THE NOSR PROCESS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE APPLICATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Community Council
CETA	Comprehensive Employment and Training Act
CRQ	Community Resources Questionnaire
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
IS	Impact Schedule
NOSR	National Office for Social Responsibility
TA	Technical Assistance
TRC	Technical Resource Committee
YNA	Youth Needs Assessment

Series Editor: William W. Keller
Senior Consultant: Margaret L. Rogers
Technical Assistance: Rudi A. Leonardi
Consultants: Linda Greenberg, *Ph.D.*
Linda W. Gruber

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GUIDE 4: DATA COLLECTION

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DATA COLLECTION —Introduction

The NOSR Youth·Work Experience Process provides a broad structure through which individual communities design and develop programs geared to their own specific resources and needs. Before any particular Program element can be planned for and executed, data must be gathered that will show what specific resources are potentially available to the Program. For example, to plan and develop the classroom components of the Program, the staff will need to know what courses are offered, which institutions offer them, and at what time, place, and cost they will be made available. Similar data will be needed for planning for all other areas of the Program, including work stations, volunteers, supportive services, and program facilities. This information provides the foundation upon which the Program will be built. This guide is designed to assist the Program staff in rationally and systematically assessing the resources of the community so that they can be matched with the needs of the Program clients.

There are several important types of data, and the staff will have to tap many sources in order to get all the pertinent information. The following is a listing of the kinds of data needed by a Program planner and possible sources for obtaining such data.

Community Resources —Education

A survey of existing educational facilities is an excellent place to begin cataloging the community resources available to the program being planned. Since the continuing education is a major thrust in the NOSR Youth Work Experience Program, it will be necessary to obtain the cooperation of educational facilities in offering:

- GED Courses
- courses specifically geared to employment possibilities
- remedial classes and tutoring
- college level classes for qualified participants
- skill training classes

This information can be obtained from the principal of a local high school. The principal will have at his or her fingertips information regarding all courses available to Program clients at the local school, special vocational training courses, and local adult education courses. Moreover, the principal can put the Program planner in touch with people who know the local educational system and who have access to the full range of educational data. If courted properly, the local principal can provide an entry into the educational community and may assist in arranging a meeting with the superintendent of schools.

Before approaching the superintendent of schools, it is advisable to contact several persons at the lower level of the school system to gain a sense of the local situation and build access for the Program. This will assist the Program planner in knowing exactly what requests for assistance to make to the superintendent. Further data may be obtained by contacting a local community college to arrange an appointment with the president or his or her representative. Representatives of the State Office of Vocational Education also will be helpful in identifying employment-related courses, and in obtaining accreditation information. A representative of the local CETA program may be of assistance in this area as well.

Other resources to check may include the following:

- libraries
- telephone directories
- college catalogues
- community organizations with educational facilities
- recreational agencies
- the Red Cross, and similar agencies
- local OIC offices
- Urban League
- local councils of government

Community Resources —Supportive Services

Program clients are likely to need a broad range of supportive services such as:

- remedial health care
- child care
- mental health care
- legal assistance
- counseling of various kinds
- organized recreational programs
- cultural enrichment programs
- day care facilities

Without the availability of such supportive services, the probability of the Program's success declines markedly, for the basic physical, social, educational, and psychological needs of each youth must be considered.

The first step in planning the Program supportive services is to compile a list of agencies that deliver such services. The NOSR Community Resources Questionnaire will provide much of this data. Other sources of information about such agencies may include county and state offices of human resources, handbooks or guides to community services complied by community coordination agencies like the United Way, and, as a final check, the telephone directory.

When the list of supportive services providers is complete, the Community Council and the Technical Resource Committee will be the best contacts in establishing and developing necessary linkages with the various agencies. This will ordinarily be accomplished through a series of meetings with representatives of the target agencies.

Community Resources —Program Facilities

In order to run the Program, it is necessary to provide office space and meeting rooms for the Program participants. The Executive Director or the Community Council should determine how much space is needed and decide on an optimal location. The Program should be housed in a "neutral" area so that all youth will be comfortable in coming to the office, and the office should be easily accessible by public transportation.

The staff person in charge of locating space to the Program should make every effort to find donated space in the desired location. The following resources should be checked carefully:

- the Community Council, the members of which may know of many places available for community service activities
- the local school system which may be mandated through a Community Facilities Act to provide space for such programs
- local real estate offices
- community organizations and other institutions which may be able to share space
- the local Employment Service offices (a resource which may prove especially productive when is can dovetail with the employment element of the Program)
- the office of the chief local elected official.

