Rural Openness Cohort
Oregon and Washington

WHAT Two learning cohorts of rural funders and rural based nonprofits in Washington and Oregon.

PURPOSE To help facilitate more transparent relationships between funders and nonprofits. Create open space to discuss opportunities and challenges facing rural communities.

HOW Three day long meetings for each cohort in rural locations. Utilization of Liberating Structures to facilitate rapid trust and constructive dialogue.

Highlights from Learning

- Relationship building leads to a stronger network and understanding of who’s doing the work, who’s investing in the work and a greater leveraging of resources (human and financial).
- Nonprofits have lived-experience expertise on issues happening on the ground in communities. Foundations have access to research and thought-leader expertise. How can we create a reciprocal sharing and lifting of expertise to design more effective programming, services and responsive grantmaking strategy?
- While working on openness between nonprofit and philanthropy sectors, cohorts thought there is need to actively engage the public sector if we are to truly move the needle on systems change.
- How can we reframe funder directed questions about scale and sustainability to a open conversation about strategy?
- In rural, while scale and reach is perceived smaller compared to urban communities, investments can go further resulting in layered impact and sustainability.
- Because of the geographic spread in rural communities and challenges around transportation and infrastructure – we discussed ideas to centralize and co-locate services and programs offered by nonprofits to overcome barriers around access. Are there creative ways to co-locate services like health services, healthy food access, and public transit?
- Collaborative fundraising and collaborative grantmaking were two strategies discussed to address funding deserts, avoid duplication and foster a culture of collaboration.
- While rural communities are becoming increasingly diverse, equity looks different in rural. Nonprofits may be doing equity work, but some translation is required between funder and communities. Transparent conversations help to surface nuances that might be overlooked in a written proposal.

Interested in learning more, please contact Maya T. Sandifor, mtsandifor@philanthropynw.org
Mokita Myth Exercise (25/10)

1. Choose a theme the group will explore.
2. Instruct participants to write a Mokita they are interested in discussing related to the theme on an index card. Exclude identifiers, name or organization.
3. Instruct participants that they will be using a scale of 1-5 "1" is I'm not interested in discussing this Mokita and "5" is I want to prioritize discussing this Mokita.
4. Standing participants will pass the cards among themselves.
   Move and pass, but do not read the card until the facilitator says stop passing.
5. Participants should read and score the card 1-5 that they are holding.
   Repeat the move, pass and score for five rounds. On the fifth and final round participants add up the five numbers on their card.
6. Facilitator helps to find the top scores. By asking who has 25.
   Then 24. Continued until you have 5-10 top scorers.
7. Facilitator may need to help the group narrow down the top scorers if there are an unmanageable number for the group size and space.
8. Assign parts of the room for each topic. And invite participants to vote with their feet for the topic they'll discuss.
9. You can choose to have one person be a note taker to share out later with the larger group. Or you can also choose to have the groups rotate, so everyone has a turn discussing as many of the topics as time allows.
10. Close out by reflecting with the group on surprises, what they learned, possible next steps on dismantling the Mokita.

What's a Mokita?
The word Mokita is a fantastic word taken from a language called Kivila. It is spoken in Papua New Guinea. The best English translation you can get of Mokita is, “the truth we all know but agree not to talk about.” In the English language we might refer to this as the “elephant in the room”. Tribal leaders in Papua New Guinea believe the fewer Mokita’s that exist in the tribe, the healthier the tribe will be.