

**A. COVER PAGE**

**Trusting Neighbors  
P.O. Box 40131  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104  
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**TRUSTING NEIGHBORS  
WORK-READINESS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING PROJECT**

**Presented by: Shirley A. Alexander  
Final Project Report  
New Hampshire College  
Community Economic Development Program  
Advisor: Woullard Lett  
February 2001**

## **B. ABSTRACT**

Despite St. Paul's robust economic growth, many households and communities are not experiencing positive growth. Serious gaps show by ethnicity that impact family and community stability and the overall progress of the City's economy. In particular, African-American young people between the ages of 14-21, who live in the Summit-University Community, are lagging behind in becoming a productive and skilled labor force. In 1999, the City of St. Paul's Summer Employment Program employed 127 African-Americans young people but 2200 lived in Summit-University community; thereby, showing a need to provide more job/career opportunities. In addition, the lack of family stability and serious disparities by race and ethnic origin in family income and social outcomes add to the plight of African-American young people. Some examples of other negative local indicators are the following: 50% of African American students graduate from high school on time, over 40% percent drop-out, over 65% receive subsidized school meals, 47% are homelessness. Also, African-American young people disproportionately have higher teen-pregnancy, delinquency and incarceration rates than other racial and ethnic populations in St. Paul.

Without appropriate prevention and intervention strategies, the conditions will grow worse as time goes on for African-American young people in St. Paul. As an effort to address some of the issues, Trusting Neighbors initiated a Work-Readiness Training and Work-Based Learning Project that incorporated the support of a cross-section of stakeholders. Trusting Neighbors is a community-based organization, comprised primarily of African-American residents, who live in the Summit-University community. The organization's mission is to provide community-based development and social service related activities that foster a sense of community support, empowerment and self-sufficiency for disadvantaged African American, children, youth, adults and families, As a result of implementing the new project, outcomes were improved for individual participants, families, Trusting Neighbors, businesses, the broader community and the City of St. Paul.

## **C. SUMMARY**

### **Problem Statement:**

There is a need to build organizational capacity and social networks inside and outside of Trusting Neighbors in order to improve conditions in the Summit-University community for young people, 14-21 years of age, who are in need of work-readiness training and employment opportunities. If strategies are not taken to improve organizational capacity and service effectiveness, then many community-based organizations will be unsuccessful in solving complex problems for disadvantaged populations; As a result, gaps in service delivery and systems change will become commonplace.

Conversations with a cross-section of community stakeholders representing local social service agencies (local planning council, youth development, community foundation and church), business and the public sector provided me with some insight on youth development concerns. Parents, teens and young adults from Trusting Neighbors expressed their individualized needs as well as Trusting Neighbors organizational needs for capacity building in skills training, income generation and network supports. Other sources of information were the 1990 U.S. Census data and Citizens League Workforce Report on conditions. Research and reports indicate that there is a lack of qualified people and businesses to meet the demands of the changing economy.

### **Goal Statement:**

The Work-Readiness and Work-Based Learning Project will improve the organizational capacity of Trusting Neighbors to address issues that affect socio-economically disadvantaged African-American youth and young adults (ages 14-21), who live in the Summit-University community. The project will gain internal and external support from community resources for better service delivery and effectiveness; consequently, improving conditions and addressing service delivery gaps in the area of workforce development. The project will train a maximum of twenty (20) youth and young adults.

### **Major Outputs if Project is Successfully Completed:**

- |   |   |                      |
|---|---|----------------------|
| ❖ Curriculum Design and Development<br>2000   | - | January and February |
| ❖ Outreach and Orientation for Summer Program | - | March                |
| ❖ Work-Readiness Training Program             | - | April – May          |

- |   |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| ❖ Recognition Ceremony                      | - | May              |
| ❖ Employment, Placements and Monitoring     | - | June – August    |
| ❖ Evaluation                                | - | September        |
| ❖ Internal and External Networks of Support | - | January          |
| ❖ Funding Support                           | - | February - April |

