AIMING HIGHER:
East Side Work Resource Hub Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Recent newspaper headlines boasted a three decade record low 2.3 unemployment rate in the Twin Cities (St. Paul Pioneer Press November 6, 1999: 3C). While reports of a boom economy with little inflation make Wall Street jubilant, many Minnesotans, particularly workers of color, face unequal access and treatment in the labor market. Community-based work resource hubs were created to connect people who want jobs to mainstream employers who need workers as well as to provide support in other areas.

This report is an assessment of the Eastside Work Resource Hub (EWRH) in St. Paul from the perspective of the people who use it. Based on a random sample of approximately 50 in-depth interviews and numerous reports from similar centers in the Twin Cities and across the U.S., my intent is to honor the excellent work that is currently being done and to spark some creative rethinking. The hub's participants represent a varied population made of primarily four groups. One grouping, defined by the category of low-waged worker, brings together new immigrant groups from Latin America and Asia, African Americans primarily from other states who live on the East Side and recipients of Minnesota Work Investment Program (MFIP), an umbrella of governmental, non-profit and community groups charged with carrying out welfare reform in the state. Many in this grouping have no or limited work history, English language skills, or education. Some have criminal records. While not everyone fits these descriptions, most are outside networks currently needed for quality, good paying jobs. Local businesses are another group who uses the hub's services. My study did not include interviewing local employers, but a future research project could certainly point in this direction.

To summarize, this report suggests the following emerging approaches:

• **Build new alliances amongst community groups and local businesses to link jobs, economic development and human services.**

• **Expand paths into jobs**: In contrast to more traditional temp agencies, the Work Resource Hub can provide multiple paths to employment by encouraging skill upgrading on the job with career ladders and job counseling after placement.

• **Recognize and implement development of skills in a broad sense in multiple locations in the neighborhood:** Training should not be defined solely in terms of on-the-job skills. People also need to be taught how to drive automobiles or to navigate the bus system. This realm of life skills provided by

peers in places such as churches or daycare centers might also entail learning metric conversions or going to a library.

Recommendations can be found at the end of this report.

Political and Economic Context:

Over the last two decades, several trends have emerged that have significantly altered economic, political and social life in the U.S. New forms of governing, as seen in welfare reform, have involved new groups of players to resolve issues that were previously the responsibility of more centralized governmental authorities. In contrast to social service models of care giving, we see new entrepreneurial and market models of action invented to conduct individual, group and institutional practices--often in areas of life previously seen as outside or antagonistic to the economic. At issue today is to what degree the market and privatization should be a principle for organizing government--not if it should.

In the economic realm, employment today no longer guarantees high wages or permanence for the majority of people. Flexibility has become a primary organizing principle. What follows from these things is the image of "economic man" who seems to only care about the cash in his pocket. Additionally, unequal trade relations and the relocation of factories to poorly regulated countries around the world have spurred large-scale migratory circuits. Regulation stems from quasi public-private organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which have blurred national boundaries and authority.

A second major trend in the economy is the shift in the U.S. economy from a manufacturing to a new information and service-based economy. This means that new jobs are more likely to be in retail, health, tourism and information-related industries. Many jobs in the latter category require more education and technical skills and are often paid less than unionized manufacturing jobs. All of these indicators point to the need for an effective retraining system.

Third, the cost of securing and attracting good-paying jobs has become a high stakes bidding war. For example, the state of Alabama promised $300 million in tax breaks and other subsidies to attract a new Mercedes plant. This amounted to $200,000 per job. After missing a $ 43 million payment to Mercedes, officials attempted to dip into its education fund, but instead borrowed from the

state's pension fund. To clear and level the land, the National Guard was called out for a "training mission" (New York Times September 1, 1996 Sect. 3: 1).

While Minnesota in 1995 was the first state in the nation to require systematic accounting of public subsidies to corporations in an attempt to curb excessive spending, the same patterns of high subsidies, low wages and absent standards persist. In a recent bidding war to woo Lawson Software Company, the city of St. Paul bested Minneapolis with an offer worth $101 million in subsidies. St. Paul taxpayers will pay to clear the land, build a new office tower and a parking ramp. There are no guarantees that there will be a net increase of jobs or that St. Paul will recover the money.[1] Instead, the city of St. Paul's net debt increased 24.5 percent in 13 months, from $367 million on February 2, 1997, to $457 million on March 2, 1998, according to Greg Blees, chief financial aide for City Council members. This was mainly due to borrowing for two downtown projects: the Lawson Software building and the new National Hockey League arena (St. Paul Pioneer Press October 29, 1998: 13). In all, corporate welfare in Minnesota totaled $ 1.76 billion in 1997. Figures since the 1999 Corporate Welfare Reform Act of 1999 are as yet unavailable.

