RIDER Charter: Rural Innovation Driving Equitable Resilience

Celebrate Learning | Normalize Failure | Elevate Success

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Charter

This charter establishes the foundational framework for RIDER (Rural Innovation Driving Equitable Resilience). It defines RIDER's mission, governance, operational structure, and strategic priorities to guide a clear, actionable approach to shift the systems that maintain rural poverty into ones that continually reduce poverty.

Rural Innovation Driving Equitable Resilience (RIDER) is on a mission to create a nationwide, decentralized network and community of practice that:

- elevates the critical value of effective leaders in rural coalitions;
- multiplies these leaders' capacity by the factor required for their work to shift from "maintenance" of poverty onto a path toward "resolution" of poverty; and
- enables those who care about specific regions to viscerally want to engage in supporting the work of rural coalitions and understand how to do so constructively.

Background of the RIDER Initiative

RIDER was founded to transform the systemic conditions that perpetuate poverty in rural communities.

RIDER is a national coalition of leaders, researchers, and practitioners committed to creating sustainable solutions that replace poverty-maintaining systems with systems that enable opportunity and generational mobility. RIDER leverages lived experience, data-driven strategies, peer-to-peer mentoring and learning, and cross-sector partnerships to drive meaningful change. The RIDER Community of Practice is a national network of networks of both rural leaders and others

dedicated to innovation, knowledge sharing, and accountability to the goal of halving rural child poverty every 20 years.

RIDER was founded by SVT Group, Rural Opportunity Institute, eTransX and Open Systems Institute in 2024 and hosted as a design team by The Federal Reserve Bank of New York. RIDER begins with five network site partners located in Arizona, Illinois, New York, North Carolina and Tennessee, under the fiscal sponsorship of the Upper Cumberland Development District (TN), and will continue to grow our network nationwide.

Alignment with Broader Rural Development Goals

RIDER aligns with national and global rural development priorities and seeks to:

- Build sustainable, community-driven economic models.
- Advance rural equity through scalable policy solutions.
- Reduce child poverty by half every 20 years.

MISSION, VISION, AND CORE PRINCIPLES

Mission

Our MISSION is to collaboratively transform the engagement, design, incentive, learning, accountability, and governance systems that perpetuate American rural child poverty in our site partners' geographic communities into systems that reduce rural child poverty by half every twenty years.

Vision

Our VISION is of a growing cluster of thriving, resilient rural American economies enabled by an inclusive social fabric in which it is always meaningful, often fun, and high status to belong.

Guiding Principles

- **Co-Creation**: Develop solutions with and for the community.
- **Reciprocity**: Ensure mutual benefit.

- **Sustainability**: Create resilient economic models that provide plenty of resources.
- **Goal-oriented Culture**: Test all decisions against the ultimate goal. Cultivate psychological safety.
- **Learning:** In the quest to end poverty, the highest value is learning.
- **Equity & Inclusion**: Ensure fair access to decision-making, opportunities, and resources.
- **Accountability:** Involve those affected in decisions, and take responsibility for the impact, learning, and progress.
- **Trust:** Practice mindfulness, assume competence, and be curious when others do things differently.

GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Roles & Responsibilities

RIDER Members:

- Executive Committee: Provides strategic direction and oversees implementation.
- Site Leader Teams: Lead local engagement and implementation.
- Working Team Leaders: Facilitate special-topic research and action.
- Design Team: The above members, and also select rural leaders, funders, and experts aligned with RIDER's mission, vision, and principles, offering cross-disciplinary guidance, and periodically convened by the New York Fed.

RIDER Affiliates:

- Community of Practice Members: Includes both RIDER Members and RIDER Affiliates, with differing levels of engagement.

Decision-Making Framework

RIDER uses a consensus-driven decision-making process that meets partners where they are. Proposals may be submitted via motion or written document to the Infrastructure or Working Team Co-leads. Input is gathered through meetings, surveys, and the RIDER Running Agenda Notes.

For major decisions we invite input from the Design Team via consensus mechanisms intended to meet team members where they are rather than requiring them to bend to accommodate RIDER. Their input will be sought:

- online / in-person by discussion
- offline / by survey (e.g. the TOA Core and Extended rating and comments process)

Proposals can be brought into consideration for a vote via:

- motions
- submitted written proposals shared with the RIDER Infrastructure Team Co-leads or RIDER Working Team Leads

Proposals and deliberation will be recorded via notes captured using automated voice-to-text tools and, in the RIDER Running Agenda Notes Google doc available to all Design Team members.

