

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

City of Bowling Green EC

The Bowling Green Enterprise Community, Inc. (BGEC) kicked off the year 2000 with a series of public forums to clarify the needs of the residents of the Enterprise Community (EC). Eleven forums were held, one for each benchmark identified in the Strategic Plan which was written anticipating an Empowerment Zone designation. The goals and work plan had to be scaled back somewhat because the EC designation provided for a significantly smaller grant. During the forums citizens listed many problems they faced living in an economically depressed area: higher levels of poverty and unemployment; crime related problems; lower educational levels; and poor transportation.

As a result of the forums, several amendments were made to the Strategic Plan, and several new programs were developed. In the area of Child Care, a Child Care Scholarship was established for EC residents. The purpose was to assist EC parents of children six months to five years for a limited time with their child care needs. It is designed to be a helping hand to self-sufficiency, not another welfare program. A similar program was developed for Youth Development targeted at ages K-12. The goal of this program was to make sure that children had a safe place to go after school. The ultimate goal was to provide the children an alternative to an environment which might eventually lead to drugs, alcohol use or crime related problems. This initiative has been a huge success. Over 100 children were served in the first six months and over \$50,000 was set aside for the two programs.

The BGEC also will be offering four \$500 scholarships to EC high school seniors for attendance at an approved post-secondary institution. A set-aside was also approved for all schools which serve the residents of the EC. The funds were distributed to Family Resource Centers or Youth Services Centers at the schools to be used for emergency needs of the children.

As a result of the lengthy process establishing the BGEC, no first year funds were distributed until the middle of 2000, about the same time as year two funding became available. It was decided that part of the money would be used to offer grants to agencies providing services to the residents of the EC. NOFA's were sent out starting in June of 2000 in eleven categories / benchmarks. Twenty-one grant applications were received for nine of the benchmarks. A total of \$190,255 was awarded in grants to fifteen agencies.

The BGEC has been very successful in leveraging federal dollars. As of October 2000, over \$50,000,000 had been leveraged. Projects ranged from a new Justice Center, to numerous education grants through the school system, the development of Kentucky's first digital library, partnering with a local non-profit organization and the City to provide affordable low income housing to residents, and partnering with the City and State to conduct a neighborhood tire clean-up project.