Finally, Congress has transferred the control of many programs to the states. Under the banner of "more for less," this brand of liberal governance links the optimum performance of the economy to minimum economic and sociopolitical cost. In other words, too much or "big" government means it is too costly. Another central feature of liberal democracies is they must enlist the participation of more or less self-activating citizens through choices. Unquestionably, the number and variety of choices mushroomed in the last half of the twentieth century with the growth of consumerism, advertising and self-help programs and experts.

Perhaps the most publicized transformation in governance in the last twenty years occurred when President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWOA) on August 22, 1996, declaring an "end [to] welfare as we know it." Welfare reform, billed as a strategy for improving the system and encouraging self-management, ended the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. In 1995, there were almost 5 million families on AFDC: 69 percent of AFDC recipients were children, the majority under the age of 5, and 28 percent were women. The new law, summarized as "welfare to work," signaled a turn in the federal government's

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[1] Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action (MAPA) has published several reports describing corporate welfare in Minnesota. Economic Development in Minnesota by Greg LeRoy and Tyson Slocum (1999) and Corporate Welfare Activist Handbook (1999).

intervention in people's lives--from face-to-face lifetime assistance to a more distanced management of population flows.

In early December of 1999, President Clinton once again addressed the issue of welfare reform. This time he trumpeted tumbling welfare rolls. The number of people collecting monthly assistance checks, Clinton announced, was less than half that of 1994 or only 2.5 million families. According to Clinton, most of the people were keeping jobs, getting raises and "teaching their children to honor the dignity of work" (St. Paul Pioneer Press December 5, 1999: 7C). The President further refined the meaning of successful welfare reform when he said states will be rewarded with bonuses when "more children live in two-parent families" (Ibid.).

Clinton's rhetoric of welfare reform "success" is underlined by the ideas of self-sufficiency, "stable" two-parent families, the work ethic as well as free enterprise. It is also suffused with a moral reformation that entails the reconstruction of primarily single-women headed households and a re-integration into mainstream family-work "norms" of the larger society. Previous support in the form of entitlements is now deemed to have undermined self-responsibility and promoted amoral, often illegal, modes of support. It doesn't take much to connect an image of "the welfare mother" with associations related to laziness, drugs, and irresponsibility. Instead, welfare to work emphasizes the old forms of the Puritan work ethic and the family in new guises of self-respect, taking responsibility and pride in one's community.

The welfare system is not the only program from the 1930s that is being reorganized. Shifts in how funds for job training are disbursed parallel changes in welfare reform. For the last sixty years, the federal government has defined national standards for public education, vocational education and other job training initiatives. Since 1982, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), under the auspices of the Department of Labor (DOL), has been a major vehicle for workforce development. As did the AFDC program, JTPA programs had many flaws and were subjects of much criticism. Some reoccurring problems were an over abundance of paperwork, inconsistencies in funding and a recycling of old training programs for jobs that were low paying or non-existent.[2] A new law, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), was passed in 1998 and has recently replaced JTPA. Its aim is also to reduce federal standards and increase local decision-making. Instead of authorized programs run by one board, WIA has set up a system for one-stop centers to deliver services. Vouchers will be given to individuals who are eligible for training services which have a more market

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[2] See the Center for Community Change's Getting Good Jobs (1999) for more detailed assessments of JTPA training programs.

oriented approach. Eligible post secondary training programs include community colleges and some trade schools. Thus, two governmental departments, two new programs and a hybrid public-private collaboration have come together to make the Eastside Work Resource Hub.

General Framework:

To begin, I pose two interrelated questions that provide a general framework for this study: Where will we find livable wage jobs for people with limited job skills and how can essential services such as child care, housing and health care be maintained and improved in the face of cuts in federal spending and privatization of social services (McKay and Lopez 6)? I phrase my inquiry in this way, of course, to open a discussion about finding links between quality human services, jobs and economic development. In part, this is a political issue that queries government funding priorities and leads to another question: How will community groups connect with others to advocate for policies that develop and extend model programs that benefit individuals and the renewal of low-income neighborhoods? Will public officials recognize continuing problems such as good jobs, affordable housing and other human services in the midst of seemingly prosperous times?

