



New book shares success stories, action steps for rural prosperity

by: Jeremy Hegle

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In November, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and the Federal Reserve Board published *Investing in Rural Prosperity*. This new resource showcases stories of progress in different communities and highlights actions that can be taken by policymakers, practitioners, funders and researchers to advance shared economic prosperity across rural America.

Nearly 80 authors contributed chapters to the book, and represent financial institutions, nonprofits, philanthropies, academia and government agencies. The chapters touch on a range of topics, including entrepreneurship support, workforce development, energy-efficient manufactured housing and digital inclusion.

My work the past few years has focused on the digital divide, where I've elevated awareness of key issues of the divide and highlighted innovative approaches to narrowing it. Because of this work I was asked to contribute to *Investing in Rural Prosperity*.

I wrote about philanthropy's role in bringing broadband to rural America. I chose this topic because of the pivotal role foundations serve in the community, filling gaps where neither government nor the for-profit sector can. The chapter highlights the work of the [Hutchinson Community Foundation](#) (Kansas), the [Blandin Foundation](#) (Minnesota) and the [Maine Community Foundation](#). The chapter also provides tips to help philanthropists strengthen their digital inclusion efforts.

The book delves into the challenges of our past and the promise of our future in rural communities. Ultimately, *Investing in Rural Prosperity* is a call to action, so we can realize that promise—together.

Investing in Rural Prosperity is available for download in its entirety, and free copies may be ordered here

<https://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/publications/invest-in-rural>

The chapter, *Bringing Broadband to Rural America: The Role of Philanthropy* can be downloaded directly here. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/files/pdfs/community-development/investing-rural/chapters/chapter15.pdf>

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Jeremy Hegle is assistant vice president and Community Affairs Officer (CAO). In this role, Hegle leads the Tenth District's [Community Development department](#) with responsibility for leading and executing the Bank's districtwide community and economic development initiatives, which address challenging issues affecting lower-income individuals, underserved communities and small businesses' access to credit. He also represents the Kansas City Fed on the Federal Reserve System's CAO subcommittee and will manage the Bank's [Community Development Advisory Council](#). Prior to being named CAO in 2023, Hegle led the Bank's digital equity efforts. In 2019 Hegle co-authored [Disconnected: Seven lessons on fixing the digital divide](#), a layperson's overview of the digital divide. He led efforts to narrow the digital divide using three strategies: Expanding access to affordable home broadband. [Collaborating with state broadband directors](#), federal agencies, and local government on broadband deployment strategies and increased access through [affordable internet programs](#). Increasing the supply of low-cost computers by encouraging employers to [donate their used computers](#) to nonprofit refurbishers, schools and community organizations. [Informing banks](#), foundations, government and policymakers of the complex factors that cause the digital divide, the latest research on the topic, and creative solutions to fix it. Hegle joined the Kansas City Fed in 2015. Previously, he served in the Army National Guard and later helped launch KCSOURCELINK, a small-business support organization that links thousands of entrepreneurs with resources to start, grow and accelerate their businesses. Hegle has a bachelor's in business administration and an M.B.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up our nation's central bank. We work in the public's interest by supporting economic and financial stability. The Kansas City Fed's territory includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Our headquarters is in Kansas City, with branch offices in Denver, Omaha and Oklahoma City. The Kansas City Fed Community Development Department promotes economic development and public understanding that leads to progress for lower-income individuals and communities. Our focus areas include community development investments, digital inclusion, small business / entrepreneurship, and workforce development.

