

ALAMEDA COUNTY'S EASTMONT SELF-SUFFICIENCY CENTER: THE INTEGRATION OF SERVICES PROCESS

Tony Lugo*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This is a case study of the Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center. The objectives of this study include an analysis of the real estate setting of the facility, an examination of the one-stop co-location concept and the utilization of the FSET (Food Stamp Employment and Training) funding within the center service model.

After I began the project I decided to make some changes regarding my original objective. I decided to expand my analysis to include the entire county because I realized that unless I got a good overview of the entire system, it would be hard for me to understand the operation at the Eastmont Center. I also decided to limit the depth of my analysis of the FSET funding when I discovered that the size of the Alameda County program was too small in relation to San Francisco's to consider the replication of many of its features there.

To accomplish my objectives, I used a variety of methods. I learned about the strategies used in the formation of the center, the real estate layout and the service delivery system.

The project was to help me develop ideas and/or recommendations that could either be replicated or implemented in San Francisco as part of the development of the Department of Human Services, and the San Francisco workforce development system.

This document discusses the outcomes of my findings and recommendations to be considered for implementation in San Francisco.

FINDINGS

To accomplish this project, I did an overview of the entire agency. It included the mission statement, organizational layout, and its strategic plan and an in-depth study of Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center.

In my study I discovered the excellent real estate resources enjoyed by the County and a pretty efficient organizational approach to service delivery. I learned that Alameda County has some fundamental differences in its organizational structure compared to San Francisco. The Workforce Investment Act system is embedded within the Department of Social Services. They also have a small FSET program compared to San Francisco.

The organizational structure model utilized at the center was the most interesting part of my project.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I think the possibility of replicating the real estate aspect of the service delivery in San Francisco is pretty slim given the economics of San Francisco today. The replication of a functional organizational structure could be an advantageous approach for San Francisco, especially with the

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implementation of CalWIN. The idea of having intake, eligibility, case management, and employment services managed by function throughout all the programs could be implemented incrementally as we reorganize our service delivery to accommodate CalWIN and as we continue to develop our service delivery system throughout the Career Link Center System.

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BACKGROUND

The City of San Francisco Welfare-To-Work Taskforce, appointed by the Mayor in 1998, recommended the creation of “career centers” in strategic areas of the city to deliver the array of services necessary to implement the workforce development plan in a centralized location in each community. This coincided with the implementation of the Federal Workforce Investment Act, which required the formation of the “One-Stop system” comprised of comprehensive one-stop centers in each service delivery area. The Department of Human Services assumed a lead role in the implementation of these programs within the City. The department hosts the two major one-stop centers. One is a full-service center in the Mission district area and the other is a satellite center in the Southeast part of the city. The idea was to capture both the “career center” recommendation (made by the task force) and the “one-stop” concept (required by the Workforce Investment Act) in the same initiative. The development and implementation of these initiatives has been underway for the last few years in San Francisco. The diversity of the city’s demographic composition, the intense political environment that exists around the human services sector, and the funds required to develop an adequate system, have made this a difficult process. One of the biggest challenges for the Department has been the achievement of the integration of service delivery at these centers. The challenge is not only to integrate the services of the various programs within DHS but also to integrate the participation of multiple partners that make up both the WIA and W2W initiatives. A lot of progress has been made thus far in

the implementation of these centers. Although we have achieved “collocation”, we have not yet achieved the level of service integration envisioned.

The County of Alameda was faced with the same challenges as that of San Francisco. Both agencies have a lot of similarities in terms of the population they serve. During the last five years, both counties have concurrently implemented the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to comply with federal legislation, but we are not sure that there was ever a study to determine the best practices learned from this experience on either side of the Bay.

OBJECTIVE

My objective with this case study was to learn about the Alameda County Social Services system. In particular I wanted to focus learning on the “Eastmont Mall” Self-Sufficiency center, to learn about its service delivery and its integration of services strategy.

