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# Fostering Neighborhood Involvement in Workforce Development: The Alameda County Neighborhood Jobs Pi- lot Initiative

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**ABSTRACT.** One of the challenges in welfare reform implementation is to provide neighborhood outreach and assistance to unemployed individuals. This case study tells the story of three neighborhoods as they implemented a public-private neighborhood jobs pilot initiative (NJPI). The Rockefeller Foundation, in partnership with Alameda County Social Services Agency, supplied seed money for the NJPI to develop “one-stop” employment resource centers. The article describes how the neighborhoods implemented the NJPI, as well as common strengths and challenges, and lessons learned from the NJPI experience. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2001 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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**KEYWORDS.** Interagency collaboration, neighborhood development, one-stop service center, welfare reform

Many counties and communities are designing creative approaches to integrate multiple federal and state funding streams to promote workforce development. This case study tells the story of three neighborhoods in Alameda County, California as they implemented a public-private neighborhood jobs pilot initiative (NJPI). Following a brief history and literature review, the case study describes how the neighborhoods implemented the NJPI, as well as their strengths and challenges, and the lessons they learned from the NJPI experience.

## *HISTORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW*

### *Background*

The Neighborhood Jobs Pilot Initiative (NJPI) is a public-private sponsored, neighborhood-based workforce development system.<sup>1</sup> The NJPI partnership between the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) and the Rockefeller Foundation (Rockefeller) began in 1995 when Rockefeller approached Alameda County's Private Industry Council (PIC) Director to explore expanding Rockefeller's Jobs Initiatives<sup>2</sup> to Alameda County. Rockefeller intended that the NJPI would support economic and workforce development as well as help community-based organizations (CBOs) develop strong networks with their residents. The NJPI would address community issues such as housing, family support, and resident leadership by accessing various resources and assistance from national and local partners. SSA would actively fund community collaboration to build neighborhood infrastructures and employment pilots.

Rockefeller accepted a final concept paper in November 1997. Subsequently, committees of SSA program staff, local employment and training providers, and CBOs developed an implementation plan for an alternative employment service system. Rockefeller funded the process while SSA staff provided in-kind contributions. The plan included a budget proposal to leverage federal, state and county welfare funds as well as foundation and corporation grants. June 1998 was the target date for implementation.

The Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC)<sup>3</sup> helped the planning committee identify target neighborhoods from the "United Way Alameda: Community Assessment 1997" (Northern California Council

for the Community, 1997). Three neighborhoods were selected based on their high rates of poverty, infant mortality, at-risk children, and their well-established California SB620 Healthy Start Pilots as well as their history of community activism: South Hayward, Prescott and, at a later date, Lower San Antonio/Fruitvale (LSAF). Technical assistance and planning grants were awarded to ICPC for the initial implementation of the NJPI in South Hayward and Prescott; and to the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) for LSAF.

The NJPI used Rockefeller grant funds to provide a framework for workforce development and to cultivate community access to employment and training resources, community-based economic development, job retention, and life-long learning activities. "One-stop" employment resource centers (Centers) were developed in all three communities: the Institute for Success in South Hayward, the Prescott Resource Center in Prescott, and the Unity Council in Lower San Antonio/Fruitvale. The Centers linked the communities to current job-related labor market information and provided job training opportunities. Each Center was to be independent of Rockefeller funding and self-supporting within two years. The anticipated types of self-support included membership dues, community volunteer time, public and private job services contracts, temporary agency contracts with corporations, and space rental from local colleges for job skills and basic education classes. The Centers are expected to evolve into community-owned resources for building long-term sufficiency.