Community Resources —Potential Work Stations

Since work experience is the other main component of the Program, along with education, an immediate survey of the accessibility and quality of work sites is critical. Both public and private nonprofit agencies must be examined to determine the availability of high quality work assignments. The suitability of an agency to Program purposes will be suggested by:

- the kinds of occupations it covers
- its location
- the size of its operation

- its past history, if any, in dealing with Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) enrollees
- its record as an employing agency under the public service employment component of CETA

One method of obtaining this information is to contact the director of the local CETA program, who will have lists of the local agencies that have asked for CETA participants.

Also available should be an evaluation of the employing agency as a good work site. The CETA Director usually will have on hand evaluations of the former NYC Program and its work stations. This information should be closely scrutinized, since work sites must be developed with the Youth Development Strategy in mind.

Given that the local CETA program is a good place to begin, the Program Director and designated staff person should contact public and private agencies to locate additional potential work stations. Members of the Community Council and the Technical Resource Committee will be able to assess whether or not their own agencies can provide sites. They can also provide names of other Youth Service Organizations and further leads to assist in work site development.

In order to generate a sufficient quality and proper cluster distribution of quality work sites, the Program staff should try the following options:

- Contact the personnel departments of local, county, state, and federal agencies—only after investigating its specific function and work site potential.
- Prevail upon the chief elected official or city manager to send notice to the various departments and agencies under his jurisdiction, requesting openings on behalf of the Program.

- Post notices in local newspaper.
- Attempt to gain access to other pubic media sources
- Conduct a systematic cursory screening of all local non-profit organizations.
- Monitor the want-ads section of the local newspaper on a daily basis.

Labor Market Information

Because the NOSR Youth Work Experience Process links the education and work experience components as closely as possible with "real world" job opportunities, labor market information is essential to successful program development. As a minimum, the Program staff will need to know:

- which occupations are currently in demand
- what the entry requirements for these occupations are
- where the jobs are located
- what the projected economic and employment trends for the local area are
- what the current unemployment picture is

Labor market information and analyses can be obtained from your local State Employment Service office. This service publishes a quarterly Standard Metropolitan Statistical Average and a list of most-needed occupations. Unfortunately, much of this information is not analyzed in terms of specific youth population age groups. The Program staff will not have to base its interpretation of much of the data on other sources of information and its own feelings about the local community. It is probable that the local CETA prime sponsor has already received and analyzed this information, perhaps in conjunction with specially executed local employment surveys. Consequently, the prime sponsor should be an early stop in the quest for labor market data. After exhausting that source, proceed to some or all of the following:

- State Employment Service Office
- the regional office of the Department of Labor, both the Employment and Training Administration and Bureau of Labor Statistics
- State Employment and Training Council (usually attached to the governor's office)

Information might also be obtained from local groups like the Chamber of Commerce, the National Alliance of Businessmen, the Jaycees, and various labor organizations. Market analyses performed by banks may provide some economic and employment projections.

In the event that appropriate labor market information is not produced by these methods, it will be necessary to conduct a survey specifically for the Program. The Program director, in consultation with the Community Council, should design a strategy for approaching the:

- local Chamber of Commerce
- associations of businessmen
- local chapter of the National Manufacturers' Association

Then after researching the major employers of the area, and learning in advance their purposes and the nature of their work, the staff person in charge of the labor market survey should contact them. He or she should have prepared a questionnaire form eliciting the following information:

- the number of entry level hires in the last year
- the occupations that were represented
- the necessary qualifications
- the anticipated openings for the next six months or year

The results of this informal survey should provide valuable information that can be easily analyzed or applied to programmatic concerns. This, taken together with other sources indicated above, should determine the economic and employment trends of the locality.

It is important not to restrict the scope of the survey too severely: often, it will be found, the employment situation only a few miles from the given municipality will be more fruitful. For this reason, local real estate firms may possess helpful information on the area's economic trends. Finally, as a general rule, it is always helpful to keep an eye on the "help wanted" section of the local newspaper. It may even be advisable to monitor it on a day-to-day basis.

