

## A CASE STUDY IN THREE PARTS

“These cases can be used in all kinds of settings as a springboard for discussions about the science and art of how we work as grant makers. In addition to the explicit learning obtained from the cases, I see them as a way to encourage practitioners to exchange knowledge about what they know but rarely get to share with each other.”

EMMETT D. CARSON

*President and CEO*

*The Minneapolis Foundation*

“What a wonderful — and comforting — resource this is! While these cases are about grant making at a major national institution, I found them relevant to my experience in community and family foundations. They are full of rich and accessible lessons for any funder, a model for learning from one’s own practice.”

MELINDA MARBLE

*Executive Director*

*The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation*

“These cases illuminate many of the key decision-making challenges that grant makers face in building strong programs. They’re an excellent resource for all types of foundations.”

KATHLEEN D. McCARTHY

*Director*

*Center for the Study of Philanthropy*

*The Graduate Center, CUNY*

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*This case study has been adapted from classic training materials used for many years with new grant makers at the Ford Foundation. It is now part of the GrantCraft series of publications and videos, which invite foundation practitioners to join conversations and solve problems with their peers about strategic and tactical issues in philanthropy.*

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## How to Use This Case Study

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The following pages describe a real episode from the experience of one grant maker at the Ford Foundation. Except for a few identifying details, the circumstances presented here actually arose, and the staff member faced the same questions and choices that this case study presents to you. But the case isn't meant as a history lesson; it doesn't supply all of the grant maker's "answers."

Those are for you to choose.

In short, this is an exercise meant to prompt reflection and imagination. It may be helpful in framing a group discussion or as the basis of a training exercise. (In fact, it was originally written for that purpose.) But it can be just as useful if read in private. It's not a test — there are many possible approaches and solutions to the issues raised here. There are no "correct" ones unveiled at the end.

If you decide to use this case study with a group or in training classes, we suggest giving participants plenty of time to read and think about the case, well before the discussion. Because the case offers an opportunity for readers to put themselves in the place of another person, it may take several readings, or just some quiet time to think, before a reader begins to imagine what she or he would do in this situation. Circulating some open-ended study questions in advance might help to jump-start a discussion, or highlight issues of special importance to the members of your group. We offer some possible questions at the end of this case.

While teaching by case method was made famous by the Harvard law and business schools, its origins go back to medical education. Medical students presented with a live case — say, a person manifesting particular symptoms — would be asked by their instructors to make a diagnosis and to recommend a course of treatment. This mode of teaching

continues to dominate pedagogy in clinical medicine. Meanwhile, case teaching as a pedagogical device has spread widely in professional education.

So we offer this case in that spirit, as a learning exercise and a springboard for formulating ideas — but fortunately, without the life-or-death consequences that a medical case might pose. Several groups have used this case in training sessions or group discussions at the Ford Foundation, and in the process they arrived at different conclusions by different methods. Similarly, we encourage you to think of it not as a way of learning from someone else's experience, but as a way of expanding your own.

## Background

Upon his arrival from India in the fall of 1981, grant maker Robert Armstrong found his fifth-floor office — the first program director's office he would occupy at the Ford Foundation's New York headquarters — to be completely empty. The lack of books, papers, or pending requests for grant funds was indicative of the blank slate that Armstrong, age 53, faced as the new director of a new division, called Rural Poverty and Resources. This was his fourth position in 12 years at the foundation.

The wholesale reorganization of the foundation earlier that year had resulted in the creation, or at least renaming, of a number of program units. But the rural program was in many ways the newest element, an attempt to move into an area in which the foundation had not previously been directly involved. With the exception of a fleeting focus on Appalachian poverty in the early years of the Kennedy administration, rural American poverty had long been either ignored or assumed to be in decline. Photographs taken by Walker Evans and others had captured the rural poverty of previous eras but had been supplanted in the national imagination by images of the urban poor.