- Unless otherwise agreed, the Initiative Leader, Site Leader, or Executive Committee member bringing the issue is responsible for ensuring that notes on proposals and deliberations are added to, or linked to, the RIDER Running Agenda Notes Google doc accessible to all.
- Voting results will also be published in the RIDER Running Agenda Notes by the Executive Committee's designee.
- Where it is important to understand the degree of agreement or disagreement with a proposal, we use the "five finger" voting method, to understand whether people are okay with a decision, or if someone is strongly against it, to enable them to block action and voice their concerns.
- When a vote requires unanimity this will be determined in advance.

- When a vote is a straight up or down “yes/no” this will also be stated in advance.

Accountability Mechanisms

- Regular performance reviews of leadership.
- Transparent reporting and decision-making.
- Annual external impact evaluations.

MEMBERSHIP & PARTICIPATION

Criteria for Membership

- Mission Alignment: Individuals must demonstrate a commitment to reducing rural and/or childhood poverty through a track record of direct services, advocacy, research, policy development, or technical assistance. Childhood and/or rural poverty does not need to be explicit in their mission statements, but if not, it must be part of their fundamental intent.
- Collaboration and Engagement: Individuals must commit to active participation, including attending meetings or participating asynchronously regularly, acting in a manner that cultivates psychological safety and individual and collective accountability, celebrating lessons learned and successes, and engaging in joint initiatives that advance the mission.
- Data and Impact Commitment: Members should be willing to track and share relevant data, outcomes, and lessons learned including successes, challenges, and failures, to ensure accountability and collective impact.
- Ethical and Transparent Practices: Individuals must operate with integrity, transparency, and commitment to ethical collaboration in alignment with the goals of the partnership.

Individuals that meet these criteria and demonstrate a willingness to contribute meaningfully to the shared mission are invited/welcome to apply to either RIDER Infrastructure Team Co-leads, or RIDER Working Team Leads for participation. The governing body of RIDER Infrastructure Team Co-leads, or RIDER Site and

Working Team Leads, reserve the right to review and approve membership to ensure alignment with these principles. Applications are submitted to the Infrastructure, Site, or Working Team Co-leads for review and approval.

Member Rights and Responsibilities:

- Participation in Governance: RIDER Infrastructure Team Co-leads and RIDER Site and Initiative Leaders (RIDERS) in good standing have the right to participate in decision-making processes, including voting on key initiatives, governance structures, and strategic priorities.
- Co-creation of, and Access to, Resources and Support: RIDER Infrastructure Team Co-leads and RIDER Site and Working Team Members are asked to collaboratively develop, and will have access to: mentorship, peer support, research, policy guidance, best practices, funding opportunities, and technical assistance provided by or facilitated by the RIDERS. Access to these resources by the wider Design Team or others may be made available by a vote of the RIDERs.
- Learning and Accountability: RIDERS pledge to share with one another appropriately de-identified details about their approach, intent, performance, lessons, mistakes, and successes. RIDERS pledge to pursue insight into what works, where, why, how, and also what does not work, using an agile development mindset that views failure as valuable due to the way it helps inform success. RIDERS pledge to cultivate a culture of psychological safety, meaning that when their own colleagues, other RIDERS, or other authority figures act in ways that look "wrong," RIDERS step back, assume goodwill, and become curious. RIDERS give voice to curiosity non-judgmentally and seek to understand what would cause the unexpected behavior of others to be rational, to learn how to attain our ultimate vision. RIDERS recognize and publicly admit where results fall short, and support the process of mutual discovery and accountability that is necessary to one another's success.

- Collaboration and Networking: RIDERS may propose, and/or be invited to participate in, working groups, committees, and other collaborative spaces to share expertise, develop partnerships, and advance RIDER's mission.
- Recognition, Visibility, and Celebration: RIDERS may be acknowledged in publications, reports, events, and other communications that highlight the collective impact of the collaboration. RIDERS celebrate one another's learnings and successes.
- Autonomy and Independence: Participation in the collaboration does not interfere with the autonomy of any participating organization. RIDERS may engage in activities beyond the collaboration's scope, provided they align with the legal and ethical standards.

