

February 12, 2018



Christina Marchand
Associate Director
Government Innovators Network and Innovations
Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Ms. Marchand:

The Board of Directors of Clear Vision Eau Claire extends our sincere appreciation to the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation for naming Clear Vision Eau Claire as a 2015 Finalist for the Innovations in American Government Award. The resulting \$10,000 grant to the Engaging Citizens and Problem-Solving Initiative in the city of Eau Claire, Wisconsin is making a positive and significant impact on our multi-year community visioning project, the Eau Claire County Poverty Summit.

The Eau Claire County Poverty Summit is a unique initiative that brought together three hundred concerned citizens, many of whom have never before been invited to participate in, or sought out, civic engagement. These grant funds were judiciously utilized to support the Poverty Summit initiative which, through citizen engagement, helped turn voiced concerns into action plan implementation.

As stipulated in the agreement letter dated November 18, 2015, we are providing:

- 1) A narrative account of what was accomplished by expenditure of funds;
- 2) A description of progress made toward achieving the goals of the grant;
- 3) A financial accounting of these activities.

If you have questions after reviewing this report, or need anything else from Clear Vision, please contact us.

Thank you again for your confidence in, and financial support of, the Engaging Citizens and Problem-Solving Initiative facilitated by Clear Vision Eau Claire, in the City of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Best regards,



Ann Rupnow
President, Board of Directors



Donald Mowry
Board of Directors



Michael Huggins
Board of Directors
Poverty Summit Co-Chair



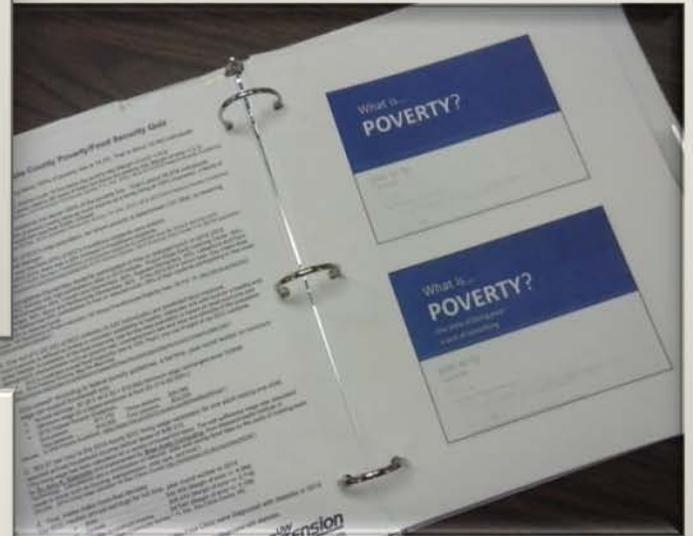
Sheng Xiong
Board of Directors
Poverty Summit Co-Chair

Enclosures



Eau Claire County Poverty Summit

Welcome
to this
Community Conversation of
Possibilities



Summit Ground Rules

- Safe space
- Start on time, end on time
- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- One person speaks at a time
- Keep an open mind
- Stay on topic
- Respect others
- Active listening

ENGAGING CITIZENS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING INITIATIVE IN THE CITY OF EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN
A Progress Report
February 12, 2018

#1a: Accomplishments through expenditure of funds

A Citizen Engagement and Problem-Solving Initiative: Eau Claire County Poverty Summit

Some communities allow the future to happen to them; others create it. Building on the realization that strong democracies begin with the conversations citizens have about the common good and the choices they make about the kind of community they want, Clear Vision Eau Claire (Clear Vision) formed in 2007. The organization's mission is to engage all members of the greater Eau Claire Community in active citizenship and collaborative conversations about the common good.

The Poverty Summit is a citizen-led public engagement and problem solving initiative to identify and take action on local issues related to poverty and income insecurity. The initiative utilizes civic engagement processes honed by Clear Vision since the organization's 2007 launch.

In 2014, Clear Vision convened community dialogue sessions that consistently identified issues related to poverty as a major concern throughout Eau Claire County. Citizens were not alone in this concern. Poverty and income insecurity were also identified as a significant concern in the 2015 Eau Claire City Comprehensive Plan, and by Eau Claire County, Eau Claire Area School District, United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley, and Eau Claire City/County Health Department's 'Healthy Communities' initiative.

