



MICRON Innovation Grant: Partners for Prosperity Final Report

Principal Investigator: Marnie Spencer, Bingham County Extension and Jessica Sotelo, P4P Executive Director

Address: 625 West Pacific, 208-785-0059

Award Amount: \$15,000

Project Name: Creating Public Awareness for STEM Education Opportunities in Eastern Idaho

1. SUMMARY OF INNOVATION DESCRIPTION.

Purpose

The purpose of this Innovation project was to address two significant findings of the Micron research: 1, the high school students are unaware of STEM education opportunities post-high school; and 2, that most 10th graders do not know how to apply for college and financial aid as well as navigate sometimes complex academic processes.

Implementation

STEM Public Awareness Campaign

The first part of the project included the development of a STEM education poster and the creation of a commercial. The flyer was professionally designed and printed and then distributed throughout the eastern Idaho region. Distribution locations included high schools, social service organizations, government agencies, grocery stores, community bulletin boards and other locations where parents, students and family members might look for information.

The poster focused on the message “Get Hired” as a means to connect the idea of STEM education to future jobs that pay a living wage. Data from the “Complete College America: STEM Careers in Idaho” was used to connect the effort to Idaho jobs and opportunities. In addition, P4P wanted to focus on both academic and professional technical opportunities so information from both was used in terms of potential earnings and lists of high-growth, high-demand jobs.

The Commercial for the script was designed to make the link between STEM education and high wage jobs as well as call attention to the need for an educated workforce in Idaho. The commercial ran on several popular cable networks over a two-three month period.

“Last year Idaho had over 21,000 open jobs related to STEM fields, most paying more than a livable wage. STEM careers include health care, energy, manufacturing, IT, environment, and much more. What does this mean for you? These jobs require education after high school whether it’s a certificate, 2 year degree, 4 year degree, or advanced degree. Contact your local college or university for details on how to apply and available financial aid. Idaho needs you to pursue educational opportunities that lead to STEM careers!”





Public Awareness for College and Financial Aid Processes

Initially the project called for conducting three workshops at high schools identified in the Micron research. The purpose of the workshops was to provide direct assistance to high school seniors with college applications and FAFSA applications. However due to several external factors P4P was required to make changes in the approach.

First, the high schools would not allow release time for students to participate in the workshops. Second, the State Board of Education has a long standing process of introducing college seniors to college opportunities. During this event all area colleges and universities are invited to the high school and given a limited amount of time to present their institution. Due to the limited release time for students to participate, P4P was unable to partner with institutions for this event.

The next option was to schedule evening workshops with several regional partners and invite parents and students. However this was also problematic given that P4P would only reach a limited number of participants based on timing and marketing of the event.

Ultimately P4P received permission to change this part of the project by creating and distributing a college prep guide to six area high schools, reaching 2,000 students. The guide was designed to be extremely user friendly and reflected the recognition that many parents and students are unfamiliar with academic terminology and processes. The booklets were distributed to the high schools during the final two weeks of classes. The guide included the following topics:

1. Glossary of terms and acronyms
2. How to apply for college, including a table of all area colleges, links to websites, telephone numbers and fees for application.
3. How to apply for FAFSA including next steps after the application is submitted.
4. Information on four area universities: Idaho State, Boise State, University of Idaho and Eastern Idaho Technical College.
5. Information on pre-college programs that provide assistance with transition to college.

2. PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS/PARTICIPANTS.

University Partners

P4P worked with the four institutions mentioned above to compile admissions and enrollment information. In addition, P4P reviewed a much larger guide published by the Idaho Association of College Registrars for guidance on what to include. This larger guide is more comprehensive but for purposes of the P4P project, it was determined that it might be too large and too slanted toward people who already understand college application processes.

Community Partners

P4P relied on numerous community partners to distribute the STEM education poster: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Department of Labor, all area high schools including alternative high schools, Community Action Agencies, NeighborWorks Agencies, Community Council of Idaho, and many others.