My goal was also to learn about the utilization of Food Stamps Employment and Training funds (FSET) within the center and/or the system.

After I began this project, I decided to make some changes to my original plan. I did it to be able to accomplish the objectives of my study. Originally, my case study was to be focused strictly on the Eastmont Center. However, I found that I needed to learn a lot about the entire system before I could really make sense of what was going on at the Eastmont Center. Therefore, I expanded my project to learn about the entire County of Alameda’s sys-

tem. By doing this I was able gain the overall perspective of the system and then zero in on the Eastmont Center, which was the focus of my project. Furthermore, in my analysis of the FSET programs I found that the Alameda program was too small, compared to the one in San Francisco, to really provide me with substantial and useable determinations that could be of relevance for our county. So I decided to limit the in-depth analysis of the FSET funds utilization.

STRATEGY

During my internship I used different strategies to gain the various angles of information, observation and experience required to learn what I needed from both counties. I performed most of my tasks associated with this project utilizing the Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center as the home base since this center was the focus of my analysis. I visited the main office on Madison Avenue to gain information on the infrastructure of the agency. In order to achieve a good understanding of Alameda's service delivery system, I went to the different service facilities throughout the county. I performed a detailed walk-through of the EDEN One-Stop and Self-Sufficiency Center. I spent time visiting and learning about the Fremont and the City of Alameda One-Stop Centers.

In order to complement my approach, I interviewed different people at various levels of operation. I had interviewing sessions with the Executive Director, the Director of Administration, spent an entire day with the Director of the Eastmont Center, and met with program managers, supervisors, case workers and clients. I also met with the Alameda WIB Director, One-Stop Centers partners, as well as staff involved with the finance and the planning aspect of the department.

To get all the information necessary to accomplish a comparable analysis, I also reviewed San Francisco's Strategic Plan - San Francisco's 5-year Workforce Development Plan, submitted to the State Workforce Investment Board; and the Local Memoranda of Understanding, which articulated the lead role of the Department of Human Services within the entire workforce development system of the City. I spent time with San Francisco's Deputy Director for Economic and Self-sufficiency; the program directors of both CalWORKs and CAAP (our version of the General Assistance Program), as well as the Food Stamp Employment and Training Plan Coordinator and members of the strategic plan committee. This gave me a complete baseline of understanding of the delivery systems, as well as the vision and strategies used for self-sufficiency services within the department in San Francisco to work on this project.

INTEGRATION FINDINGS

Service Delivery

This is a self-sufficiency center which operates as a one-stop location. It offers the range of services, assistance and guidance that a person or a family may need to successfully move into the workforce and become self-sufficient, while maintaining essential benefits for their families.

The concept of the integrated self-sufficiency services used at the Eastmont Center was developed to effectively use the communities' limited public resources. The approach of placing all the essential social and employment services for the welfare to work participants under one roof is designed to provide them with the full package of services they really need to find and retain employment. The lack of affordable housing, reliable transportation, and

access to health care and childcare are some of the major obstacles people face when trying to get off welfare and into secure jobs and careers. By offering access to “career building” services along with the actual employment and benefit services, public assistance recipients are provided with all the tools they need to permanently join the workforce.

Real Estate Layout

The Eastmont Center is an impressive 65,000 sq.ft. facility located in East Oakland that was converted from a shopping mall and is hosted by the Alameda Department of Social Services. The center is adjacent to the Wellness Center, which is the one-stop version of the County of Alameda’s Department of Health. These two centers are in the midst of a large shopping mall that operates regular stores and businesses. The Center is a one-stop location offering different kinds of services and assistance to persons or families in transition to economic independence.

