

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLABORATIVES

Jana Rickerson*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

My objective for the BASSC internship was to learn how Santa Cruz County was able to create, foster and sustain positive relationships with its community partners. Santa Cruz has a task force, the Revenue Enhancement Team (RET), whose sole purpose is to find ways to invest in the community by enhancing and sustaining its community based organizations. This is done through analysis, planning and technical assistance. Technical assistance consists of, but is not limited to, the government agency providing mentoring, "how to" educational workshops, identification of service gaps, and providing administrative and fiscal assessments.

Currently the RET is almost a year old. In its first year a work plan was created that focused on: a) the formalization of group structure, b) the development of a mission statement, c) the development of strategies to enhance CBO revenues, d) the demonstration of collective enhancement successes and e) the creation of the next fiscal year's work plan. This 14 member inter-agency team meets once a month to review progress on their work plan goals and to hold Team Consults. "Team Consulting" is a management strategy to help project managers plan and prioritize various project activities in order to better meet established goals. According to the RET coordinator, the successes so far have been as follows:

1. Learning more about collaboration and being exposed to a variety of perspectives.

2. Having a centralized place to be educated about programs and services run by various governmental agencies in Santa Cruz County.
3. Seeing the fruits of the collaborative effort and watching the Inter-agency collaboration gel.
4. Creating a new way to analyze the functioning of CBOs.
5. Increasing the ability of CBOs to move forward and draw down Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA) Funds and EPSDT funds.

In fiscal year 1995–96, only one CBO accessed MAA funds which brought \$4000 into the community. In fiscal year 1999-2000 nine additional CBOs and two initiatives were brought on board. This effort brought \$269,296 into the community. As a result of continued hard work, in the upcoming fiscal year RET will add a minimum of seven more CBOs that will be positioned to draw down MAA funds. This will bring the total to 19 agencies that will have the capacity to draw down federal money, thus freeing up county money to provide other needed services in and for the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)

- Explore the possibility of creating a RET that could work alongside of the Contracts unit to provide technical assistance that would enhance the capacity of our current partners in the community.

*Jana Rickerson is a Special Projects Manager with Family and Children Services in the City and County of San Francisco's Department of Human Services.

- Identify other community-based organizations that are not currently working with DHS, and explore the possibility of expanding service options and contracts for DHS clients.
- Review the process used by the Contracts Department to assist community based organizations in successfully completing the terms of their contracts.
- Identify common areas of needed improvement and begin providing technical assistance to the organizations in order to facilitate enhancement of their programs and increase their capacity to serve more of our clients.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLABORATIVES

Jana Rickerson

BACKGROUND OF PROJECT

My objective for the BASSC internship was to learn how Santa Cruz County was able to create, foster and sustain positive relationships with its community partners. As our county's Special Projects Manager, I had been charged with implementing our department's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project. Our Project involves working side by side with people hired from our neighborhoods to mentor clients involved with Child Protective Services. Given the difficulty and conflict among the Community Based Organizations, who had formed a collaborative to carry out this component of our project, I wanted to learn more about the collaborative process. I also wanted to learn ways of fostering positive regard among territorial groups who mistrusted one another and were having constant power struggles.

I wanted to interview people from various collaborative roles in Santa Cruz County and inquire about their ideas regarding the collaborative process. I asked the following questions of agency administrators, agency line staff, grass roots community based workers, and non-profit community agencies:

1. What is your definition of collaboration?
2. How should an ideal collaboration function?
3. What things work best in your collaboration?
What things need to improve?
4. If you could change one thing to improve your collaboration, what would that be?
5. What in your background helped you prepare for collaborative work?

6. Is there any conflict of values of what you would like to do in the collaboration vs. the bureaucratic system? How did you resolve these?

The answers I received were varied in perspective as I had hoped, and I was able to gain a comprehensive view of how people from different walks of life could work cooperatively together. Many themes arose out of my conversations with people. The one that was most interesting to me focused on the need of community based organizations to become more self sufficient and less dependent on governmental agencies for their survival. Therefore the CBOs would have more autonomy, be more empowered and feel more equal and less guarded at the table with governmental agencies when searching for ways to provide more services for communities. Santa Cruz County has a task force (The Revenue Enhancement Team) whose sole purpose is to find ways to invest in the community by enhancing and sustaining its community based partners.

HISTORY OF THE REVENUE ENHANCEMENT TEAM

Santa Cruz County has a long-standing history of supporting health and human services that are provided by community based organizations (CBOs). The Human Resource Agency, Health Services Agency and Probation Department were working individually with several of the same CBOs simultaneously. In 1998 the three Departments came together to discuss how they might coordinate their efforts in order to get "more bang for the buck." They formulated an inter-agency collaboration

known as the Revenue Maximization Work Group. Their collaborative efforts were an attempt to take collective investments across departments and connect the dots to help enhance and sustain the programs they financially supported. This was an intentional strategy to further the vital collaborative link between local government and the community.

