



Heart & Soul Community Planning Request for Proposals

Submission deadline: March 3, 2008

Visit: www.orton.org/rfp for updated information

The Orton Family Foundation seeks partnerships with communities eager to and capable of collaborating on an exciting and novel approach to community planning that emphasizes ongoing evaluation and the sharing of best practices. The Foundation invites proposals from small cities and towns and partnering organizations committed to plans for future growth inspired by their community's "heart and soul" attributes. The Foundation anticipates selecting two (2) communities in New England and two (2) communities in the Rocky Mountain West in 2008. Each selected community will be eligible for up to \$100,000 in supporting funds over two years.

I. Background:

Land use planning in America has not lived up to its full potential to engage a broad base of citizens in defining and shaping the future of their communities. Efforts to interest people in community planning often fall short because processes commonly used don't always convey the impacts community decision-making has on citizens' day-to-day lives and livelihoods. Such efforts often ignore the informal networks of people within communities where ideas and opinions are routinely formed and shared in settings as humble as the laundromat or the corner store.

Growth and development pressures in small cities and towns are increasing dramatically and will continue to in the years to come. Added to the hurdles confronting broad participation is the incremental nature of land use changes and the difficulty of predicting the consequences of these changes. Traditional land use planning often doesn't truly incorporate the particular ways people relate to their physical surroundings – their sense of place. It also tends to ignore or discount the shared values, beliefs and traditions people derive from their communities' unique environments, economies and cultures.

The Orton Family Foundation helps citizens and leaders of small cities and towns identify and express their community's heart and soul—those attributes citizens hold dear and that connect individuals to one another and to the community as a whole. When they are fully understood, these heart and soul attributes can be used to shape and drive decisions that protect and enhance local character and values even as change occurs. The Foundation believes that identifying, describing, and stewarding heart and soul attributes is essential to building vibrant, enduring communities — and that when leaders, guided by broad participation, take action they inspire in citizens a deep connection to one another and to what matters most about the places where they live, work, and learn.

With the selection of four small cities or towns, the Foundation aims to:

- Foster Enduring, Actionable Planning by Communities
 - Seek broad community participation and consensus in determining development futures and help build local resilience for facing future land use challenges and threats
 - Develop implementation processes that extend agreed on values, visions, and plans into actions that achieve desired results
- Attract and Engage Others in a Community
 - Form new partnerships and convene group and community resources at the local, regional, state and national levels to achieve community goals
- Build an Empowering Culture for Communities to Take Action
 - Enable citizens and leaders to improve outcomes by fostering accountability, continuous learning, and stewardship
 - Build local capacity for stronger community dialogue, democratic processes, decision-making, and action
- Advance Inquiry and Discovery in the Land Use and Community Planning Fields
 - Vigorously promote the creation, dissemination, and application of new knowledge in support of the Foundation's goals

The Heart & Soul Community Planning initiative is an essential step toward the Orton Family Foundation's goal of developing a model community planning and implementation process applicable to other small cities and towns in the U.S. Through this RFP, the Foundation seeks partnerships with communities that are eager to and capable of collaborating on an innovative approach to planning that includes measurable results, long term project evaluation and sharing of best practices. For examples of efforts by other communities and organizations, see:

Planning for Community Heart and Soul - A Review of Processes and Practitioners at:

<http://www.orton.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=640&nodeID=1>

II. Eligibility:

This invitation is open to any community—in partnership with a regional entity (public, private or non-profit)—with the desire and potential to develop and put into action plans that identify, preserve, and enhance the heart and soul elements of the community. The project must focus on a general purpose municipality (town, village, or city) of no more than 50,000 residents. The community must be experiencing growth pressures and be located in either northern New England (ME, NH, VT, or MA, for purposes of this RFP) or the Rocky Mountain region (CO, MT, WY, or ID, for purposes of this RFP).

III. What we are looking for:

The Foundation would like to partner with communities on comprehensive “heart and soul” community planning efforts that begin with an in-depth discovery and visioning process and then implement actions to protect and enhance the places, values, and desires identified through the visioning. We will consider planning for a specific development project only if the specific project is part of an open and comprehensive planning effort to ensure that the project is consistent with the articulated community values and vision.

We strongly encourage communities to undertake this work with one or more regional partners and other local organizations (governmental or nongovernmental), particularly where those partners can

offer technical assistance, access to resources, and assistance with project design, implementation, evaluation and stewardship.