The Eastside Work Resource Hub provides an excellent site for working through many aspects of these questions. Merrick Community Services initiated the concept of a one-stop work-related center on St. Paul's East Side in 1997 following a model developed by the Community Employment Partnership (CEP). At present, there are thirteen groups which co-locate in its temporary building and a broader group of thirty-five partners that are affiliated in various capacities. A study of this partnership was previously conducted by the Humphrey Institute's "Creating Value Through Collaboration" class. My assessment of the work of the Eastside Work Resource Hub tackles some different issues: How can a work resource center find an alternative space to provide for the well-being of participants without the value judgements attached to charity or the "shoulds," as hub director Bruce Casselton phrases it? How is the ESWRH different from temp agencies?

Impressions of the Eastside Work Resource Hub:

Most of the people I talked to in the fall of 1999 had never heard of the Eastside Work Resource Hub prior to a referral by a social service agency or a

friend. Quite a few people said they drove by the hub almost everyday but never thought about going inside. The building looks like a warehouse and the name is also innocuous. Hector recalled that he once called information for the phone number of the Eastside Work Resource Hub and he got all kinds of numbers. "You have to have the exact name or they'll give you the hub on University Avenue." What this reveals to me is not just the need for a snappier name, but perhaps more importantly the need to clarify and distinguish the work of the hub from other similar entities, especially temporary agencies

Despite limitations of place and name, word-of-mouth has brought roughly 200 people in search of work each month to the East Side Job Bank (ESJB) housed at the hub. Most recently this group is largely comprised of African Americans and new Mexican immigrants. Mexicans from all over the metro area come to the job bank because of the past and present Latino directors. When there was a Hmong staff member, I was told there were many more Hmong using the job referral services. The staff of Merrick Community Services, especially the Food Shelf, has referred quite a few of the "walk-ins". Others like Jeff followed the advice from a friend got had gotten a job working at a slaughterhouse through the job bank. Although he had heard about the job bank about a year ago, Jeff didn't seriously think about walking in the door until two weeks ago. Then, when he "got desperate" and needed the money, he came to the job bank and started working at a warehouse the next week.

While staff members often complain about the dilapidated environment of the hub's temporary quarters, most of the users of the resource hub didn't think too much about it. Many commented that they were used to places like it. Ana described her experiences at the hub as "warm." She wasn't, however, referring to the building that is always too hot. Ana was thinking about the warmth of the people. Several other people described the hub as friendly. Vincente echoed this feeling: "You come in. You're feeling cool. Things put out." Sharita saw the Eastside Work Resource Hub as a place she could turn when she "got stuck." This occurred when she lost the person who took care of her five children and she was forced to quit a job cleaning offices where she worked from 5:15 to 10:15 p.m. in downtown St. Paul. Others come because they hear there is "free money" available and, of course, this group leaves disappointed.

Another new and growing category of users of the hub's services is people on General Assistance and those receiving minimal MFIP benefits. Taking the MFIP slogans of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship to heart, almost half the women I spoke to at the job bank and elsewhere had found their own jobs--many before the work requirements were instituted. The Urban Coalition (1999) reached some similar conclusions. In their recent study, Welfare Reform: Real

Possibilities or Empty Promises, past employment trends relating to AFDC mothers were investigated. They found many successful programs were cut in the early 1980s and more than 32 percent of AFDC mothers were working. I found many people who are elated with the changes that have emerged prior to and after welfare reform, many more who are frustrated, but few who mourn the demise of AFDC.

In the next section, I will separate the experiences and comments made by MFIP recipients from those who use the job bank. While job seekers face some similar obstacles, there are also significant differences in delivery and nature of services.

Welfare to Work:

"Success" is an ambiguous word. If success of the program is measured in terms of declining case loads, then welfare reform, thus far, has been successful. The statistics from Ramsey County Community Human Services for adults and children receiving cash assistance are as follows:

37,031	1994
30,739	1998
29,037	1999

In contrast to Ramsey County's assessment, I have come to understand welfare reform in some different ways. Generally, most of the people on MFIP that I spoke to were so frustrated with the new system that they would be more than happy to leave it if they could. One lasting impression I take with me was all the serious health issues the women and/or their children faced that shaped their lives. It was not uncommon to hear about open-heart surgery, blood transfusions, debilitating autism and other major disabilities. Emotional instability and physical abuse are also pervasive. Affordable housing is another critical problem mentioned continuously.

