

Framing Direction



Community Foundation of Greater South Wood County's
Role in Building Community

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Community Foundations have a long history of establishing priorities for community action, providing financial and other resources to support community change efforts, and encouraging research on and solutions to community social welfare problems. Some of the earliest community foundations (Boston, Cleveland, Kansas City, and San Francisco) embraced what is now referred to as a deliberative democratic approach to learning about and understanding public problems as well as engaging citizens in the pursuit of acceptable solutions to challenging issues facing local communities.

The notion of a foundation governed by a board representative of community interest with influence and responsibility for allocation of financial resources to address the community's collective problems is central to the purpose of a community foundation. These earliest community foundations embraced the fundamental principles of civil discourse, reasoned reflection, and responsible citizen engagement as they led efforts to redress segregation, improve public education, rectify inadequate employment opportunities, remedy juvenile delinquency, and address other intractable urban problems.

As independent organizations free from political and market-based pressures, community foundations of today are in a unique position to continue a tradition of community leadership by convening a broad cross-section of citizens and institutions around challenging issues facing the community with the intent to promote the common good. Community Foundation of Greater South Wood County (CFGSWC) is committed to making the region a better place to live for all its citizens by advancing three core goals consistent with the notion of building community.

1. Increase social capital as the platform for addressing community issues and opportunities
2. Foster collective and strategic philanthropy in ways that support community development and promote social change
3. Invest in research and skill development to build knowledge and inform decision making

Goal #1 - Increase Social Capital

Social capital refers to the “social networks (who people know) and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” Social capital is about “community connectedness” and the specific factors that influence the quality of life within a community, including trust, tolerance, volunteerism, informal socializing, and civic engagement. Social capital makes the most of the individuals’ remarkable tendency to reach out to another, to lend a hand to those in need, and to organize groups with the intent to advance the common good. Too many communities have become coarse and uncivil. Civic culture can only be restored with deliberate effort – what’s needed is nothing less than a sustained, broad-based social movement to restore civic virtue and civic participation in our communities.

Two different forms of social capital are often described. Bonding social capital is created in the homogenous social networks that connect people with others who are like them (similar race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). This type of social capital is drawn upon for social support when dealing with challenges or coping with adversity. Bridging social capital occurs when social networks forge heterogeneous relationships across historical, deeply-entrenched, group boundaries. Individuals draw upon bridging social capital for social leverage to improve life circumstances. Bridging social capital is especially important as communities grow more ethnically and socially diverse, particularly because for the disadvantaged, leverage often comes through the decisions of those who are more fortunate. Multicultural societies must promote an understanding of diversity that does not erode ethnic specificities but strengthens shared identities that create opportunities for meaningful interaction across ethnic and social lines where people work, learn, recreate, and live. The challenge for many communities is to create a broad sense of “we”; where strangers are welcome; citizens are open to and recognize the benefit of different perspectives; and diversity is promoted as a community asset.

Community foundations, by their very nature, build bridging social capital – they connect wealthy donors with those who are more economically disadvantaged; foster linkages between and among service providers focused around single issues; and convene local networks among donors, corporate leaders, public officials, grantees, and other local players and leaders to advance the common good. Community social capital requires both the “glue” that binds any one group together internally and the “bridges” that span diverse social worlds.

Modest investments in social capital generate impressive long-term benefits. Studies have shown that communities with high levels of social capital are more likely to have higher educational achievement, better performing governmental



institutions, faster economic growth, and less crime and violence. Residents are also apt to be happier, healthier, and to enjoy longer life expectancies. Social capital is self-reinforcing – a small investment creates a “virtuous circle” in which good deeds beget good deeds. Community foundations are in the business of building community; therefore they have an explicit responsibility to build the social capital that is necessary and must be present in thriving communities that work well for all citizens.

CFGSWC will increase social capital in the region by:

1. Fostering Strategic Connections

Strengthening the bonds of community requires both institutional and individual action focused on creating new relationships and networks, understanding multiple perspectives, searching for common interests, and deciding on mutually acceptable solutions to pressing public needs.

- **Convene Individuals and Institutions** – Bringing together diverse segments of society cultivates responsible voices capable of appreciating complexity, recognizing the legitimate interests of other groups, recognizing the need for difficult trade-offs, and generating a sense of common ownership and purpose.
- **Facilitate Collaboration, Partnerships, and Networks** – Collective effort promotes and encourages the creation of new relationships and integration of knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources so that strategic and systematic investments can be made to strengthen communities.

2. Contributing Ideas & Information

Catalyzing social capital conversation and action is an important part of making other kinds of capital (land, labor, and investment) work well. Individuals and institutions must have the knowledge and skills to promote a widely-shared vision of the common good.

- **Promote Education and Performance** – Building the knowledge and capacity of individuals and community-based organizations to achieve their goals through training, technical assistance, peer learning, referrals, and other training opportunities is essential to community development.
- **Expand Leadership Base** – Community leaders who proactively bring new people into decision-making are strengthening communities by recognizing that leadership is collaborative, adaptive, inclusive, and cooperative. Community leadership emphasizes participation and shared ownership.

Technology can play a key role in facilitating strategic connections and contributing ideas and information. Although technological advances have been criticized for adding to social isolation, technology has cut the costs of travel and communication in ways that help establish and maintain relationships with people who might not otherwise be part of each others lives.



Goal #2 - Foster Collective and Strategic Philanthropy

Strategic philanthropy is proactive giving that reflects and is driven by a foundation's core values and priorities in order to achieve the greatest social impact. It is designed around focused research, innovative thinking, creative planning, prudent risk-taking, reflective execution, and thorough evaluation in order to promote positive systemic change that advances the common good. Strategic Philanthropy embraces a concept of social change to the effect of greater social justice rather than mere grant-making to address social problems.