Communities must be: ready to use innovative project design, planning and communication tools; eager to work with community stakeholders; and committed to achieving citizen engagement and consensus building by seeking and listening to townspeople who are under represented in traditional planning processes.

Projects must incorporate, but are not limited to, the following five (5) elements:

- 1. Explore and identify heart and soul attributes of the community:** Each community must engage in a dynamic public outreach program designed to tap a wide cross-section of the local citizenry. This program must fully explore and articulate the characteristics that make the community a great place to live. The characteristics identified may be tangible or intangible and may include unique built, economic, natural, social and cultural attributes, and traditions. Projects must engage citizens, organizations, and social networks, both formal and informal, in the process and in making decisions for the community's future. That will require participating municipalities to listen carefully to all those who live, work and play in the community, including potentially marginalized populations such as seniors, youth, minorities, lower income families, recent arrivals, and farmers/ranchers. Innovative processes or tools for engagement must be used both in initial outreach and to assist the community in prioritizing actions that protect or enhance their heart and soul elements.
- 2. Share local stories:** Telling a story, in its broadest sense, brings to life residents' experiences and values: their shared heritage, sense of place, motivations, and purpose. As part of a community planning process, sharing stories can reveal important overlooked values and unresolved issues, reflect collective experiences and common themes, and give voice to hopes for the future. It can unlock community heart and soul attributes like few other processes can. Hearing each other's stories builds the mutual understanding, connections and sympathies that support taking action. The storytelling aspect of proposed projects can be as simple or as expansive as the community desires, but it is an important technique for listening, building trust and understanding, and capturing the community's qualitative sense of itself and its aspirations.
- 3. Use a shared, values-based vision to guide growth:** Participating communities will manage growth and navigate change based on a shared vision built from broadly accepted heart and soul attributes and common themes. If alternative growth scenarios are identified, a town will evaluate and present the alternatives and their benefits and impacts to help in the adoption of a vision based on evaluation criteria that reflect the vision and values. Visualization tools will be employed in the process of reviewing alternative scenarios.
- 4. Develop actionable plans and implement priority activities:** With a consensus building process, the community will put recommended actions into practice to preserve and enhance the town's heart and soul attributes. These recommendations must include specific actions related to land use and community development. The implementation plan should answer questions such as: *How* will governing regulations, financial incentives, design guidelines, and budgeting need to be changed? *Who* will take responsibility for each of the recommended actions, including public, private and nonprofit sectors? *When* are the actions anticipated? *What*

resources will be required? Implementation activities are expected to occur over several years, but projects should achieve noticeable successes within the first two to three years, particularly where land-use policies and town plans are to be revised.

- 5. Build accountability and share results:** To ensure accountability, implementation plans must include a system or set of practices for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the community's decisions over time. Results and progress toward implementation of the community's values, vision and plans must be regularly communicated to the public.

IV. Funding:

The Foundation will commit up to \$100,000 over two years to each of the selected cities or towns. Participating communities and their partner organizations are expected to play a major role in project direction, management, and implementation. Communities or project teams must demonstrate that they have the capacity to ensure successful processes and outcomes, and that they will dedicate personnel and raise additional funds, if necessary, to complete the project. It is expected that projects will require a dedicated project coordinator.

The primary purposes of Foundation funding are to bring or enhance innovation, effective decision-support tools, and creative engagement and planning processes to selected communities. Foundation funds are for direct project expenses such as consultants, outreach and materials, partial support towards staffing, travel and other direct project expenses. Foundation Funds may not be used for overhead expenses or indirect costs.

Project towns are expected to provide at minimum a 1:1 match to Orton Family Foundation funds through a combination of cash contributions (including grants, existing budgets, donations, etc.) and in-kind resources, over the life of the project. In-kind contributions may include donated services, materials and supplies; equipment; use of facilities; and staff time.

V. Foundation staff role:

The Orton Family Foundation is an operating foundation; as such its staff will be directly involved as a partner in selected projects. Foundation staff has expertise in community planning, citizen engagement, planning tools application, project evaluation, and communications. Foundation staff is not involved in project implementation on a day-to-day basis but rather serves in an "active advisory" role. In that role, Foundation staff will be available to assist with project design and help to identify and provide citizen engagement tools. Additionally, as a project partner, the Foundation will be involved with the approval of outside consultants and the scope of their work. The Foundation is prepared to provide professional training to project staff and volunteers around issues most relevant to the project, during the visioning and implementation phases. The Foundation will also work with the local leaders to evaluate the project and to communicate results to local, regional and national audiences.