The foundation had planned a modest step to reverse this trend. Its Rural Poverty and Resources Program in the United

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States would not only be its newest program, but also its smallest: The domestic rural poverty program that Armstrong would head was to start making grants in the coming fall, with at least \$500,000 at its disposal.

As he settled into the new office, Armstrong knew he would have to do much more than dispose of those funds. He would have to define the contours of the program he had agreed to lead – a program that, he hoped, would begin to give the issue of rural poverty a higher profile by year’s end, both within the foundation and on the public agenda. Doing so would require a series of key early grant decisions.

## The Challenge

Poverty in the United States, whether rural or otherwise, had never been Robert Armstrong’s field of expertise. Although an agricultural economist by training, he had come to the foundation in 1969 from an academic career in economics and business administration. His previous foundation postings had called on him to apply that background to improve agricultural productivity, and thereby rural income and employment prospects, in developing countries in Latin America and most recently in India. In the latter job, he had been responsible for agricultural and rural development programs in the foundation’s largest international office.

In his new position, Armstrong was to continue to play a role in the foundation’s international work, serving as an adviser – “an intellectual resource,” in foundation parlance – generally to those more junior than he who were making grants in developing countries. His own grant making, however, was to focus on rural poverty within the United States. Armstrong therefore faced not only the challenge of taking on a new field, but also the need to divide his time between New York

*A new job, in a new field, with no precedents to draw from*

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and New Delhi, where he had left-over obligations that would continue for another year. Moreover, he would face his new task mostly on his own. At the outset, he was to have only one other program officer available to help him – someone who, like Armstrong, had no direct experience in domestic rural poverty.

Armstrong’s position was challenging but not overwhelming. He had considerable experience fashioning a variety of programs at the founda-

tion, and he no longer considered himself an economist or agricultural specialist in any narrow sense. Instead, like others at the foundation, he thought of himself as a “programmer” – someone who could assemble grants and activities that added up to a coherent, effective philanthropic endeavor. Says Armstrong: “Being a programmer, to me, means that you are not going to pursue an isolated set of activities, however interesting, but that you are trying to build something cumulatively and systematically.”

In that context, Armstrong believed his task in his new position was “to put rural poverty on the map, to catch the attention of people. We were going to have to do something to make people think that somehow rural poverty and rural things in general were important.” Armstrong was mindful that the foundation frequently followed a specific approach to gaining such a place on the public policy agenda: It often tried to link grass roots organizing and advocacy groups with the research capabilities of other institutions, such that the local groups would be taken more seriously by the policy mainstream, and might adjust their views based on new information from research.

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## An Arid Scene

Although he was not to begin his new job formally until October 1981, Armstrong started thinking about his strategic possibilities that summer. Armstrong was determined that his approach not be “too short-term” – that is, not aimed at quickly funding a series of projects simply to get the program off the ground. As one of his longtime associates put it: “He knew that if all you did was read proposals that came across your desk and choose from among them, you’d be in trouble.”

As he began to think about the nature of his division, he took two “givens” as his starting points: the new division’s name, and the wider spectrum of priorities at the foundation. Armstrong believed that a foundation-wide emphasis on helping the disadvantaged meant that his job entailed helping the rural poor improve their own circumstances, not just finding ways to promote the development of parts of rural America. And he took the term “resources” in his program title to mean that the allocation of natural resources was a factor he should take seriously in trying to help the disadvantaged.

