

PROJECT CONTRACT FINAL REPORT

submitted by
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for the
**Community Economic Development Program
of New Hampshire College**

Project Focus: Development of a Leadership Training Program for the Feeding agencies of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank

Date: 9/94 to 1/96

Project Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Advisor: David Miller

*The following documentation represents a culmination of 17 months of work in the
New Hampshire CED Program*

INTRODUCTION:

My community consists of over 650 non-profit organizations. These agencies range in size from the small local grassroots organization to fully staffed, fully funded government/private agencies. They consist of Soup Kitchens, Daycares and Senior Centers, M/R and M/H facilities, Drug/alcohol rehabs and Churches of all different denominations. The common thread that these agencies hold is the fact that they are all "social service agencies" that contain a feeding program that serves low-income individuals in some form whether through hot-prepared on-site meals or emergency food packages. The other common thread that they all share is membership into the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank which is a food collection, storage and distribution center. The collective mission of my community is to end "Hunger". Each individual organization has its own defined method of achieving that result in conjunction with other goals....job training, low-cost childcare, affordable housing, etc...The collective ultimate goal of these agencies, although not clearly recognized in all cases is to end "Poverty". The need as identified through my observation as Agency Relations Director is to strengthen and focus these social service agencies so that they can more effectively achieve positive results within their own communities. It is with this in mind that I began my seventeen (17) month participation in the CED program.

The problem as I defined it, existed in the fact that these social service agencies with "good intentions" which had originally been set-up to help resolve the problem, had somehow grown to be part of the problem instead of the solution. I believed that the key was to re-

direct these agencies so that they could break "the cycle of dependency" and utilize their foothold in the community to "empower" the clients which they now "simply served". It was to that end that I focused my project attention.....

My goal was to increase the stability of these agencies by providing increased support. Working as Agency Relations Director and as a liaison between the Food Bank and its membership base, I planned to coordinate activities for these agencies which would help to change the mindset which they now followed and would continue to focus efforts on providing further development in identified areas.

A key piece which would help facilitate the flow of this development was an Executive Director who had already shown support in "empowerment" efforts and was open to other development initiatives. Also, what proved to be particularly instrumental was staff support which could be easily focused in those areas identified and a recent increase of agency interest in more "pro-active" efforts . These factors, along with my own progressive ideas, I believed would allow for an easier facilitation of the entire project process.

Initially, although, I believed I had a clear picture of the problems, I had difficulty in compiling my problem statement. My original statement read:

"If no solution is found for over 650 feeding agencies of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank within the next five years, these agencies will be forced to either reduce their services or altogether close their food cupboards causing an increase in the number of hungry people in Philadelphia and its surrounding five (5) counties."

However, with input from David Miller, professor at New Hampshire College, I was able to re-focus and re-work it to more accurately reflect the real root of the problem...

"If no solution is found for the over 650 feeding agencies of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank within the next decade, these agencies will continue to perpetuate the problems of social dependency thus causing an increase in the number of impoverished people in Philadelphia and its five counties."

It was such that I designed and planned a project that I felt would address a key problem within my targeted community.

HISTORY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA FOOD BANK:

The Greater Philadelphia Food Bank was established in 1981 after a food distribution need was identified in the community. During its fifteen years, the Food Bank has grown from simply being a Distribution Center to a key player in the Anti-hunger arena. Its position is unique in that it has a clearly established link to a wide-range of non-profit agencies and churches within its target community. This untapped avenue allows the Food Bank an unique position as a clearinghouse to channel vital information to these same feeding agencies.

DEFINITION OF PROBLEM WITHIN THE TARGET COMMUNITY:

"If no solution is found for over 650 feeding agencies of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank within the next decade, these agencies will continue to perpetuate the problems of social dependency, thus causing an increase in the number of impoverished people in Philadelphia and its five (5) counties."

As mentioned above, my community consists of social service agencies in the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank. Collectively, these agencies service over 82,000 individuals each month through their feeding programs. This contact is sometimes brief, as in the distribution of an emergency food package or longer term, as in the case of rehabilitation centers. However, regardless of the length of time, each contact offers an opportunity for change to be made. These agencies represent the linkages to their communities and have a unique opportunity to move empowerment efforts forward, however, in many cases this is not done.

Through a recent survey it was discovered that:

- * In an agency base of 650 agencies, less than 23% of these social service agencies address any issues of empowerment for their clients such as life skills training.

- *Most agencies are run by underskilled volunteers who have little or no formal training in dealing with common problems faced by their clients.

