

IDA Program Visioning Retreat, March 26, 2009

Welcome and Introduction

- Victor welcomed the group to part two of our strategic planning retreat. He noted that this is a good time to be very clear about program outcomes and measures as we prepare for the 2011 legislative session. After establishing measures, the next step will be to talk about how to work towards implementing those measures in each Fiduciary Organization. There have been some great successes in housing and community development lately. The document recording fee passed, NOAH helped to secure a 5 million dollar grant for the preservation of affordable housing, housing purchases are up by 5% this month (the first uptake in a year), and for people who are still working, the rate of savings is increasing around the country. Unfortunately, our state is facing a 5.1 billion dollar shortfall at this time. Agencies are considering cuts of up to 30%, and are deeply concerned about how this will impact the most vulnerable Oregonians.
- Stan reminded the group of what was accomplished at our last meeting. He read an especially inspiring summary from one of the break out groups from our first retreat, "In five years, IDA program participants will plan for the future, save money, dare to dream, be skilled consumers, achieve ownership, be prepared for the unexpected, think positively, have family and community role models, achieve financial stability, and have greater resiliency." Those words capture the passion of our first meeting, in which we succeeded in meeting the goal of coming up with a vision statement for the program. We also succeeded in identifying overlapping key stakeholders such as donors, legislators, and participants.
- Stan outlined the purpose of today's meeting: building a roadmap for the key outcomes we wish to measure, and determining how we'll know we've achieved success in meeting those outcomes as we go into the 2011 legislative session.
- At the end of the last retreat, Stan asked Victor and Cynthia to think about whether there were a few "critical outcomes" that HCS and NPF felt were essential to include. Today those "critical outcomes" will be presented to the group, and the group will continue to think about where there are additional outcomes to measure.
- Victor presented the critical outcomes for going to the legislature in 2011. One critical outcome is having an IDA program in every county in the state. (IDAs are currently available in all counties except for Gilliam, Grant, Morrow, and Wheeler.) The other is allocating resources; the department wants to see that the funds are actually being delivered to the people who will benefit from them.
- In addition to critical outcomes for preparing to go to the legislature, there are three important programmatic outcomes that HCS and NPF are especially interested in monitoring on an ongoing basis:
 - Racial equity – is there an equitable distribution of resources to minority communities and communities of color?
 - Geographic representation – is there a balanced distribution of IDAs across the state?

- Administrative excellence – are fiduciary organizations adhering to good program practices and management such as participating in trainings, calls, carefully tracking program data, etc?
- The three program-related critical outcomes will be discussed in greater depth at the June FO meeting.
- Stan asked the group to breakdown into small groups to talk about additions to the list of legislative (not programmatic) critical outcomes.
- There was a clarifying question about whether the goal is to have “coverage” or actually to have open accounts in all 36 counties? Cynthia responded that both geographic coverage and geographic representation were included intentionally, although coverage is more important than representation for the legislature. For the legislature, we need geographic coverage at a minimum (meaning there should be a partner organization in every county).
- Rey suggested setting aside trust accounts for places where we don’t currently have coverage.
- Maggie asked why we are assessing geographic representation using 200% of poverty data when 80% of AMI has historically been used to determine program eligibility.
- Cynthia explained that the 200% of poverty data is more readily available via the Census.
- Sandy asked about increasing the number of accounts in Lane and Marion counties specifically. Cynthia recommended tabling the discussion until June when we will set aside space to discuss programmatic outcomes.
- Stan reminded the group that goals are supposed to be challenging to obtain. They may require work, creativity, and partnerships. Some may be goals for the partners and some may be goals for NPF.
- Rebekah asked if, from a legislative perspective, there’s a difference between representation and coverage.
- Victor responded that he is regularly asked if he can show that a program benefits the entire state. We want to be able to provide to the legislators that their jurisdiction has received benefit from the tax credit.
- Lonnie commented that there is a perception that the lawmakers are not concerned about what goes on in the Eastern part of the state. There is a lack of access to support services for public safety as well as other types of support services. Making the argument that IDAs can increase property tax revenues by increasing homeownership in all parts of the state could be a good way to get everybody on board. The same could be said for the way that IDAs help to get people off of social/safety net services.
- We can achieve these outcomes, but they may require some creativity. We have a lack of capacity to offer the program in some counties. There might not be a nonprofit organization in some of the rural counties we’re targeting. Existing FOs need money and staffing resources to modify their programs and expand.
- Lonnie: We’ll need creative thinking on how to reach remote communities and creative thinking on how to achieve the rest of these outcomes once they’re identified.