Members must:

- Align with the mission
- Embody the goal-oriented, systems shift-oriented culture of learning, accountability, and celebration
- Engage and participate
- Share insights and data where appropriate
- Uphold ethical and inclusive practices
- Adhere to organizational policies
- Maintain good standing

Code of Conduct & Expectations

Membership may be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with the collaboration's goals. If a member performs actions counter to RIDER goals, any RIDER is encouraged to bring this to the member's attention in the spirit of curiosity, assumed goodwill, and respect to make them aware and discover what might be motivating the actions, and to resolve any misunderstandings or miscommunications. If the member fails to meet participation expectations, violates ethical standards, or acts counter to the mission, they may have their

membership status reviewed, with potential suspension or removal by a vote of the governing body. Concerns are raised with respect, curiosity, and goodwill.

STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

We recognize that the current system and culture that supports and surrounds efforts to address rural child poverty is one in which the sense of urgency is diluted by the hugeness and complexity of the problem, the limited resources available, and the personal and often sensitive nature of the issues. Accountability for results is sometimes weak, partly due to the lack of resources and the complexity that would make it difficult to hold any party accountable for the results.

However, in 2025, in the wealthiest nation in the history of the world, we can go beyond this status quo to achieve something American society has not yet seen: a sustained and continuous reduction in child poverty.

Three key strategies will shift the systems that maintain poverty to enable us to achieve our strategic goal where previous efforts have fallen short. They are:

1. **Normalize Failure.** Overcome the trust barriers, privacy concerns, governance and liability risks, and sense of overwhelm or vulnerability that prevent players from admitting failures and thus learning from what doesn't work.
2. **Elevate Learning.** RIDERS focus obsessively on the goal and what does and does not generate progress toward it, while balancing this with realism about the generational timescale over which the transformation will take place. We will systematically yet simply capture our attempts, scores, and misses[1], and bring world-class technology to bear to help this insight become widely known and useful to more and more communities.
3. **Celebrate Success.** Humans will solve poverty but humans require moral support, encouragement, and energy. We will build our community of

[1] See the CAP Playbook model.

practice until it is capable of succeeding at our strategic goal by making people aware of success and creating a desire to play a part in it.

Objectives

Our objectives that lead to attainment of these strategic goals are as follows:

1. Build capacity, both in knowledge and leadership, within rural communities, and leveraging all relevant know-how.
2. Develop business/work plans around key topics for RIDER sites that address systemic factors capable of shifting rural poverty trendlines. By permission of these sites, share these with other rural communities for adaptation, implementation, and replication.
3. Shift the culture to: celebrate failures as much as wins which will elevate/improve overall success, to make goal-oriented learning a norm and expectation, and to celebrate the heart it takes to pursue this goal, the quest with all its travails, and the progress RIDERS are making, and thus motivate continued and expanded engagement in the work.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE & COLLABORATION MODEL

Structure & Purpose of RIDER's Community of Practice (CoP)

RIDER is both a network and a Community of Practice that facilitates community-based collective self-help, knowledge resources, and organizational scaffolding necessary for innovators in rural areas to succeed in starting up, testing, and scaling efforts to solve rural poverty.

Benefits of the community of practice are that it significantly reduces both the cost of capital for funders, by establishing a level of trust and expediting the process of locating rural innovators, and it reduces human capital costs to the RIDER site organization, so organizations and their stakeholders can make even more of a difference than they otherwise could, and do it sooner.

Plans are to contract with a website software service (such as Kajabi or similar) to be able to securely share information related to the community of practice with RIDER members and potentially with RIDER affiliate members supports community-based knowledge sharing and resource access to empower rural innovators.

RIDER Community of Practice (CoP) Framework

Purpose & Goals

- Facilitate knowledge sharing and innovation to reduce childhood poverty in rural communities.
- Strengthen collaboration among organizations and individuals working on poverty alleviation.
- Develop and scale evidence-based strategies that improve economic mobility for children.
- Advocate for systemic policy changes informed by on-the-ground experiences.

Membership & Participants

Both RIDER Members and Affiliates may participate in the Community of Practice:

- RIDERS: Pilot site leaders, initiative leads, executive committee leads, technical experts, and representatives of people experiencing poverty in the site communities ("stakeholders").
- Affiliates: Engaged supporters with less intensive involvement.

Activities & Engagement

- Ongoing Virtual Gatherings: Meetings that enhance human connection and morale, accountability to peers for alignment with the ultimate goals, shared learning, normalization of failure for the purposes of mining the lessons from it, and leadership recognition.

