



University of Idaho
Extension

Idaho Horizons, 208-885-4017
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Idaho community members develop leadership skills

The Situation

Rural Idaho community members frequently have limited training, time or skills to meet the decision-making challenges their communities face. There are few processes to encourage, grow and support existing and emerging rural leaders as their communities face major economic, social, cultural, and environmental changes. To help create prosperous communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, the University of Idaho partnered with the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAFF) to deliver a community leadership program. University of Idaho Extension delivered the Horizons program to 26 rural Idaho towns. These communities had between 226 and 4,900 residents, with poverty rates from 11% to 26%. Horizons focused on poverty reduction, leadership development and community mobilization. A coach and steering committee comprised of local individual volunteers helped guide the program.

Our Response

Idaho Horizons communities participated in the Pew Partnership's program, "*LeadershipPlenty: Equipping Citizens to Work for Change*" in April - July 2007. This leadership training is designed to develop community leadership to address poverty by making civic leadership training available to those who may not consider themselves leaders but have much to offer communities. It also strengthens the skills of those who already hold leadership positions. The curriculum focused on community leadership, rather than on individual leadership skill building.

The Leadership Plenty Curriculum consists of 27 hours of training divided into 9 modules: Finding Leadership Within, Identifying Community Assets, Managing Groups for Results, Making Meetings Work Better, Managing Conflict, Building Strategic

Partnerships, Moving from Talk to Action, Valuing Evaluation, and Communicating for Change.

In March 2007, 47 Idaho Horizons community members participated in 2½ days of 'training-the-trainer' on how to facilitate the 27 hour LeadershipPlenty curriculum in their respective communities. The training was conducted by the Pew Partnership and was held in the central location of Lewiston, Idaho.

Program Outcomes

Four hundred eighty-eight community residents, including 65 youth, participated in the LeadershipPlenty program in Idaho Horizons communities. Eighteen percent of the participants lived in poverty and 47% of participants have incomes below 200% of the poverty level.

The LeadershipPlenty course was offered for academic or continuing education credit to interested community members. 1-3 academic credits were offered for undergraduate/graduate credit or for 3.2 continuing education units. Six individuals enrolled in the undergraduate course, one in the graduate program and three in the continuing education program. Offering this course for academic credit served as an incentive for individuals to take the course and filled a need for this type of credit to be offered in remote rural areas, thus benefiting both community members and the University of Idaho. For many communities this was the first time that academic course offerings had been offered locally.

Community coaches and steering committees engaged 89 partners in recruiting, marketing and delivering of the LeadershipPlenty program. These partners assisted in recruiting low-income participants, coaching of communities, providing meeting room space, refreshments and advertising.

Results of post program surveys completed by 330 participants indicate:

- 85% of participants increased their leadership skills.
- Participants attributed 52% of their leadership skills to the LeadershipPlenty program.
- 53% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to bring attention to issues of poverty.
- 58% of participants intend to work on poverty reduction in their community.
- 62% of participants intend to become more involved in community decision making.
- 58% of participants intend to recruit others for leadership in their community.
- 43% intend to expand local leadership training.

Participant, trainer and coach comments about the LeadershipPlenty program included:

“It's about building capacity. About having other people step in the arena and participate.”

“I have a lot of people who have really talked about changing how they relate to the community as a result of Horizons.”

“One of the things that excited me [about Horizons] is the premise that everybody, to some extent, or another, is a community leader.”

“...there are people stepping up that I have never seen before ... [even though] I've lived here my entire life ... You actually see other people coming to different events and running for Mayor.”

“More [people] are coming to City Councils to voice their opinions and ask the cities for help.”

“I think you've got new people stepping up. You've got people realizing they do have a voice.... it has given people the possibility to feel like they matter and they can speak up and that they can do something about it versus the same powerful people being the ones that do it, in a small town.”

“New leaders have gotten an enhancement of their skills ... I don't think that they really knew what to do or what was needed or how to step forward.”

Idaho Horizons Communities 2006/08:

The fourteen Horizons clusters (comprised of 26 communities) are: Bonners Ferry, Silver Valley (Kellogg, Pinehurst, Smeltonville, Wardner), Coeur d'Alene Reservation (Desmet, Plummer, Tensed, Worley), UpRiver (Fernwood, Santa,

Emida), St. Maries, Bovill, Troy, Kendrick/Juliaetta, Prairie (Cottonwood, Keuterville, Greenecreek, Ferdinand), Kooskia, Stites, Grangeville, Riggins, and Cascade.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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