

Margins to Mainstream

Community Foundations Advancing Family Economic Success

Doug Jansson
President
Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY)
and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Greater Milwaukee Foundation

- Founded in 1915
- Serves four counties with a population of 1.5 million
- Assets of \$340 million
- Total grants of \$22.5 million
- 45% discretionary assets
- History of leadership roles in last 15 years

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Genesis of the Super VITA Sites

- Amelia Island conference
- Remarks by Peter Edelman
- \$35,000 for three pieces of research
 - UW-Milwaukee for study on poverty in Milwaukee area over past 30 years
 - Determine utilization rates of key entitlement programs such as EITC
 - Interviews with 30 key informants

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Key Findings

- In 1999 over 1/5th of City residents lived in poverty
- Nearly 1/3 of the City's children
- Focus on making existing successful programs work better
- Focus on the working poor – those caught between poverty and self-sufficiency
- Programs need to be marketed, application processes simplified and services better coordinated

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Utilization Rates of Public Programs

Program	Estimated Not Served
EITC	10,000
Food Stamps	30,000
Medicaid	18,000
BadgerCare	20,000
GAMP	20,000
Childcare (Title 20)	108,000
School Lunch Program	10,000

Program Design

- For whom? Focus on the working poor and EITC in particular
- Where? Two primary locations – North and South side of the City
- How long? Not yet determined.

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Key Elements of the Strategy

- Partnerships formed:
 - Social Development Commission (SDC)
 - Milwaukee Asset Building Coalition
 - BadgerCare Consortium and City Health Dept.
 - Greater Milwaukee Foundation
 - University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and evaluator
- \$75,000 grant to establish three VITA “super sites” including two fixed sites and one mobile site
- \$25,000 for program evaluation
- Significant investment of program staff time

Goals of the VITA Super Sites

- Increase the number of people taking advantage of EITC, childcare credits, etc.
- Increase the skills of participants in planning, developing and managing assets
- Reduce the use of for-profit tax preparers and high interest check cashing services
- Build new collaborative relationships and strengthen existing ones

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Key Desired Outcomes/Indicators

- Working families have and use reasonably priced savings and checking accounts
- Obtain loans without using predatory lenders
- Take full advantage of all available tax benefits
- Find and use all public and private programs that provide essential services

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Services Offered at VITA sites

- Free income tax preparation focused on tax credits
 - EITC
 - Homestead credit
 - Childcare credits
- Enrollment in BadgerCare, WIC, food stamps, etc.
- Saving options with a local banking institution
- Other on-site services such as energy assistance

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Accomplishments

- Over 12,000 people received tax credits
- \$5.4 million provided to participants at 19-site VITA program
- Three times prior year filings
- The three super sites accounted for 36% of EITC filings valued at \$2.3 million
- 80% were new filers at VITA sites
- 150 families assisted with health coverage, food stamps and other entitlement programs

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Utilization of EITC Credits

- Immediate expenses such as rent or utilities, clothing, general living expenses, etc.
- Fewer than 1/3rd reported saving any of refunded money
- 5% reported putting money aside to “to buy something major”
- 5% “for my kids and retirement”

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Challenges

- Program started too late in January
- Only 28% deposited checks into bank or credit union
- Recruiting and scheduling volunteers
- County food stamp workers relocated
- Federal policy change in 2005: pre-certification requirements for EITC
- Long-term funding of the VITA sites

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Current Status

- \$100,000 grant for the continuation of the three VITA super sites
- \$15,000 grant for evaluation of the second year
- Focus on the issues raised by the evaluation of first year
- Increase on-site services – student financial aid, child care, weatherization, savings accounts

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Lessons Learned

- The investment in research on utilization rates was critical for Board understanding and support
- Defining clear outcomes and indicators was critical for the Board and for the partners
- Investing in evaluation is helping refine the model
- Public policy issues cannot be avoided
 - County decision to move food stamp workers
 - Federal decision to pre-certify EITC filers

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only

Foundation's Role

- Funded research on utilization rates
- Pulled together the required partners to develop the VITA super site strategy
- Provided key grants to test the strategy
- Secured additional funding partners
- Generated media coverage to promote the VITA super sites
- Funded evaluation of the strategy
- Attended key meetings of the partners

Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop —October 24-25, 2003—Baltimore, MD

Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) —The Aspen Institute

Use with permission only