- Stan reminded the group that our charge today is to think about additional outcomes that we'd like to achieve by 2011. The next step will be thinking about how to measure those outcomes. The outcomes should be in the form of SMART goals (specific, concrete, measurable, etc). The goals should be quantifiable so you'll know if you've achieved them or not. The measures should also be relevant to your organization. Throughout this process, remember to ask yourself carefully if each item being considered is an activity, a result, or an outcome.
- Some concern was expressed about the short time frame we're working with, what change will be achievable within a two year window? Should we focus on telling the story of our program for the legislature using the data and data collection systems we already have in place?
- Stan responded that the group should focus on achievable change as we prepare to go the legislature. This will help demonstrate that our program is dynamic and moving forward.

Break Out Group #1

Brenda's Group:

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - Increase post graduation savings rate by 20% above the national average for low income families by Nov. 15, 2010.
 - Decrease the debt to asset ratios by X% at the time of graduation for homeownership graduates.
- *Additional Comments:* Focus on "Return on Investment" especially in this time of scarce resources. The core of the IDA program is teaching low income people the mechanics of the fact that they can save if they save towards a goal. The true outcome is securing financial stability beyond obtaining their asset, and ascertaining whether people are continuing to save as graduates. It would also be helpful to know how much more our graduates save versus people in similar income groups nationally.
- Victor point out the challenge may be balancing the human interest story with the big picture financial implications.
- Stan asked if we are already achieving this; if so, should we consider making additional improvements by the time the legislature roles around?
- There was concern about how the personal economic conditions are changing for our participants generally. What trends do we see that might impact the data we're collecting?

Rey's Group

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - Increase by X% IDA graduates leveraging funds 3:1 back into the local community.
 - Focus on economic impacts and multiplier effects to make an economic case to the legislature.

- *Additional Comments:* Economic impact is the type of measurement we want, especially to show that IDA funds are being leveraged back into the local economy. Leveraged funds and multiplier effects help to measure the “so what” question. We need to think through how IDAs impact the local economy (e.g. the story of all of the houses that were purchased in state, educations attained in state, microenterprises started in state, etc.). This includes thinking through how IDAs translate into economic activity (dollars spent locally, jobs created, taxes paid, etc.). Another important thing to think about is money the program brings in to the state from national funders.
- Stan noted that Brenda’s group focused on individual outcomes such as how much individuals are saving, while Rey’s group reported on community level outcomes. Between the two groups we’ve established a direct connection to our vision statement, which refers to both individuals and communities.
- Rey agreed and noted that the other dollars-and-cents argument is that the program moves people off of safety net programs.

Maggie’s Group

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - From 2002-2010, X people have started/expanded their businesses, bought their first home, increased their post-secondary education through the OR IDA program.
 - From 2002-2010, \$X in federal and private match has gone to X graduates, leveraging \$X in IDA money.
- *Additional Comments:* The number of people graduating from the program shows huge success and shows the program’s geographic coverage. We could also consider showing to what extent state funds have been leveraged to bring in federal and foundation funds.
- Maggie reported that the group struggled with whether we’re picking measures to assess our progress to date, or projecting out to the future. Ultimately, they chose two things that could be increased within the next two years.
- It is just as important to focus on personal stories as on numbers as we prepare to go before the legislature.
- It may be helpful to track cumulative fund increases. Janet noted that we could use a standard multiplier effect to assess how IDA dollars impact the community.

Stan asked for general reactions to what we saw from the three groups.

- Victor noted that the first two resonated most for him. The third group’s suggestions are helpful data to have on hand, but might need to be digested a little more. In response to the question about whether our goal for 2011 is to report improvement or current conditions, Victor said our goal is to do both. We should plan on both being able to state clearly where we are, and share information about where we’re going.
- Cynthia stated that she was excited to see how the individual and community outcomes groups chose tie closely to our program vision.

- Diane noted that the timing is great because PSU plans to report out on baseline data in June and September.
- Victor noted that at our last retreat he offered HCS's research analyst's time to support our program. She can help to assess the return on investment for local communities, and help us think about all the "trickle down" impacts of IDA's funds.
- Janet noted that one challenge is moving people to be passionate about your issue. Legislatures often care about what happens to people; that's where people see the hope in this program. We have to balance the human story with the raw numbers to explain why what we're doing is unique. She would like to be able to show how the IDA program changes people's lives by changing their behavior.
- Stan asked everyone to go back into break out groups, and to focus on the first three sets of recommendations (individual outcomes, community building outcomes, and administrative outcomes). Attendees were tasked with thinking about additional outcomes to take to the legislature for each set of recommendations.

Break Out Group #2

Kelly's Group

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - X% of people continue to save post participation.
 - X% of purchases remaining in Oregon.
 - Total savings by participants between 2002 and 2010.
- *Additional Comments:* This could also be phrased as increasing the number of IDA graduates who continue to save after completing the program.

