

Incourage Community Foundation

Blueprints for Tomorrow

Wisconsin Rapids, WI

Challenge

Economic development is a pressing challenge facing America's rural areas. Network building, collaboration, and shared knowledge needs to be fostered to allow communities to make collective progress, while creating a safe space to develop trust and break down institutional barriers.

Innovation

Blueprints was the first collaboration of its kind and is leveraging philanthropy to build a network and resources for the community that reach new areas and involve knowledge partners, including the public sector and financing. Through Blueprints, participating government and nonprofit organizations are building state-of-the-art field knowledge while applying new insights and techniques to collaborative projects that support community priorities.

Blueprints for Tomorrow is a 25-month Incourage- and USDA-supported program that is building networks, vision, and skills among local institutions to lead a new regional economy based upon the values of equity, opportunity, and shared stewardship. Based in the rural, central Wisconsin city of Wisconsin Rapids, this professional development program combines training, coaching, and community knowledge with evolving design and finance tools to complete projects that support community priorities. In working to create a more participatory culture and grow a local, inclusive, sustainable economy, Incourage learned that residents have an appetite for change and were ready to help shape their community's future. This was affirmed in a 2012 community survey when residents identified four community priorities: (1) a strong local economy, (2) opportunities for young adults and families, (3) openness to new ideas and change, and (4) nature and recreation. Blueprints is helping the community's institutions do business in new and different ways, ensuring that they are prepared to support an entrepreneurial culture shaped by resident participation.

Public Sector Partners

City of Wisconsin Rapids,
the Wisconsin Rapids
Housing Authority, Wood
County, and the USDA

Other Partners

Central Rivers Farmed
and John E. Alexander
South Wood County YMCA