### *Context*

Alameda County's NJPI combines private foundation support with county and local resources in a comprehensive workforce development system that extends funding from the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) program, California's version of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF).<sup>4</sup> The Department of Labor Welfare to Work (DOL-WtW) grant programs provide supplemental funds and services to help welfare recipients with formidable problems gain and maintain employment. Under the authority of the Department of Labor Private Industry Councils, DOL-WtW grant programs enhance TANF services and improve the job skills of participants (Nightingale, Trutko, & Barnow, 1999). The programs usually focus on immediate job entry, known as Workfirst! (Trutko, Pindus, Barnow, & Nightingale, 1999). With staff counseling and assistance with job readiness, job search workshops, job clubs, and/or job leads, TANF recipients are expected to

explore the labor market to find jobs. Most TANF programs only engage recipients in other activities such as training or community service jobs when they are unsuccessful in securing employment.

States receiving the first DOL-WtW funds linked agencies and programs to expand the range and availability of support services such as transportation, child care, housing, substance abuse services, and domestic violence services (Trutko et al., 1999). Post-employment and career advancement services (e.g., customized training at employer sites, workplace-based computer learning centers, workplace mentors, and extended case management services) were expanded, and follow-up periods were extended. Promising program features included: targeting individuals with multiple barriers to employment, mandating services to non-custodial parents, allowing open-ended periods during which job retention and post-employment services may be provided, and coordinating welfare and workforce development systems at state and local levels.

The DOL-WtW program requires states to match every \$2 of federal DOL-WtW funds expended with \$1 of state and/or local expenditures (Trutko et al., 1999). Up to 50% of the state match may be provided through in-kind services.

### ***One-Stop Career Centers***

Some state welfare agencies provide job search assistance and employment services; while other states integrate their programs into one-stop career centers that might include employment services, education and other services (Martinson, 1999). There is considerable variation in one-stop service centers' target population, types of agencies and programs, and array of services and activities (Holcomb, Seefeldt, Trutko, Barnow, & Nightingale, 1993). Target populations may include all job seekers, disadvantaged workers, dislocated workers, unemployment insurance claimants, welfare recipients, youth, homeless, and ex-offenders. Diverse programs and agencies at the state and local level may incorporate employment services, cash assistance programs, secondary and post-secondary academic education, vocational education, economic development, and vocational rehabilitation. Moreover, agencies may coordinate activities such as planning, training and information exchange, integrate MIS systems, and/or co-locate facilities. The spectrum of client services may comprise intake and eligibility determination, assessment and case management, and delivery of employment and training services.

Coordinating services benefits participants as well as programs (Holcomb et al., 1993; Trutko, Bailis, Barnow, & French, 1991). Coordi-

nation frequently enables participants to access a wider range of services than would otherwise be available. Moreover, participants may experience reduced barriers to services primarily through simplified referral processes that reduce the associated cost and time. Agencies may eliminate service duplication through coordination that might allow them to offer expanded or more intensive services. Agencies also may acquire additional resources, greater funding flexibility, increased knowledge and communication among staff, enhanced ability to serve different target groups, and an improved image with participants, employers, and service communities.

Following the national trend, California has attempted to move its employment and training system toward an integrated, seamless delivery model that meets the needs of all low-income, disadvantaged job seekers. California's commitment to a one-stop system began in the mid-1990s when it placed a high priority on developing a statewide performance-based system to provide universal access to services, promote customer choice, and provide integrated access to a full spectrum of workforce preparation programs (Employment Development Department, 1997; Green, Zimmermann, Douglas, Zedlewski, & Waters, 1998). California's goal is to integrate partnerships between state and local government as well as between the public and private sectors into one-stop career centers. In January, 1997 California received \$8 million, the first of a three-year U.S. Department of Labor One-Stop implementation grant. In July, Governor Pete Wilson awarded 18 grants, totaling almost \$5 million to local one-stop partnerships throughout California. The State envisions that one-stop career centers will provide services and benefits for participants including service directories, job availability information, labor market data, assessments and referrals to program and support services. Employers are to receive similar services and benefits including service directories, job order and referral resources, labor market data, and information and referral on training resources and business assistance.