**Major Outputs Fully Achieved:**

- ❖ Curriculum Design and Development
- ❖ Outreach and Orientation for Summer Program
- ❖ Work-Readiness Training Program
- ❖ Recognition Ceremony
- ❖ Employment, Placements and Monitoring
- ❖ Evaluation

**Major Outputs Partially Achieved:**

- ❖ School and Business Partnerships
- ❖ Financial Support from Funding Community

**Major Outputs with no Task Initiated:**

All Major Outputs Had Tasks Initiated

**Conclusions / Recommendations:**

The Work-Readiness and Work-Based Learning Project's goals and purpose have not change since its inception. The goals of improving the skills and income of disadvantaged African-American youth and young adults; and improving the organizational capacity of Trusting Neighbors to address these issues were achieved. The project used a strategy of gaining internal and external support from community resources in order to provide better service delivery and effectiveness. As a result of Trusting Neighbors' efforts, community conditions were improved and gaps in the workforce development service delivery were addressed.

The project was completed, despite challenges. Trusting Neighbors would have had better outcomes had financial resources been secured to hire staff to

coordinate the process and project (Intense attention is needed to build relationships and structures among diverse interests/sectors); Volunteers can only contribute so much to the planning and implementation of projects. In Addition, if external networks would have been more responsive and shared resources in a timely and just manner then Trusting Neighbors would have been able to improve its capacity to serve more disadvantaged neighborhood youth and young adults.

The delay in securing funding and institutional support for the project hampered the accomplishment of greater outcomes. Yet, the project accomplished its original goals.

**For someone doing similar work, I would suggest the following:**

- ❖ Because there are so many changes in national and local economic, political and social environments, you should remain flexible with the strategy for your project;
- ❖ Understand your capacity levels and find viable and committed partners to complement your project;

#### **D. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

There is a need to build organizational capacity and social networks inside and outside of Trusting Neighbors in order to improve conditions in the Summit-University community for young people, who are in need of work-readiness training and employment opportunities. If strategies are not taken to improve organizational capacity and service effectiveness, then many community-based organizations will be unsuccessful in solving complex problems for disadvantaged populations; As a result, gaps in service delivery and systems change will become commonplace.

Conversations with a cross-section of community stakeholders representing local social service agencies (local planning council, youth development, community foundation and church), business and the public sector provided me with some insight on youth development concerns. Parents, teens and young adults from Trusting Neighbors expressed their individualized needs as well as Trusting Neighbors organizational needs for capacity building in skills training, income generation and network supports. Other sources of information were the 1990 U.S. Census data and Citizens League Workforce

Report on conditions. Research and reports indicate that there is a lack of qualified people and businesses to meet the demands of the changing economy.

**Target Population:**

- ❖ Primarily African American youth and young adults
- ❖ Unemployed or under employed and low-income
- ❖ At-risk of dropping out of school
- ❖ Single parent or pregnant
- ❖ 14-21 years of age

**E. PROJECT GOALS**

The Work-Readiness and Work-Based Learning Project will improve the organizational capacity of Trusting Neighbors to address issues that affect socio-economically disadvantaged African-American youth and young adults (ages 14-21), who live in the Summit-University community. The project will gain internal and external support from community resources for better service delivery and effectiveness; consequently, improving conditions and addressing service delivery gaps in the area of workforce development. The project will train a maximum of twenty (20) youth and young adults.

**F. PROJECT PURPOSE - METHOD**

**1) Project Purpose Statement:**

To improve the organizational capacity of Trusting Neighbors by gaining internal and external support from community resources for better service delivery and effectiveness for meeting the work-readiness and employment needs of disadvantaged African-Americans, 14-21 years of age, who live in the Summit-University community of St. Paul.

