

NRFC, Community Investment Network and Community Philanthropy

NRFC continues its support of the Community Investment Network (CIN), as a key partner in advancing community philanthropy. What makes the partnership work? Similar missions related to community-based philanthropy and the creation of broader civic participation by communities of color.

“CIN brings together a diverse array of organizations interested in strategic investment and community building by design and not in response to crisis,” says Athan Lindsay, Associate Director at the National Rural Funder’s Collaborative. “This calls for the creation of new, alternative forms of philanthropy and community investment that focus on developing a community’s shared assets. “

CIN works to enhance the collective giving capacity of organized groups and promotes community problem solving. A central tenet for the Network is the creation of community philanthropy that recognizes solutions to community problems often originate in unexpected places and from people traditionally excluded from community decision-making.

“Community-based philanthropy must begin locally and be conceived, not as charitable giving by the wealthy few, but as civic, collective participation, in which all members of society shape their communities’ futures,” says Lindsay.

Why NRFC Supports CIN

A key lesson from NRFC’s ongoing work is that persistently poor regions are lacking in organized philanthropy or access to other forms of investment. The need for improved philanthropic infrastructure makes it difficult to sustain transformative work and reduce poverty, for example. But, by leveraging and redefining community philanthropy, new philanthropic models, similar to CINs, are created.

“One of our objectives at NRFC is to expand access to resources in regions where concentrations of poverty and communities of color overlap,” says Lindsay. “We encourage those who live and work in these regions to invest in their own future.”

At their annual conference early October, CIN engaged a diverse group of individuals, families, neighborhood associations, foundations, giving circles, and community and civic groups in dialogue and sharing of best practices. Organizations working in isolation also gained benefits by meeting new philanthropic partners doing similar work within and across regions.

“Our support of CIN provides an excellent venue to advance NRFC’s distinctive work as a change agent within philanthropy,” added Lindsay. “This is a win-win for us both.”