



# E-PARCC

## COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

### **Leading IslandWood: From Homewaters to Brightwater Case C**

Under the leadership of Pat O'Rourke, Ben Klasky, Director of Education John Haskin, and the board of directors, IslandWood forged initial partnerships with Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Boys and Girls Club (BGC) of King County. These partnership initiatives helped IslandWood to begin expanding its reach off campus, while creating new opportunities to engage with funders in support of IslandWood's programs. The success of these early initiatives helped IslandWood to develop even deeper partnerships with the Homewaters project and the Brightwater Environmental Education and Community Center at the King County Brightwater Clean-Water Treatment Facility.

#### **Seattle Parks and Recreation**

When the Pat's new outreach position was created at IslandWood it coincided with the hiring of a new Director of the Parks and Recreation Department's Natural Resources Unit, which included Environmental Learning Center facilities. Pat held several meetings with the new director to explore opportunities for collaboration. This opportunity came when the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation contacted IslandWood and expressed interest in funding after-school experiential and environmental learning activities with teenagers. For over 15 years the parks had been running a program called Outdoor Opportunities (O2), which annually took 400 inner-city, teens from low-income families on outings in Seattle and nearby wilderness areas. The teens also participated in monthly service learning projects. IslandWood proposed that the teens document these "stewardship" experiences through short video stories, and The Paul G Allen Family Foundation awarded IslandWood a two-year \$50,000 grant to conduct this work from 2010-2011.

This case is the Snow Foundation Award Winner for the best case or simulation in Collaborative Nonprofit Management in our 2011-12 "Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving" teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by David Cook and Lauren Guzauskas of The Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University's Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

### **Boys and Girls Clubs of King County**

This partnership was initially fostered by a former IslandWood staff member who joined BGC, and urged key staff members who were interested in environmental education to collaborate with IslandWood. Building on the informal relationship, IslandWood secured funding from the Russell Family Foundation to support of part-time curriculum development and instructional positions for staffing a proposed collaboration (IslandWood's graduate alumni were hired as part-time staff to lead programming). Later the National Science Foundation (NSF) invited IslandWood to submit a planning grant to its informal science education division, and the staff seized the opportunity to advance the BGC partnership. NSF awarded a \$75,000 grant for the two organizations to collaborate on a pilot program in several clubs, delivering science learning programs to more than 100 kids in the after-school setting of the clubs. A multi-year proposal was submitted to expand the work but the funding was not awarded.

### **Homewaters Project**

While Pat, Ben, and John devoted significant time considering their impact on Seattle's underserved students, the board and staff of Homewaters, another environmental education organization, were having a similar conversation. Like IslandWood, Homewaters served students in Seattle Public Schools using outdoor inquiry-based education. But the organization was facing a crisis in the fall of 2008, when its fiscal sponsor informed Homewaters that it would need to find a new independent operating arrangement. After an internal dialogue among the board and staff, the Executive Director of Homewaters called IslandWood in early 2009 to discuss the possibility of Homewaters joining IslandWood. After nearly a year of evaluation by both parties, IslandWood and Homewaters decided to partner. IslandWood acquired rights to the Homewaters name and programs, and hired its staff effective July 1, 2010, further solidifying its efforts to maintain off-campus programming<sup>1</sup>. The partnership proved to be a success, with continued operations of campus-based programs and expanded off-site programs to 2,500 additional students through the *Homewaters Project* of IslandWood.

### **Brightwater Environmental Education and Community Center**

The successful off-site expansion continued for IslandWood in September 2012, exactly ten years after its grand opening, when King County selected IslandWood through a competitive process to be the lead education service provider at its Brightwater Environmental Education and Community Center.<sup>2</sup> The partnership marked the latest success in IslandWood's strategic planning by expanding IslandWood programs and impacts through effective collaboration with another community partner.

In total, IslandWood expects to annually serve nearly 9,000 students in the Puget Sound region.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2010/06/28/story5.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://islandwood.org/school\\_programs/brightwater/front-page/?searchterm=brightwater](http://islandwood.org/school_programs/brightwater/front-page/?searchterm=brightwater)