Demographic Information

Proper program planning must take into consideration the characteristics of the youth to be served. In order to determine the composition of the universe of need, the following information will be necessary:

- the number of economically disadvantaged youth
- the ethnic composition of the youth population
- prevalence of languages other than English being spoken in the home
- number of youth completing high school
- areas of residence of most of the economically disadvantaged youth (by census tract or some other easily defined geographic area)
- number of school dropouts
- arrest rates by age, sex, and geographic area
- local school district achievement test ratings

Much of the above information is collected by the Bureau of the Census and is available from it. However, the regional office of the Department of Labor, ETA, has access to special analyses and updates of this census data. Another good place to start is with the local CETA program, which should have these data runs available. As a caution, much of this information may not be broken down into appropriate age groups to be of use to the specific program. Often, it is possible to extrapolate, taking account all other sources of information (including a nonspecific feeling about the community), and end up with useful data.

Most local school districts have a research department and should have information on dropouts and test results from individual schools. Local agencies or departments of police, probation, and welfare should be able to provide arrest rate information. Since these agencies are likely to be members of the Technical Resource Council, the task should be easy.

In addition to these offical information sources, it may be possible to tap various community organizations for the results of any pertinent surveys they may have taken or for any special data they may have collected.

Historical Information

In addition to all of the above data that is required for planning, Program staff should collect any available historical information—this may prevent repeating past mistakes. Relevant historical information will include:

- evaluations of previous youth programs. Formally, this information can often be obtained through the CETA prime sponsor or from the Program's Technical Resource Committee. Informally, the Program staff should approach the grass roots of the community. Teachers, church leaders, youth, and other community people can provide apt evaluations of past programs at the local level.
- community patterns in previous youth programs. In what areas have youth been served and to what degree? What

has been the reaction to these programs? Can the NOSR Youth Work Experience Program build on these past efforts? If not, they are best avoided, and the Program should take pains to disassociate itself from them.

- community attitudes toward youth and particular youth problems. Is the community really concerned about youth? What are the specific concerns, and do they dovetail with real problems? Suppose, for instance, that the specific problem is delinquency, and the local community has traditionally taken a hard line on the subject. This situation will necessitate much face-to-face contact between Program staff and community leaders. The staff will have to take the time to sell these people on the Youth Development Strategy. Fortunately, much of this work will have been initiated in advance by the Program operator, in conjunction with the Technical Resource Committee and Community Council. Ultimately, the Program will have to mesh with community values and feelings, but it can effect lasting changes in these areas, given enough time.

Strategy for Obtaining Data

The knowledge of where certain information is located will not always make it easy to obtain. In order to facilitate data collection, the staff should be instructed as follows:

- Know why you want the data requested and how you plan to use it (good answers to these questions will allay fears which may hinder release of information).
- Formulate your data requests very specifically so that no one has to interpret what it is you are asking for.

- Use both informal and formal methods such as letters, personal contacts, and citizen contacts with organizations.
- Use your Technical Resource Committee and Community Council to help assure access to available data.
- If you strike out with one source, remember to ask if they can suggest alternative sources.
- Be courteous and be sure you have permission to use any information obtained.

All data requests should be formulated in writing and filed. Follow-up thank you letters are a proper response to any release of information for Program use. The net result of these efforts will be extensive documentation that will be useful in the evaluation process. It will catalogue factors that inhibit or facilitate the collection of necessary data.

Using the Data

Having amassed the volume of data suggested above, the staff may feel somewhat inundated by it all. To help cope with all the information, the following steps may be of assistance in organizing the data:

- Catalogue and survey of community resources into the various education and training components of the Youth Work Experience Process. Determine the relationship needed with each resource and what contacts are needed to establish such a relationship.
- Plot information obtained on occupations in short supply and expected employment possibilities against existing or potential skill training resources. Also plot potential work stations and input received from youth on their career interests and experience. Without a reasonable amount of congruency, the Program cannot succeed.

- Analyze demographic information to determine
  1. characteristics of potential enrollees
  2. selection of criteria for Program participants
  3. kind of components to be included in the Program
  4. supportive services likely to be needed
  5. process for recruitment—how to recruit—where to recruit and e.g., which newspapers, organizations, agencies, and media have access to target population
  6. location of facilities for offices and components in order to be accessible and neutral for participants

Information obtained should be tied to the rough Program outline and to the flow chart being constructed. This will show what information, if any, is lacking and will also point up gags, if any, in the Program design.

National Office
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1901 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209 (703) 558-4545
180 Lombard St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 398-7300

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