VI. Selection criteria:

1. Proposals will advance a clear, well thought out, and achievable concept, with the understanding that the concept will be refined in consultation with the Foundation.
2. Proposals will demonstrate commitment to a high level of citizen participation and diverse stakeholder involvement.
3. Proposals will embrace creative approaches to public outreach, planning and communication and the opportunity to integrate innovative tools and processes.

4. Proposals will demonstrate a high level of commitment from community and project partners.
5. Proposals will provide a commitment to the dedicated personnel and financial capacity necessary to complete the project's scope of work successfully within two years.
6. Proposals will present a clearly defined need and appropriate timing for the project.
7. Proposals will articulate a commitment to provide measurable results that can be reported and monitored after completion of the grant period.
8. Proposals will demonstrate the likelihood that project results will inform the Foundation's broader Heart and Soul initiative and will be useful to other community planning efforts.

VII. Details for submitting a proposal:

1. Completed project questionnaire (attached) - not to exceed 5 pages at 12 pt font, single-spaced. No additional attachments, please.
2. Proposed project budget, not to exceed 1 page, indicating sources and uses of funds and in-kind match.
3. Letters of support from both local government and partner organization(s).
4. An optional conference call to review the expectations of the RFP and to respond to questions has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 12, 2008 at 1 PM ET. To sign up for the call, please email Maureen Gour (mgour@orton.org) with your name, affiliation, and phone number.
5. For updated information on this Request for Proposals and to review FAQ, visit our website at: www.orton.org/RFP.

Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than Monday, March 3, 2008 to: Maureen Gour at mgour@orton.org. Late submissions will not be considered for funding.

Proposals will be reviewed and a short list of finalists developed by March 31, 2008. Additional information may be required of finalists. Site visits to finalist towns will be scheduled for April of 2008. Final selection is anticipated by May 30, 2008. An agreement with project partners will be developed following final selection. Project start dates are anticipated for summer 2008.

VIII. Attachments

Request For Proposals Questionnaire
Declaration of Community Heart and Soul Beliefs



P.O. Box 111
Middlebury, VT 05753
802.388.6633
www.orton.org
info@orton.org

Request for Proposals Questionnaire
Heart and Soul Community Planning
Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than
Monday, March 3, 2008 to:
Maureen Gour at mgour@orton.org.

Please provide **brief** responses to the following questions, submitting **no more than five pages** (12 pt font, single spaced) in addition to your one page project budget and letters of support. No attachments or images will be accepted.

Community:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone:

Web address:

Population:

Title:

Email:

Partnering organization(s), add lines if needed

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone:

Web address:

Title:

Email:

1. Briefly highlight relevant socioeconomic data about your community (income, demographics, employment, growth patterns and trends, etc).
2. Briefly describe key community assets. What are the most significant planning and development opportunities and challenges?
3. Given the scope of this RFP project and its particular emphasis on community heart and soul planning, why are you interested in participating and why at this time?
4. Describe your Project Concept, keeping in mind the five required elements from Section III above. What are the short and long-term goals for this project? What outcome do you want and how will you define success? What barriers do you anticipate and how will you overcome them? If you have ideas about how your community will engage citizens and stakeholders or what tools, techniques or processes you are interested in using, please describe. (Final project design will be developed in consultation with the Foundation.)
5. Does your town already have experience working with the proposed partner organization(s)? What will the partner(s) bring to the project and how will project responsibilities and roles be assigned?
6. Describe the commitment of community leaders to the project. List key civic, governmental or nonprofit organizations, as well as individuals, in your town that would or should be involved in the project.

7. Has your community identified and demonstrated a prior commitment to protecting its unique assets such as natural and recreational resources or cultural and social places? Were those protection efforts successful? What key challenges did you face in protecting these assets?
8. How have you tried to increase citizen participation in the past and what has been your success? Reflecting on your community's past experiences with broad-based planning efforts (if any), how much interest do you believe there is for engaging in future substantial planning efforts.
9. What is your plan for a project coordinator?
10. Are there any other key facts or circumstances that you would like for us to know?
11. Please attach a preliminary project budget (maximum of 1 page) including proposed sources of funding and matching funds (1:1 match required). Matching funds can include a combination of both cash and in-kind resources. Indicate how you propose to use Foundation funds. Describe the commitment of the community itself (municipal governing body, planning commission, mayor, town manager, etc.), and of any project partner organizations in terms of staff resources, funding, and ability to raise additional resources if needed to complete the project.