- Celebrations: A regular habit of recognizing and celebrating effort and progress, and a formal Awards program, to recognize learnings and progress – while always remaining focused on the goal of halving rural child poverty every 20 years.
- Dedicated problem-solving sessions: In-person gathering for deep collaboration, training, and networking.
    - Fail Fests (or CALFFs, Culture, Awards, and Learning from Failure meetups), partly inspired by "Fuckup nights," to share and learn from our failures. ("Don't have a cow, have a CALFF.")
    - Document (while protecting sensitive or anonymous data, and only by permission of the sharer) lessons harvested from these gatherings by putting them into the RIDER knowledge base.
- Peer Learning Circles: Small group discussions to troubleshoot challenges, make progress, and share successes. Benefits of these circles may include:
    - *Reduce Transaction Costs*: Provide ready-made financial and legal templates on easy to access digital infrastructure that helps reduce costs of contracts, transactions, and accounting.
    - *Expedite fundraising:*Build trust and accelerate connections between operators and funders.
    - *Improve marketing:* Share templates, calendars, PR opportunities, and other techniques to improve and speed up RIDERs' ability to create awareness and inspire action.
    - *Avoid reinventing wheels:* Capture and make learnings easy to find and apply.
- Data & Impact Dashboard: Collaborative tracking and communication of progress toward poverty reduction goals, enabled by appropriate technology.
    - *Empower Just-in-Time Knowledge*: Training AI/LLM models on a national database of structured and unstructured data with key levers for ending rural child poverty, accessible through a digital portal with tools for knowledge and data sharing as well as tracking and reporting program impacts.

    - *Community Accountability Plan (CAP) model tracking*: Recording scores, attempts/misses, in a simple consistent way that is accessible to RIDER site leaders and their colleagues to do and to plug into the AI/LLM model.
- Policy Advocacy Initiatives: Coordinated efforts to influence legislation and funding opportunities.

Peer Mentoring & Learning Exchange

RIDER's Community of Practice will provide a Peer Mentoring and Learning Exchange available to both RIDERs and Affiliate Members that will enable the following:

- *Peer Learning Circles*: Small groups focused on topics like childcare, housing, poverty alleviation.
- *One-on-One Peer Mentorships*: Pairing experienced leaders with newer practitioners for guidance.
- *Case studies*: Highlighting successful projects across the nation.
- *Field visits*: Members can visit successful initiatives in different communities to learn firsthand.
- *Virtual Knowledge Exchanges*: Webinars and discussion forums where members share best practices and lessons learned.

FUNDING & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

RIDERS As Investors: RIDER members contribute of their own time, talent, and networks. Their investment will be recorded and valued to ensure that it remains seen alongside other resources.

Capital Fundraising Strategy: RIDER will pursue capital from aligned funders across national, state, regional, and local levels—focusing on partnerships that share our mission and values.

Uses of Funds

The executive director and their support team will be paid a (stipend/salary) to be determined as set by the RIDERs, to: coordinate the RIDER network, support the work of the Charter, Fundraising, Tech, Culture/Awards/Learning from Failure, and other working teams, build consensus among RIDERS, ensure overall fidelity to this Charter, and ensure that our activities are recorded to achieve RIDER's goals of culture shift, learning, celebrating failure and success, and ultimately driving down rural child poverty rates.

Governance & Oversight

- In 2025, RIDER is fiscally sponsored by Cumberland Regional Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) entity based in Tennessee.
- All funds are deposited in a dedicated RIDER account and allocated in accordance with governance decisions.
- RIDER anticipates incorporation as an independent 501(c)(3) as it scales.

Revenue-Generating Tools

Where possible, we will minimize the cost of maintaining the RIDER community of practice, knowledge base, and initiatives. Where this is not possible, we will strive to design self-sufficiency into the model, either by creating incentives to users to pay for what RIDER does or for others to pay for initiatives that direct revenues toward RIDER's work, or through incentives to RIDERs to do the work needed. As a last resort we will depend upon charitable grants or sponsorships.

Medium- to Long-Term Sustainability Approach

RIDER will continually assess its cost structure and seek to embed sustainability into all aspects of its model. Where feasible, self-sufficiency will be built through user-driven value creation and reciprocal funding strategies. Charitable grants and sponsorships remain important but will not be the sole source of RIDER's financial stability.

FINAL COMMITMENTS

All stakeholders commit to upholding the values, principles, and vision of RIDER in advancing sustainable rural transformation, informed by experience and data, powered by community, and rooted in a vision of opportunity for all.