Despite these restricting aspects of everyday life, many women found the mentoring and job counseling they received through MFIP helpful and work has opened up new possibilities in their lives. Going back and getting their high school diplomas was seen by many as long overdue. Getting out the house and away from "the soaps" as well as learning skills such as computer operation have been empowering.

Unfortunately, despite the hopefulness and excitement expressed by the primarily women MFIP recipients, the effect of many of the programs designed by groups at the hub, whether intentional or not, is to produce a sector of the working population that is temporarily employed, with few benefits, protection and security. Wages are below poverty level. After rattling off a concise budget, Jennifer calculated that she would need a $ 13 an hour job to support her family. I found a pragmatism underlying resistance to taking entry-level jobs starting at $ 6 or $ 7 an hour that stemmed partly from the recognition that they were being "pushed into jobs that don't pay nothing. They expect you to take the first job."

> It's just enough to pay rent. After that you're broke. Can't buy boots. Can't pay the phone. Diapers alone are $60.

Training in a skilled job is not a guarantee for a permanent full-time job either. Nancy did assembly work for a cookie company. She worked in a warehouse for a book company. Tired of working jobs she didn't like, Nancy spent two years learning the most advanced computer programs at one school. Still, she's been looking for a while for a full-time job. At her last job at a large St. Paul company, she was paid $ 9.55 an hour. Although Nancy was hired for data entry/office assistant, she ended up cleaning out storage rooms, packing and lifting big boxes--every other job except the one for which she was hired. After three months, she was fired

> The boss was mean. Laying a bunch of people off. Then hired them again. Then cutting back.

Dionne was also fired at a nursing home after she had received some training at St. Paul Vo-tech as a home health aid. She worked from 2 to 11 p.m. passing out snacks. Dionne was told that she had "an attitude" and was accused of spitting on people's snacks. Still reeling from the experience, her response bristled with contradictory feelings and thoughts--of disbelief, rejection and indignation:

> Wasn't true. I felt like I was on probation. Even the janitor was watching. Someone was watching all the time. I cried all the way coming home. I'm 22. I have two kids and I don't have anything. I come to work to do a job, not to socialize.

Next, Dionne had a security job at $7.25 an hour.

> I did the rounds every hour in downtown. You see drunks. What do you ask them to do with no mace? I was all alone at night 2 to 11 second shift.

Her last job was driving a school bus. In this job, Dionne could bring her youngest daughter with her. Her daughter, however, got sick from the bus fumes. Another major problem was there was no guarantee of morning and afternoon routes. The week I spoke to Dionne she had just picked up her check for the week. "What's $ 57 gonna do? Like my mother said, it's hardly worth all the trouble picking it up." In the latest round of job searching, Dionne turned to the East Side Job Bank. She was placed in a temporary packing job at $ 10 cash. If she had her wish, Dionne would like to be a police officer, but would settle for an x-ray technician job. I asked most people what kind of job they would choose if the opportunity presented itself. I heard responses such as lawyer, floral designer and teachers, but also more modest choices such as school aid or receptionist. A large number of the women wanted computer skills, but improving English language skills was a top priority for many Asians and Latinos.

While I can hear a response that says something to the effect that "you have to start somewhere and work your way up," there are major factors at hand that keep this from being a simple strategy. In light of serious issues of housing, education, domestic abuse and health, I was disheartened to talk to MFIP staff members who summed up the reason for "stabilized" number of caseloads as due to failure of will or attitude. More local research needs to study the effects of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) regulations on homelessness, restrictions to health care and education. Questions and research posed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Center for Community Change (see appendix under resource list) begin to draw out important relationships and point in fruitful directions. While this report is not the place to examine these critical issues in detail, more research is definitely needed in following the course of welfare reform.