The work group went before the Board of Supervisors in 1999, to request the formalization of this inter-agency collaboration. As a result, a full time position was created to oversee and facilitate the now named Revenue Enhancement Team (R.E.T.). Its purpose is to support the community by strengthening and sustaining the capacity of essential service providers through enhancing the revenues and resources generated by community-based partners. This is done through analysis, planning and technical assistance. The technical assistance consists of, but is not limited to, the government agency providing mentoring, “how to” educational workshops, identification of service gaps, and providing administrative and fiscal assessments.

THE REVENUE ENHANCEMENT TEAM PROCESS

Currently, the Revenue Enhancement Team is almost a year old. In its first year a work plan was created. Its initial goals focused on: (a) the formalization of the group structure (b) the development of a mission statement (c) the development of strategies to enhance CBO revenues (d) the demonstration of collective enhancement successes and (e) the creation of the next fiscal year’s work plan.

The Revenue Enhancement Team meets in various configurations to handle specific tasks. The 14 member inter-agency team meets once a month to review progress on their work plan goals and to

hold Team Consults. “Team Consulting” is a management strategy to help project managers plan and prioritize various project activities in order to better meet established goals. It is a problem solving technique presented in a brainstorming format. Community Based Organizations and/or Inter-Agency Initiative programs can request a Team Consult with the Revenue Enhancement Team.

The Executive Team, which is a sub-committee of the R.E.T., consists of an Administrative Analyst, a representative from the Human Resource Agency, the Health Services Agency, the Probation Department, and the Finance Department. This group meets once a month to focus on how to enhance the capacity and sustainability of specific community based organizations identified in the work plan.

CBOs are grouped in two categories. “Tier One” organizations are CBOs that already have existing infrastructures that can handle the influx of increased revenues to expand services. The “Special Focus” organizations are CBOs that have some infrastructures in place but need assistance in order to handle an influx of increased revenues and expansion of services.

In order to assess which agencies fall within each category, an inventory table was created to establish baseline information for each CBO. The coordinator of the R.E.T. reviewed existing funding sources, programs, dollars leveraged to date and potential revenue maximization sources. Once each agency was assessed, the work group identified which agencies fell within the two categories. In a pilot effort to see if the model of the Revenue Enhancement Team would work, one agency was delicately approached to see if they would be willing to test the model. They were approached sensi-

tively in order to create a partnership rather than engender a defensive response. Once the work group completed their process of how the identified agency could be enhanced, the results were shared with the larger group of the entire R.E.T. At this moment in time, I do not have the results of this first endeavor due to the conclusion of my BASSC internship.

SUCCESS TO DATE

When thinking beyond traditional limitations, “success” must be thought of differently. Most of the time we think of success as the final outcome of the effort. However, there are many successes along the way that contribute to the overall fruition of the effort. According to the RET coordinator, the successes so far have been as follows:

1. Learning more about collaboration and being exposed to a variety of perspectives;
2. Having a centralized place to be educated about programs and services run by various governmental agencies in Santa Cruz County;
3. Seeing the fruits of the collaborative effort and watching the Inter-agency collaboration gel;
4. Creating a new way to analyze the functioning of CBOs;
5. Increasing the ability of CBOs to move forward and draw down Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA) Funds and EPSDT funds.

In fiscal year 95–96 only one CBO accessed MAA funds which brought \$4000 into the community. In fiscal year 99–2000 nine additional CBOs and two Initiatives were brought on board. This effort brought \$269,296 into community. As a result of continued hard work, in the upcoming fiscal year R.E.T. will add a minimum of seven more CBOs that will be positioned to draw down MAA funds.

This will bring the total to 19 agencies that will have the capacity to draw down federal money thus freeing up county money to provide other needed services in and for the community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Over the past five years, there has been an increasing shift to involve community-based organizations in providing services to clients associated with Human Services. Many of these organizations have the knowledge base to work with our diverse populations with cultural sensitivity, but may not have the organizational skills needed to carry out services. As more “wrap-around” programs are being created, the department is relying on community-based organizations to provide the majority of these services. In order to support the development of successful “wrap-around” programs, the department needs to provide more technical assistance, similar to that provided by Santa Cruz County, to CBOs. In essence, DHS would provide “wrap-around” services to the community-based organizations that would then, in turn, provide similar “wraparound” services to our clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

- Explore the possibility of creating a Revenue Enhancement Team that could work along side of the Contracts unit to provide any and all technical assistance that would enhance capacity of our current partners in the community.
- Identify other community-based organizations that are not currently working with DHS, and explore the possibility of expanding service options and contracts for DHS clients.

- Review the process used by the Contracts Department to assist community-based organizations in successfully completing the terms of their contracts.
- Identify common areas of needed improvement and begin providing technical assistance to the organizations in order to facilitate enhancement of their programs and increase their capacity to serve more of our clients.