In summary, one-stop employment centers, despite their variation in population, structure, and service offerings, have provided participants with greater access to a wider range of services, and reduced agency service duplication. The NJPI coordination goals mirror California's in developing one-stop employment centers to enhance existing community support networks.

## ***THE NEIGHBORHOODS***<sup>5</sup>

### ***South Hayward Neighborhood***

*Description.* Centrally located within the county, South Hayward is framed by a freeway, two major thoroughfares, and a light industrial area bordered by five mobile home parks primarily inhabited by senior retirees. South Hayward's 14,080 residents are mainly low-income, blue-collar, highly transient immigrants. Transiency combined with 70% rental housing versus home ownership, and lack of local employment opportunities causes instability in the neighborhood. Moreover, access to jobs outside the community through public transportation is difficult. Fifty-six languages are spoken by students at local schools. Almost 20% of the residents do not have a high school diploma. Over 1,300 families depend on public assistance. Welfare reform legislation requires individuals to find employment. Many of these individuals have language barriers, minimal or no education, employment history, or job skills. Limited resources coupled with a high commitment to improving the quality of life in South Hayward has engendered cooperation between service providers, churches, and volunteers.

*Collaborative Efforts.* The South Hayward Neighborhood Collaborative (SoHNC) emerged in 1973 when a neighborhood association conducted a needs assessment. Neighborhood families rely on SoHNC's more than 30 members to provide services and activities to address their needs. Major stakeholders include Glad Tidings Church, Institute for Success, Shepard Family Resource Center, Healthy Start Elementary School, Tennyson Middle School Family Resource Center, LaFamilia, Family Support Network (FSN) Family Resource Center, Eden Youth and Family Center, and the SSA.

*Programs.* In 1997, Rockefeller awarded the NJPI planning grant to the SoHNC. Concurrently, Glad Tidings Church (GT) hoped to establish on-site education and training services. SoHNC and GT established the Glad Tidings Community Campus (GTCC) to offer high school and college education, and business training for the working poor as well as welfare recipients. The GTCC jobs placement center provides resumé assistance, employment placement and development, and post-employment support; before long it will offer child care for children 2 1/2 to 5 years of age while their parents are enrolled in on-site programs.

In January 1999, GT created the Institute for Success (IFS), a 30-day Workfirst! employment model that provides job search and retention activities, and develops motivational and critical thinking skills. The IFS facility has a 12-computer training center and lab, a career library, and Internet access. Key program components include developing a personal



plan, a weekly progress evaluation, a learning objectives workbook, self-esteem exercises, and interpersonal communication and job search strategies. IFS staff provide soft skills training as well as customized job search, career and family planning services. A local adult school provides on-site computer training, GED, English as a second language (ESL), Vocational ESL (VESL), vocational training, and certificate programs. A community college provides CalWORKS assessments on contract with the SSA. The IFS enhances the Workfirst! program with support services to assist participants with their transition to work. Success is based on numbers of participants enrolled, placed in jobs, and job retention at 30, 60, and 90 days.

The IFS combines successful traditional employment placement strategies with transferable skills and innovative learning techniques from the Les Brown & Associates Inc. model. SSA has traditionally used the Dean Curtis job club model which includes one week of learning job search skills followed by three weeks of job search, supported by peer networks and daily meetings with employment counselors. The Les Brown model adds a motivational piece to the Dean Curtis model that includes independent thinking and problem-solving skills, dealing with authority, positive work ethics, completing assigned tasks and activities, following directions and instructions, assessing strengths and weakness, and making good career decisions.