## **2) Major Outputs if project is successfully completed:**

❖ Curriculum Design and Development 2000	-	January and February
❖ Outreach and Orientation for Summer Program	-	March
❖ Work-Readiness Training Program	-	April – May
❖ Recognition Ceremony	-	May
❖ Employment, Placements and Monitoring	-	June – August
❖ Evaluation	-	September
❖ Internal and External Networks of Support	-	January
❖ Funding Support	-	February - April

### **Method for Accomplishing Outputs:**

#### **Output #1**

Identify high priority project

Activities:

Meet to determine project and planning process (Planning Team)

Gather data for review

#### **Output #2**

Develop a Project Plan and Curriculum

Activities:

Schedule on-going meetings for plan development and refinement

#### **Output #3**

Identify collaborative partners and supporters (External Networks)

Activities:

Gather information

Make contact by phone

Meet to determine interest

Include in project planning meetings

Output #4

Seek board approval for project plan and partnerships

Activities:

Schedule board meeting

Take board action

Output #5

Identify and secure sources of funding

Activities:

Gather information on funding sources

Secure letters of support

Complete grant applications

Receive favorable funding decisions

Output #6

Implement the project plan

Activities:

Begin start-up

Monitor progress

Evaluate outcomes

### **3) Background:**

#### **a) How Trusting Neighbors Became Involved in the Project:**

Trusting Neighbors became involved in the Work-Readiness and Work-Based Learning Project through my observation and interest as the Founder and Executive Director of the



organization. Because there was a lack of employment opportunities for young people in our organization and the neighborhood, there was a need to become proactive in solving the problem. Therefore, I engaged in a process of having conversations with a cross-section of community stakeholders representing local social service agencies (local planning council, youth development, community foundation and church), business and the public sector that provided me with some insight on youth development concerns.

#### **b) Major Players Involvement:**

Internal and external social networks were used as a way to gain support and access to skills and resources for the Work-Readiness and Work-Based Learning Project. Youth interns served in leadership roles.

Trusting Neighbors created a planning and implementation team that internally consisted of board members who represented youth, parents, and community members with expertise in education, social work, youth development and business management.

Team members were responsible for specific tasks during the planning and implementation phases of the project. As the organizational leader, I had responsibilities as facilitator and consultant. Therefore, I provided guidance, encouraged board members to assume leadership roles, and provided technical assistance and follow-up support in the coordination and integration of the entire range of resources and work-tasks.

External community networks provided facilities, equipment, supplies, transportation, funding, training support and jobs.

#### **c) Other Interesting Information: SWOT ANALYSIS**

The SWOT analysis was used as a tool for helping Trusting Neighbors to understand its role and the internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that impacted the success of the project. Also, it gave Trusting Neighbors an opportunity to decide how to proceed with the continuation of the project, beyond the initial phase.

#### **Training Service Provider:**

<b>Strengths</b>	Demonstrated capability in planning and implementing a new project. The project utilized internal resources and increased
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participation of board members on the committee level. As a result, Trusting Neighbors enhanced its leadership and organizational development capacity.

**Weaknesses** Need more money and full-time staff to concentrate on administrative, fundraising and social/political activities. Also, the project might be perceived as being high risk because it lacks an established track record.

**Opportunities** Leaders of the public and private sectors, including foundations, are talking about systems reform and accountability. Work-readiness training and job-placement services are hot topics due to welfare reform and changing demands in the economy. Doors can potentially open for new players.

**Threats** Large and traditional organizations carry a lot of power and control; Therefore, they can create challenges or barriers to entry by competing for the same pool of dollars and/or markets.

**Collaborative Facilitator:**

**Strengths** Demonstrated success to gain support from external and diverse parties to share in a mutually beneficial project.

Decreased overhead costs for project implementation.

**Weaknesses** Trusting Neighbors would be vulnerable to the priorities, interests and demands of collaborating parties. Large and established organizations are deemed in the industry as being capable of providing the capacity to administer collaborations. Therefore, they will receive the funding community's support for administration.

Time and resources are required because working with a collaborative can be a time-consuming and slow process.

**Opportunities** Diverse industries are downsizing and seeking ways to have more impact and save on costs; therefore, opportunities for facilitating collaborations exist in the marketplace. Benefits: Can develop ways of working together on common goals and problems;

managing costs, sharing expertise; building trust; and extending networks of support.

