



Funder Convening on Restoring Prosperity in Older Industrial Cities

Baltimore, MD

October 12-13, 2011

Meeting Summary

On October 12-13, 2011 a diverse group of funders representing national, regional, and local foundations from Older Industrial cities located in Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Indiana, Louisiana and Ohio met for the Fundations' Network's annual convening of its OIC working group. Discussion focused around the following objectives:

1. Deepen learning from peers, experts, and place
2. Report on 5-year assessment of OIC working group and TFN recommended adjustments
3. Solicit funder feedback re prioritization of Land Use/reclamation and Competitive Economies focus areas for OIC working group
4. Funders identify priority activities and joint learning topics for 2012, opportunities for collaboration/collective action
5. Highlight topic that cuts across TFN working groups, i.e. stormwater/green infrastructure

Key Take-Aways

- Funders expressed interest in working together in three ways: Information sharing, research and face-to-face convenings. TFN was asked to activate 'news you can use' approach to reinvigorate the listserv and add staff analysis to research dissemination, where appropriate.
- Small group discussions highlighted the importance of disseminating info to enhance funders ability to explore potential collaborative grantmaking .
- Given the current national economic climate, funders indicated that they want to continue to look for ways to leverage Fed investment. To that end, TFN staff will assist by identifying and translating 2012-13 Fed investments that align with local resources.
- Strong interest in learning from non-philanthropic experts such as private sector leaders (e.g. CEO for Cities) and national resource experts – ICIC and National Skills Coalition. One person noted that philanthropy should consider working with private sector re Future of Cities Forum to help funders understand how the private sector is viewing New Economy trends.
- Stormwater policy experts underscored the very influential role that funders play identifying and connecting the stormwater/smart growth policy agenda through support of specific campaigns, and key advocates/NGO's. For example, funders can help identify mitigation strategies that fit a local EPA consent decree and help change how stormwater management spending happens to promote green infrastructure for water management and its multiple community benefits. In DC, advocates need to continue to push deeper reforms in administrative practice, beyond boutique funding programs and to get Congress to buy into value of interagency collaboration and new performance based approaches.

- There's an opportunity before us to explore a partnership with the Federal Reserve to support research, technical assistance and convenings focused on economic revitalization of Older Industrial cities.

Next Steps

Based upon full meeting and mall group discussions, funders suggested that staff incorporate the following activities into the 2012 work planning::

1. **Update OIC grant and PRI investment scan.** Update the earlier OIC membership scan to provide current snapshot of aggregate funder investments in revitalization of older cities. We will preview initial results during Spring 2012.

Action: Staff will engage consultant to design survey tool, initiate funder interviews and provide analysis of data.

2. **'Dig deeper' re Land Use and Competitive Economies.** Funders expressed interest in near term learning agenda focused on economic growth/job creation, land regeneration and regional innovation clusters.

Action: Staff will sketch out 2012 learning agenda as part of Work Plan development that will feature briefing calls, site visit and TFN conference track sessions that hone in on workforce/job creation and triple-bottom line investment.

3. **Fed –Philanthropic Engagement.** Continue to strengthen philanthropic connections to federal agencies and further refine Fed/philanthropic action agenda for Sustainable Communities Partnership (SC2) and EPA/RACER Trust.

Action: TFN staff will continue to serve as conduit for Fed-philanthropy talks re strategic alignment and coordination of revitalization efforts in the region. Staff will work with funders to ID places that connect up neighborhood innovation and opportunity for Fed engagement activities.

4. **Info sharing.** Restart quarterly funder updates that will include cutting edge research, opportunities to explore funder collaboration and 'news you can use'. This will include insights via blog post from national economic development expert and TFN consultant, Linda Fowler (CEO and founder of Regionerate, Inc). Look for more regarding Linda's work with TFN shortly.

Action: Staff will work with funders and key National Prosperity partners to identify timely and important content for briefing calls, site visits, and future dialogue with private sector to get their perspective re restoring prosperity in Older cities.