The SoHNC has created innovative services and accessed other resources to meet its community employment goals. The IFS is the intake information hub for its collaborative partners via a shared universal intake form. All intake information is entered into IFS's on-site data base. The collaborative is currently working on a shared data system. In addition, CalWORKS money was used to employ a retention counselor who links participants with the family support services through the IFS. Moreover, SoHNC, partnered with the Greater Bay Area Family Resource Network and supported by the Irvine Foundation, created the Employment Journey project. The Employment Journey project provides services such as job search, career development and family advocacy through the family resource centers. Further, GT develops neighborhood rental properties through a separate non-profit entity enabling it to provide assistance to individuals ineligible for county funds through money it receives from the rental units. Finally, multiple employment support services are provided through La Familia, FSN and the Eden Youth and Family Center.<sup>6</sup> A multidisciplinary team meets twice each month to discuss participant issues.



*Participants.* Participants learn about services mainly through fliers, brochures, advertisements in school class schedules, and word of mouth. Eligibility is determined by the SSA which provides a list of individuals qualified for WorkFirst! by zip code. CalWORKS participants are referred to the IFS by collaborative partners. Client assessment and enrollment occurs through the IFS. During the first two weeks, participants work on a customized job search plan and motivational skills with a job coach who provides one-on-one assistance in activities such as posting resumés and calling prospective employers.

*Strengths and Challenges.* The following strengths were identified by SoHNC members:

- The tenacious and hardworking SoHNC partners maintain open communication and trust.
- Partnership referrals increase client access to services and streamline service provision.
- Universal intake forms and a centralized data base facilitate client referrals.
- The strength-based model builds on the assets of the poor (e.g., family, friends, faith).
- GT provides assistance to individuals ineligible for county funds.

The following challenges were identified by SoHNC members:

- Diverse opinions and beliefs need to be blended to move toward collaborative goals.
- Local resources are not adequate to support the services required by Workfirst! and CalWORKS participants, nor to bolster low-income families.
- Outreach is difficult to a transient, multilingual, limited-English-speaking community as well as to isolated residents, and those with substance abuse and/or mental health challenges.

With SSA support, the IFS addresses its challenges with new services such as post-WorkFirst! employment activities, on-the-job training programs, micro-enterprise projects, enhanced post-employment retention services, in-home family assessments, and on-site “drop-in” child care. Additionally, GT has collaborated with two local schools to develop adult education and entrepreneurial centers, and to house a CalWORKS assessment center at the GTCC. Moreover, GTCC hopes to offer a transportation shuttle between the assessment and training centers to job interviews

or job sites, and to partner school campuses. SoHNC has expanded CalWORKS activities, leveraged funding from multiple sources, and forged strong alliances with employers and training operators.

### ***Prescott Neighborhood***

*Description.* Prescott's 6,000 residents are primarily African-American, English-speaking, and working-class with smaller numbers of Hispanic and Asian-Americans. Located in West Oakland, Prescott is bounded by two major thoroughfares, Third Street, and the Southern Pacific Depot. Prescott's strong economy and flourishing recreational and cultural life declined following the closing of the ferry and railway services after World War II. The deterioration was exacerbated by major construction projects such as the BART station and tracks, the U.S. Post Office distribution facility, and the building of the Nimitz Freeway through the center of community. Two final blows to the neighborhood were the 1989 earthquake, which physically destroyed both the freeway and the neighborhood, and the 1994 closure of the army base. Banking practices of "redlining" and denying home renovation loans to low-income families accelerated the decline. Poverty, domestic violence, homicide, lack of home ownership, and the need for more after-school programs have been identified as crucial community concerns.

Thirty-seven percent of Prescott's families live in poverty. Over 70% of Prescott's 1,144 CalWORKS residents are neither working nor looking for work perhaps due to transportation needs, and the lack of local employment opportunities or the necessary education and skills for available jobs. Half do not have high school diplomas or the equivalent. Over half of the residents indicate they need assistance paying for transportation, and locating and paying for child care. Most have limited transportation options: 70% do not have valid driver licenses, 85% do not have access to vehicles, 40% indicate they need assistance finding transportation.