### **Threats**

Collaborative networks can become political and exhibit a conflict of interest in decision-making when they must compete for limited resources. These actions can create deterioration in relationships and hinder their efforts for achieving more impact and greater service effectiveness.

Because there are so many changes in the economic, political and social environments, it was my recommendation that Trusting Neighbors should remain flexible with its strategy for the new work-readiness and work-based learning project. Currently, the project is serving as a direct service provider, but the organization will remain open to opportunities to be a facilitator on projects, as well. Joint-venturing and/or allowing larger organizations to take the lead on specific aspects of collaborative projects will be a way to move Trusting Neighbors towards greater effectiveness and sustainability.

## **G. RESULTS**

### **1) Major Outputs if project is successfully completed:**

- |   |   |                      |
|---|---|----------------------|
| ❖ Curriculum Design and Development 2000      | - | January and February |
| ❖ Outreach and Orientation for Summer Program | - | March                |
| ❖ Work-Readiness Training Program             | - | April – May          |
| ❖ Recognition Ceremony                        | - | May                  |
| ❖ Employment, Placements and Monitoring       | - | June – August        |
| ❖ Evaluation                                  | - | September            |
| ❖ Internal and External Networks of Support   | - | January              |
| ❖ Funding Support                             | - | February - April     |

### **2) Major Outputs Fully Achieved:**

- |   |   |                    |
|---|---|--------------------|
| ❖ Curriculum Design and Development 2000      | - | January & February |
| ❖ Outreach and Orientation for Summer Program | - | March              |

- ❖ Work-Readiness Training Program - April – May
- ❖ Recognition Ceremony - May
- ❖ Employment, Placements and Monitoring - June – August
- ❖ Evaluation - September

### **Project Impact on Improving Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults:**

Trusting Neighbors improved the work-readiness and work-based learning skills of youth and young adults, 14 -21 years of age. Records keeping and monitoring methods were used for measuring the following results:

- ❖ The project completed 8 sessions of training classes – 12 graduated out of 20 enrolled;
- ❖ Achieved jobs and wages for 7 participants in the non-profit and private sectors;
- ❖ Improved work-retention skills of 6 participants who completed summer jobs;
- ❖ Maintained 2 participants who continue to work at the same private sector jobs;
- ❖ Secured private-sector career placement at \$10.50/ hour for 1 participant;
- ❖ Improved academic achievement for 1 participant by securing academic credit.

### **3) Major Outputs Partially Achieved:**

School and business partnerships;

Financial support from funding community.

### **Project Impact on Improving Organizational Capacity:**

Trusting Neighbors began the process of improving organizational capacity and community conditions.

- ❖ Increased commitment and responsibility of board members for investing their time and expertise on committee projects;
- ❖ Improved management capacity in the areas of human resources support, leadership and project development from internal stakeholders (board and staff);

- ❖ Strengthen organizational resources by using the facilities, equipment, supplies and transportation of external networks and diversifying income stream (grants and contracts).

#### **Project Impact on Improving Community Conditions:**

- ❖ Secured support and academic credit from school for community youth and young adults;
- ❖ Created job opportunities and increased income for community youth and young adults;
- ❖ Began the process of building relationships and coordinating resources among community stakeholders.

#### **4) Major Outputs with no Task Initiated:**

All major outputs had tasks initiated.

## **H. CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1) Has the Project Purpose and/or Goal change since you began this Project?**

Trusting Neighbors' project goals and purpose have not change since its inception.

The goals of improving the skills and income of disadvantaged African-American youth and young adults; and improving the organizational capacity of Trusting Neighbors to address these issues were achieved. The project used a strategy of gaining internal and external support from community resources in order to provide better service delivery and effectiveness. As a result of Trusting Neighbors' efforts, community conditions were improved and gaps in the workforce development service delivery were addressed.

