

## **BEYOND COLLABORATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EAST BAY WORKS! A REGIONAL SYSTEM OF ONE STOP CAREER CENTERS IN ALAMEDA AND CONTRA COSTA COUNTIES**

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Private Industry Councils (PIC's) are made up of local leaders of businesses, labor, education, rehabilitation, public services and community based organizations (CBO's). PIC's are as varied as the communities they serve. Some PIC's are seriously engaged and engaging, committed and active: others are quietly quiescent and relatively non-participatory. Regardless of their level of involvement, they are responsible for designing programs to meet the needs of the local employers. PIC's leverage JTPA federal funds with other community resources. They have political clout. They command and receive respect and authority. They operate on a level equal to the Boards of Supervisors.

Imagine, then, when four different PIC's decided to look far beyond their local agenda to the needs and wants of an entire region. That is exactly what the PIC's of Alameda County, Oakland, Contra Costa County and Richmond did to create **East Bay Works!**, a system to provide **One Stop** Career Centers throughout the entire East Bay. This is the only system of its kind in the San Francisco Bay Area, and one of only two in all of California.

### **BACKGROUND**

Employment and training programs have existed for many years however customers have typically found them fragmented, duplicative and difficult to use. For several years, beginning in 1994, the Federal

government had been sending signals to the 52 PIC's in California to *regionalize*, to collaborate with all the players to develop the most comprehensive **One Stop** plan for an entire area. So when 15 million dollars became available in 1996, Jane Myers of Alameda Co. PIC, (a 25-year veteran of employment services) was paying attention to those signals. She thought, "We'll have a better chance for more money if we regionalize." She took her idea to Dorothy Chen, Alameda Co PIC director, who presented it to her staff and the other 3 PIC's and their staffs and the rest is history. **East Bay Works!** was funded for 3 million dollars, one fifth of the total amount available for the entire State of California. Four PIC's went in as one region. All four are equal partners, regardless of their differences in size. The partners decided that one half of the money would be used for systems (technology, resources, software, directories of support services, EDD info, training for staff) and the other half for development of Centers. This amounted to \$375,000.00 for each PIC for the development of **One Stop** Centers.

The four PIC's wrote the grant together, carefully following the Federal guidelines. Jane commented that this was an incredible experience in democracy. No decision was made unless all agreed. The grant writer facilitated the numerous meetings and recommended that Alameda County be the fiscal agent. All agreed. The State allowed each PIC to

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receive their own money and be responsible independently.

## DESIGN OF SYSTEM

The **One Stops** are set up to be *integrated* – a broad array of employment and training programs integrated into a single system for both employers and current and future employees: *comprehensive* – a full array of services depending on the customers level of need: *customer focused* – service delivery that is information based and offered with informed client choice: *performance based* – **One Stops** and their partners are accountable for achieving their performance outcome objectives. By this time next year, 16 **One Stop** Career Centers will be operating throughout the East Bay, serving both employers and job seekers, at no charge.

For the job seeker, there will be standardized core services at each Center including:

- computers- with on line job access, internet, Microsoft Word, Excel, resume template, typing tutor, Eriss occupational information
- fax, copiers, telephones
- library, VCR
- EDD Job match
- Job search workshops, professional seminars for resumes, interviews
- Self-assessment tools

Services for employers include:

- Employee hiring and recruitment
- Business development assistance
- Tax incentives
- Labor Market Information

These are the services specifically asked for by the surveyed employers who wanted simple, easy access and above all, expedited services. There are

also numerous rooms available at each **One Stop** for meetings, gatherings and interviewing.

The four PIC's based their plan on Partnership Building, bringing in not only the mandatory players (Veterans, All JTPA Title services, EDD) but also other community organizations that are vital to the economic well being of the region. There are presently 100 partner agencies in **East Bay Works!** including community colleges, CBO's, business, labor and other service and training organizations. These partners were included from the very beginning, which, according to Dorothy Chen, is critical for a successful endeavor. Each partner organization contributes and has on-going responsibilities to the **One Stop**. They, in return, receive financial assistance for furniture, other resources and training. There are quarterly "partnership" meetings where the work teams present their reports. Work teams are open to all partners and their staffs. There are six work teams in **East Bay Works!** who meet monthly and report quarterly. The quarterly meeting I attended (with over 100 excited, passionate people) focused on these spirited reports from each team.

- **MARKETING TEAM**- the logo for **East Bay Works!** was unveiled – for brochures, items and other marketing materials. The logo reflects the vibrancy and exuberance of the venture.
- **TECHNOLOGY TEAM**- This team has a steering committee of paid professionals. Electronic access is the key component of the **One Stop** Plan and is critical to its success. The planning team chose to invest money here and pay for technical professionals rather than hire one coordinator to oversee the entire **One Stop** plan.
- **RESOURCE TEAM**- there will be core require-

ments for each Center, then sites can customize as needed. Cross training for all staff will ensure uniformity, continuity and quality of service. There is also a focus on team building for staff and partner groups. The Lester Brown motivational seminars that were scheduled were filled to capacity with over 200 people.