Some community issues are exceedingly complex, and resolving those issues is beyond the capabilities of any single organization or person. Poverty is one such issue. As a result, Clear Vision launched the Poverty Summit to create a collaborative dialogue that could move from talk to action. Since its inception, the Poverty Summit has been endorsed and supported by the City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire Area School District, and other government agencies, community organizations, and private businesses.

THREE PHASES

The Poverty Summit was carried out in three phases. The Pre-Planning Phase included compiling a broad array of data regarding poverty in Eau Claire County; planning logistics and facilities; conducting a stakeholder analysis to identify participants who reflect the diversity of community organizations, demographics, and economic experiences; implementing specific recruitment strategies to include lower income and impacted populations in the public engagement process; and securing project funding.

The Stakeholder Engagement Phase included identifying and inviting a diverse mix of community stakeholders; recruiting Clear Vision coaches to guide action teams; training participants in Clear Vision relational problem solving skills; creating action teams; and providing support and resources as teams developed action plans with specific goals and timelines.

The final, and current, phase is the Implementation Phase. This includes supporting teams as they implement action plans; helping teams build community connections and relational power to fund and implement their plans; and evaluating and celebrating achievements.

COORDINATION

Two members of the Clear Vision Board of Directors stepped forward to serve as co-chairs of the Poverty Summit. Representatives from key government and community entities were invited to join Clear Vision in planning the Poverty Summit. Because of the scope of the initiative and the importance of recording and documenting the Poverty Summit process in a way that could eventually be used to create a replicable community model, Clear Vision also created a short-term position and hired a project coordinator.

RECRUITING CONCERNED CITIZENS

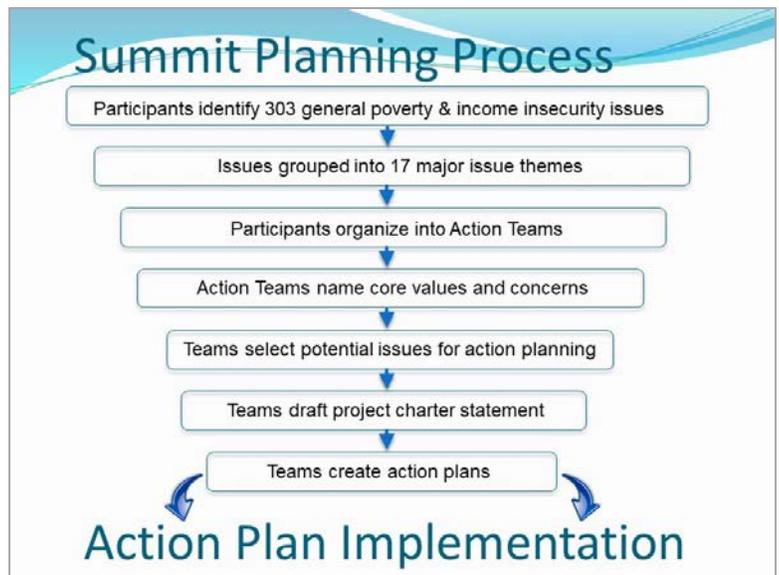
Clear Vision invited citizens from throughout Eau Claire County to join the Poverty Summit conversation, and encouraged them to reach out to others with an interest. The general public was welcome, but Clear Vision also made a concerted effort to identify and recruit participants with a specific interest in, knowledge of, or passion for aspects of poverty. Invitation letters were mailed to targeted individuals within local government, community organizations, churches, neighborhood associations, schools, health care, and more. Flyers, handouts, and the Clear Vision website (ClearVisionEauClaire.org) provided important what/where/when details. However, word of mouth marketing was most important and continued throughout the Poverty Summit as participants became evangelists and recruited others.

8 STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

Convened as a Community Conversation of Possibilities, the Poverty Summit included a series of eight stakeholder sessions held over a period of six months.

