

**Final Report to Urban Collaborators for a
2006-07 Community Program Enhancement Project
Board Development Programming with the Lansing Community
Micro-Enterprise Fund**

Background: The Lansing Community Micro-Enterprise Fund (LCMF) is a micro-enterprise assistance and loan fund program in Lansing, Michigan. It exists to facilitate the development of new and /or growing micro-enterprises, which are rooted in the low and moderate-income areas of the city of Lansing. A micro-enterprise is a small business with five employees or less that requires \$35,000 or less in initial capital. The overall goal of the LCMF is that its clients will become self-sufficient and capable of participating in the economic mainstream contributing to a better stronger Lansing.

The LCMF was established as a collaborative effort by the City of Lansing, Michigan State University's Center for Urban Affairs, Lansing Neighborhood Associations, Lansing Community College's Small Business Development Center, Catholic Charities, First of America (now National City), and Michigan National Bank (now Standard Federal). The Mayor of Lansing established a Community Investment Committee with representatives of the above organizations in January 1994.

LCMF was created to focus on the following mission: To assist low-moderate income individuals starting or expanding a small business in distressed communities by providing business training, micro-loans, networking opportunities and one-on-one mentoring.

Recently, the LCMF experienced leadership challenges at the board level. Four new board members have been recruited. The board, a mix of old and new members, has reached a point where board development activities are both needed and welcomed.

\$1,800 was awarded to help the LCMF build the capacity of the organization as well as the County Extension Director's own capacity to work with organizations undergoing strategic planning.

Outputs:

- An email survey of LCMF board members, funding partners, local government officials, peer organizations and clients of LCMF. Results of the survey were used by the group that participated in the strategic planning session.

- The Board, staff and stakeholders of the LCMF met for a day-long strategic planning session on July 16, 2007. This session was facilitated by staff of the Protogenia Group who led the group through a formal brainstorming exercise where goals were established in four areas; Organizational Development, Board Development, Fund Development, and Program Development. Participants were offered the opportunity to prioritize goals and then were engaged in brainstorming implementation strategies for the top two goals in each area.
- A final report was prepared by the consultant and presented to the Board for approval.

Outcomes:

- The Board of Directors has a strategic blueprint for decisions it will be making about the organization, its own development as well as fund and program development.
- Stakeholders who participated in the planning session have renewed their connections with the Board and have pledged additional cooperation as the Board implements its plan.

County Extension Director's Development:

- Learned about the modified Rensselaerville model for use when guiding a group through strategic planning
- Was able to both observe and participate as the consultant conducted the various planning exercises with the group
- Observed the challenges (and strategies to overcome) encountered by a facilitator during the course of brainstorming and goal setting with a board comprised of new and seasoned members.

Submitted by Randy Bell, County Extension Director