



Executive Memo

To: Jessica Sotelo, Executive Director, Partners for Prosperity
From: Ramona Higley, Ph.D., Research Specialist, Partners for Prosperity
Date: March 9, 2005
Re: Research Proposal for April 2005 to March 2006

An assumption of Partners for Prosperity (P4P) is that the people living in poverty in Eastern Idaho are more aware of their conditions and circumstance than an outsider. Further, it is a belief of P4P that if empowered, the people living in poverty will be able to move from a state of poverty to a state of prosperity. For this reason, P4P uses research methods that rely on deductive methods of inquiry to understand poverty and prosperity as experienced by people in the region.

During the planning stage, interviews were conducted throughout the region with people living in poverty. Community dialogue meetings were also held, and regional stakeholders gave input on poverty issues. These methods of inquiry led to the identification of 10 poverty indicators that seemed to be consistent throughout the 16 county region that P4P serves. The first year of implementation was dedicated to development efforts by forming working groups to address the poverty indicators. Additionally, the organizational structure was solidified so that ongoing research and development activities could continue.

As we enter the second year of implementation, P4P research activities will resume. This document outlines the proposed research activities for the second year of implementation of the P4P ten year strategic plan.

Content Analysis of Planning Stage Interviews

During the planning stage, approximately 80 interviews were conducted with individuals living in poverty in 6 communities of Eastern Idaho. Informants of these interviews were self-selected through a snowball sample method. The interviews were conducted and analyzed by P4P staff and general themes relative to poverty were identified both for the region and for the communities represented. During Year 2, P4P staff will revisit the interviews and conduct a modified content analysis of them. Constructs relative to poverty and prosperity will be identified from these interviews. The purpose of this analysis is to ensure that (a) the general themes identified during the planning stage continue to be accurate, and (b) to further explore poverty as it is experienced by individuals in Eastern Idaho. P4P committed in the strategic plan to be a reactive organization that responds to change in the community. By doing a modified content analysis of the planning stage interviews and verifying what we believe we know, it allows P4P to adjust to meet the current needs of those in poverty in our area.

Community Dialogue Meetings

During the planning stage, community dialogue meetings were held throughout the region as a method of defining poverty. During this next phase of research, P4P will reconvene the community dialogue meetings. Meetings will be held in each of the 6



communities where the planning stage interviews were conducted. These meetings will be held following the completion of the content analysis of the interviews. The purpose of these meetings will be to verify the constructs identified from the content analysis of the planning stage interviews. These focus group meetings will explore the constructs identified in the interviews and work to validate or reject the perceived truth of these constructs. Community specific and regional constructs will be verified in this manner.

Identification of Imbedded Communities

Imbedded within the counties of this region are individual communities with sub-cultures attached to the communities. In order to understand the people, the economic structure, the assets and the deficits of the region, it is necessary to identify the various communities throughout the region. During Year 2, P4P will partner with county agencies, school districts, university personnel, and others to map the imbedded communities in our region. This map will be made available for public use.

Essay contests

P4P seeks to include all persons living in Eastern Idaho in discussions of poverty and prosperity. For this reason, annual essay contests with school age children will be held around poverty issues. This year, a contest for high school seniors will be held addressing the issue of the high poverty rate of young adults in the 18 to 24 age range. These essays will be evaluated for content and will serve as a way for P4P staff members to hear the voice of the youth. These essays will be used in a summary report written in cooperation with Idaho Kids Count and the Annie Casey Foundation.

Idaho Kids Count Partnership

P4P will work with Idaho Kids Count to produce a series of reports on poverty in Idaho. The essays discussed in the previous section will be used in these reports. The details of these reports have not yet been decided, however, P4P staff hopes to expand its network of resources through this and other partnerships. Although Idaho Kids Count is a statewide effort, the focus of P4P will primarily be on the 16 counties that we service.

Demographic Analysis of Region

During Year 2, P4P will work with community partners to complete a demographic analysis of the Eastern Idaho region. This analysis will not only report or restate demographic statistics and parameters for the region but will explain trends, change, and demographic patterns relative to poverty.

Taxes and Expenditure Studies in Key Areas in the Region

Several communities in the Eastern Idaho region are geographically located so that many people living there shop outside of their home county or town. In many rural areas this may be unavoidable; in some of the larger towns this situation leads to a depletion of the sales tax dollars. The depletion of sales tax cuts back on local abilities to provide services to those living in poverty. For this reason P4P will partner with various communities to evaluate



where income in those communities originates and where money is being spent by the community members. P4P will help communities create projections based on retention of local sales tax dollars. P4P will work with the Miner County Venture team in creating an appropriate research model for these rural communities.

Forms and Miscellaneous

A revision of demographic forms, creation of evaluation forms, and creation of protocol to communicate between working groups will be completed. Data based software will be purchased and data handling training will occur. P4P will work to become a resource for community partners in data handling protocol and training. P4P staff will also assist the working groups in research activities as needed.

Summary

Partners for Prosperity believes that research is a key part of community development. The research staff will increase grassroots research activities that increase understanding of the region, the people who live here, and how poverty and prosperity are experienced in this area. By increasing knowledge in these areas we increase the opportunity to address the issues that are unique to this area and to make a difference in reducing poverty and in increasing prosperity for the people here. Research efforts will empower the people living here to solve this problem.