

Mayor David N. Cicilline's
Poverty, Work and Opportunity Task Force

Task Force Meeting
July 9, 2007

Resident Focus Groups— Background

- ❑ Facilitated by Kristin Lehoullier (independent consultant)
 - ❑ All focus groups were conducted in June 2007
 - ❑ 5 groups
 - 10-15 participants each, total of 58 participants
 - *Hosted by:* CHisPA, Dorcas Place, John Hope, Making Connections Providence, and SEDC
 - ❑ Participant Demographics:
 - 75% had incomes under \$30,000/year (60% under \$15,000/year)
 - About 1/3 of participants were employed at the time
 - About half had some type of bank account
 - Participants were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, language, education levels, and age
-

Resident Focus Groups— Questions

- ❑ What are barriers Providence residents face in finding jobs that pay enough to live?
 - ❑ Suggestions for making sure people in Providence have enough money to live?
 - ❑ What can be done to help families (especially single women with children) get by?
 - ❑ Is there a need for assistance in enrolling in state assistance programs?
 - ❑ Would it be helpful to increase access to regular banking services and reducing use of high-cost financial services?
 - ❑ What would help young people finish high school and get the skills needed for work and college?
-

Resident Focus Group Results— Major Themes (I)

- ❑ The high cost of living in RI makes it difficult to get ahead
 - ❑ Not enough local job opportunities
 - ❑ Limited education, skills, and language barriers made being competitive in the labor force difficult
 - ❑ Complications from other factors affect ability to make a living (age, criminal records, mental health, immigration status)
 - ❑ State assistance programs do not promote financial independence
-

Resident Focus Group Results— Major Themes (II)

- ❑ Enrolling in state assistance programs is often onerous and confusing
 - ❑ Lack of quality education perpetuates poverty in Providence
 - ❑ Families face a tension between advocating for their children's educational needs and meeting family basic financial needs
 - ❑ Youth need more opportunities to prepare for work and positive alternatives to the street
-

Resident Focus Group Results— Major Themes (III)

- Many residents don't see the value of regular banking services, and they resent high cost services but don't see alternatives
 - Need to help low-income communities invest in their own development through small business supports
-

Synthesis of Small Group Discussions from June 11th

- Investing in the Providence Workforce
 - Improving adult education, literacy, and English-Language skill levels
 - Establishing and Improving Access to Career Pathways for Low-Skill Workers
 - Youth Connections to the Workforce
 - Programs for Out-of-School Youth without a High School Diploma or GED
-

Task Force Timeline

- Task Force meeting in September to review the final report and discuss next steps
 - Draft of report to Task Force July 27 – feedback in August
 - Feedback Discussion Groups in August:
 - Youth
 - Business community members
 - Business leaders meeting in September
 - Release of final Task Force report in early October
-

Outline for Final Report

- I. Introduction
 - II. Background on Poverty in Providence
 - III. The Larger Context (changing RI economy, current municipal efforts, partnerships and collaborations)
 - IV. Workforce Needs (adults and youth)
 - V. Making Work Pay
 - VI. Reducing the High Cost of Being Poor
 - VII. Preventing Poverty in Future Generations
 - VIII. Next Steps/Implementation
 - IX. Summary of Recommendations
-

Criteria for Objectives and Strategies

- ***Meaningful***
Making a change in this will have a significant and positive impact on people in Providence and there are data showing need
 - ***Measurable***
It is possible to make a measurable change within 3 years
 - ***Effective***
There is a research-base showing effectiveness or promising models in other cities
 - ***Feasible***
There is a realistic resource development strategy to accomplish this objective
 - ***Ability to Implement***
Leadership capacity; community interest; existing building blocks
-