



Executive Memorandum

To: Jessica Sotelo, Executive Director, Partners for Prosperity
From: Judy McClanahan, Community Development Specialist, Partners for Prosperity
Date: February 11, 2006
Re: Executive Summary (LEQ)

Working group activities in FY06 have been outstanding and participation by the LEQ has been remarkable. At the end of this fiscal year there were close to 100 community members involved in the five working groups and on the Board of Directors as well as 650 members of the RPTF - all engaged in a variety of activities.

Science and technology presentations to the community through expos such as *Celebrate Your Future*, and considering financial concerns while trying to initiate after-school programs for children in Eastern Idaho are two important projects on which one working group is concentrating. There are leadership projects for people in poverty in our region, small business training and poverty reduction initiatives, language preservation and vendor support projects in the works. Service projects and service learning projects are ongoing. The P4P website includes most working group community events, dates and times for upcoming meetings and links to working group partners. Community fairs for early childhood and parenting issues, the on-wheels learning mobile and numerous ELOA grant activities involving community members are initiatives of another working group. There is a public awareness campaign covering the counties that are part of the ELOA grant. E-bay training and web page building, small business development, community leadership and a Mercado project round out the gamut of activities with which the LEQ are involved.

Board of Directors, RPTF and working group involvement and collaborating with P4P and its mission is crucial in all initiatives. A constant concern for P4P staff is how to engage more community members. Placing meeting notices in newspapers, posting flyers, attending community meetings, being involved in community organizations, radio and television spots are ways the P4P staff reach the people of the 16 county region. Sponsoring community dinners and social events or simple things like hanging a banner for visibility, or attaching stickers with our logo in books and on blankets are ways to make visible the fact that P4P is working hard to be more inclusive and make a difference for people in poverty. Advertising with local and regional stakeholders as well as businesses, organizations and service providers to the LEQ have been effective. The best method for advertising, unquestionably, is word-of-mouth.

District coordinators are vital in spreading the mission of P4P throughout the region and soliciting support for the RPTF. Working group members are instrumental in increasing membership in the individual working groups. Once working group facilitators receive e-mail or direct mail addresses from demographic forms or from district coordinator referrals, personal contact begins. The test for increasing membership, building relationships and forming partnerships within P4P is for staff to be creative, innovative and perceptive.

Several groups have advertising and PR campaigns that help get our name out as well as promoting the missions of the individual working groups. Some working groups are



concentrating efforts in specific areas with culturally specific initiatives, which will be used as models to duplicate in surrounding areas. A concerted effort will be initiated during FY07 to reach our most rural areas, which is a current challenge. In absentia membership works well for several working groups to include people in our most rural communities. Culturally specific newspapers are utilized, direct contact with community groups, relationship building and staff involvement in university, school and faith-based projects are vital to partnership formation.

Education is a way out of poverty. GED scholarships were provided through working group funding to a single mother who recently moved to Southeast Idaho and wanted to provide a better life for her 6-month-old daughter. Her only prior work experience was as a dancer and as a dealer in a casino. A second scholarship was given to a single mother who was ambitiously starting her own business by opening her home as a "group home" and a third scholarship went to a woman with 4 children who was working as an aide for the developmentally disabled. She said no one had ever offered to help her before and the scholarship helped change her life. All three participants passed their GED tests. Initiatives to help poverty reduction through education are ongoing. People who are unemployed and underemployed are gaining the self-esteem necessary to educate themselves out of poverty and learn a living.

Inviting Latinos to participate as volunteers is accomplished on a one-on-one basis either by personal visits or through phone conversations. Personal contacts are made directly by outreach staff or by community leaders and groups who are supporters. In the Latino culture, personal relationships are the foundation of the community and people will respond more readily to an invitation if contacted personally. We must "go to them" rather than just make an announcement and expect them to "come to us." This applies across all levels of education and socioeconomic status. Most of the newly arrived immigrants in this region are employed in the farming industry, and are most likely living in poverty, which makes participation in any manner difficult to engage.

It is imperative that P4P continue to be seen as inclusive in all respects, that it proves itself to be an organization which provides a platform for people in poverty to have a voice, and understand that they can make a difference. One excellent example is through individual involvement in events that affect the Latino community - the members themselves are an example of creating change from a grassroots level. They come together, invite community participation, and take ownership of initiatives in prosperity creation for this community. According to research done by the Oregon Latino Research Center, "Community members who have a successful volunteer experience with an organization will spread the word, and will be very effective in recruiting others to volunteer. Latinos look to other Latinos for a model of volunteering."

Bringing community members together has been a challenge in some of the working groups. Members bring personal agendas and differences to the group, and tension can sometimes result. Some members simply lack appropriate social skills and remain content in a negative frame of mind. P4P is developing a *Life Skills and Group Dynamics* course to offer community members that will provide tools to help improve their behavior and social skills.



A natural occurrence observed within several working groups is that members who are not in the LEQ have taken on a mentoring role. Some have taken those who have language barriers or a lower level of education to the library and shown them how to use various available resources. Others have volunteered to help write business plans, with no division among them with regard to educational achievement. Working group members have opportunities to learn more about scholarships, educational advantages and training initiatives that are available for themselves and their children. They can learn how to make and manage a website, and they realize that the other group members are no smarter or no better than they are.

Service projects and service learning projects are excellent examples of relationship building in the P4P region. Groups representing LEQ initiatives have come together to help with projects sponsored by P4P which benefit others in poverty and partnerships are the result. One example was a blanket-making project where members of a group of lower income participants, partnered with P4P to make blankets for people less fortunate. For each blanket they made to donate, they could make one to take home. They made 218 blankets and helped deliver them to area service agencies for distribution. Because of those partnerships, the LEQ groups are taking advantage of the trust they now have in P4P and are connecting with working group initiatives to work their way out of poverty.

Within most working groups, there is a genuine camaraderie and positive energy. Group members, board members and the RPTF in general are dedicated to the mission of P4P and have a lot of passion for what they do, the changes they make, and the results they see. Partners with P4P, in whatever regard, are always very willing to work together, share resources, and work for the betterment of the community.