- *Most of the agencies have little or no budget

These problems further prevented the agencies from gaining access to traditional support systems. This project will address these linkage issues by:

*Formulating and solidifying coalitions

*Providing in-house certificate training

*Creating a resource guide

My assumptions were that given an opportunity, these agency representatives would participate in the workshops and would in-turn be able to train their clients.

PROJECT GOALS:

"To increase the stability and effectiveness of the feeding agencies of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank through an enhanced support system of technical and financial assistance and expertise."

As mentioned previously, the largest group of our agencies (73%) report that they serve unemployed Adults, yet only 23% offer life skills or literacy training. This figure grossly represents an underserved need. To further complicate this, many of our agencies are extremely limited in their focus. The Food Bank, as a major food provider, has linkage to all of these non-profits. We have the ability to communicate to our members on a regular basis through the weekly circulation of our newsletter, The Grapevine, as well as through annual membership meetings.

The key then is to utilize this constant contact to re-focus these groups by providing further technical assistance workshops and other anti-hunger networking development. The goals are as follows:

***Development of six functioning coalitions**

***Twelve month curriculum of workshops (specifically focusing on Leadership Development)**

***Ten certified agencies**

***Agency Advisory Council with ten members**

***On-line computer service**

***Resource guide**

The end goal would be to provide exposure to the available technical assistance to all interested agencies and to support activities which can lead to further empowerment efforts.

PROJECT PURPOSE: (Method)

***The establishment of a network of resource providers**

***The development of a curriculum of in-service training leading to certificate programs**

***The creation of a resource guide listing available resources**

***The strengthening of anti-hunger coalitions**

The original intention of the project is two-fold:

1) To expand the role of the Food Bank in its anti-hunger efforts

2) To transform our feeding agencies into more pro-active entities

The Food Bank's efforts in the anti-hunger arena have evolved tremendously in the past three years. This evolution was based partly on the insight of key staff who saw the need to expand the services that were made available to our agencies and to look more holistically at our role in the feeding community. With the guidance and direction of Executive Director and the lead of the Agency Relations Department who assumed the key role in this movement, our aim was to work towards using our strong position to stabilize our member agencies and to provide technical assistance in their future development. Because of the large membership base and the overlapping of these agencies, it was important that we coordinate our efforts with other key players in the hunger community.

We had already previously began to establish relationships in the anti-hunger community and had even coordinated efforts to resolve "old differences" and to partner with previous "rival" food providers. The shared efforts allowed for a smoother facilitation of the project process in many areas and eased the burden of solely coordinating activities with so many diverse agencies. Partnerships throughout the project life expanded and focused in different areas. There were several coalition developments undertaken with such entities as the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Nutritional Development Services, the Presbytery, and SHARE (a national food cooperative). Concerns were both focused on key issues such as the development of an Anti-hunger Leadership Coalition and more general, as in supporting continuing activities which would lead to more informed feeding agencies. Their roles were mostly of participants in the activities. Other key individuals such as Karen Wilson (an anti-hunger advocate) and Patience Jacobs (VISTA volunteer) were direct facilitators in most of the activities involving the coalitions; while I was facilitator of the Agency Advisory Council. Throughout the process, the Food Bank was the central player for most of the efforts and provided the facilities for most of the workshops and meetings.

An important detail to note, was how the coordinated efforts worked to strengthen relationships which had in the past been severed and bridged communication between communities, thereby forging partnerships that would long outlast the immediate impact of the project.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Objective: *"To establish a network of resource providers for feeding agencies in the Greater Philadelphia Area"*

Results: Steps were already initiated before the project began to network the various resources available to the feeding agencies. The players who took part in this initiative included: Nutritional Development Services, Presbytery, Share, Philabundance, and Penn State Cooperative Extension (EFNEP). Each, represented an enormous resource for the agencies. Philabundance represented an additional food resource; NDS, SHARE and Presbytery represented both food and financial resources and EFNEP provided nutritional educational instruction. In addition, the following outcomes have also occurred:

- the group has loosely formed itself into a Greater Philadelphia Anti-Hunger Coalition which meets monthly to oversee anti-hunger efforts within the Greater Philadelphia region and to communicate and educate the agencies and public on "the state of Hunger"

- the group has divided into various sub-committees. One, the public policy work group, has identified organizations that can keep agencies informed on pending legislation and policy issues.

