



# Leadership training builds and strengthens skills in Challis community members

## The Situation

Historically, many Challis community members have not engaged in community events, decision making challenges, or leadership training. This can be attributed to two main factors: 1. remote location or accessibility to resources and 2. lack of confidence of their abilities to engage.

Currently, there are few processes to encourage, grow, and support existing and emerging rural leaders. To help create a prosperous community where everyone has the opportunity to engage in community events, decision making, and trainings, University of Idaho Extension (UIE) and the Custer Economic Development Association (CEDA), with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation (NWF), provided a community leadership program.

The 18-month Horizons program was delivered to Challis community members by UIE and CEDA and was guided by a 10-member steering committee comprised of community volunteers. Horizons is a community leadership program aimed at reducing poverty in small rural communities. Poverty is defined as a lack of opportunity. With a population of just over 900 residents, Challis has an overall poverty rate of 12.7%, which includes a child poverty rate of 16.4% and an elderly poverty rate of 28.2%.

## Our Response

Challis was one of 15 Idaho communities that participated in the Pew Partnership's LeadershipPlenty® training. The goal of the training program was to make civic leadership training available to community members who may not consider themselves leaders but have much to offer their communities, and to strengthen the skills of those who already held leadership positions. It is designed for anyone, with

any skill level, for any leadership capacity. Skills learned can help both experienced leaders, as well as those new to leadership. It can benefit leaders within the community, schools, churches, volunteer organizations, or work related committees. LeadershipPlenty® is broken down into nine 3-hour training modules and one practicum for discussion: Finding Leadership Within, Identifying Community Assets, Managing Groups for Results, Making Meetings Work Better, Managing Conflict, Building Strategic Partnerships, Moving from Talk to Action, Valuing Evaluation, and Communicating for Change.

During a 2½ day training seminar conducted by the Pew Partnership in Idaho Falls, 3 Challis community members were certified as Trainers to deliver the LeadershipPlenty® Program to community members.

## Program Outcomes

Twenty three Challis community residents participated in the LeadershipPlenty® Program. Participants were asked to complete a survey following their participating in the program. The survey measured community poverty rates compared to participant poverty rates, pre- and post-survey changes in 16 leadership skills, how Horizons has helped communities address or change poverty in communities, and how participants intend to use leadership skills in their community.

Post program surveys indicate:

- 18.8% of participants had incomes below 200% of the poverty level.
- 100% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to enhance their effectiveness in the community.

- 95% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to get more people involved in leadership positions, create a greater community understanding of the importance of leadership skills, get more diverse leadership within the community, and create more open discussions of difficult topics.
- 90% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to work more effectively with others.
- 90% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to involve more parts of the community in making decisions for the community.
- 90% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to get more people involved in making community decisions, including low income community members.
- 85% of participants intend to use their leadership skills to expand local leadership training.

When surveyed about 16 leadership skills before and after participating in LeadershipPlenty®, Challis participants indicated an increase in all skills (table below).

One program participant stated, “This class was helpful to show us how to develop a goal and build the map to get it done. The class developed confidence in my ability to actually make a difference in my community by working together, in spite of differing personal values. This training will make the difference between projects talked about, and projects actually completed in Challis in the future.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**HORIZONS III CHALLIS, IDAHO BEFORE AND AFTER MEAN/AVERAGE SELF RATING OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS FROM LEADERSHIPPLENTY POSTSURVEYS**