P4P worked with six area high schools including one tribal high school, to distribute the college booklet: Pocatello High School, New Horizons High School, Shoshone Bannock Junior Senior High, Blackfoot High School, Independence High School, and Idaho Falls High School.



3. BUDGET SUMMARY

Expense	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount
Personnel	\$7,000	\$10,693.00
Copying and Printing	\$3,250	\$589
Media Ads	\$3,250	\$2,175
Mileage	\$500	\$543
Principle Investigator Spencer	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total	\$15,000	\$15,000

4. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND GOALS.

The success of this project is difficult to measure since success is linked to successful admission and enrollment in an academic or professional technical education program particularly in a STEM field. This type of data is collected by educational institutions and annual data would need to be compared to previous years in a longitudinal study to determine the ultimate effectiveness of the P4P campaign.

However there are findings, at least anecdotally, that lead to the conclusion that this type of campaign and information is important in terms of increasing participation in STEM educational opportunities and increasing awareness of admissions and enrollment processes.

One area high school asked for additional booklets to distribute to juniors and reported positive feedback from those who received the booklet as well as parents. Counselors from another high school reported that this information was “user-friendly” and provided the basic types of information that many guides lack. In addition, almost all high schools reported that in spite of the move toward digital information sharing, there is still a need for hard copy booklets to be given to students and parents, particularly those who do not have access to a computer.

Metrics

300 “Get Hired” posters were distributed in the 16-county region.

2,000 College Prep booklets were distributed to six area high schools including three traditional high schools, two alternative high schools and one tribal high school

Findings

P4P encountered numerous barriers in the implementation of this project and we believe these barriers inform the underlying reasons for results of the Micron research:

- The original intent was to distribute already existing materials for STEM education opportunities, professional technical education opportunities and higher education admission and enrollment processes. However no materials existed for STEM education and professional technical education in general. Each college has institution specific information about their institution and programs but no GENERAL information exists, not even information that explains the differences between academic and professional technical education.
- P4P found one guide published by the Idaho Association of College Registrars; however this guide proved to be unwieldy and awkward. It contained too much information yet lacked basic information that helps parents and students overcome barriers linked to an understanding of the admissions and enrollment processes. It also contained academic vernacular that most first



generation college students would be unfamiliar with let alone their parents who might be guiding and assisting in this process.

- P4P encountered a high degree of bureaucracy that prevented workshops to provide one on one assistance with college applications and FAFSA applications. None of the schools would permit release time during the day. In addition, all of the high schools reported that while counselors do have and disseminate information, the reality is that they don't have the time and resources to assist large numbers of students with college applications.
- Another degree of bureaucracy was encountered in the structured event endorsed by the State Board of Education. All of the high schools participate in a "College Day" type event where colleges and universities are allowed to make presentations to high school students about their institutions and programs. P4P was not allowed to participate in these events. In addition, high school students are only given sufficient time to choose two of the institutions to hear the presentations rather than all of them.

Recommendations

- Idaho needs general educational information accessible and disseminated to all residents. This information would include basic information about the differences between academic and professional technical education as well as steps for admissions and enrollment. The information needs to be broken down to account for first generation college students, low income students and their families and others who may not understand institutional vernacular. The information needs to be presented in a way that doesn't lead potential students to any one institution but rather leads them to higher education in general. Finally the information needs to be linked to the end result—JOBS! It is crucial to present information on Idaho's workforce needs and the connection to the regional and state economy.
- The entire process of presenting information to high school students in a two-hour college presentation needs to be restructured. There needs to be an element of basic information shared with students similar to the information listed above about types of degrees and programs and links to specific jobs. Students should be given as much information as possible and the opportunity to learn about ALL of their options.
- There continues to be a lot of stigma around professional technical education. Idaho needs a campaign geared towards changing the dynamic and creating awareness about PTE and the employment opportunities it provides.

5. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED WORK IN THIS AREA

P4P is actively searching for resources that will fund a statewide campaign for professional technical education and employment opportunities. The campaign will be heavily linked to living wage jobs and particularly jobs in Idaho and the demand for a skilled workforce.