Services

This center provides all services for CalWORKs, Food Stamps, MediCal, General Assistance, and Employment Services. It includes: job training workshops, placement assistance, post employment support, and child care referral services. It also offers general information about support services, transportation, health care, and other needs. The center’s resource room is open to community members as well as recipients and offers job listings, computers, telephone and other materials to help with job searches. Additionally the center offers, SSI advocacy, drop-in childcare, mental health services, domestic violence counseling, family support services, and alcohol and other drug assessment and referral. The Department of Social Services

partners with other departments such as Alameda County Family Support Division, Alameda Children and Family Services, Oakland Private Industry Council, East Bay Community Law Center, the Employment Development Department, the Department of Health, and the Social Services Administration, among others, in this project.

Client Flow

The center is equipped with personnel of different specialties that participate in a continuum of service delivery. The staff includes 30 eligibility workers who process applications for CalWORKs, MediCal and Food Stamps for the participants; 11 eligibility workers who provide services for carrying cases as needed; approximately 30 employment counselors who assist customers with tasks from developing employment plans to providing the necessary support services linkages; and at least eight employment trainers who provide and deliver workshops in soft skill training and who coordinate job club activities for clients engaged at the center.

This model provides a clear self-sufficiency path for all participants. The comprehensive service delivery starts at the front door. Throughout the various stages of the client’s transition during the process, he/she is provided with a continuum of services that includes required procedures dealing with eligibility and benefits for the various programs (i.e. CalWORKs, food stamps, housing, etc.) operated by the department. Concurrently, the client is receiving the workforce development services necessary for him/her to achieve employment and become self-sufficient.

Capacity

Every month more than 55,000 people receive CalWORKs, Food Stamps, and General Assistance in Alameda County. Medical services are made available to more than 85,000 people.

The Department of Social Services has a total of approximately 2,300 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$565 million dollars. The department provides services to approximately 14 million people in a county that extends from Albany to Livermore. The Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center, with approximately 200 staff has the capacity to assist more than 600 clients a day who live in the surrounding community. This center presently provides services to over 12,000 CalWORKs recipients living around the perimeter of the center. Ample off-street parking and access to public transportation are both features that make this center accessible to the clients.

Economic Infrastructure

The Department of Social Services of Alameda County has a total annual budget of approximately \$565M. The Department of Welfare-To-Work has an annual budget of \$221M to offer services, the FSET plan makes up a little more than \$2M of this budget. The Eastmont Center, together with the other two self sufficiency centers, are funded with these dollars.

FOOD STAMPS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (FSET)

Utilization of FSET

The Food Stamps Employment and Training program provides job services to employable food

stamps clients. My objective, in this case, was to study the utilization of FSET funds within the delivery system in Alameda and more specifically, the Eastmont Self-sufficiency Center.

Description of Program

In San Francisco the FSET Program serves the non-assistance Food Stamp clients; many of whom are also General Assistance clients. The FSET program provides employment and training services through an assortment of programs and components within the city's workforce development system. The plan in San Francisco totals more than \$14M dollars which includes the 100% allocations provided by the Federal Government plus the 50% matching allocations provided through the state.

The FSET program in Alameda County is a lot smaller totaling approximately 2.2 million dollars. The services are mostly delivered in this county through the Eastmont Self-sufficiency Center. The eligible clients are all funneled through a clearly identified and consistent path within the FSET service delivery system. The model has definite benchmarks starting from entry to the various components to the final transition to employment. Generic workers perform the intake, eligibility and employment services. They provide services for the clients eligible for the different programs, including FSET. Mandatory job services include welfare, job club, job search, and training and education components.

Findings

In my analysis of the FSET programs I found that the Alameda County program is too small, compared to the one in San Francisco, to really provide me with substantial and useable determinations

that could be of relevance for our county.

CONCLUSION

This internship provided me with an opportunity to get an understanding of the social services and self-sufficiency delivery system in the County of Alameda, mainly the operation at the Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center, where my project was focused. This was an opportunity to develop a clear understanding of the services that are provided in both San Francisco and Alameda counties.