### **2) Identify any two factors or conditions that if they had been different would have increased your ability to complete the project.**

The project was completed, despite challenges. Trusting Neighbors would have had better outcomes had financial resources been secured to hire staff to coordinate the process and project (Intense attention is needed to build relationships and structures among diverse interests/sectors); Volunteers can only contribute so much to the planning and implementation of projects. In Addition, if external networks would have been more responsive and share their resources in a timely and just manner then Trusting Neighbors would have been able to improve its capacity to serve more disadvantaged neighborhood youth and young adults.

**3) Identify one unexpected thing that occurred that significantly affected your ability to complete the project and achieve the stated goals.**

The delay in securing funding and institutional support for the project hampered the accomplishment of greater outcomes. The project accomplished its original goals.

**4) What two things would you suggest to someone doing similar projects?**

I would suggest the following three things to someone doing similar work:

- Because there are so many changes in national and local economic, political and social environments, you should remain flexible with the strategy for your project;
- Understand your capacity levels and find viable and committed partners to complement your project.

**Words of Inspiration**

Remember that community development is a process; Therefore, it takes time to transform people, organizations and environments; So, **Pace Yourself and Celebrate Your Successes Along the Way!**

## **Attachment #1**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

**The demographics of the 1990 Census Tract for District 8 (Summit-University neighborhood) are as follow:**

**Total Population      18,301**

**Housing Units          8,074**

#### **Racial Categories:**

**White                    45.4%**

**Black                    40.6%**

**Asian                    11.8%**

**Hispanic                2.5 %**

**American Indian      1.1%**

**Other                    1.1%**

**The median household income of the district is \$20,034**

#### **Per Capita Income by Race and Origin:**

**White:                    \$17,504**

**Black:                    8,126**

**American Indian:    4,834**

**Asian:                    3,173**

**Hispanic:               9,749**

**Other Race:            8,962**

#### **Income Below Poverty:**

**White:                    15.6%**

**Black:                    37.7%**

**American Indian:    44.8%**

**Asian:                    75.5%**

**Hispanic:               32.3%**

**Other Race:            38.3%**

## **Attachment #2**

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

#### **Websites**

Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Workforce Center;  
<http://www.des.state.mn.us>

NRCREL, School-to-Work Transition; <http://www.ncrel.org/skrs/areas>

Boston's Pro-Tech Youth Apprenticeship Program; <http://www.ncrel.org>

HUD Youthbuild Press Release; <http://www.hud.gov/pressrel/pr98-627.html>

America Promise; <http://www.americapromise.org>

Center for Community Change; <http://www.communitychange.org/>

"The 10 Greatest Marketing Mistakes Almost Every Business Makes and How to Avoid The Pitfalls" and "10 Companies that Get It";  
<http://www.merlin.nhc.edu.sweb.swebsock/0020>

#### **Publications**

School-to-Work in Minnesota, Dept. of Children, Families and Learning; 1999

East Metro Trend Watch, Wilder Research Center; April 1999

St. Paul Workforce Development Council, WIA Youth Council's Five-Year Plan; Nov. 1999

Yale Child Study Center, Comer School Development Program; 1997

#### **Reports**

1999 Children Report Card, Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center

Minnesota's Labor Shortage, State Demographic Center; May 1999

The Glass Ceiling Task Force Report, Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center; 1996

St. Paul Public Schools District at a Glance Report; 1999

Voices of Pain and Hope in Saint Paul, The Planning Commission; Nov. 1992

"Parent Involvement: A of Research and Principles of Successful Practice", National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C.; 1984

SCANS Report for America 2000

1990 United States Census Data





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Phone: 651-292-1921 Fax: 651-292-1990

# **TRUSTING NEIGHBORS**

## **WORK-READINESS & WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM**

### **2000 SPRING TRAINING**

**Orientation:** Tuesday, March 21, 2000  
Central High School  
275 N. Lexington Parkway  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
6:30 - 8:00 P.M.

