Charting the Course for Change
Reflections from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation’s 2017 Biennial Grantee and Stakeholder Convening

In September 2017, atop beautiful Petit Jean Mountain, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) boldly asked more than 100 of its partners an important question: “What will Arkansas look like in the future if each of us do our part to improve the lives of all Arkansans?” WRF was in the midst of its Reflection, Analysis, and Planning (RAP) process, and it was time for Board and staff members to hear directly from the Foundation’s network and share what they had learned about Asset Framing and Futurism as powerful tools for change.

Over the course of the day, the Foundation and its partners framed, processed, and envisioned a better future for Arkansans. WRF’s Board members immediately put what they learned to use the next day as they started the strategic planning process, charting the course for change in Arkansas.

Where partners came from:

- C (Central) 64%
- E (East) 14%
- NW (Northwest) 17%
- SW (Southwest) 3%
- W (West) 2%

Partners were passionate about:
A New Frame

National thought leaders took center stage and shared more about what the Foundation had started exploring throughout its RAP process to frame WRF’s strategic direction.

Trabian Shorters
Asset Framing

When we acknowledge the people we serve as the heroes of their own stories—rather than victims that need to be saved—we are better able to serve and support them in achieving their full potential.

Trista Harris
Futurism

The future is easier to understand than most people think. All we have to do is STOP loving our problems, LOOK for signals about where we are heading, and GO create the future we want for our families and communities.

Daryn Dodson
Rural Economic Development

Investment in women, minorities, and rural communities should represent the diversity of our nation. More equitable investment will increase opportunities for all of us in the future.

Mike Malone
Arkansas’s Economy

Economic headlines in Arkansas are great, but we have to expect more. The state’s educational attainment, income, and health outcomes are among the lowest in the nation, but we have an opportunity to create a dramatically brighter future for all Arkansans.

An Informed Process

Reflecting on insights gained from listening to national thought leaders, WRF partners, Board, and staff processed the new framework WRF was using to begin crafting its strategic direction.

How partners will apply asset framing to what they do:

“Approach every situation I encounter by first seeing the value of the individuals involved.”

“Update our mission and our work from an asset perspective.”

“Change how we describe our ‘at-risk’ kids.”

“Community engagement in OUR plan, which is rich in assets we have defined together.”

“Start by agreeing that everyone has worth.”

“Enthusiastically think about equity.”
What should WRF consider as it decides whether to stay the course or change direction in the next iteration of its strategic plan?

“Look at where we have been and the policy decisions made that brought us to this place. For example, policy decisions for tax breaks rather than using funds to incentivize Internet connectivity.”

“How do we involve those we support as we have these conversations? Where is their seat at the table?”

“Building trust and relationships that will encourage and facilitate creating a better future for Arkansas.”

“Enhance the course of action and continue to shape the conversation about the future.”

“Boldly move forward to address collaborative philanthropic funding.”

“Hold onto WRF’s four bold initiatives, but be creative about how to achieve our shared goals.”

“Balance focus and structure with flexibility to respond to community needs.”
After taking time to process how Asset Framing and Futurism can be applied to improving the lives of all Arkansans, WRF’s partners, Board, and staff envisioned what education, economics, and social justice should look like in the state a decade from now.

What attendees would create if WRF didn’t exist:

“Public funding for public good”
“A public advocacy organization”
“An incubator for local projects”
“An impact bank”

What education in Arkansas should look like in a decade:

“Great schools with visionary leaders”
“Research-proven solutions of ForwARd”
“Ensure the system helps all students”
“STEM - think for the future”

What Arkansas’s economy should look like in a decade:

“Invest in innovation”
“Opportunity in rural areas”
“Entrepreneurship skills and jobs”
“Establish universal income for all”

What social justice should look like in a decade:

“Advocate for criminal justice reform”
“Come together to eliminate social injustice”
“Inform, educate, and mobilize residents”
“Quality education for all”

And above all, continue to be innovative and bold.
Charting the Course for Change

WRF will take partners’ encouragement to be bold and will launch strategic planning. Over the next three quarters, WRF will share progress, seek additional feedback to chart the course for change in Arkansas, and continue to rely on partners to help share accomplishments from the last decade of Moving the Needle.

What attendees want WRF to consider as it shapes its strategic direction:

Strategic Planning Timeline

**December 2017**
The Board will discuss and design the Foundation’s programmatic impact areas.

**March 2018**
The Board will shape WRF’s operations and outcomes as they relate to the Foundation’s priorities in the new strategic direction.

**April - May 2018**
The Foundation will share the ideas generated from Board discussions with key stakeholders for input and feedback.

**June 2018**
The Board will review a draft of the strategic plan.

**July - August 2018**
We will seek feedback from partners for the Board to use as it revises and finalizes the strategic plan.

**September 2018**
The Board will share final thoughts and feedback on the strategic plan and begin discussing how to operationalize it.

**December 2018**
The Board and staff will celebrate and launch the new strategic plan.

**2019 - Onward**
The Foundation will share the new strategic plan with partners and support them as ambassadors, advocates, and activists for achieving the Foundation’s new goals.
What will Arkansas look like in the future if each of us do our part to improve the lives of all Arkansans?

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