More big ideas wanted!

“Our goal is nothing less than to change forever the quality of our life together - yours and mine, theirs and ours - by endeavoring to join the urban renaissance of Milwaukee, and the transformation of ourselves as Milwaukee’s and someday the nation’s premier urban university.”

Since Chancellor Nancy Zimpher spoke those words to a campus-wide audience in September 1998, The Milwaukee Idea has involved over 500 people on 38 committees, action teams and working groups. We have brought over $6 million to the table and proposed wide-ranging action on a number of fronts important to the community. We are not stopping here.

More "Big Ideas" are on the horizon for UWM as The Milwaukee Idea enters its second round in this leading effort to build community-campus engagement.

It is expected that three or four ideas will be selected in a competitive process that begins with the submission of concept papers (due no later than March 15). A "Reading Group" convened by the Chancellor will evaluate each one and select a small number to move forward.

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To find that better way, members of the NME project have broken up into several work groups. They are examining a variety of issues including educational opportunities in nonprofit management (e.g., degree, non-degree, certificate programs and continuing education), creation of a learning center to increase understanding of the nonprofit sector, strengthening diversity in nonprofits (both locally and nationally) and nonprofit service models elsewhere in the country. They will bring their recommendations back to the full group in early spring with an implementation phase to follow.

At the same time, agencies were experiencing cuts in funding. They were being asked to do more and more with less and less. "At the same time, agencies were experiencing cuts in funding. They were being asked to do more and more with less and less."

The foundations responded with the Nonprofit Management Fund which provides grants on an agency by agency basis. The fund was well received, Maryl said. But as the role of the nonprofits continued to expand, the foundations decided it was time to take a look at the nonprofit sector as a whole.

They found a variety of resources, ranging from workshops and seminars to degree programs in related fields to a certificate in non-profit management. It was clear, however, that a broader and more organized approach was needed.

"There’s no one place to go in Milwaukee to get a handle on that a broader and more organized approach was needed." said Lange: "None of my education – I was a social work-

Focus groups made up of agency executives and man-

The Milwaukee Idea: Partnering with Milwaukee's nonprofits

The power of The Milwaukee Idea to generate community partnerships is being demonstrated in an exciting new effort to create educational and support services for nonprofit groups. Representatives from a number of schools and colleges at UWM are working with a consortium of over 30 nonprofit organizations from metropolitan Milwaukee as well as with several local foundations on the Nonprofit Management Education Project. It is aimed at enhancing effective management, governance and leadership in the nonprofit sector.

The idea for the project was percolating in the community just as The Milwaukee Idea, with its mission of community-campus engagement, was taking shape. Enthusiastic about the possibilities of a partnership, the Helen Bader Foundation contacted UWM to talk about collaboration. For the university, it was a chance to put The Milwaukee Idea into action.

"UWM saw the potential to become a partner in this," notes Joan Taylor, project facilitator. "When the foundations approached UWM, the university’s response was immediate and positive. I don’t think that would have happened at all without The Milwaukee Idea. It has provided a focus and an impetus so UWM can join the community in a timely fashion."

Since 1994, an alliance of foundations, initiated by the Bader, Faye McBeath and Milwaukee Foundations has funded technical assistance to nonprofit groups through their Nonprofit Management Fund. According to Robin Maryl of the Bader Foundation, the fund grew from the recognition that the role of nonprofit organizations was changing dramatically.

"Governments were removing themselves from the front lines in social services and more responsibility was going to community organizations," she said.

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