

SpotLight #6: W.K. Kellogg Foundation's People and Land – Building Consensus, Finding Common Ground

Abstract

This *SpotLight* features a unique approach to promoting local, regional, and multi-sector consensus building around issues of growth and development. People and Land (PAL), a program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), funds a process that builds local, regional, and multi-sector consensus around issues of growth and development. The PAL approach emphasizes leadership development, citizen education, and the support of informed change. PAL's advisory group includes representatives of land-based industries as well as environmental interests and works on the premise that land use issues require transcending the traditional economic development versus environmental protection dichotomy. PAL's initial round of grants fund projects that are regional in scale, and that aim to build diverse constituencies, encourage partnerships, consensus, and changes in attitude that are expected to bring significant change at the state level over the long term.

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People and Land (PAL), a funding program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), is a unique approach to promoting local, regional, and multi-sector consensus building around issues of growth and development. PAL falls under WKKF's Food Systems and Rural Development program area, and grew out of the Foundation's interest in preserving Michigan's rural and agricultural heritage. Recognizing that Michigan acreage is being consumed at six times the rate of population growth, the program seeks to explore how farm and rural populations can connect with urban and other partners to address the issue of land use and encroaching sprawl throughout the state of Michigan.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Headquartered in Battle Creek, Michigan, WKKF is a national private foundation with approximately \$5.7 billion in assets and annual grantmaking of approximately \$195 million. Since the Foundation was established in 1930, its United States programming has centered on health, education, and agriculture. In addition to Food Systems and Rural Development, WKKF has domestic program areas in: Health, Youth and Education, Philanthropy and Volunteerism, Greater Battle Creek (MI), and Devolution (Cross Programming Work). The Foundation also works in Southern Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Food Systems and Rural Development program area is meant to fill a programming niche addressed by few other national foundations. The food systems component is concerned with community-based, economically viable, and environmentally responsible food production systems and their contribution to the health and well being of people and communities. The rural development component is concerned with the economic and social sustainability of rural communities, many of which are rapidly deteriorating due to isolation, out-migration, and lack of new investment. One of six initiatives falling under

this program area, PAL explicitly makes the connection between these issues and regional growth, development, and investment patterns.

PAL Evolution. PAL began making grants in 2001, but its germination goes back almost a decade. In 1992 WKKF funded a study identifying Michigan's primary public policy priorities; land use was identified as a top concern. This was followed in 1997 by the publication of *Shaping our Future*, a WKKF-funded report on land use issues in Michigan prepared by Public Sector Consultants (PSC), a Michigan consulting firm specializing in public policy research, analysis, and planning.

Shaping our Future began to explore in depth the linkages between urban, suburban, and rural development and investment patterns, also discussing implications for natural resources, social equity and race relations, and the institutional and political contexts for land use decision-making. It identified strategic opportunities for intervention by WKKF, including leadership development, education and capacity building, improved public policy decisions, research and information, legal assistance, and advocacy. The report also made recommendations about a program structure, and it was out of these explorations that PAL was formed.

First Year Grants. PAL's focus is on leadership development, citizen education, and the support of informed change. In January 2001 the program was launched with a cluster of nine pilot mini-grants (\$2,000 - \$25,000) totaling \$125,000. This was followed by the first round of large grants in July 2001. Nine projects, totaling \$600,000, were funded, and PSC received a grant of \$200,000 to administer the program. These projects include, among others: American Farmland Trust's Building the Blocks for Successful Farmland Preservation, Kalamazoo College's Convening for Action, Michigan State University's Citizen Planner Program, Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region's Keweenaw Blueprint for Tomorrow, and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's Cheboygan River Watershed Land-Use Partnership. As intermediary, PSC's role is to select projects, work with the Foundation and the advisory group, and manage the grants. Other consulting firms are providing program communications and evaluation functions.

Advisory Group's Strategic Planning Process. PAL is built on a multi-stakeholder model, in which the program is shaped jointly by the foundation, PSC as an intermediary organization, and an advisory group comprising knowledgeable stakeholders representing a number of diverse sectors. This advisory group includes land-based industries as well as environmental interests and bases its work on finding and promoting common ground. Such diverse interests as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Association of Realtors, land conservancies, educational institutions, and environmental groups are all represented on the Advisory Group, which functions like a Board of Directors, determining broad program directions and funding criteria.

PAL's advisory group undertook a six-month strategic planning process that, in the words of program assistant manager Julie Metty, "was almost more successful than the plan that came out of it." This reflects an explicit approach of the program as a whole to emphasize and support appropriate decision-making processes as equally or more

important than any specific outcomes. Through the strategic planning process, the advisory group concluded that land use issues require transcending the traditional economic development versus environmental protection dichotomy, and, based on this recognition, adopted a sustainable development approach.

Focus on Process and Participation. As a result, grantees are required to adopt a similar multi-stakeholder framework, and projects must be regional in scale, meaning that at least two local units of government are involved; funded projects usually encompass a whole county. Desired outcomes for projects are to build diverse constituencies, encourage partnerships, consensus, and changes in attitude that are expected to bring significant change at the state level over the long term. These goals – because they are process oriented – present a challenge to the project’s evaluators (Public Policy Associates) who, nonetheless, have established indicators for measuring progress in such areas as interest and understanding, diverse coalitions, collaboration, capacity building, media exposure, and changes in policy direction.

Early Learning. Only one year into the program, it is early to attempt to derive lessons learned – particularly since the goals are so far-reaching and long term. Early learning is taking place, however, among grantees, advisory group members, and program managers. Through the strategic planning process, it was learned that people on a variety of sides have more common interests than they assume, or give each other credit for. Land use issues are all encompassing, and when inclusive participatory processes are employed, relationships and consensus can be built. PAL is also working with other funders, for example by participating in the Michigan Land Use Funders¹ (a working group associated with the Council of Michigan Foundations), whose members support complementary projects and goals. As part of this outreach, PSC joined with this group in October 2001 to convene all of their grantees – representing more than 100 organizations – in a statewide land-use networking conference. This outreach is intended to contribute to the relationship and consensus building being promoted through the People and Land program.

Resources. Additional information is available on the People and Land website at www.peopleandland.org or by contacting: Bill Rustem, People and Land Program Manager, or Julie Metty, PAL Assistant Program Manager, Public Sector Consultants, 600 W. St. Joseph, Suite 10, Lansing, MI 48933-2265, tel: (517) 484-4954, fax: (517) 484-6549, e-mail: pal@peopleandland.org; and Gail Imig, Program Director, Kellogg Foundation, One Michigan Avenue East, Battle Creek, Michigan 49017-4058, tel: (616) 968-1611, fax: (616) 968-0413, e-mail: GLI@wkkf.org.

¹ Participants in the Michigan Land Use Funders group include the Beldon Fund, Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan, Council of Michigan Foundations, Americana Foundation, Carls Foundation, Frey Foundation, Hudson-Webber Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, People and Land, Kresge Foundation, McGregor Foundation, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality—Coastal Management Program, C.S. Mott Foundation, Rotary Charities of Traverse City, and the Wege Foundation.