, for example:
  -  River clean-up events
  -  Riverboat events
  -  Mississippi River day
  -  Chautauqua events that provide speakers and/or performers to community foundations up-and-down the River
2. Develop tools for people who influence donors such as professional advisors
3. Make efforts to forge relationships with national information and state/regional information resources such as NPR
4. Develop an expanded communications initiative with dedicated resources
  - a. Develop a list of stakeholders for communications purposes
  - b. Use the Funders' Network's technical assistance and communications expertise to help frame global stories in a local context
5. Explore ways to address policy-related issues through advocacy and education

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<sup>3</sup> Core Strategies are strategies and activities that will be done using the resources that already exist for the Partnership. Non-core Strategies are strategies and activities that will be done only if additional designated funds are raised and/or if an individual community foundation decides to lead the effort.

## ► Strategies to Achieve Long-term Outcome #2: Increased Capacity of Participating Community Foundations

### Core Strategies

1. Provide tools, trainings, and other resources to build the skills of participating community foundations on topics that are especially pertinent to the Partnership, including:
  - ↳ Asset identification
  - ↳ Community mobilization and convening
  - ↳ Building strong, lasting partnerships
  - ↳ Fund raising, especially around field of interest funds (including endowment building)
  - ↳ Donor engagement
2. Compile useful resources and best practices related to the Partnership, including identified assets from participating community foundations, and make easily accessible to partners
3. Provide educational forums and resources to participating community foundations and their constituents about growth and development and its relevance to the River
4. Learn together about River-related issues, e.g. “the dead zone”; bridges; barge traffic and its economic impact

### Non-core Strategies

1. Develop and share evaluation tools, especially those that integrate cultural/economic/environmental measures
2. Help community foundations convene members from various communities, for example, businesses, and government

## ► Strategies to Achieve Long-term Outcome #3: Existence of Strong Partnerships among Community Foundations

### Core Strategies

1. Facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges through a listserv, website, and conference calls
2. Facilitate collective learning and activities as needed
3. Explore similarities and differences among community foundations in how they relate to the environment, the economy, and culture
4. Organize two meetings per year of the Partnership and provide financial support for at least one person from each participating foundation to attend
5. Develop community foundation clusters based on similar interests, characteristics, and/or regions, for example:
  - ↳ Urban/suburban/rural
  - ↳ Economic development and community revitalization focus
  - ↳ Environmental improvements focus
  - ↳ Regional interests
6. Engage community foundations in the region that aren't yet engaged: use CEO-to-CEO outreach strategy

### Non-core Strategies

1. Raise specific resources to support collective strategies emerging from community foundation clusters and/or from the Partnership as a whole
2. Develop a “strike team” with 2-3 people (preferably from the Partnership) who have expertise on an issue to come to town help a partners foundation with a specific issue

**► Strategies to Achieve Outcome #4: Existence of Long-term Investments, Commitment, and Ability to Financially Support the Partnership’s Mission and Vision**

Core Strategies

1. Continue providing responsive and predictable grants to participating community foundations (explore the benefits of competitive grants at least for responsive pool)
2. Develop strategies and tools for working with donors to educate them about the River (e.g., fund development materials, sample RFPs, etc.)
3. Encourage and support the development of field of interest funds and endowments for River-related work through training, grantmaking, and other possible resources

Non-core Strategies

1. Streamline grantmaking strategies for participating community foundations (in clusters or for the Partnership as a whole) to efficiently and effectively make grants around common areas
2. Develop resources and strategies for participating community foundations (in clusters or for the Partnership as a whole) to engage in collective grantmaking
3. Help partners to raise money for River-related work:
  - a. Assistance with preparing joint grant proposals
  - b. Develop donor circles
  - c. Develop strategies for utilizing discretionary funds for River-related activities
  - d. Identify and provide technical assistance on how to raise funds from national/regional grantmakers
  - e. Identify government funders and other public sector resources to support the Partnership and participating community foundations

## **Outcomes and Strategies, Part 2: Participating Community Foundations**

### **► Long-term Outcomes for Participating Community Foundations**

1. Local community improvements that are environmentally, economically, and culturally relevant (to be determined by each participating community foundation).  
Examples include:

- ↳ The built environment and the River exist in harmony
- ↳ Environmental restoration on and around the River has been achieved
- ↳ Local communities receive economical benefits from an increase in tourism related to the River
- ↳ Increase in jobs and benefits for the middle class
- ↳ Local investments in green infrastructure are increased significantly
- ↳ Local policy officials approve and fund planning and zoning that enhances, protects, and restores the River
- ↳ Cultural heritage is preserved
- ↳ The River is valued and utilized by all community groups including groups that historically have been disenfranchised from the River and its many benefits

### **► Strategies for Individual Participating Community Foundations**

#### **Program-Related Strategies**

*Active participation in the Partnership includes the following activities that relate to achieving economic, environmental, and/or cultural outcomes for participating community foundations:*

1. Complete a customized asset identification process to better understand the key stakeholders, current activities and opportunities in each Partner's local community related to the River
2. Develop an action plan that articulates outcomes or outputs and specific strategies that will achieve the economic, environmental, and/or cultural outcomes that are prioritized by each community foundation (when possible, community foundations are encouraged to incorporate their River-related action plans into the foundation's strategic plan)

Participation in the Partnership Activities

*Each active member of the Partnership agrees to do the following:*

1. Submit a signed letter of support (or resolution) for participation in the Partnership from CEO and/or Board of Directors
2. Complete a benchmarking tool on an annual basis
3. Make a financial commitment to the Partnership (amount to be determined by each community foundation; in-kind contributions such as hosting meetings to be applied)
4. Attend two meetings annually