*Collaborative Efforts.* The neighborhood's first collaborative, the Prescott Parent Collaborative, was established in 1995. Initial efforts to establish a Center stalled due to turnover in staff and in lead and fiscal agencies.<sup>7</sup> However, during the 1997-1998 NJPI planning process, ICPC formed the Prescott Community Collaborative (PCC) which included community residents, CBOs, and city and county representatives. A site was selected for the The Prescott Family Resource Center (PFRC) and the PCC performed a community needs assessment.

In April 1999, based on its 18-year history of advocacy for low-income, disenfranchised communities and individuals, the Women's Economic

Agenda Project (WEAP) was chosen by SSA as lead agency for the PFRC. WEAP coordinates a continuum of social services, economic development programs, technical assistance, and community outreach and capacity building. WEAP hired a director for the PFRC and helped it develop a governance structure and define community goals and vision with local parents. WEAP and the PFRC (renamed the Prescott Resource Center [PRC] in 1999), collaborate with a variety of service providers in the community. A new parent collaborative formed in August, 1999, the Prescott Community Parent Collaborative, created a forum in which community members may talk with elected officials about their concerns such as safety, crime and housing, and meets monthly to address community issues.

*Programs.* The PRC, the only family resource center in Prescott, offers a one-stop program. The PRC has several computers, a printer, a fax machine, and a copier which are all accessible to the community. Staff help participants with resumé preparation, using the equipment, and calling prospective employers. The PRC receives the Alameda County Job Announcement mailing list that includes current job openings and promotions within Alameda County and has an on-site job announcement bulletin board and a job placement book. WEAP intended to upgrade the PRC by the end of the year 2000 to provide basic and intermediate computer training, job readiness training, and job placement services for area residents. Residents will have the option of enrolling in Cisco courses at WEAP's downtown office to prepare for positions as network administrators. The teen volunteer program is an additional employment-training component where teens receive a small stipend to assist the PRC staff after school, enabling teens to learn about office work and procedures.

Support services available through the PRC include a food pantry, a clothing closet, emergency child care, basic literacy and parent training classes, family advocacy and peer support through case management, as well as child and family counseling. All residents have access to the parent drop-in room, a large room with comfortable furniture, videos, magazines, the daily paper and books, service provider listings and other informational brochures. County on-site health and social services include eligibility determination, child welfare case management, maternal and child health outreach, and public health services. Collaborative partners participate in a bi-weekly multidisciplinary team meeting to resolve any difficult participant and community issues.

*Participants.* Participants access PRC programs through outreach efforts, word of mouth, and referrals from the collaborative partners including the county SSA. Outreach efforts include block parties and

neighborhood events that are attended by CBOs, public figures, and local musicians. Community meetings, which include speakers such as local politicians and experts in various fields, are well-attended. Intakes, assessments, and referrals are performed on-site by the community family advocate/case manager. Approximately 40% of the people who access the PRC are seeking first-time jobs.

*Strengths and Challenges.* The following strengths were identified by ICPC, PRC and WEAP staff:

- Community residents are committed to positive change based on strong family values.
- The PRC infuses trust and cooperation and a sense of pride into the community. Staff stability and understanding have earned the support of Prescott's residents.
- Through the planning process, WEAP designed and implemented a systematic outreach strategy and trained two local community outreach workers and one volunteer worker.
- Employment opportunities are in close proximity or accessible by public transportation.

The following challenges were identified by ICPC, PRC and WEAP staff:

- WEAP had to overcome residents' negative perceptions of previous agencies.
- It is difficult to offer comprehensive long-term support services based on categorical funding streams. Participants need education and training to obtain living-wage employment and cannot retain employment without long-term support services such as child care.
- Reporting performance-based goals required by funding sources was difficult during the initial start-up period.

WEAP and PRC linked with various resources to address their challenges. Prescott received support from the Hewlett Foundation for the implementation of economic development activities. Moreover, the SSA committed to support CalWORKS job-related activities. WEAP plans to resume a neighborhood Economic Development Collaborative by engaging area interests such as businesses, training facilities, schools, residents, and developers. Further, WEAP partnered with the Port of Oakland, U.S. Post Office Bay Area Economics, and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors among others to enhance neighborhood employment opportunities.