Sessions 1, 2 included small group discussions of poverty issues, challenges, and possibilities that led to a list of 303 issues, later grouped into 17 themes. In Session 3, participants began to create action teams. With action teams in place, participants used Sessions 4, 5, 6, 7 to further prioritize issues, create a Charter Statement, and develop a written Action Plan. At Session 8, each team presented their action plan and next major accomplishment(s). This final session concluded with time to celebrate, as public work is hard work and it is important to periodically take time to reflect on what has been accomplished and learned.

At each Stakeholder Session, Clear Vision provided training on core concepts and strategies for civic problem solving that make up the Clear Vision Process. Participants were given time to practice and incorporate these concepts into their small group work.



ACTION TEAMS

Eight action teams formed. Each focused on a different aspect of poverty: access to resources, children, education, food insecurity, incarceration transition, income & job skills, mental health, and stigma & public narrative. Each team created a Project Charter Statement and an actionable plan. Teams continue to review their Project Charter and adjust their action plans when needed.

Following are the Project Charter Statements that each action team presented in April 2017 when the Poverty Summit concluded its Planning Phase and launched the Implementation Phase.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE lack of physical access to, awareness of, and eligibility for resources are serious problems. **WE PROPOSE** to create a better platform for finding and accessing resources and will start by focusing on transportation to determine gaps and barriers to service and opportunities for increased access.



Kids First-Eau Claire
Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE that lack of positive parental role models and support systems for families of low income is a serious problem. **WE PROPOSE** to empower community members to support and nurture families in need by establishing an evidence-informed Parent-to-Parent Mentoring Program.

EDUCATION ACCESS Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE the lack of awareness of education system resources is a serious problem and contributes to lack of access and under-utilization in our community. **WE PROPOSE** to create a network to assist parents and students in navigating the educational system and community resources.

FOOD INSECURITY Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE everyone deserves access to food, and a well fed community will be stronger and healthier, saving on health care costs and, more importantly, saving lives. **WE PROPOSE** to work within the Dells Neighborhood to gain better perspectives on food insecurity and expand on current meal and produce programs.

INCARCERATION TRANSITION Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE the difficulty of returning as a citizen from the Eau Claire County Jail without a plan for re-entry is a serious problem. **WE PROPOSE** to advocate for a re-entry coordinator to work with inmates to create a detailed plan for return to their community.

INCOME & JOB SKILLS Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE the lack of a step and bridge benefit program is a serious problem and contributes to underemployment, lack of upward mobility, and workforce (skill) shortages in the Eau Claire community.

WE PROPOSE to increase public awareness of step program availability and bridge funding where needed.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE better communication among local mental health resources can help with economic security, access to mental healthcare, and a decrease in access time. **WE PROPOSE** to build connections among mental health service providers and create an inventory of current mental health services available.

STIGMA & PUBLIC NARRATIVE Action Team

PROJECT CHARTER

WE BELIEVE myths about poverty prevent us from identifying the root causes of poverty, and stigma about people living in poverty divides our community. **WE PROPOSE** to coordinate a creative media campaign to combat myths and stereotypes by telling true stories about people living in poverty.

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

To help support the teams as they implement their action plans, Clear Vision established two committees.

(1) The Poverty Summit Resource Committee helps connect action teams with available resources and best practices by providing contacts, references, web links, and access to existing studies, research, and data. When possible, links or downloadable files are available at ClearVisionEauClaire.org. Committee members have knowledge of or access to a broad range of available resources.

(2) The Poverty Summit Coordinating Committee provides project oversight for the implementation of the action team projects. The committee facilitates ongoing communication between action teams and also with the general public, provides a sounding board for concerns or barriers and an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments, and manages funding requests from action teams. Committee members include a representative from each action team plus representatives from Clear Vision and other Poverty Summit organizers.

Clear Vision will actively support the action teams through December 2018.

MEDIA & MARKETING

Local media (television, radio, print, and online) provided coverage and live interviews during the Stakeholder Engagement phase of the Poverty Summit. Personal meetings were scheduled with news editors. News releases were periodically submitted to keep the media updated. Internal and external communication was top-of-mind throughout the Poverty Summit.