I found there are some similarities in the diversity of the population served by both counties. The County of Alameda seemed to have made a great investment into the infrastructure for the delivery of the social services system compared to San Francisco. Many of the buildings were architecturally designed and constructed, both in the exterior facades as well as the interiors, to suit the service delivery plans and customized to the needs of the client served. The equipment and furniture are built with high standards of IT and modular principles. The Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center is a good example of a program built in a shopping mall setting.

The organizational structure of the workforce development system in Alameda is the following: the Workforce Investment Board is embedded within the department, with their administration offices located in the same building. The staff for the Workforce Investment Board, the one-stop centers, and the self-sufficiency centers are all employees of the county.

I found a dichotomy between the one-stop versus the self-sufficiency center. The one-stop centers, even though they are an integral part of the social

services agency, function mostly within the fulfillment of the Workforce Investment Act mandate and are separate from the self-sufficiency centers, although sometimes it is within the same building. The Eastmont Self Sufficiency Center, however, is a large shopping mall size facility that has many of the characteristics of a one-stop, including the multiple partners, and the availability of the many supportive services and elements. It is not a "One Stop WIA Center". This is very different than San Francisco where an independent agency, the Private Industry Council, staffs the Workforce Investment Board and the Department of Human Services, although it plays a lead role, is just another partner. Paradoxically, in San Francisco there seems to be more integration between the welfare-to-work and one-stop WIA delivery system as the one stop center in San Francisco fulfills the self-sufficiency services for the welfare-to-work clients and provides the core services for the universal clientele.

CHALLENGES

In Alameda County the separation between the self-sufficiency and WIA one-stop centers is problematic. Although they are both embedded within the social services agency, the separation creates a gap in resources and in the continuum of services for the clients, especially given the fact that many of the clients could be one of the same.

There appears to be no career advancement and retention services available to the self-sufficiency center clients after they are off of aid and out of reach of welfare-to-work formula funds (12 months). Finally, there seemed to be no adequate system for tracking the employment outcomes outside of the generic welfare-to-work system. Everybody's waiting for CalWIN to do it.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SAN FRANCISCO

As a result of this project, I would like to propose the following for either implementation or replication in San Francisco of the following. The real estate lay out of the Eastmont Mall Self-Sufficiency Center seems to provide a number of features that will be of great importance to the success of the program and that should be considered in San Francisco. This center is equipped with ample parking for clients, which plays a big factor in the accessibility. The self-sufficiency services are embedded within the shopping mall, which means that clients are able not only to receive their self-sufficiency services but also do their banking, buy their groceries and even join the army with a one-stop visit.

The client flow track (see attached) offers a pretty clear service delivery track for all clients.

Everybody goes to the same door to develop a self-sufficiency plan. The CalWORKs, FSET, and Medi-Cal clients are all exposed to the same opportunities and services for self-sufficiency outcomes.

The functional approach to the service delivery is an impressive feature of the Eastmont Center. (see attached org. chart). This concept seems to bring a consistency and level of proficiency that might be of good use in San Francisco where each program still functions within an organizational silo.

The idea of having intake, eligibility, case management, and employment services managed by function throughout all the programs could be implemented incrementally as we reorganize our service delivery to accommodate CalWIN. This functional organizational approach could be integrated within the changed management timetable utilized for the implementation of CalWIN in San Francisco. This