Doug's Group

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - Credit scores.
 - Foreclosures (or lack of) – lower by X% compared to the general population.
 - Increase in business revenue.
 - 70% of participants use budgeting – 1 year post exiting the program.
 - Decrease in reliance on social services.
 - Number of new businesses created.
 - Number of new, first-time homeowners.
 - Number of jobs created.
 - Number of individuals who gained or improved employment as a result of IDA-related education.
- *Additional Comments:* Credit scores can be used as a proxy for financial education and financial responsibility; the question is whether a credit score can change in the timeframe of the IDA program. Decreased reliance on social services may also be an important indicator.

Maggie's Group

- *Flip Chart Notes:*
 - Utilize some increase in savings and compare it to national data sets.
 - Sub-indicators compared against national trends, using current data (e.g., generational indicators).
 - States' performances compared to Oregon.
 - Personal development – change in short-term behavior.
 - Leveraging resources – linking to other asset-building programs e.g., AFI, EITC, Voc Rehab, Federal \$.
 - Community engagement – e.g. joining groups, networking, voting.
 - 100% of homeowners have sustained homeownership by 12/1/10.
 - Efficacy, timeline of the IDA, success to date (cumulative), projections/forecasts of geographic reach, national data (CFED 6/09).
 - Business formation and survival rates.

- Stan: There is real substance in the recommendations presented here, including lots of ways to measure positive impacts on the individual. The next challenge is going to be refining these pieces.
- Diane pointed out that when we compare data sets we need to make sure that we're comparing the same populations.
- Maggie: It is important to look at what other asset building programs are doing nationally. We should also keep track of the federal resources being brought into Oregon because of the IDA program.
- Community engagement can also be a measure of the program's impact, including measures like voter engagement and rates of graduates joining organizations like business or neighborhood associations.
- Kelly: Recommends looking at how many dollars went into homeownership or small businesses around that state; we should develop language that points out how sustainable those investments are. Foreclosure rates would really help to document this. On the other hand, multiplier effects are subjective and hard to prove.
- Doug: We should measure which outcome represent net gains for the community such as the number of new homeowners, the number of new business, and the number of jobs created. Also, how IDAs related to education ended up improving personal or family circumstances.
- Alisa: In reality, it is hard to separate individual and community impacts, personal stories are extremely powerful. These types of stories are only going to come through testimony.
- Stan: Our program lends itself to personal stories, the humanistic appeal is incredibly important in ethnic communities and other close-knit communities. We'll want to know if the program succeeded in strengthening cultural ties. This will only come through in personal stories.
- Cynthia: It's not a question of "either or," both personal stories and quantifiable data are important.
- Lonnie: I understand the reticence to talk about multiplier effects, but they're important because they help people get a better understanding of local community

impacts. If they're no local businesses in rural communities, the population declines. We have to be able to demonstrate how IDAs impact the success of rural communities.

- Kelly: Leveraging is important too – we need to be able to explain how much money was brought into the state from other sources in addition to raw numbers (like the number of graduates and the number of homeowners to date).
- The number of people who have moved off of public assistance could also be a good number to have available; this shows that our program is in the business of “teaching people to fish” instead of giving “hand outs.”
- Maggie: We should look at the efficiency of the program overall compared to other programs. CFED just released a new set of national indicators in June.
- Alisa: We could remind legislators of the wealth gap issues, such as how much money is made available to wealthy folks through tax breaks on the state level. Also, how the state of Oregon has been a leader in IDAs.

Reactions

- Cynthia: The groups' suggestions are aligned with her ideas.
- Janet: One of the next steps is to pull together focus groups and bounce these ideas off of legislators. A few of the items discussed might be difficult to measure, but by in large, we're already tracking most of the data we'd need.
- Stan: You probably considered 50 different options and making the initial cut was hard. The next step for Cynthia and Victor is to come up with a final list for the legislature.
- Next, Stan asked each of the groups to develop a preliminary implementation plan. After we've picked our outcomes, what will you do to implement them in your organization? Specially, how would you encourage your clients to start saving.

Break Out #3 Report Out: Preliminary Implementation Plans

- Shawn: He would start by looking at existing data to determine where we actually are. Next, he would assess which factors are likely to influence participant savings behavior. He would run data on those factors to find the greatest correlations.
- Rey: He would clarify the goal and how it will be measured, which might involve calling Cynthia for details. He would want to know where his organization is currently in reference to the measure. Then, he would brief staff and let them know this goal is something that NAYA is committing its resources to organizationally. The next step would be to determine what steps will be needed to increase the participant savings rate, which would involve working with staff to develop a plan.
- Lonnie: Would begin by compiling baseline data and gathering information from financial institutions. He would get information on the radio and in newspapers. He would also start a thrift newsletter, which could serve as a resource guide.
- Stan: Often encounters organizations who don't know what to do once performance measures are in place. Often the hardest part is taking 5-10 minutes to

figure out how to get started. In June, everyone will have to do this so Stan wanted to show us that it is easy to do.

- Cynthia: the next step is testing possible outcomes with legislators and asking if we need to tweak anything. We'll also update the quarterly report form to help track progress.