Objective: *"The creation of a resource guide listing available sources for member agencies."*

Results: This guide is still in the working and has been revised to include a listing of all of the coalitions, as well as food resource providers indicated above. It will identify agencies by services provided in zip code order and by days of operation. This is a great accomplishment because the last time a guide was published was in 1993. The Archdiocese took the lead in the establishment of this guide and identified a group of students from Wharton Business School to design the finished product. The Food Bank coordinated the gathering of resource information by sending out an insert in its weekly grapevine newsletter. The guide is targeted for distribution February 1996.

Objective: *"The expansion and strengthening of feeding coalitions."*

Results: When this project was started, the Food Bank had already begun to investigate the development of feeding networks. Initially, a network was established in Southwest/west Philadelphia. Within the last seventeen (17) months this group has solidified and now meets on a regular monthly basis, and have identified a coordinator from within their ranks to oversee its future development. The coalition shares food resources and has a common referral sheet. In addition, it has become a model for the future development of other groups within the Greater Philadelphia region. Also, during the past seventeen months, there has been the creation/expansion of five additional coalitions: North Philadelphia/Germantown, South Philadelphia, Bucks, Delaware and Chester.

-North Philadelphia/Germantown: This group meets regularly, has identified a coordinator to facilitate and has participated in letter writing campaigns.

-South Philadelphia: This group has historically represented one of the most underserved areas in the city. Although, there exists a strong force of feeding agencies, we have had problems facilitating the development of this area. The meetings had little turnout and we have had difficulty in identifying a coordinator. To help, the Southwest/West Philadelphia Coalition has agreed to combine the two coalitions together to lend additional support until its full development.

In addition, two existing coalitions in Chester and Delaware county were identified and efforts were developed which would help feed additional agencies into these already existing entities. Correspondence was sent to feeding agencies within the region inviting them to the meetings and it was advertised in the weekly grapevine. Coalition development continues with a goal of having networks established in all surrounding counties. Most recently, Bucks county has been targeted and has also begun coalition development. Past and future activities include(d):

- established coalitions hosted a meeting to "Block the block grants"

- all coalitions will be invited to participate in the Annual Hunger Walk which will help raise funds for their feeding programs.

The coalition development will be an ongoing process. Once all networks have been

established in the Greater Philadelphia area then future attentions will focus towards leadership development, and funding solicitation. As well as the formation of an umbrella group made up of representatives of all the networks.

Objective: *"The creation of a twelve month curriculum/speakers identified"*

Results: During 1995, we scheduled workshops which covered a wide range of topics with speakers who were able to donate the service. The topics included were both specific to feeding agencies such as "How to start a soup kitchen" or "safe food handling" to more broad based such as "Volunteer recruitment" and "Grant writing".

Objective: *" Agency Advisory Board Operating "*

Results: Key to the development of the training was the participation of the council in helping to design the survey and assess the needs. The council represented the voice of the agencies to the Food Bank, gave input on policy and program formulation and acted as a mentor to new agencies. The council supplied most of the agency representatives who helped design the curriculum for the training. It had fifteen members who represented the member agency base of the Food Bank for a year on a rotational basis. During the year it was successful in developing its mission statement and provided invaluable input to the Food Bank in many areas.

Objective: *"On-line computer service access"*

Results: This service has not been established. Although, the Food Bank now has internet capabilities, I was unable to obtain access to a designated computer which could provide the service. This initiative will be followed through in the 1996 year.

Objective: *"The development of a curriculum of in-service training for further development and leading to certificate programs."*

Results: This was the main focus of my project- the development of a Leadership Training Program. The concept was to provide these workshops as exposure to Community Economic Development and to begin to re-shape the thinking of social service agencies. The idea was to have agency representatives go through a six week workshop series to enhance skill development. Its main target group was the anti-hunger coalitions who have already expressed an interest in pro-active efforts and would have had some preliminary exposure. This objective was partially achieved with continuation through the Spring of 1996. Through various meetings the leadership subcommittee discussed workshops for consideration and it was decided that there would be both advanced and introductory trainings. Their suggestions were as follows:

***Introduction to Community Economic Development**

***Community Organizing**

***Resource Development**

***Effective Networking**

***Organizational/Board Development**

***Strategic Planning**

The workshops will be hosted in the late Spring of 1996 and will be open to all member agencies with specific targeting towards the coalition participants. What is needed is the identification of key speakers and sites to host the workshops. I will continue to work in conjunction with the Anti-hunger coalition and the Leadership Development subcommittee to develop the certificate program and to bring it to fruition. Although, the maximum objective was not accomplished within the seventeen months, the minimum objective of providing basic food service skill was. The results were as follows:

-the planning was accomplished for a 16 hour "Safe Foodhandling" certificate workshop designed to certify the staff of member agencies in safe food handling techniques.

