



## Impact

The Poverty Immersion changes attitudes and challenges stereotypes about the working poor—paving a pathway toward professional growth and organizational transformation.

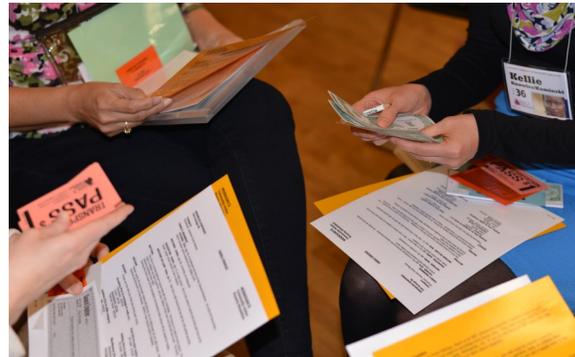
**Strategic Planning** - lay the groundwork for strategic planning and internal policy development to address equity and access, and more effectively serve people in poverty.

**Professional Development** - improve decision making and communication when interacting with low income clients and customers.

**Program Development** - gain new insight into how poverty impacts access to programs and outreach.

**Volunteer Training** - increase volunteers' effectiveness by helping them understand the experiences and needs of the people they serve.

*"Thank you so much for putting on such a professional, organized, and meaningful poverty immersion.... I think it was extremely effective in communicating exactly the messages we wanted to convey...What a great way to examine poverty in our communities."*



To hold a Poverty Immersion, or to discuss organizational development services offered by WSU's Metropolitan Center for Applied Research and Extension contact:

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Visit us at <http://metrocenter.wsu.edu/>

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# THE POVERTY IMMERSION

a virtual experience of life on the edge





## What is a Poverty Immersion?

The Poverty Immersion, also called a Poverty Simulation, is a unique interactive experience that helps people understand what life is like with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress.

Although it uses play money and fictional scenarios, a Poverty Immersion is a facilitated role play – not a game. It is a powerful experience that takes only three hours of time, but makes a lasting impact. It builds a greater awareness of the issues facing people in poverty, and helps build a foundation for change – personally, professionally, organizationally and in our communities.

*It was impactful....My own "person" has stayed with me these past days. I've worked in (social services) for many years- and do hear and see the stories that reminded me of my simulation family - and it's still powerful to be immersed in this activity."*

*"The emotional stress and realistic nature of this workshop increased my understanding of all of these issues. I thought the immersion was highly thought provoking."*

## How does it work?

During a Poverty Immersion 40-80 participants assume the role of a low income family member living on a limited budget. They are instructed to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities for themselves and their families, using resources they receive through a random assignment.

Aiding in the workshop are volunteers who play the role of social service workers, bankers, school teachers, grocers, law enforcement, etc., providing a 'community' with whom the participants interact.

It sounds simple enough until attendees are faced with the impossible daily dilemmas that are common to the poor.



## Host organization requirements:

### Personnel

- A minimum of 40 and a maximum of 80 people participating as low income individuals.
- An additional 17-20 volunteers to play the roles of resource providers.
- A contact person in your organization to coordinate logistics and secure participants.

### Time

- A Poverty Immersion lasts approximately 3 hours, including a debrief discussion, making it feasible for busy professionals.
- Resource provider volunteers attend a one hour orientation prior to the workshop.

### Facility

- A large space (approx. 3,000 sq. ft.) to allow workshop participants to move about freely.
- 15 tables of any size, and up to 180 chairs, set up prior to the workshop. A floor plan will be provided.
- 1-2 wireless microphones.

### Fee

- The Poverty Immersion is a fee-based service. For more information contact Martha Aitken at: [aitkenm@wsu.edu](mailto:aitkenm@wsu.edu) or 206-219-2429



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