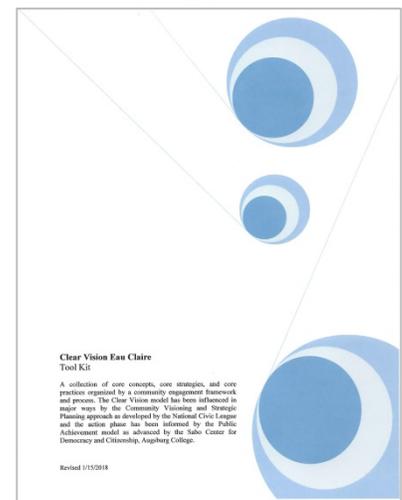
As mentioned earlier, word-of-mouth marketing was a primary tool used to create awareness and recruit citizen participation for stakeholder sessions and action teams. Word of mouth and personal relationships continue to be valuable and have resulted in several online articles by local and national news outlets.

The Clear Vision website, although humble, does serve as a valuable repository of projects and initiatives undertaken by Clear Vision. The site was updated throughout Poverty Summit phases and stakeholder sessions and offers a framework for organizations or communities to consider when contemplating their own Citizen Engagement and Problem-Solving initiatives.

CLEAR VISION TOOL KIT

The Clear Vision Tool Kit is a collection of core concepts, core strategies, and core practices organized by a community engagement framework and process. The Clear Vision model has been influenced in major ways by the [Community Visioning and Strategic Planning](#) approach as developed by the National Civic League and the action phase has been informed by the [Public Achievement](#) model as advanced by the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship, Augsburg. The Tool Kit includes one-to-one interviews, mapping power and interests, values house meetings, creating public spaces, cutting issues, action plans, taking action, and public evaluation. All are conducted through a dynamic and iterative process and were taught and utilized throughout the Poverty Summit. Because of the Poverty Summit and the Ash Award, the Tool Kit now has a section that outlines the process by which communities can bring members together in a summit phase and an action phase for accomplishing projects that are in the public good.

Each participant received a binder with the Clear Vision Tool Kit as well as information specific to the Poverty Summit: local poverty data, background material, and handouts from the stakeholder sessions. Exposing an additional 300 citizens to the Clear Vision Tool Kit was beneficial not only for achieving Poverty Summit work, but also for other community problem solving work.



STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS

Ground Rules

When launching any community conversation, Clear Vision asks participants to suggest, approve, and abide by a set of Ground Rules to create a safe, respectful, and welcoming conversation where everyone is encouraged to share ideas, keep an open mind, listen actively, respect others, and critique ideas rather than people. The agreed-upon Ground Rules for the Poverty Summit were posted at each public session and continue to be used by action teams in the course of their work.

Citizen Led

Civic engagement builds around issues that community members have identified and have a strong self-interest in resolving. Clear Vision brings concerned citizens together, ensures a safe and welcoming opportunity for conversation, and provides training on the public engagement process we refer to as the 'Clear Vision Process.' Citizens take the lead in identifying and prioritizing specific issues, creating an action plan, and implementing that plan.

Coaches

To help facilitate the Poverty Summit process, Clear Vision recruited twenty-three University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire students to serve as volunteer coaches. Pairs of coaches were assigned to each action team to help guide team members in using Clear Vision's core civic engagement tools; to ensure that all voices at the table were heard and that conversation was safe, respectful, and welcoming; and to communicate their group's progress, barriers, and concerns to Summit organizers. Most student coaches were experiencing civic engagement for the first time, but they embraced the opportunity and provided steady leadership for their teams.

As we neared the conclusion of the stakeholder engagement phase, each action team selected co-chairs to replace student coaches as the Poverty Summit moved into its implementation phase. In some instances student coaches became co-chairs, some remained as a team participant, and others stepped away due to class schedule, graduation, or other commitments.

The opportunity to recruit and train college students as coaches contributed to a successful stakeholder engagement phase of the Poverty Summit. The coaches received early training on Clear Vision core civic engagement tools which enabled them to offer guidance and answer questions as these tools were rolled out to all Summit participants. The students' perspectives also brought an important multi-generational dimension to all discussions.

