

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friend,

As we reflect on the past year, we're grateful to report growth in program range, depth and impact—helped along by a national administration much more supportive of high-road development than those of the past.

Among many new initiatives in 2023, we launched the Government Performance Action and Learning (GPAL), a partnership with Polco and others. GPAL aims to give local decision makers easy access to a huge number of indicators and local government performance, over time and compared to other communities. It provides latitude and longitude in making development choices for their communities, and verifiable evidence of the wisdom of taking a high road path. Working with AARP Livable Communities and Smart Growth America, our Mayors Innovation Project (MIP) also began the Mayors Institute on Pedestrian Safety, which we expect will be continuing service of peer support and technical service for mayors leading in this increasingly contentious area. As you'll see in the annual review below, longer standing program efforts—on MIP again, State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI), ProGov21, and Work and Opportunity—have also been very active.

By the end of 2023, and beginning publicly at the start of 2024, we also changed our name from COWS to High Road Strategy Center. "COWS" was originally an acronym for Center on Wisconsin Strategy. The acronym was easily pronounced, and its ordinary reference—to a herbaceous ruminant more numerous here in Wisconsin than humans—reassuringly familiar. But as an ever-greater share of our work went on outside Wisconsin, the center's name was increasingly inaccurate and thus confusing; our home state name had to go. Still fond of the acronym, but unable to find a suitable alternative word beginning with "w"—we dropped the original name but kept the old acronym as our name. But while "COWS" is easy to pronounce and the center named such has done decades of good work that we're proud of, this name obviously does not directly describe our work, which has always been and will remain to research, experiment, improve and extend the practice of high-road development: using better democratic practice, inside and outside government, to increase productivity in environmentally sustainable ways and ensure fairness and inclusion in its opportunity and benefits. "High Road Strategy Center" better describes that work. We hope you agree. As we move forward, we remain committed to our goal of getting this whole world on the high road, beginning with every community in this country. We still believe that for the U.S. to better become a society fit to live in, and human civilization something worth preserving, we must learn to live better with each other and the rest of nature while increasing human flourishing. Taking the high road in our development enables us to do that. We're delighted the present administration in Washington appears, at least sometimes, to recognize this imperative. But we know there is a nearly fantastic amount of work to be done to implement it.

Thanks again to all who have helped in this work so far and going forward.



Joel Rogers
Director