Armstrong remembers the summer of 1981 as a flurry of phone calls. He believed he had to make an attempt to learn the field in which he’d been asked to work. Yet that was not, he felt, a task for which he could rely on others. He believed he had to take a hard and personal look at the issue of rural poverty. As he recalls:

*“I was talking to a lot of people that summer. A lot of people. I tried to bring myself up-to-date on just what*

*the sort of thinking is about America during this period. I talked to people in the agricultural universities, where I had a background, who were doing research on rural problems. I was raised in rural America, so it wasn’t an entirely new subject for me. But I wanted to find out what the ‘frontier topics’ were, what people were concerned about.*

*“I wanted to find out about institutional capacities: Who is doing what? Where are the good minds in this? I talked to the Department of Agriculture in Washington. But I wanted to find out about the part of the equation I knew the least about: the nongovernmental, the nonprofit activist groups around. That’s not a universe that I had worked with directly. I was trying to find out where I was going to find allies, and who was really out there that I could help.”*

Armstrong became convinced that, for the most part, he faced a policy vacuum. “I found that it was a very arid scene, extremely arid,” he recalls. He did, however, pick up what he considered to be some key facts, and he came to some early decisions.

Armstrong learned that,

although from 1959 until 1981 the absolute number of the rural poor had decreased, the problem of rural poverty could nonetheless still be cast as significant. The proportion of those living in poverty in rural areas, he learned, remained higher than the proportion of the poor in urban areas. He began to emphasize this “disproportionate rural poverty” in casual conversations, both outside the foundation and within it. Armstrong believed that emphasizing such numbers would help reinforce the fledgling program’s legitimacy – especially in relation to the foundation’s far larger program in

***‘I wanted to find out what the frontier topics were ... and where I was going to find allies.’***

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urban poverty. “I did not want to compete with the urban poverty program,” recalls Armstrong. “But I did want people to know that rural was important, too.”

His motives were not merely strategic; he shared notes and insights with others, particularly senior foundation officers. Promoting the need for his program was, of course, only a preliminary step before making grant decisions. Having satisfied himself that there was need for a program such as his, and that the need was not being met, Armstrong set out to focus his efforts.

## Narrowing the Field

Armstrong’s explorations of the “arid scene” in rural policy, although dispiriting on one level, helped him in another task he considered crucial: defining what the rural program would *not* be. Common reactions to the program’s name helped him to do so. “If you have ‘resources’ in your title,” he pointed out, “it’s easy for some people to say, ‘Well, gee, I guess you work on the Great Lakes, don’t you? Coastal fisheries, isn’t that resources?’ We [the foundation] had had a very strong resource and environment program before.” Yet Armstrong decided that his was not to be an environmental program. The process of beginning to exclude topics from his portfolio-to-be heartened him: “I felt good about it. If you’re sort of all-inclusive, you don’t have to explain anything to anybody. But I don’t think you can be effective that way.”

Armstrong believed that to help the rural poor — often isolated, disproportionately unemployed, many working at low-wage manufacturing jobs, and often earning less than the poverty level even if employed full-time — it was necessary to improve their means of earning a livelihood. This belief would lead Armstrong to a decision to exclude yet another subject from the rural poverty program’s purview: agriculture.

In many ways, agricultural expertise was Robert Armstrong’s calling card. He had come of age academically among land-grant public universities that specialize in improving agricultural productivity. His work overseas had focused on

agricultural development. But during his summer phone-calling, Armstrong had begun to question whether there was any necessary connection between improving agriculture and ameliorating rural poverty.

In the fall of 1981, not long after officially assuming his directorial duties, he had an influential conversation with Donna Haywood, a foundation consultant who had been a U.S. Department of Agriculture official in Washington. The conversation crystallized the doubts Armstrong had about the part agriculture should play in his program. Haywood had come to Armstrong to report on some consulting work she had done for the foundation just prior to his arrival in New York. As they talked and he reviewed her report, he realized that she shared his incipient doubts about the centrality of agriculture in an approach to rural poverty. She described data on the large number of non-farm families among the rural poor and the relative prosperity of rural farm counties, in contrast to counties with concentrations of rural poverty.

Armstrong grew more concerned that aiding agriculture might not be the most effective approach to aiding the poor. “It wasn’t a very difficult decision, but it was a major decision,” he recalls. “We were not going to be working on agriculture or price supports or agricultural trade. Those were all businesses I understood. But we were not going to be a farm program.”

