



HISTORY

Partners for Prosperity: New Beginnings for Eastern Idaho originated with a planning grant by the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf). The NWAf is a private, non-profit organization that was established in 1934 by Louis W. Hill, son of James J. Hill, founder of the Great Northern Railway. The NWAf is a philanthropic organization, supported by approximately 470 million dollars in total assets, and serves an eight-state region that includes: Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

The mission of the NWAf is to seek long-term community partnerships to reduce poverty. As part of their mission, the NWAf works with communities in stimulating economic growth, sustaining the natural environment, developing effective institutions, and developing solid relationships with many diverse groups and individuals. The “Community Ventures Program” was established by the NWAf as a way for communities to think strategically in helping reduce poverty. The goal of this program focuses on significant involvement from many sources including those affected by poverty—specifically local Native American Tribes and other areas of high poverty. Whereas the NWAf was once a grant-making organization primarily interested in forming and shaping public policy, they now focus on a more proactive, community-specific approach that involves facilitating discussions, creating partnerships, and co-sponsoring organizations as effective change-agents for poverty reduction.

As early as 1998, community leaders throughout Eastern Idaho expressed interest in the new philosophy and mission of the NWAf. In December of 2001, the communities of Eastern Idaho, including Pocatello, Idaho Falls, Blackfoot, and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, were invited to come together as a region and participate in an 18-month strategic planning process. A \$600,000 planning grant was awarded by the NWAf to Eastern Idaho in order to create a 10 year plan for poverty reduction. Concurrently, three other regional communities in the United States were selected to participate with the same objective.

On January 18, 2002 our region formally accepted the NWAf invitation to develop a strategic plan and began organizing and planning. Idaho State University was chosen to be the Grant Administrator. A service area of 16 Eastern Idaho counties and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation was established. An Executive Committee was formed that includes: Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Government Representative, Mayors from Blackfoot, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls, and Commissioners from Bannock, Bonneville, and Bingham Counties. A regional Steering Committee was formed to guide the strategic planning process. Membership on the Steering Committee is fluid, with new membership and ideas welcome at any time. Each person has a voice, with the committee serving as a forum for creative ideas and consensus building.

Partners for Prosperity used a multi-method approach to gather information about poverty, including both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of poverty indicators from a variety of sources. Community dialogue meetings were held throughout the region and over 80 personal interviews were conducted with people in poverty who were given the opportunity to tell their story of poverty.

In June of 2003, Partners for Prosperity submitted a draft strategic plan to the NWAf. Several public meetings were held and a Steering Committee review panel met to discuss the plan and make suggestions for revisions. In addition, the NWAf presented feedback for revisions. In October, 2003, Partners for Prosperity submitted the final 10 year plan that includes a strong emphasis on the core strategies of relationship building and partnership formation. On December 8, 2003, the NWAf announced that Partners for Prosperity was selected for a long-term partnership that will include significant financial and technical assistance.

Today, 16 Eastern Idaho counties and the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribes have come together as a region to build partnerships and reduce the effects of poverty throughout our community. We are PARTNERS FOR PROSPERITY—*New Beginnings for Eastern Idaho.*



FACT SHEET

Organization

- Northwest Area Foundation (NWAFF) is a non-profit, philanthropic organization that is committed to helping communities strategically reduce poverty through long term financial and technical assistance.
- Partners for Prosperity was established by a planning grant from the NWAFF Community Ventures Program, and includes 16 counties throughout Eastern Idaho, including the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.
- Partners for Prosperity is a nonprofit organization that incorporates a grass-roots effort using local citizens and leadership to implement the strategic plan. The organizational structure includes a Board of Directors, Regional Prosperity Task Force and staff.
- Diversity trainings are utilized for staff and community members alike to better understand multiple perspectives.

Regional Activities

- Local community dialogue meetings to discuss and prioritize issues
- Ethnographic interviews to include people traditionally excluded in community development
- Community assessments such as asset mapping of local resources
- Poverty research to identify trends and opportunities
- Regional working groups that are task specific
- Regional prosperity task force to create public awareness and systemic change
- Leadership development to keep the initiative at the grassroots level

Strategic Plan

- Core strategies are relationship building and partnership formation.
 - Partners for Prosperity takes a regional approach to poverty reduction
 - Existing resources and community strengths are integral to the success of the plan
- Prosperity Creation strategies focus on wealth building opportunities such as individual development accounts and entrepreneurship
- Prosperity Growth strategies are a preventive approach to poverty reduction and focus on education such as early learning opportunities, K-12 math and science, and adult education and training
- Prosperity Preservation strategies focus on wealth retention programs as well as leadership and mentorship programs.