The whole is only as great as the sum of its parts. Effective, sustainable community development requires collective philanthropic action and shared investment from the funding community broadly defined to include individuals, corporations, government, and foundations. Current priority areas to support the advancement of collective and strategic philanthropy in the Greater South Wood County area include promoting social justice, aligning grantmaking and investment practices to maximize social return, and nurturing high-impact philanthropists.

Promoting Social Justice

Emmett Carson, CEO, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and a leader in advocating for community foundations to engage in social change efforts, explains that through social justice grantmaking, community foundations can improve how society provides equal access to opportunities for all citizens and ensures a minimum quality of life for all.

CFGSWC will promote social justice by:

- 1. Leveraging Systems Change**— Given the imperatives of equal treatment and program effectiveness, governmental decision-making should be informed by citizens who believe they can have influence over the policies that affect their lives. Targeting time and money in specific issue areas can facilitate system-level, policy-focused improvements that encourage citizens to take part in community affairs. Moreover, these types of investments facilitate trust, cooperation, and understanding among diverse networks that bridge disparate groups and individuals.
- 2. Providing and Expanding Resources** – A single funder cannot do it alone; resources need to be leveraged to address systemic issues and advance common goals. Moreover, collective grantmaking provides a distinct opportunity to improve and streamline funding in ways that avoid duplication of service, strengthen relationships among funders, promote individual and institutional capacity-building, and ensure sustainable programming so that community needs are adequately addressed.



3. Contributing Ideas and Information – Community foundations are well positioned to expand public dialogue about key community issues in ways that provide opportunities for expressing shared community values. Broad public deliberation and meaningful citizen participation enhances a sense of community, improves knowledge of local affairs, encourages tolerance toward difference, brings important issues to the fore, and redresses power imbalances.

Aligning Investment & Grantmaking Practices to Maximize Social Return

Community foundations must think about how to use existing financial assets more strategically to achieve maximum community impact. Strategic investments that balance achieving the greatest financial return with social impact contribute to greater achievement of mission. Innovative grantmaking practices provide the risk capital within a society to test pioneering solutions to systemic problems.

CFGSWC will align investment & grantmaking practices to maximize Social Return by:

- 1. Providing and Expanding Resources** – Mission-related investing (including Program-related investments) provides community foundations with important tools that can be used to advance program goals, support important local projects that require a financial investment beyond what has traditionally been funded, and leverage additional financial support for grantees from banks, corporations, and government. Grantmaking practices must embody and advance the vision, mission and values of CFGSWC in order to most effectively support the desired goals related to social capital, philanthropy and research/knowledge.
- 2. Contributing Ideas and Information** – In order to achieve the greatest social return on grantmaking and financial investments the broader community must have a better understanding of the ways in which these practices can be used as tools to achieve CFGSWC’s mission.

Nurturing High-Impact Philanthropists

Private philanthropy plays a role in building social capital and advancing common community goals that are not being met by private industry or government. Community foundations are in a unique position to help philanthropists understand community development priorities and play an essential role in building strong relationships with donors who are not only interested in sharing their financial resources, but who also are willing to lend their knowledge, expertise, and networks. The satisfaction individuals get from giving or investing in their communities is encouraged and cultivated through personalized interaction.



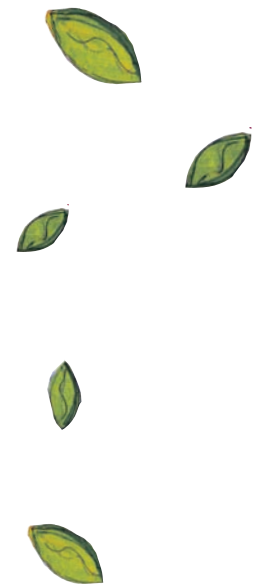
Goal #3 - Invest in Research and Skill Development

Philanthropic investments informed by sound research, community need, and best practices will be more strategic, cost-effective, and inclusive. Moreover, studying past activities and programs to assess how they helped or hurt community development and social capital will increase the return on philanthropic investments. All types of civic organizations and traditional institutions such as nonprofits, community-based organizations, churches, and schools are the mainstay of community capacity. When these institutions are run well, and the individuals who provide leadership are aware and informed the community will be stronger.

CFGSWC will invest in research and skill development to build knowledge and increase the effectiveness of community decision-making and action by:

- 1. Contributing Ideas and Information** – Initiating research, gathering, interpreting, and disseminating information about community issues and problems is a key role for community foundations as they often have firsthand contact, can spot trends, surface issues, provide analysis, and serve as hubs for community information & research.
- 2. Promoting Education and Performance** – Educational opportunities and access to information increases knowledge, strengthens networks and ultimately improves decision-making. Assisting local leadership to generate metrics and think through issues of accountability, transparency, and evaluation in ways that can be used to model desirable behavior and ultimately inform local decision-making. Improving the ability of individuals, organizations, businesses, and government to come together, learn, and make well-reasoned decisions about the community’s present and future, while working together to carry out those decisions is essential to promoting community development.
- 3. Facilitate Collaboration, Partnerships, and Networks** – Tapping into the knowledge-based institutional resources and harnessing the networking potential of technology will generate useful data and knowledge to inform decision-making.

Embedded in each of the three core goals detailed above is a profound awareness that CFGSWC must effectively market itself to its constituents and the broader citizenry so that a shared understanding of its role in building community is promoted.





**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

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