



Executive Summary

In the mythic west, hard work and self sacrifice will be rewarded, possibilities abound, and the good guys always win. In the real west, newcomers are suspect, there are roadblocks to opportunity, and only a few prosper. Oftentimes the reality of life in the west provides a stark contrast to idealized perceptions about independence, success, and the pioneer spirit. Poverty is a harsh reality in Eastern Idaho, with far reaching effects. Westward expansion may have been good for pioneers, but the reality is that Native American tribes were left without resources and still feel the consequences of those actions today. Many people continue to work hard and make sacrifices, but the reality is a new classification for an old phenomena: the working poor. There may be opportunities for prosperity, but too many obstacles to achieve it. The good guys don't always win.

Partners for Prosperity is dedicated to reducing poverty and increasing prosperity in Eastern Idaho. The ten year strategic plan reflects a strong commitment to prevent and diminish poverty for the regional community. We propose a unified approach, where systems change leads to the creation, growth and preservation of prosperity. The core strategies of relationship building and partnership formation are based on our values of inclusion, sharing and collaboration. We believe that through an innovative approach, poverty will be reduced and prosperity increased.

The Region

The sixteen county region of Eastern Idaho is diverse, not only in terms of natural features but in terms of the people and cultures. The economy includes everything from extractive markets such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and mining, to manufacturing and service based economies. In recent years, much of the region suffered due to the loss of the extractive economic base, which paid higher wages, and the failure to adequately secure a replacement with manufacturing and service based industries that pay comparably. This situation compounded the already existing problem of poverty.

Stakeholders throughout Eastern Idaho are faced with many of the effects of poverty. Their input and contributions to both individual and community interests are vital in building coalitions and opening doors to allow many voices to be considered in planning efforts to reduce poverty. Poverty in Eastern Idaho has been examined through the use of several indicators including employment, housing, education, health, census demographics, technology, crime and safety, and food security. Poverty in Eastern Idaho is complex and interrelated. The voices of those in poverty have been allowed to tell their own story.

Among people in poverty there are several common concerns: (1) Education: those in poverty acknowledge the importance of education for themselves and their children; (2) Employment: those in poverty acknowledge a desire for good paying jobs; (3) Support Systems: those in poverty recognize the importance of mentoring programs and knowledge of available resources; (4) Empowerment: people in poverty have a desire to change their lives for the better, and for their children to live better lives.



Other regional stakeholders identified the need for a centralized and regional hub that acts as a “poverty watch dog” by identifying poverty issues and the resources necessary to address them: advocating systems change and sharing this information throughout the region.

The Organization

Partners for Prosperity is a regional organization based on the principles of inclusiveness and consensus building. The organization serves 16 counties of Idaho and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. It is guided by a regional Steering Committee that is fluid and dynamic in its organization. A concerted effort was made to involve stakeholders beyond agency service providers. The committee specifically targeted people in poverty, members of the faith-based community, business and industry representatives, ethnically diverse constituencies, educators, farmers, environmentalists, and individuals from other sectors that reflect the diversity of regional residents.

Idaho State University has served as the grant administrator because of its regional presence, expertise, and infrastructure. An important element of the organizational structure of Partners for Prosperity has been the involvement of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. Their input and philosophies have guided much of the research and strategy development.

The Strategic Plan

The mission statement reflects the community values of working together with trust, respect and tolerance to identify resources, cultivate partnerships, and implement actions to reduce poverty. The vision statement frames the issues in a positive light by describing “Rights of Prosperity.” This reflects the commitment of the Eastern Idaho community to enhance and impact the presence of prosperity for all people.

The core strategies are centered on region wide relationships and partnership building. All program and operation strategies are built on the foundation of these strategies. The core strategies reflect the major purpose of the organization: to build relationships and partnerships that will address poverty through systems change, strengthening existing resources, and developing innovative programs. The organization will become a regional clearinghouse of poverty issues and resources. We will act as a catalyst for positive change through a Regional Prosperity Task Force. We will conduct research on poverty issues and policies and share the information with the regional community. Partners for Prosperity will also act as a connector of people by bringing stakeholders together to fight poverty in unison. A concentrated effort will be made to recruit partnerships with people in poverty to strengthen their voice and leadership capacity.

Additional program strategies focus on the creation, growth, and preservation of prosperity. Partners for Prosperity will create opportunities for prosperity by strengthening existing resources and helping to develop new and innovative programs such as Individual Development Accounts and entrepreneurship programs. These programs empower people in the lowest economic quartile to build wealth and maximize their potential.

Prosperity Growth will be accomplished by strengthening existing educational programs in early learning, math and science education, and adult basic education and training. Programs



will address poverty prevention by focusing on children and the link early learning and math and science education have with future success. In addition, the push for a stronger math and science component for school children reflects the need of the Eastern Idaho community for a workforce in the technology arena. Finally, adult basic education and training will address current poverty for people in the lowest economic quartile by preparing them for living wage jobs and benefit employers with a skilled workforce.

Prosperity preservation will be achieved by promoting leadership and mentorship programs that prepare new leaders for more control over their futures. The Regional Prosperity Task Force will play a significant role in leadership development and mentoring opportunities to bridge the gap for people in poverty.

Program strategies throughout the ten year plan will be developed using a phased approach based on ongoing research of poverty issues. The strategies will be driven by people in poverty and their changing circumstances, working in collaboration with the Eastern Idaho community. Partners for Prosperity will continue a strong, outreach effort to include voices from the Native American, Hispanic, and African American communities, as well as other people who have traditionally been excluded from community development initiatives.

Partners for Prosperity will marshal resources, build relationships, form partnerships, and provide technical assistance to reduce poverty throughout the region. Our philosophy is based on the concept of sharing—our resources, our time, our energy and our dedication to increase the prosperity of the Eastern Idaho Regional Community.