With the assistance of public and private funds, the PRC, ICPC, and WEAP are developing strategies for local self-sufficiency.

### ***Lower San Antonio/Fruitvale Neighborhood***

*Description.* Located in East Oakland, Lower San Antonio/ Fruitvale's (LSAF) 21,367 residents are predominantly immigrants. The area is characterized by high unemployment, poverty, and low educational attainment rates. Fruitvale's residents are mainly Latino; whereas Lower San Antonio's are mainly Asian. Almost 5,000 jobs were lost over the past 10 years due, in part, to closures of big factories and warehouses. Smaller businesses replaced larger ones, and the smaller ones employ fewer people. Unemployment rates have remained at approximately 15% for the neighborhood, more than double the state rate (6.9%), and over triple the county rate (3.8%). Over 25% of LSAF residents fall below the poverty level, double the California rate and 2 ½ times the County rate. In addition, 21% of LSAF adults have less than a ninth grade education; as many as 42% in Fruitvale do not have a high school diploma. About a quarter of LSAF's population receive public assistance. Almost two-thirds of the 4,000 CalWORKS recipients are limited-English speakers.

The county DOL-WtW system targets primarily English-speaking participants. For example, the WorkFirst! model places all participants in a four-week, self-paced job club from which very few limited-English proficiency (LEP) participants benefit. Participants are expected to look for work on their own by using English language job listings. The SSA allows LEP participants to waive job club requirements and move directly to post-assessment programs, yet assessments and related written tests are currently offered only in English. Many residents in the LSAF neighborhood are not literate in their own language. Although they have bilingual staff, SSA and PIC systems, as well as the community agencies with which they contract, do not have the capacity to match language resources with client needs. CalWORKS programs and the DOL-WtW grants funded in Oakland do not target LEP participants. Recognizing their lack of capacity to develop an alternative system, SSA awarded contracts to several CBOs to serve LEP residents.

*Collaborative Efforts.* The NJPI planning process joined two neighborhoods to form the LSAF collaborative (LSAFC) and address employment issues. In 1997, the SSA approached the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) to develop an alternative to the DOL-WtW plan for the LSAF. The SSA and Rockefeller provided EBALDC with a planning grant to build and implement a job readiness program for LEP

participants. The Unity Council,<sup>8</sup> located in Fruitvale, was asked to participate based on its Spanish-language model. The 35-member partnership, composed of local churches, community groups, ethnic associations and service organizations, formed work groups and convened focus groups of community residents to identify welfare reform issues. Based on this data, the SSA provided a CalWORKS grant to EBALDC to extend the planning process to job readiness programs. This was intended to restructure the delivery of social services into in a comprehensive, integrated system. The SSA provided separate funding for EBALDC to manage two pilot projects: a WorkFirst! job readiness program and a transportation contract to teach people how to use public transportation.

*Programs.* LSAFC employment efforts are co-located at the Unity Council site. The NJPI employment program, the Comprehensive Integrated Resources for CalWORKS Limited English Speakers (CIRCLES), focuses specifically on the needs of LEP welfare recipients. CIRCLES offers participants work experience, skills training, peer support, and job placement while they improve their vocational English skills. Partnership agencies<sup>9</sup> provide on-site eligibility, assessment, case management, peer support, and on going retention services for CIRCLES. Linguistic and cultural experts serve five groups: Cambodian, Laotian, Latino, Mein and Vietnamese. Case managers provide up to one year of intensive job coaching and two years of peer support. CIRCLES offers intensive English as a second language (ESL) and Vocational English as a second language (VESL) training, but ensures that participants are not simply learning English while other plans are put on hold. The VESL training integrates career path preparation and English language skills into a vocationally specific English language program. This component begins with basic ESL services and expands to on-site career path classes provided through community colleges that teach workplace-appropriate language skills as well as technical skills.