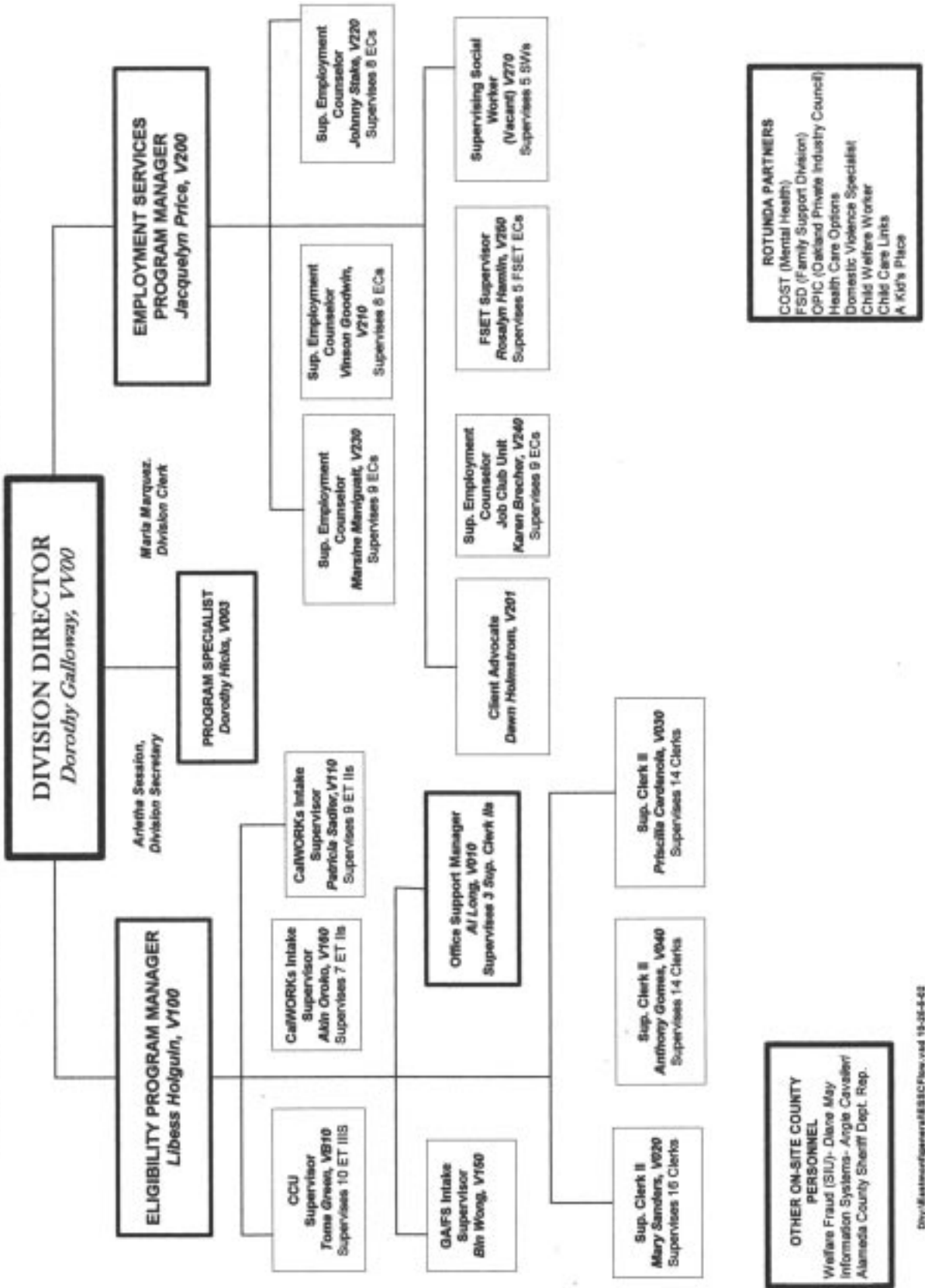
timetable has a schedule of implementation that starts in December 2003 and is expected to go live in January 2005. The implementation of a plan to replicate some of the real estate lay out that Alameda County has is far-fetched; however, we could do a lot of improvements as part of our role as a lead agency in the operation and development of the San Francisco Career Link One-Stop Centers.

The only workable recommendation that I can provide for San Francisco's FSET program as a result of both my analysis of the Alameda County model and review of our program in San Francisco is that we should develop a plan to incrementally build consistency in our different FSET components and programs. This plan should also develop outcomes, forms and tracking systems to achieve the programmatic design desired.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EASTMONT SELF-SUFFICIENCY CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