Having decided some of what he wouldn’t do, in the ensuing months Armstrong would face a series of decisions that would begin to define what kind of program he would seek to run. Seeking to maintain maximum flexibility as he shaped that program, Armstrong chose not to write an overarching program paper but to shape his program through a series of early grants. He stayed in close touch with senior foundation officers, and built his program in stages.

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## Early Decisions

As a programmer, Robert Armstrong believed that he would eventually have to build a coherent framework for his grant making. In the long run, that would likely mean soliciting proposals for the kind of work he envisioned. But in the early months of his tenure, he would spend time considering unsolicited proposals – weighing both their individual merits and the ways in which they might fit into his long-range program vision. In his first several months on the job, Armstrong therefore gave special thought to four potential grantees:

1. The Southern Water Project came to Armstrong’s attention when a Southern state community activist named Wynonie Edwards arrived at the foundation’s headquarters in New York without an appointment, having paid her own plane fare. When he agreed to see her, Armstrong heard an impassioned and effective plea about a subject he had never thought much about in a U.S. context: clean drinking water. Many small towns, particularly in the Southwest but, Edwards believed, in parts of the Southeast as well, did not have the tax base to build or maintain safe drinking and waste-treatment systems. In other communities, residents of poorer neighborhoods could not afford “hook-up” charges to join municipal water and water-treatment systems.

Edwards sought \$50,000 to begin to develop public/private partnerships involving rural church and civic groups and private businesses, pressing for new drinking water and waste-treatment initiatives. Funds would pay primarily for staff, not for new water projects directly. Edwards

and her active board of directors seemed energetic and capable, and the proposal did combine issues of poverty and natural resources. Moreover, it fit the foundation’s program interests in other ways, too: The Ford Foundation was interested in public/private partnerships generally, and in encouraging women in leadership roles. This effort would strike three important chords at once.

The Southern Water Project was not a new organization, however. It was more than ten years old and had already formed a kind of public/private relationship, inasmuch as it had been relying on federal and state funds for much of its work. In fact, Edwards was coming to the foundation partly because of cutbacks in federal social programs about to take full effect during the first full fiscal year of the Reagan administration. Such cutbacks were going to affect a wide range of programs, and Armstrong knew he did not have funds to fill the vacuum. In that context, funding the Southern Water Project might send the wrong message to other organizations seeking to replace dwindling federal funds.

“In general,” recalls Armstrong, “I was concerned that people not look on us as able to pick up a good number of community development groups that had formerly received major funding. I believed I had to say, ‘Look, we’re not the replacement.’ ” Moreover, although Wynonie Edwards was proposing to reach out to local business communities in ways that Armstrong was hoping to encourage, she was nonetheless a loyal veteran of the War on Poverty, neither accustomed nor predisposed to such alliances.

***A subject rarely discussed in the United States:  
a lack of clean drinking water***

On the other hand, Armstrong was much impressed by Edwards. Her organization was, he recalls, “up and running and well run. It cared a lot about poor people and was more sophisticated than many other rural organizations.” Armstrong also believed that improving the quality of water supplies would not only have health benefits,

but aid in economic development as well. “What company,” he asks, “wants to build a plant somewhere that doesn’t have guaranteed access to a safe water supply? Safe water is not a sufficient condition for economic development, but [development] can’t happen without water.” Finally, the Southern Water Project was promising to parlay the \$50,000 Ford grant into \$500,000 raised from private-sector sources.

2. At nearly the same time that Armstrong was considering the Southern Water proposal, he found himself faced with another decision. A nationally known nonprofit public policy center specializing in rural issues had stood out amid the “arid scene” that Armstrong had discovered earlier – a rare group that was refreshingly concerned about rural poverty issues. “The group had to do really with the range of things I was interested in,” recalls Armstrong. “Not farmers. I was hopeful, when I first heard about it, that it could be very helpful.”

