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KEY QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS WHEN CONSIDERING A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

While the Fact Sheet and Definition of A Community Foundation describe the concept, the following questions should be addressed in the very early stages of thinking about a community foundation for your area.

1. Community foundations are born out of the vision and energetic leadership of key individuals and groups in a community. The leadership generally includes highly respected individuals from professional groups such as law and finance; senior volunteers or staff of organizations and institutions serving the community's interests in the arts, culture, education, social services; other fundraisers and grantmakers such as United Way; senior personnel from your community's leading businesses and possibly local government, and those individuals who are known to be generous philanthropists with a commitment to the well being of their local community.

How is the commitment of individual key leaders in your community evident? Have they come together to discuss this initiative and if so, with what results?

2. Community foundations, in order to be successful, require a base of wealth in the community, a potential for economic growth and a forecast of growth in population.

How do these factors apply to your community?

3. Community foundations are partners in philanthropy with other local foundations, fundraisers and grantmakers, government, corporations and businesses. They do not compete, but work collaboratively to determine how they can complement and enhance what is already in existence or address needs and interests that may require new and creative thinking.

What is the current picture of philanthropy and charitable giving in your community? What are the needs and how are they addressed? What opportunities for collaboration are there?

4. While recognizing that each community has unique interests, needs and resources, there are efficiencies and benefits from developing regional models of community foundations with a larger pool of wealth and community support.

How has your community explored this possibility? Have you contacted near-by existing community foundation and if so, with what outcome?

5. Building an infrastructure, no matter how simple, is an important early step in getting a community foundation off to a healthy start. An office and staff are needed, paperwork must be followed through, budgets prepared and monitored, and accounts must be paid. One of the greatest challenges facing the new board of directors is how to cover the cost of operations.

Has your community addressed the need for operating funds for the community foundation? How will you ensure that this need is met right from your inception?