

## **LENNOX EDUCATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE (LENZ)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is LENZ?**

LENZ is a pioneering model of “collective impact.” It is a cross-sector collaboration of partners working strategically to dramatically improve outcomes for the children and young adults of Lennox, especially when it comes to college-readiness, health and general preparation for a successful life. These partners include nonprofits from within and outside of Lennox, community members, and philanthropists working together in a coordinated effort facilitated by New Visions in close collaboration with the Lennox School District. Each partner shares responsibility and accountability for agreed upon results.

LENZ strives to prepare all Lennox children and young adults for college, and a healthy, successful life. LENZ has so far identified 31 milestones that it considers critical for a child’s successful journey from birth to college and beyond, into the early stages of a young adults career. These milestones are academic (e.g., school related) and non-academic (e.g., health related).

#### **The mission of LENZ is to prepare all children for college. But is college really for everyone?**

We believe every child should have adequate preparation for college and career readiness. Some students will struggle more than others on the road to college, and some students may determine along the way that they would be happier or more successful pursuing a different post-secondary option. Therefore, LENZ will work to accommodate the goals of every child, whether or not his/her goal is to attend college.

#### **How is LENZ different from other programs in Lennox trying to help children?**

Many organizations or programs focus on one or a few of a child’s needs, and will serve a subset of students within a community. No single organization or program can serve all of the needs of every child in Lennox. Therefore, the mission of LENZ is to assist in the coordination of a variety of organizations, programs and interventions to ensure that every child in Lennox receives the comprehensive support he/she needs to be successful at each and every milestone on the journey from cradle to career.

#### **Who is in charge of LENZ?**

LENZ is a collaboration led by of the partners and community members of Lennox. The collaboration is highly outcomes-focused, and is geared to significantly improving outcomes for youth. With this goal in mind, LENZ is facilitated by New Visions (a nonprofit organization) and the Lennox School District. An Executive Committee of local organizations and community

members provides important oversight of and guidance to LENZ. New Visions serves as the backbone organization, overseeing the overall work of LENZ. This includes the collaboration among partners to ensure everyone is working effectively together and that data regarding the outcomes for Lennox youth continues to make steady and significant improvement.

### **What specifically is the responsibility of New Visions?**

New Visions is the backbone organization of LENZ. Managing a highly outcomes-focused collaboration, such as LENZ, requires a separate organization and staff with a unique set of skills to serve as the pillar for the entire initiative. The work of the backbone organization is to create and manage a supporting infrastructure to insure the success of the collaboration. The backbone organization requires a staff whose primary responsibility is to plan, manage, and support the initiative.

New Visions is focused primarily on four roles: overall management of LENZ, data management, support for individual partner programs and key initiatives, work to support, recruit and align partners as they participate in LENZ, and kickstart new innovations and initiatives.

Duties include:

- ongoing facilitation and communication among partners
- data collection and reporting in a robust performance management system
- use of technology to facilitate greater collaboration and data integration
- building capacity in partners if needed and requested, to assist them in working at their highest potential with a focus on measurable results
- oversight of numerous logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to achieve its goals
- design of critical initiatives aligned to the goals and specific milestones of LENZ, that build focus and a coalition among special partners (e.g., partners with expertise in math to help solve the algebra challenge in Lennox)
- fundraising, together with partners, schools and communities, to see that LENZ and its partners are adequately funded to meet their obligations

A helpful article on the role of a backbone organization can be found at the Stanford Social Innovation Review website: [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact).

### **New Visions has only a small number of staff assigned to work with Lennox. What can it really hope to accomplish?**

The LENZ program of New Visions is a model of collective impact; as such, it uses a systemic approach that focuses on the relationships between multiple partner organizations and the progress they all make together toward shared objectives. New Visions is focused on providing the skills and resources to assemble and coordinate the specific elements necessary for collective action to succeed. This is an entirely different methodology than doing “all the work” ourselves, or of adding a handful of additional programs to the Lennox taxonomy of supports.

## **Does New Visions provide funding for schools and programs operating within Lennox?**

New Visions works to help its partners in Lennox through a variety of means, including the support of their involvement in LENZ, integrating and sharing data on performance, and helping them build capacity where needed. New Visions also supports local educators through its Innovation Awards program. This program provides moderately sized (\$2,500) awards (formally, "stipends") to selected teachers and school leaders to help them develop new, effective solutions for the challenges of Lennox and to accelerate change.

Like many of its partners, New Visions is also a 501c3 organization and relies on philanthropic contributions to fund its operation. It will support efforts to raise money together to ensure that all of the organizations and initiatives of LENZ are adequately funded.

## **What benefit would my organization gain from participating in LENZ?**

A lack of service coordination is one of the biggest factors discouraging donors from engaging with nonprofits at higher levels of support. An organization that participates in LENZ is part of a massive and outcomes-focused coordination of services. The philanthropic community is likely to support with greater interest an organization that is participating in a collective impact effort where outcomes and performance are transparent. Outcomes-focused work accomplishes greater impact, and therefore a greater social return for the donor's investment. A goal of LENZ and its partners is to clearly demonstrate that return.

Additionally, organizations who partner with LENZ will have their services showcased more publicly within and beyond Lennox, through press releases, blogs and newsletters, as well as through the LENZ Portal. The LENZ Portal is a user-friendly tool to help increase awareness of and access to important services and service providers in Lennox.

## **How is New Visions uniquely able to succeed at “Collective Impact”?**

Over the last year, New Visions has assembled a team with extensive experience in areas that contribute to success of collective impact strategies. The team has expertise in cross-sector collaboration, school turnaround, technology, and use of data to drive performance. Also, NV's recent 4-star rating by Charity Navigator is another indication of high organizational efficiency, which is a fundamental component of effective collective impact.