<u>Moral and ethical value judgments</u>:

Another obstacle to making welfare reform work is the strong moral and ethical value judgments underlying the program. Tensions over conflicting value judgments provoked some of the strongest objections to MFIP and staff. Connie's response to remarks made job counselor, Nora, was: "She doesn't make me feel good. If you really want to know, she makes me feel like crap. She said I have a problem speaking, wearing my hair, wearing make-up." Nora didn't like her clothes either. "She's wrong. It's not the way the world works." Other

women objected to the conservative, out-of-date image that job counselor's wanted them to project. "You should see those sequenced platform shoes I saw one girl wear in an office I was just at. She could hardly walk in them." What Connie and others objected to was a make over in an image of a 1950s suburban housewife who also worked. Contrarily, Connie's idea of a make over was "a boob and ass job" so she could get a good paying job as an entertainer/dancer. While Connie displays self-initiative and entrepeneurship, seemingly the objective of welfare reform, her moral character would most likely be considered a problem. Similarly, many everyday troubles are cast as "problems."

For those participants who don't find work in a timely manner, problematizing becomes another important part of MFIP work. Now the single category of "welfare mother" has fractured and there are an array of other descriptions such as "teen mother," "homeless," "drug user," "sexually abused," "single parent," "mentally unstable." Of course, all of these terms are attached to larger moral values and issues of sexual promiscuity, unmarried women, drugs, gangs and other social issues. Each category in turn has been codified and pathologized. Whereas in the past most problems were handled by a single case worker, a person with health, legal, housing or childcare "special" needs can be referred to the appropriate specialist or support group.

The Run-Around:

To get an array of needs met in the new welfare to work system often requires "a lot of running around." The diversity of services parallels a de-centralization of sites of services. "Welfare" no longer sits in a bureaucracy in a downtown area. In the present system, people can choose what location they will visit or they are placed in a hub nearest to where they live. While this might have a more convenient and friendly gloss, dispersal of services has added hours of time on the bus for the majority who don't own cars. Tama concurred: "Especially, if there's an issue. You could spend half a day--easily." She and her five children were recently homeless. "We needed this shelter form. Get a bus card. See the job counselor. Drop the work form off. I was running from one office to the next and I could spend a whole day and still not get anything done." This dizzying run-around is exacerbated with the turn over of case files between staff within the different agencies. I spoke to two women who said they had four or five different financial workers in six months. Sharise recalled how she forgot the name of her financial worker and was left to retrace a chain of financial workers: "First I called Lou Yang who was my financial worker for three months. Then there was Peggy Faye who couldn't help me so I turned to Peggy Buryn whose office in the mean-time had been transferred to the Midway." On leave from a hostess job with a new baby, Sharise was receiving only $ 10 a

month in food stamps. She wondered: "What did I do that was so bad? All I'm asking for is a little help now. A little help with medical."

Staff members are also on the move. During the duration of my study, there was a turn over of three Ramsey County financial workers. Few work full-time one in location and are therefore not always accessible. It is not uncommon for staff and client to miss connections. This is particularly the case for picking up bus passes.

Buses end up playing a critical part of MFIP recipient's lives. Once placed in a job, getting to the suburbs where the majority of them are is a challenge. To get to work on time often means bringing several kids to day care on the bus. All the women know the bus schedules by heart. "8:53 9:55 11:00 1:41 3:43."

Most women testify to the support received by close family members and friends to help fulfill work requirements and "get by." Most often a mother or grandmother helps with childcare, meals and laundry. Informal support networks at job clubs and training programs are also very evident. These circles cross all race, age and ethnic groups.

While self-improvement and self-sufficiency are the engines of welfare reform, it would be incorrect to downplay the role punitive sanctions play. The image of "the clock" ticking is invoked constantly by MFIP staff. The time constraints add even more stress to already complicated life situations. Clocks start running upon your first visit with an intake worker, although "you can also stop your clock" if there is an approved exemption. For example, if you a "domestic abuse victim," you can be exempt but you must follow a "safety plan." Parents of a newborn child may use all or part of a one-time twelve-month exemption. Failure to meet work rules results in sanctions. For non-compliance in the first month, you lose 10 percent of your grant. In a second month of non-compliance, the grant is reduced by 30 percent. In other words, to be on MFIP demands participation in order to receive benefits.