- **COORDINATED JOB DEVELOPMENT TEAM-** There will be a single point of contact: 1-888-411-HIRE. Calls will be routed to the nearest **One Stop** where a professional consultant will assist employers.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM-** Strategic marketing presentations will be made throughout the region to advertise the **One Stops** and their accessibility to all.
- **EMPLOYER DIRECTORY TEAM-** Services employers want are **SIMPLE**, direct with easy access for hiring and recruitment, business development, tax incentives, and labor market information.

Being the only Bay Area Regional **One Stop** is an accomplishment in itself. Expanding the vision, building on its success and acknowledging the proportions and extent of the potential is monumental. How was this accomplished? Why did it work?

Based on conversations with Dorothy Chen and Jane Myers and the experiences of attending various dynamic meetings, here are some clues:

- **The vision was clear.** It was motivating, inspirational, and dynamic. As Kathy Armstrong said in a BASSC class, "Vision is an energy field. It keeps expanding and infecting everyone around, sharing hopes and dreams and possibilities."

This was obvious from the individuals with whom I spoke and the events I attended. The actual mission statement had not even been written until February 1998, but it had been talked about and kept very much alive.

- **Partners were convened from the onset.** Guidelines were established, language was defined and purpose was clear. Partners were respected, listened to and included. All ideas were validated and considered. With consensus, ideas became part of the plan.
- **Meetings were purposeful and action oriented.** A strategic plan was developed that was fast paced. Data was organized for people to act. Teams were formed based on interest, passion, ability and action. Deadlines were developed and results were expected and presented publicly.
- **There was an efficient grant writer.** Partners were patient, persistent and persevered throughout the numerous meetings. The grant writer facilitated, clarified and pulled it all together. The grant writer was critical for meetings to be clear of purpose, focused, action oriented and produce results.
- **There was a true level of commitment, beyond collaboration.** Because people were included from the onset and participated with their time, energy and ideas, they became invested. Several people commented that there was not just the collaboration during the grant writing, like so many other times, but a true level of commitment that endured when the grant writing ended. Relationships were developed that continue today. Trust is growing and bringing about more collaboration and commitment.

- **There was acknowledgement and celebration of each product and success.** Work teams shared their results, whether it be a new logo or a start up date and all partners recognized and applauded. Food was also present at each meeting, a very important part of good celebrations.

It was helpful to have clear Federal guidelines, a dynamic vision that broke new ground, passionate people and ongoing coordinators who stayed the course and kept people focused. Considering each PIC as an equal partner regardless of size was a bold but very wise beginning. Making decisions completely by consensus was another risky and successful maneuver. Throughout the process, *humility* reigned, trust was key and solid relationships developed. These relationships are continuing to grow and mature, making the next steps for expansion and further development easier.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY

- There is already a well-connected network of community people who can be called together for the new purpose of developing the **One Stop** plan. Listen to them, hear their ideas and interests, get their buy-in.
  - The vision must be clear and dynamic. Define operating rules, language terms, and expected results *together*.
  - Hire a grant writer who is also an effective facilitator.
  - Develop work teams who take ownership for specific actions. Give them authority and responsibility.
- Have well planned, facilitated, action-oriented meetings where results are acknowledged and celebrated. Remember to offer good refreshments.
  - Pay for excellent technology. Electronic connections are critical for the success of the One Stop. This would include interactive sites with open platforms and universal access.

With vision, focus, humor and action the above will lead to a level of commitment that extends beyond the collaboration of the grant writing and initial planning.

### ACTION STEPS FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY

- Use the work of **East Bay Works!** and follow that design. Don't reinvent the wheel. Get partners together to visit Alameda County **One Stops** and experience the possibilities. "Learn – by- doing" is a concept that works in this capacity.
- Hire an efficient grant writer. San Mateo County has all the pieces for a successful **One Stop** Plan. What is lacking is coordination and integration. An effective grant writer can work with the numerous partners already in place. He/she can facilitate, clarify and pull together a custom **One Stop** plan for San Mateo County using **East Bay Works!** as a model.
- Follow surveyed employer's requests. Of particular interest in Alameda County's **One Stop** Plan are the services to employers based on their surveyed requests. This translates to SIMPLICITY-One telephone number that all employers call for hiring and recruitment needs. A trained consul-

tant responsible to meet employers needs answers this line. For San Mateo County, this person would act in coordination with a Business/Community Connection Specialist whose job is to develop relationships with local employers, businesses and labor. This Business Community Connection has already been established in North San Mateo County and can be expanded county wide.

- Build on San Mateo County SUCCESS model where there is a “no wrong door approach.” Every job seeker or employer can obtain **One Stop** information from each and every community organization. They are already linked electronically and philosophically. When San Mateo County’s **One Stop** plan is implemented, it makes sense to connect electronically with our neighboring counties for extended job sharing and employment information using open platform and universal access.
- Use the experience of SUCCESS planning and implementation. San Mateo County is miles ahead of the other Bay Area counties in the area of welfare reform, specifically employment services for TANF applicants and recipients. The employment services of JTPA and CalWorks (formerly GAIN) have already been integrated for several years in San Mateo County. Dialogue between these two divisions is just beginning in most East Bay counties. Because of San Mateo County’s success with SUCCESS we are ready to use our own experience and pull together the One Stop Plan. It is only the next step in the ongoing march to consolidated and comprehensive services in San Mateo County.