-out of the planning, a more simplified food handlers exam was created specific to non-profit feeding agencies. This exam was geared to the skill level of the volunteer staff who work at many of our member agencies. This exam once modified, was presented to the city who approved its use for our certification purposes.

-Out of the 35 agencies who registered for the sessions and took the exam, only one did not pass. All others are now certified foodhandlers.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

As mentioned previously, early in the project planning stage, under the guidance of David Miller, I revised my project problem statement. This revision helped me to focus more readily on my goals and objectives. Although, my project purpose did not change, as I gained more insight into CED methodology, my project focus became more channeled into specific areas. The new change that I experienced was a shift in my time frame. Although, I had originally planned to host my first Leadership certificate workshop in June 1995, a new target date of Spring 1996 soon emerged. This shift was due to many factors both internal to my organization and external. Two major impediments to the successful completion of my project purpose within the designated time frame were:

*A decision by the Executive Director in the Spring of 1995, which forced me to cease utilizing the Agency Advisory Council meetings for the certificate development and to seek members outside the council in the form of a subcommittee to help design the program. The problem with this occurrence was not the act itself, but the timing which came after I had already scheduled to use the body as a focus group. This action forced me to quickly re-think how I would recruit interested members and set

back my original time frame.

*A city ordinance was passed which stated that "all retail establishments" must be certified in safe food handling. Although, we questioned the involvement of our feeding agencies into this grouping, it was clear that they were to be included.

Deadline date was to be February 1996. In order to assist with this ordinance, to cut expenses and to cater the exam to the population that we worked with, my attentions were forced to be focused in this area; again setting back original time frames.

Other key factors included:

*The lack of funding for the creation of the Leadership Development program. By working without a funding resource, I was limited in the scope of the project that was being designed. Sites and speakers would have to be donated, thereby limiting the resource base that I had to draw from.

*The umbrella group, the Greater Philadelphia Anti-hunger Coalition did not become actively involved in the Leadership piece until it was well underway. If their involvement had been sooner in the process, then we could have achieved results sooner.

SUGGESTIONS:

Most of the suggestions that I will make are not unique to my project process or to working with Food Banks; but are considerations that should be examined before undergoing a project planning process.

-In engaging in any planning process, particularly when working with groups/individuals who have their own agendas, make sure you get players to "buy in" to your idea in the early stages and are truly supportive of the efforts. This is particularly true for "higher-ups" who could easily and quickly change your playing field with one decision. My problem was that I worked from a loose structure and did not keep my Executive Director informed of each step. After initial approval, I failed to keep her updated and thus was forced to re-group when she felt that I had gotten off track. Also, it is important to make sure things agreed to are put in writing for later reference.

-The other piece that I learned is not to rush or force the process. At different points during my 17 month experience, I was tempted to rush the process because I saw myself getting off track. What I discovered was that in order to have a successful long lasting effect, you must allow for the natural occurrence. Even when I became disheartened because it seemed as though "Murphy's Law" was taking effect, I kept a slow steady pace. Sometimes I realized small accomplishments like identifying a "pro-bono" speaker for a

workshop and sometimes I visibly thought I saw no progress. No matter which, I maintained an even work flow. What happened was everything started to piece together!

-Document for Duplication. There is nothing more frustrating than to go through an entire 17 month project process and have nothing to document on it. One of the things that I realized as I began this process was my goal to have our Food Bank become a model for other Food Banks throughout the US. In order to have this happen, I wanted to provide tools to follow that I could share with other Agency Relations Directors. Upon completion, I plan to provide a guide for other Food Banks in undertaking empowerment efforts in their local communities. This process of documentation should be noted by any individual who is attempting to put something permanent in place.

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

In our search to redevelop communities we must first look at developing the human capacity within those communities; Community Economic Development education is a tool for doing just that. It provides an opportunity to broaden the skill levels of individuals by providing exposure to concepts and ideas that increase their potential. It provides opportunities for development of marginal communities and can lead to future financial empowerment. What I have found during my past seventeen months is that utilizing Food Banking as a clearinghouse to share this resource is both challenging and doable. It allows an opportunity for the expansion of the traditional role of the Food Bank in the community and redefines the mission of "Freedom from Hunger".