CIRCLES created a range of work experience opportunities within a supportive environment for participants. Temporary, subsidized positions which meet the Workfirst! requirements are available with private employers as well as CBOs. EBALDC provides centralized job development and placement services for the different language groups, trains supervisors for the transitional work experience positions, and conducts extensive outreach to develop relationships with local employers. In addition, educational specialists link participants with resources for supportive services such as transportation, child care and mental health services. Child care/transportation advocates identify service alternatives, and provide training to enable participants to plan their trips to work. Two mental



health care organizations, La Clinica de la Raza and Asian Community Mental Health Services, provide ongoing support as needed.

An innovative structure called Grant Based Employment (GBE) converts a portion of county CalWORKS client grants to wages rather than benefits. GBE participants perform community service work at CBOs or public agencies and receive paychecks subsidized by competitive grant dollars to cover payroll taxes, workers compensation, and liability insurance. GBE payments allow recipients to be eligible for Earned Income Tax Credits that can substantially increase their annual income as well as provide the psychological benefits of paid employment.

*Participants.* Participants learn about programs primarily through outreach but also through the county WorkFirst! program. Eligibility is ultimately determined by the SSA. Upon entry, a comprehensive intake at the Unity Council matches participants with the services they require, such as routine time management, ESL or VESL classes. Case managers help them develop a plan, monitor and evaluate their progress, and reset goals toward self-sufficiency. During the intake evaluation, an Employment Development Plan is created for each client and reviewed periodically. The evaluation includes client work history, education, abilities, job preferences, and an assessment of individual need for support services. Upon placement, participants join a career advancement program for up to two years to help them identify specific skills to be developed.

Participants are scheduled for ESL training and peer support groups at the time of enrollment. Practice and reinforcement of ESL skills is emphasized in all activities. Case managers incorporate increasing levels of language skills into the job readiness courses. For example, the ESL curriculum includes working with job listings and completion of applications. Day, evening, and weekend classes are offered through partnerships with two local colleges. Peer groups comprise about eight members to encourage participation and provide a supportive environment that focuses on culturally specific employment-related issues. Participants identify their goals as well as barriers and ways to overcome them as they transition from welfare to work. The peer support system helps participants cope with the day-to-day difficulties of becoming and remaining employed. The groups remain open to participants even after they find employment.

*Strengths and Challenges.* The following strengths were identified by EBALDC and Unity Council staff:

- The SSA has supported alternative programs targeted specifically at LEP clientele.



- The NJPI planning process: (a) developed collaborative commitment; (b) strengthened neighborhood efforts, (c) encouraged sharing of resources, and (d) gained funding credibility.
- Language specific employee support specialists and assessment tools are indispensable.
- CIRCLES's monthly staff support group facilitates training through modeling as well as allowing staff to resolve problems and release frustrations.

The following challenges were identified by EBALDC and Unity Council staff:

- Current funding, based on specific program and service performance measures, does not include support for technical assistance and administration.
- Categorical funding does not facilitate comprehensive, integrated services. Funding applied to specific performance-based service categories encourages increased processing of participants under the specified categories. Participants may need other services.
- Service coordination between agencies creates tension over who has ultimate responsibility for participants. Staff may blame another agency for mistakes or lack of follow-through.
- It is difficult to conduct vocational training with non-English speaking and/or illiterate participants. They must learn English before being trained for employment.
- Access to local employment opportunities outside the collaborative partnership is difficult.
- Residents require additional resources to obtain and retain employment such as low-cost housing, parenting skills, and after-school programs for children older than 12 years.