The hopefulness was mutual. Leaders of the center hoped the rural poverty program could, in the long run, provide a steady stream of support – perhaps at a million-dollar-plus level, though at that point, almost any level would be useful to help the center stay afloat. Founded in the early 1970s with a grant from a New York-based foundation, the center had attracted some attention for the kind of

***‘If we didn’t fund this center, we’d have to invent something like it.’***

research that could be influential in public policy – precisely the kind of research that Armstrong knew would be necessary to capture public attention. For example, one of the center’s studies had focused on the poor access to health care among rural residents who lived far from hospitals. The study had been especially well received.

Moreover, the center was one of the very few organizations whose mission seemed

clearly to overlap with that of the foundation’s Rural Poverty and Resources Program. Armstrong believed that his task was in large part “to help invent a field,” to find ways to develop research capacity in rural poverty topics, and to bring researchers, advocates, and policymakers together. A national rural center could be a vehicle for such work.

At the same time, he was hearing from another major foundation on the matter. Armstrong knew it was considered good policy at the Ford Foundation to enlist the interest and aid of other grant-making institutions. In the case of the center, there was interest from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which had played a key role in starting the center and wanted to see it continue. In the fund’s view, recalls Armstrong, “if we didn’t fund this center, we’d have to invent something else like it.”

To decide whether to approve the center’s \$250,000 request for general support, Armstrong dispatched consultant Donna Haywood and the Rural Poverty program officer, Carol Johnson, to assess the possibilities. Their report gave him pause. The center’s leadership, they found, was not as strong as it might have been. They told him that the center had been seriously weakened by budget problems, did not have a reputation for effective-



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ness, and did not have a high profile in Washington. It had been slow in submitting reports, often missing chances to affect the policy agenda as a result. It was, moreover, given to making its case in a combative tone and style left over from a previous political era. Haywood and Johnson believed that pragmatic assertions, rather than moral demands, would be necessary in the new political environment of the 1980s.

Armstrong did not have Washington experience himself and believed it was important for rural issues to be taken seriously at the federal level. He therefore took the report seriously. But he also knew, as an experienced grant maker, that a major foundation grant can be used to encourage an organization to rethink its mission, adjust its operating style, or otherwise reorganize, if there is agreement that such changes are desirable.

3. In his first six months on the job, Armstrong also began to receive proposals from institutions that were relatively certain they would get a sympathetic hearing from him. One example: the University of Nebraska, Armstrong's alma mater and one of the major Midwestern land-grant institutions known for its work in improving agricultural productivity. Such institutions usually worked closely with the more-established farm organizations. Although in recent years new groups claiming to represent farm interests had sprung up — for instance, grass roots groups concerned about the increasing purchase of farmland by insurance companies — the land-grant universities were far more likely to be close to traditional groups like the 4-H.

Armstrong began to get inquiries from a variety of the land-grant institutions that had previously received foundation support. The proposals stressed the need to help rural America in adjusting to the farm crisis of the early 1980s — an era that was seeing prices decline sharply and communities lose population. Some proposals were focused on specific crop problems, such as wheat blight. Such issues were not entirely outside Armstrong's interest, notwithstanding his decision not to emphasize agriculture

in his grant making. And he knew the land-grant universities were prestigious research institutions with rural sociologists and political scientists on staff, not just agricultural experts. If he did not want to fund a proposal on wheat blight, might he encourage the land-grant universities to consider work in which he had greater interest?

4. Among those attracted by the use of the word "resources" in the program division's title were environmental and conservation groups, including several that the foundation had funded in the past. Among those approaching Armstrong were two prominent environmental groups known equally for research and advocacy. The primary interest of both these groups was in Western water, specifically in preserving the aquatic habitats of various species.

