

## A strategic initiative to create the first

### *City Model for Social Innovation*

#### THE OPPORTUNITY

We believe cities need to nurture and sustain social entrepreneurs, helping their communities strengthen social and environmental innovation. We are developing a comprehensive city-wide model, replicable by other cities, while also laying the groundwork for a statewide initiative on social entrepreneurship.

**Goals of a city model for social innovation.** We need a new approach to leading change and we need more people to get involved. Social enterprise/social entrepreneurship is a proven strategy that will move the nonprofit world into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, allowing it to mature as a viable profession and career, and allow it to be recognized for what it should be: high-value business that we rely on to create a common, safe, and sustainable future. This model does not include *everyone* working in a city—it is a model focused on the specific goals below. However, it is intended to be comprehensive enough to touch many of the lives of those living in a city.

#### 1. Engage more citizens in change

Citizens want to be involved, lead change, and see evidence of improvement. More individuals are stepping up and offering to do something—but few pathways exist for them to learn, receive full support, and ensure success.

#### 2. Foster a new breed of change organization

The traditional charity-driven model of nonprofits reduces collaboration and increases competition for scarce funding. Some nonprofits spend up to 70% of their precious time begging to feed their organizations, lowering their ability to be effective change organizations. The model is broken. We need new examples and strategies for leading change.

## A COMPREHENSIVE CITY MODEL FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

We have outlined eight elements that comprise an ideal city model.

#### 1. Education for New Leadership

Higher education opportunities for learning about and practicing social entrepreneurship as well as community-based educational opportunities for learning how to launch social ventures. Community centers can be avenues for reaching lower income populations, and they need programs to implement in these areas. Universities have begun to define goals in these course areas, and we are consulting with a number to further develop programs.

2. **Engagement Pathways for Supporters**  
Citizens need pathways to engagement in change organizations and programs. Volunteering, mentoring, interning, shadowing, partnering, and providing expertise are opportunities for citizens to connect with change. We can identify what opportunities exist for engagement, collaborate on communication, and design new opportunities to fill identified gaps.
3. **Communication Coordination**  
We have a number of new tools launching in this arena. We can coordinate these communication tools to better inform the public of opportunities, pathways, models, and events. Web sites, newsletters, magazines, etc.—they currently lack cross-coordination in planning and implementation which results in a piecemeal approach to information dissemination. A more connected approach to communication and information dissemination would result in a better informed public.
4. **Support by the Professional Community**  
The comprehensive network that exists to help small for-profit businesses launch, the legal, financial, and mentoring system, is extensive—yet nonexistent for *social ventures*. The support for nonprofit launching is also weak, disjointed, and based on outdated models. We need to improve the knowledge base of this system, and help it nurture a new breed of change organization. This includes government agencies as well as the funding, legal, financial, and business community.
5. **Convenings and Exchanges**  
From Springboard's Social Innovation Forum to the Young Women's Social Entrepreneurship monthly meetings, some events and forums occur in Portland now around social innovation. They offer support, advice, and showcase effective models, improving practice of change leaders. But, we need improved support for and coordination of forums like these. An *annual statewide summit* on social innovation would share best practice in cities across the state as well as outside the state.
6. **A Professional Network for Sustainable Innovation**  
We are developing a Network for Sustainable Innovation—a professional organization of social innovators and those who support the practice will serve to connect professionals in the field, identify results, disseminate best practices, and raise awareness of the social profits being generated by social and environmental entrepreneurs throughout the state. These will be state-wide, and ultimately connect to each other state to state across the nation.
7. **Physical Spaces for Innovation Incubation**  
Each community needs a place where early launchers, leaders of traditional nonprofits, volunteers, innovators who need space, and other professional supports, businesses and events can cooperate to create a rich place for modeling, nurturing, hosting, and launching innovations.
8. **Emphasis on *Everyone***  
From the newly minted "Encore" generation of baby boomers, to the youth leadership emerging in schools and community centers around the globe, we need to ensure *everyone* gets invited to the table. Also, we know that those who struggle to make ends meet or are marginalized must learn to design and implement innovative and powerful ideas—we need focused strategies to invite and engage everyone in meaningful action—beyond dialogue and visioning into viable leadership.