Job Clubs:

MFIP participants who have not found a job are placed on a job search plan developed with the help of a job counselor. To avoid sanctions, work rules must be met by looking for a job for at least 30 hours a week. This is accomplished in part by attending job clubs designed to make participants "job ready." At the sessions, participants identify their skills and receive support for overcoming obstacles and fears. I spoke many people who had dropped out of high school by the 9th grade, so classrooms often bring back old memories and

patterns and feelings of inadequacy. Tara explained: "I kept thinking oh, I can't do that. I'm not smart enough. I can't type quick enough." At the job clubs, tips are imparted on how to fill-out applications, write a resume and retain jobs. One person described what was done at the clubs as "figuring out lifestyles." Many people spoke favorably about going through mock interviews prior to a "real" one. It made them less nervous since they knew better what to expect. Others described the job clubs as "plain dull, not real interesting." or "just a hassle." One comment brought home another reality: "Most of my friends can't read or write. How are they gonna get a job when they can't fill out an application?" Many had gone through the program at least two or three times to fulfill the requirements. Successful programs, I heard, "keep it simple" and there is "a lot of one-on- one."

East Side Job Bank:

The job bank provides another resource at the hub. Since getting a job is a function of who you know as well as what you know, the small staff of the job bank acts as advocates for those with disadvantages in securing and keeping employment.

Roughly 70 percent of the jobs available at the job bank are temporary. Many people prefer it that way, in part perhaps because they do not have legal work permits. People with poor English literacy skills most often find light assembly and cleaning jobs. Others chose not to go from temp to permanent when offered because they don't like the jobs. Mai described what it was like to work at one assembly job. She worked with six to eight women and four men who were Hmong, Latino and Lao:

> Hours were seven days a week from 5 to 5. You had to work so fast. There were hardly any breaks--at 10:00 and 3:00 10 minutes and 30 minutes half way through. The line is going through and you had to wrap credit cards in one small box. One time, they fell all over the place because my fingers couldn't grip them. My cousin came and they kicked her off. Too slow. The supervisor would come and watch.

When Mai was offered a permanent job at $ 10.50 instead of the $ 8.50 cash she was receiving, she didn't take it.

> It was too hard working Saturday and Sunday for my kids, husband and the Church. They let you go to

> Church. But just Sunday off.

Mai summed up that "working in a factory is too different for Hmong. In my country, people work for yourself. No pressure." It was perhaps the sacrifice of a leisurely meal that seemed to provoke the most anger. Ka worked in two assembly jobs for five years before she injured her back lifting heavy loads. Her first choice for another job would be in childcare because she could eat throughout the day. One complaint relayed to me was with only one microwave in a workplace, it might take waiting on line for most of the lunch or dinner break just to heat your food. Then, you'd have to gulp it down. Mai remembers her remedy for short lunches.

> Put the hot water on for 10 minutes before break. Hot pepper and rice with hot water works better. Just from the sink. It's hot enough and done in 5 minutes.

Many of the jobs are placed through temp agencies although notable exceptions are the new businesses at Williams Hill as part of the St. Paul Authority/Phalen Corridor Initiative, UPS, Goodwill and an apprenticeship program in conjunction with the Carpenter's Union. Juan worked for one the temp agency who screened people at the Eastside Work Resource Hub. He described it as a bad experience.

> They had b.s. corporate rules in the hood. 'This is the way it had to be done.' But it was the way they do it in suburbia. The agency saw it as a way to donate to the community, although they didn't really want to do it.

Both Juan and Margarita tried to find ways "to cater to people's needs" mostly by "taking the time" and bending a few rules. Everyone employed by the temp agency was required to listen to a three-hour orientation audiotape. "Stupid 50s tape of the procedures. A lot of people get scared off. Think it's a test." They cut the orientation time to an hour and a half.

Although this agency no longer co-locates at the hub, the experience raises a continuing tension of objectives and frameworks that can work at cross purposes amongst and within groups such as between for profits and non-profits.

In general, people were very positive about the work and staff of the East Side Job Bank. Some of the responses I got in my evaluation of the job bank's at present two staff members were:

> Down-to-earth. Make people feel comfortable. They talk to you with advice. You can talk to the receptionist about your personal life. You're not scared of them. They're there to help you--do something for you.

As Louis sums up:

> Luis got on the phone. Just like that. (Employers) push you to the side. 'We don't need you. Can you come back?' The center knows the connections. They give you something to go on. People looking out for your future.

Vincent was extremely pleased with the Brownsfield Program.

> I couldn't stay in college. Had to take care of the family. In St. Paul Vo-tech welding program, there were loans. This program is free. It's not by the books. It's hands on. The classes are useful.

Of course, many people cited more staff as a need. A resource room assistant has been recently hired. Other suggestions were to give the waiting room more of a feel of a living room or at least a space that's lived in and the production of a brochure that listed a full-range of resources and referrals.