Armstrong had no immediate interest in such projects, but he was acutely interested in the broader topic of Western water. His earlier years in the California university system had acquainted him with both the problems of water scarcity and the issue of whether water policy should favor agriculture over other claims. Armstrong believed that poverty and water issues were closely related in rural Western areas in a number of ways. Small, agricultural, predominantly Hispanic towns in northern New Mexico, for example, often did not make the best use of the scarce water supplies they had. Other areas, such as towns on the Texas/Mexico border, were plagued by unsafe drinking water supplies. Finally, Armstrong believed that residents of Indian reservations, historically the poorest places in the West, often lacked access to water, treaty rights notwithstanding. He felt, too, that there were situations in which tribes could use or sell their water rights as part of their economic development strategies, if they had proper training and representation.

Such work was not what either of these environmental grant seekers had in mind when they proposed their Western water projects. Neither had any experience in dealing with the rural poor or with the particular issues that had attracted Armstrong's attention. Still, Armstrong

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considered whether to try to interest these groups in the kind of Western water project that he, not they, envisioned.

Robert Armstrong would have to keep in mind his overall program strategy as he considered whether, to what extent, and in what form he would recommend grant approval for any or all of these four early applicants.

### **Sample Study Questions for This Case:**

- 1.** By what processes does Armstrong define his goals for the Rural Poverty and Resources Program?
- 2.** What are Armstrong's goals for the Rural Poverty and Resources Program?
- 3.** Which of the four proposals that Armstrong is considering should he fund, and why?

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PART TWO

**Next Steps in Field-  
Building**

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## Next Steps in Field-Building

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By the end of his first full year as director of the foundation's recently created Rural Poverty and Resources division, Robert Armstrong had recommended grant approvals for three of the four promising unsolicited proposals he had received in the early months of his tenure. He provided partial support (\$50,000) for the public policy center specializing in rural issues, targeting funds for it to finish current projects but not to begin new initiatives. He recommended an equal amount for the Southern Water Project, which seemed to him to have the kind of strong community base which the foundation was seeking to encourage. However, Armstrong noted in his recommendation that the grant was not necessarily the precursor to a major pure drinking water initiative. "I didn't want to do a lot of little things and get scattered all over the place. But I had a hunch and I wanted to play it without making a big investment. I put a disclaimer on it so I didn't get myself out there too far."

Armstrong's largest grant went to the pair of environmental groups interested in Western water. Originally the groups had submitted a proposal for projects on preserving aquatic habitats, but, at Armstrong's urging, agreed to submit a revised proposal focused on ways in which changes in Western water management could benefit the rural poor. He then recommended a one-year grant of \$175,000 for each. In addition, Armstrong made a \$100,000 grant to the Council of State Resource Agencies, a planning arm of the National Government Executives Association, which planned to work on interjurisdictional issues affecting water management.

Armstrong liked the water projects because they might be a way to target funds to some of the poorest geographic areas in the West and South. Both projects promised economic development benefits as well. And Armstrong believed that Wynonie Edwards, the director of the Southern Water Project, was likely to be a good spokeswoman for the interests of the rural poor generally. Also, as his consultant Donna Haywood recalled, "You have to remember that Bob had worked overseas. He understood irrigation from that experience, and water issues generally had resonance for him."

Armstrong's decision to limit funding for the public policy center was based not only on his assessment of its condition at that time but also on his conclusion that its mission diverged from his own goals. Armstrong was less interested in early advocacy of specific policy initiatives – the stated purpose of the center – than in moving the general issue of rural poverty to a more prominent position on the national policy agenda. He thought this could be best accomplished through a strategy of "field-building" – drawing researchers and organizations to rural issues, introducing them to one another, and making sure that their work was published and distributed. Armstrong was aware that, without the center, he would lose a potential vehicle for drawing public attention to specific issues. But considering his larger goal to promote interest – and ultimately policy makers' interest – in rural matters generally, he was willing to run that risk.

At the same time, Armstrong continued Haywood's consultancy so that she could serve as liaison to the Western water projects. Given his own limited staff, Armstrong liked the idea of having a colleague with whom he could work out his programmatic agenda. As a consultant, moreover, she could undertake exploratory or evaluative work with grantees without being directly responsible for grant recommendations – thus, she and Armstrong believed, creating a more informal dialogue.

