Based on research and best practices from the field, Aspen CSG's **Thrive Rural Framework** shows what needs to be true within both a local-level and systems-level theory of change for equitable rural prosperity to occur.

The framework's ten Local-Level Building Blocks are conditions on the ground that communities and regions can take action on directly, by themselves. The ten Systems-Level Building Blocks are beyond the scope of an individual community or region to change alone — though rural communities and people can certainly (and must) work together to influence these as well.

This brief has many themes and recommendations that connect to the Thrive Rural Framework. The authors note that “effective stewardship for our future requires addressing the inequities of place, race, and class created or worsened by past economic and natural resource exploitation and management policies and practices.” They directly connect to the framework’s **Foundational Element** in the Legacy of Rural Resource Exploitation and Management section, which summarizes some of the race, place, and class inequities around these issues.

Exploring **Systems-Level theory of change**: Throughout the brief, the authors note the need to measure development success as both resource sustainability and poverty reduction/wealth creation found in the Balanced Development Outcomes Building Block. The need for coordinated and targeted government policies is represented in the Cohesive Rural Policy Lens Building Block. The majority of the brief is centered on the Valued Rural Stewardship Building Block, which refers to fairly compensating rural actors for the natural resource value they are managing. The authors note the fraught history and important need for balanced relationships to produce fair value in the Rural Stakeholder Equity Building Block. Finally, the recommendations call for more steady and accessible investments for rural stewards found in the Rural Ready Capital Access and Flow Building Block.

Exploring **Local-Level theory of change**: The authors recommend that local efforts to create a more dynamic economy also seek to strengthen the natural environment found in the Balanced Development Goals Building Block. While the authors note the economic opportunities from eco-tourism and related efforts, they also highlight that communities will not see economic growth without investment and intentional efforts to grow local businesses to meet these opportunities. This concept is found in the Strengthen Local Ownership and Influence Building Block. Given the long history of discrimination against Native communities and farmers of color, the authors suggest an intentional economic effort is needed to improve outcomes for these groups, which is found in the Design for Everyone to Thrive Building Block.

**Use the Thrive Rural Framework** in your work to take stock, target action, and gauge progress on equitable rural prosperity.

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The series aims to catalyze more effective and fair rural policy and practice.

In this series, we ask thinkers and doers with rural experience and expertise to propel and deepen understanding about rural issues and realities, shine a light on rural innovation and investment opportunities, connect and align fields of practice and interest, and call for constructive changes in the design and implementation of key public and private systems — all toward achieving this outcome: **Communities and Native nations across the rural United States are healthy places where each and every person belongs, lives with dignity and thrives.**

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Since 1985, the [Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group](http://www.aspencsg.org) (CSG) has been committed to equitable rural prosperity. We work towards a future where communities and Native nations across the rural United States are places where each and every person belongs, lives with dignity, and thrives.

CSG serves as a connecting hub for equitable rural community and economic development. We design and facilitate action-inducing peer learning among rural practitioners, national and regional organizations, and policymakers. We build networks, foster collaboration, and advance best practices from the field. The foundation of our work is the [Thrive Rural Framework](http://www.aspencsg.org) — a tool to take stock, target action, and gauge progress on equitable rural prosperity.