2015 Funder Roundtables

One of the most popular aspects of Rural Philanthropy Days, the Funder Roundtables, will occur on Friday morning. During that portion of the conference, representatives from funding organizations and nonprofit organizations like yours will have an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss possible matches between the funder's giving or grant priorities, and your nonprofit's needs.

Changes for 2015

In 2014, we solicited feedback from both nonprofits and funders who attended past RPD events, in order to make the 2015 conference even stronger. In response to those comments, we are implementing some changes this year:

- **Pre-conference training**. All registrants will be required to participate in a pre-conference webinar in July. The webinar will be offered twice, on July 13 and 20. If you cannot participate in the webinar, please contact Jenny Turner to discuss your options.

- **No Friday drop-ins**. Anyone who shows up on Friday morning without pre-registering or attending the pre-conference training will be turned away.

- **Time and seating limits at Roundtables**. To ensure that everyone has a chance to present their case to funders, we will be limiting the seating at each funder table to eight nonprofit representatives, and strictly enforcing time limits.

How the Roundtables Work

- **Funder tables.** At about 8:45 a.m. on Friday, the different funders will split up and sit at separate tables in the ballroom. Most funders are sending one person; some are sending two. Each table will have a sign on it identifying the funder at that table. There will also be a map available telling you where each funder is sitting.

- **Rotations.** Beginning at 9:00 a.m., nonprofit representatives will fan out and sit at the tables of the funders they want to visit. (*More on this below.*) There will be five "rotations" over the course of the morning (that is, opportunities to meet with five different funders). Each rotation is about 30 minutes long in total: 25 minutes for the table discussions, and 5 minutes to regroup for the next rotation. If your favorite funder's table is full at first, don't despair. You will have another chance. If your agency is bringing two people, you might consider splitting up so you meet with more funders.

- **Pitch.** As will be discussed further at the pre-conference training, the basic approach is that the funder will ask each of the nonprofits at the table for their "pitch": that, is to explain, in two minutes, what the nonprofit does, and whether it has any specific grant needs right now. The funder might also explain a little about that funder's grants process and priorities.

  - In response to each brief pitch, the funder will say either that (1) there is a fit between the funder's priorities and your nonprofit's needs, ("green light"), (2) there might be a fit but the funder needs more information ("yellow light"), or (3) there is not a fit either because your nonprofit or your specific need doesn't match up well with the funder's giving priorities ("red light").

  - If a funder gives you a "red light," don't be offended. It is not personal. Thank the funder for listening and let the conversation move on to the next person.

  - If a funder gives a "green light," that is not an obligation or commitment from the funder to award a grant to your organization. It is simply the funder saying that is worth your time to submit an application.

  When the next rotation starts, the funder stays at the table, and you will move on to the tables of other funders that interest you.