As the Rural Poverty and Resources division grew, Haywood worked to develop a national rural policy research awards competition, a major part of Armstrong's field-building efforts. It was an effort that bore early fruit. To the surprise of both Armstrong and Haywood, the first round of awards attracted more than 300 applications – though many were for farm-related projects that weren't within Armstrong's program focus. At Armstrong's direction, Haywood also began to arrange workshops and seminars to help establish a network of what Armstrong described as "concerned researchers, policy makers, and rural development and private sector leaders."

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Such efforts helped Armstrong, over the first three years of the program's existence, to identify, cultivate, and fund a group of institutions that began to advance a new rural agenda. Grantees came from several different rural areas and many were either community-based or region-based. By its fifth year, the division's overall budget would grow to approximately \$6.7 million. And its grant-making staff would increase from three to four positions, with two program officers devoted full time to domestic rural poverty issues.

Looking back, Armstrong believed he had been able to encourage significant progress along several fronts. Nonetheless, he was frustrated with what he viewed as slow movement toward his goal of moving rural poverty issues to center stage. Although pleased with the work of what he described as "rural action-research groups," he felt that the field had not coalesced and that his current approach to field-building was reaching the limits of its effectiveness. Wrote Armstrong: "The broader network of more distinguished and better-known policy and economics research institutions typically has shown little, if any, interest in rural problems." In particular, he sought a way to "enlist participation of the major economics and policy studies groups which have not formerly given priority to U.S. rural concerns." His strategy for enlisting such participation would include a new policy research awards competition. But Armstrong continued to feel that he needed something more.



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## Epilogue

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As he entered his fifth year as the director of the foundation's Rural Poverty and Resources division, Robert Armstrong recommended approval of a \$165,000 grant to the Washington-based Institute for Public Studies for the purpose of serving as the host organization for a new "sustained rural policy program."

"Staff considered carrying out the expanded program under a foundation-administered project," wrote Armstrong, "and concluded that a preferred option would be to help build a strong [external] institutional base to sustain the program — in collaboration with an interested outside organization — if a suitable candidate could be identified." The institute he selected was a prominent, politically neutral organization known for supporting a wide range of interests, among them a program on food, water, and climate. The foundation's grant would fund a new Rural Economic Policy Program, to be headed by Donna Haywood. In his recommendation, Armstrong listed five major purposes for the new program:

1. Defining an agenda of priority research needs in the rural policy field.
2. Conducting a broad-based campaign to build a national network of professionals and institutions engaged in policy studies of the U.S. rural sector.
3. Administering the search and review process to identify potential candidates for Ford Foundation support under a rural policy research awards competition.
4. Organizing a series of workshops and seminars to encourage interchange on rural policy issues among scholars, policy makers, rural development leaders, and private sector decision makers.
5. Fostering the publication of studies of the rural economy to inform policy makers and to raise awareness among the general public of problems and issues faced by the rural sector.

Over the next three years, the institute's Rural Economic Policy Program recommended more than 120 grants to the Ford Foundation, including a number of significant grants to nationally-known, but Washington-based, institutions known for analysis of policy and economic trends. In some cases, such institutions were persuaded to add a rural component to their ongoing economic studies.

Among the key grant recipients was the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, known for its analysis of the effects of changes in federal social welfare spending. The center received two grants of \$150,000 "to research the participation of the rural poor in federal programs and the impact of budget questions on the rural poor," as well as for "ongoing analysis of rural policy and poverty issues." Another key partner identified by the institute was the Children's Defense Fund, known for its work on urban poverty. It received a \$150,000 grant to "initiate a rural child poverty project." Armstrong hoped that such organizations, whose reports generally commanded the attention of the press and congressional committees, would both build the rural field and raise the profile of rural issues.





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