LSAFC has pursued additional resources to meet their challenges. CIRCLES received funding from the SSA and the Hewlett Foundation for post-assessment services. The SSA and Federal Transit Administration provided resources for transportation development and related staff training activities. In addition, the SSA provided funding for a CalWORKS financial literacy program. Moreover, an electronic infrastructure is being planned to enhance agency networking capacity and establish Internet connections.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The neighborhoods learned much from the challenges they faced. Based on their NJPI experience, the neighborhoods identified lessons under three categories: funding, collaboration, and program development.

### ***Funding***

Lesson 1: It is important to locate unrestricted funding to cover capacity building, administrative and start-up costs, and services such as outreach, referrals and follow-up.

Lesson 2: In the planning process, local needs must be balanced with programs or services that funders will support.

### ***Collaboration***

Lesson 3: High levels of communication and trust are necessary for collaborative partners with different values to pursue common community goals.

Lesson 4: It is easy to become disheartened with the collaborative vision because program implementation is more difficult than program design.

Lesson 5: The capacities of potential partners must be assessed for successful collaboration. Balance is needed between providing and receiving technical assistance as well as between demonstrated and potential administrative expertise.

### ***Program Development***

Lesson 6: A comprehensive community needs assessment is essential to effective program design and implementation.

Lesson 7: Program flexibility is important for integration of participants who have various levels of need, skills and knowledge.

Lesson 8: Better connections and communications need to be fostered among county and community resources to link participants with programs as well as provide opportunities for education, training and support services.

Lesson 9: A semi-annual, issue-based forum needs to be created for communities to discuss their challenges and to provide technical assistance to each other.

The NJPI partners have maintained high levels of commitment despite their overwhelming challenges. Although they are in different stages of development, all three neighborhoods have attained their goals of leveraging SSA and Rockefeller support to access additional resources, gain community support, and create new and innovative services for their residents.

## NOTES

1. "The workforce development system generally refers to a broad range of employment and training services whose purpose is to enable job seekers, students, and employers to access a wide range of information about jobs, the labor market, careers, education and training organizations, financing options, skills standards or certification requirements, and needed support services" (Martinson, 1999, pg. 2).

2. The Rockefeller Foundation is designing, testing, and evaluating four Jobs Initiatives models to increase employment rates and create "entire communities of work" (1999, pg. 3). The Alameda NJPI is part of the "Connections to Work" initiative whereby Rockefeller is working with public welfare agencies, employment and training providers, and local officials in several cities to establish training and placement services that meet the needs of low-income residents as well as exploring the creation of publicly subsidized community service jobs.

3. ICPC is the county's governing body for state law AB1741 Blending Funding Strategies for Youth Project. Membership includes individuals from the county Board of Supervisors, the County Office of Education, Health Care Services, Juvenile Court, Probation, and Social Services, as well as non-governmental organizations.

4. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program was created by the Welfare Reform Law of 1996. TANF became effective July 1, 1997, and replaced what was then commonly known as welfare: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs. TANF provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states federal funds and flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs.

5. The descriptions of the neighborhood sections are based on a synthesis of information from personal interviews as well as agency and collaborative documentation.

6. La Familia is the fiscal agent for the Family Support Network (FSN) which includes child care, mental health, and youth leadership services, family case management services, and a family resource center. The FSN Family Resource Center provides resumé assistance. Eden Youth and Family Center provides co-located services such as a pediatrics clinic, a dental clinic, day school, child care center, Head Start, and a respite care center.

7. Lead and fiscal agencies are separate entities.

8. The Unity Council was formed in Fruitvale during 1964 as the Spanish Speaking Unity Council. It is a community development organization that aims to attract resources critical to the neighborhood. The Unity Council, through its network of institutions, provides a comprehensive program of physical, economic, and social development aimed at enriching the lives of families in the community. Programs include leadership in commu-

nity advocacy, social service delivery, housing and economic development especially for minorities in the community.

9. American Viet League, East Bay Cambodian Council, Former Vietnamese Political Prisoners Mutual Assistance, United Laotian Community Development, Inc., and Unity Council.

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