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January 4, 2008

Birth of a Heart & Soul Community Planning Movement

26 October 2007

BURLINGTON, VT—More than 300 community activists, citizen planners, professional planners and local elected officials gathered here for the 2007 **COMMUNITYMATTERS** conference and wrote a Declaration of Community Heart & Soul Beliefs. So far, 103 attendees have signed the declaration, making a commitment to put their shared beliefs into action toward greater citizen participation in defining the future of communities. The conference was co-sponsored by The Orton Family Foundation and PlaceMatters.

The Declaration sets out fundamental beliefs for a new path to building and sustaining community across America—a heart and soul path that goes to the citizens of a town to discover and voice what the community values most about itself. After this process of discovery—with faith in the citizens' vision for their town and trust in a fair process—communities can embark on long term planning, reordering priorities and rewriting town plans.

Context for Declaration

Small cities and towns are facing many growth challenges: increasing local or regional development pressures to aging populations, increasingly mobile residents, youth out-migration, crumbling infrastructure, and antiquated economies are among the many forces communities confront in this complex world. In all of these communities, change is occurring, and competing interests often fracture the social fabric. Stories of confrontation and alienation are commonplace in local newspapers, while other citizens opt out of their towns' important discussions and decisions.

While innovation and success has occurred across the country, land use planning in America has not lived up to its full potential in engaging a broad base of local citizens and helping them define and shape the future of their communities. Traditional quantitative approaches to planning use important data about demographic and economic shifts, traffic counts and infrastructure needs, but frequently fail to account for the particular ways people relate to their physical surroundings and ignore or discount the intangibles—the shared values, beliefs and quirky customs—that make community. Furthermore, a collection of quantifiable attributes without an understanding of shared values and a sense of purpose does not motivate citizens to show up and make tough, consistent decisions. It also fails to account for how citizens' day-to-day lives and livelihoods, and those of future generations, will be affected by change.

Local citizens have the ingenuity and ability to ensure vibrant, enduring economic, environmental and social well being in their communities. With the full participation of those who live, work and play in a community, a town can tap into its deep beliefs to direct the forces of growth and change, protecting and enhancing its heart and soul—the attributes and places that connect citizens to one another and to the community as a whole.

Declaration of Community Heart & Soul Beliefs

We the undersigned believe that every community must explore and express what makes it special—its **Heart & Soul** elements—and with specificity describe those tangible and intangible elements that if lost would fundamentally change the character of the place. Once articulated and acknowledged, community Heart & Soul serves as the “Bill of Rights and Responsibilities” for citizens as they make decisions about the future.

We believe that when a community takes the time to get to know itself—to identify its **Heart & Soul** elements—it will gain a sense of identity and purpose that will empower its citizens to make strong enduring decisions and take right action to protect and strengthen who they are.

We believe in a direct democratic process. There is no place in this process for “inclusion as usual.” Traditional gestures toward inclusion are bankrupt; they engender neither trust nor common purpose. Only by going to, listening to, and learning from everyone—the influential and the forgotten, old timers and newcomers, young and old, rich and poor, business owners and workers, professionals and tradesmen, the noisy and the quiet, the caregivers and the gatekeepers—can communities live with and be guided by shared purpose and identity.

We believe in the strength of connection. Through connection to other places, communities can define their place in the world and contribute to a broader region of ideas, people, economies and natural systems. This connectedness gives communities an evolving understanding of themselves, with which to steer their futures in a world of change.

We believe in the necessity of reciprocating citizens’ trust and participation with results: actionable plans and visions for a future that are grounded by the reality of each community’s circumstances.

We believe that community planning steered by **Heart & Soul** values will tap into sources of creativity within communities. Decisions and actions relating to development, planning and policy must reflect and reinforce the community’s self-identity. This approach must guide planning, zoning, public investment, development, design, budgeting and management.

We believe that **Heart & Soul** elements must be monitored as closely as any economic indicator. **Heart & Soul** must be so deeply enmeshed in the community’s identity that making a decision without reference to it will be as unthinkable as making a decision without reference to its economic effects.

We believe in the importance of celebration: in acknowledging and measuring **Heart & Soul** results as yardsticks for accountability. We believe in asking all members of a community, regardless of role or race, how to do better. We care about sharing success and validating progress to influence the wider world.