**Training Program:** Tuesdays  
Central High School  
6:30 - 8:00 P.M.

April 4, 11, 18, 25  
May 2, 9, 16, and 23

### **CURRICULUM**

**Professional Appearance for Today's Workforce**  
**A, B, C's of Resume Writing & Successful interviewing**  
**Self-Esteem & Responsibilities**  
**Managing Your Funds**  
**Social Development and Volunteerism in Your Community**  
**Field-Trips and Guest Speakers**

# Achievements

## CREDIT FOR LEARNING (CFL) REQUEST

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_ 11 \_\_\_\_ 12 Student Number (6 digits): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What requirement are you planning to complete with this IDS?

NOTE: YOU MUST SUBMIT A SCHEDULE FOR THE CURRENT SEMESTER.

The following two items must be answered on a separate sheet of paper and attached to this form.

1. State the rationale or reasons you are requesting CFL credit. Describe all other options you have tried.
2. What is your plan for completing this CFL? (NOTE: The following components must be included in plan: Objectives of CFL, procedure(s), products/projects to be completed, a timeline, and any other pertinent to completing the CFL.)

### PARENTAL PERMISSION STATEMENT:

I approve \_\_\_\_\_ do not approve \_\_\_\_\_ my student's application for independent study in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\*Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Comments regarding CFL request:

Return this form to your counselor at the completion of your Credit Learning project.

### FINAL GRADE INFORMATION

Class Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Course No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Earned: \_\_\_\_\_

Final Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

After final approval by the principal, this form should be given to the CRT clerk for entry and the form be placed in the student's cumulative folder.

My experiences working with Trusting Neighbors taught me responsibility, how to be a role model, helping others, decision making, commitment and how to have fun.

I learned that I first had to take responsibility for my own actions in order to do the best job I could do. I learned to be willing to listen and accept positive criticism as well as learning to express myself without anger. Through this process I learned how to be a role model to the children I worked with. I learned how to help them work through conflicts, we did special projects together and had lots of fun.

Working with Trusting Neighbors has helped me with school also. I have learned to make the decision to walk away from situations that could be unsafe. I have learned that in order to do well in my school work I have to set aside time to study. My grades are much better this year.

I was also able to help my mom out while she was off work because she hurt her back in a car accident. I helped her pay some bills and was still able to do things for myself and my little brother. I learned how to get along with him and to be more patient with him.

Trusting Neighbors has taught me many things that I'm sure will stick with me for a long time. I have always liked working with children and I learned a lot of skills that will help me in my career choice. Someday I hope to be a pediatric doctor.

Trusting Neighbors taught me a lot of things and I feel it is a very good program that teaches what life in the real world is all about. It is a program that is a good program for students to try.

Yours Truly,

Student Intern



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P.O. Box 40131  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104  
Phone: 651-292-1921 Fax 651-292-1990

November 13, 2000

Mary McBee  
Principal  
Central High School  
275 N. Lexington Parkway  
St. Paul, MN 55104

Dear Ms. McBee:

Thank you for providing an opportunity for \_\_\_\_\_, a Central High School student, to earn a "Credit for Learning" in Trusting Neighbors Work-Readiness Career Seminar and Work-Based Learning Internship Programs that took place from April - August 2000. \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrated an outstanding attendance record by completing 200 hours of participation in seminars and experiential learning activities.

Trusting Neighbors Work-Readiness Career Seminar Program provided opportunities in decision-making, career options, work maturity and life skills training. Our Work-Based Learning Internship Program provided "hands-on" work experiences in different environments with diverse people. In \_\_\_\_\_, she participated in planning, implementing and evaluating project activities in areas of educational enrichment, recreation and community service. She enhanced her leadership and communication skills by supporting work-teams in the accomplishment of daily tasks of public speaking, project management, personal responsibility and by being a positive role-model for younger program participants.

We were happy to have \_\_\_\_\_ as a student intern at Trusting Neighbors. She represented Central High School in a positive way, and we gained from providing a supportive context for \_\_\_\_\_ to personally grow and successfully complete her first work-readiness training and paid internship programs.

Again, thank you, and we look forward to continuing our efforts in building successful partnerships with Central High School to improve student achievement for all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley Alexander".

Shirley Alexander  
Executive Director