IN SUMMARY

Governments, schools, organizations, and citizens voiced a common concern about the growing incidents and impacts of local poverty. In response, Clear Vision Eau Claire launched a collaborative initiative, the Eau Claire County Poverty Summit. The Poverty Summit is a citizen-led public engagement and problem solving project to identify and take action on issues related to poverty and income insecurity in Eau Claire County.

Grant funds from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation were utilized within Phase 2 of the Poverty Summit to create stakeholder engagement and turn the voiced concerns into actionable plans. Since April 2017, eight action teams have been refining and implementing plans to address specific aspects of poverty in Eau Claire County.

In addition, the Tool Kit has been revised to include a section on the Community Summit & Action Phase process that we refer to locally as the Clear Vision Process. In the Appendix are outlines of the major organizing committees and action teams that are necessary to implement a community visioning and action process including an outline of the Poverty Summit as an example to other communities.



#1b. Description of progress made toward achieving goals of the grant

A Citizen Engagement and Problem-Solving Initiative: Eau Claire County Poverty Summit

Short Term Goals

Short term goals have been achieved or exceeded:

- Goal: Train 150-200 stakeholder and action team participants in core relational problem solving skills
 - Actual: 300 citizens participated in one or more Poverty Summit sessions; 174 joined an action team and as teams recruit additional members, participant numbers will continue to grow
- Goal: Include active participation of lower income community members
 - Actual: Participants were not surveyed to determine income, however qualitative feedback from group discussion and general conversation indicate that lower income citizens did participate in Summit sessions and some joined action teams. Clear Vision reached out through churches, neighborhood associations, schools, and other targeted groups to recruit from lower income populations and also offered transportation reimbursement and free on-site child care for all Summit sessions.
- Goal: Empower up to six action teams to develop and implement action strategies
 - Actual: Eight action teams formed.

Long Term Goals

Achievement of long term goals will come through the work of the citizen-led action teams. Clear Vision will support their work through December 2018 by providing access to resources, communication and collaboration, and project funding.

- Goal: Reduce the number of individuals and families living in poverty in Eau Claire County
 - Actual: Measurable after 2018 based on reporting through City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Eau Claire Area School District, City/County Health Department, and other local organizations
- Goal: Build more resilient, thriving and inclusive communities that empower citizens to act
 - Actual: A research study to determine how public deliberation gives citizens the skills they need to make change in their communities is underway. The study is being conducted by a University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire professor, using anonymous survey information gathered from Poverty Summit participants during the first and final stakeholder sessions.

Creating a *Model for Community Change*

The problem of an increasing per capita poverty rate is not unique to Eau Claire County. However the opportunity to address that problem from a grass-root, civic engagement perspective may be unique. Clear Vision has expanded the Clear Vision Tool Kit in an attempt to capture the entire Poverty Summit process in a way that other communities can engage their citizens and replicate the Summit process to their advantage. This *Model for Community Change* includes process, skills, and practices; and eventually will include case studies, anecdotal pieces, stories, results, and more.

#2. Financial accounting of activities

A Citizen Engagement and Problem-Solving Initiative: Eau Claire County Poverty Summit

ACTIVITY	IMPACT ON INITIATIVE	INVESTMENT*
Invitations	Necessary to recruit participants who reflected the diversity of community organizations, demographics, and economic experiences	343.00
Facility for 8 Stakeholder Sessions	Necessary for planned communications and dissemination activities; facility choice sent a subtle but important message for inclusiveness through location, accessibility, ease of access, layout, and ability to accommodate a variety of discussion configurations in settings conducive to open conversation	1,000.00
Recruiting & Training Coaches	Necessary to train-the-trainer on Clear Vision core concepts, strategies, and practices so coaches were able to guide their action teams in utilizing these tools	992.00
Participant Materials	Necessary reference and resource materials including Clear Vision Tool Kit, Coaches Handbook, and session handouts	1,953.00
Temporary Project Coordinator	Necessary to ensure timely and organized implementation of Poverty Summit including organizing large mailings and databases, responding to phone and email requests, arranging logistics for meetings and stakeholder sessions, documenting the Poverty Summit process, updating program budget, and guiding internal and external communication; coordinator was contracted part time for 10 months	5,712.00

* All expenses were incurred and paid September 1, 2016 – May 31, 2017.