Recommendations:

I suspect that many paths that swerve from the "norm" can be found in the past and present work of the work resource hub. First, many of the staff once found themselves in similar positions to hub users. They learned new skills on the job; some have moved on but most continue to maintain close ties. This kind of peer support, mentoring and sharing can serve as underlying organizing principles for the staff as well. The varied programs at the hub that teach English as a Second Language (ESL) cross work, ethnic, social and personal boundaries and also provide wonderful examples for building job initiative through cooperative work and learning. Second, the Brownfields Program, which is an apprenticeship program with the Carpenter's Union, affords on-the-job training

for potentially good paying jobs as well as opportunities to make communities' livable by cleaning up urban land and buildings.

I offer the following recommendations:

◊ **Make businesses major players in the work of the hub.** This means not only holding businesses accountable to contractual and subsidy agreements, but also to the neighborhood and surrounding community.

• Training must fill the needs of employers and real jobs. To understand this better entails identifying and building close one-to-one ties with employers and constantly keeping tabs on new businesses and jobs in the region. The collaboration between the East Side Job Bank and Williams Hill businesses is a positive step toward combining employment opportunities, local economic development and services such as child care and "lunch and learn" ESL classes. New models of collaboration also include business to business cooperation.

• To better connect job seekers, the community and businesses, all parties should become more integral in the work and planning strategies of the Work Resource Hub. This might include participating on governing and short term advisory committees when appropriate.

• Package the job preparation and placement services offered by the East Side Job Bank to make it more attractive to employers. As experiences of the East Side Job Bank and similar efforts in the U. S. have shown, community-based brokering businesses with a social mission can successfully compete in a market *niche* and help fill the need for employment support for disadvantaged workers. Setting the limits of what the job bank is prepared to do to help recruit, screen and prepare new employees for businesses is tricky and must be clearly defined and constantly re-evaluated. Businesses will no doubt pressure hub staff to do more. There have already been requests by some employers for verification of work visas and criminal checks. In keeping with a non-coercive approach, disciplinary and surveillance practices should remain in the domain of interested parties. On the other hand, staff intervention, when there have been disputes or problems in work places, has proven valuable. Since most of the jobs are temporary, workers have little protection. Post-employment negotiations, which at present are sporadic and more in the realm of "putting out the fires," could be an expanded area of the work of the staff. Since at least in principle, hub staff better understand the job seekers, they can also work with businesses to improve work training, conditions and longevity. As an example, many Hmong have voiced intense dissatisfaction with limited meal breaks that do not give them

enough time to heat their food and eat it. As a more leisurely meal is seen as a priority, businesses could stagger meal breaks in order to retain good workers.

◊ **Commit to doing outreach** face-to-face in the community and with local businesses, not just the official groups such as the St. Paul Port Authority and Chamber of Commerce.

There are new constituencies on the East Side that make it necessary to expand formal and informal networks through religious congregations, health clinics and day care centers. Nadell Fullwood, Pastor of Life Christian Fellowship and Bill Pratt, Pastor of East Emmanuel Lutheran have both put development of employment services and skills as top priorities in their work. Using media outlets such as Employment Weekly which many job seekers read regularly is another step in broadening referrals and word-of-mouth.

• Since this process is experimental and constantly changing, there are many lessons to be learned from other programs, particularly those in the Twin Cities area. Two that might be a good place to start are Abbott Northwestern Hospital's "Train to Work" and Pillsbury Neighborhood Services programs.

• Although self-employment may not be a first step for many, the development of small businesses is an important step in neighborhood renewal. The staff from Neighborhood Microentrepreneur Training and Loan Programs in partnership with the Neighborhood Development Center provides training and start-up loans for home daycare centers and other needed services that can build on each other.

• Since money for many programs is now being disbursed in block grants administered by the state or city, the Eastside Work Resource Center must band together with like-minded interest groups to articulate inventive strategies to secure and widen resources. One possible group to investigate is Affirmative Options. This is a statewide coalition of more than 70 organizations that advocates for a comprehensive approach to welfare reform and economic security. The emphasis of Affirmative Options is on investing in locally owned businesses and granting incentives for businesses to grow where they are.

◊ **Building credibility and trust through valued services** by responding to requests and complaints.

Conclusion:

The initial purpose of this research was to investigate if users of the hub would be able and willing to become more active in the building of a community hiring hall/resource center. This would make the hub less of a service provider with a more passive supplier-recipient relationship. I found openness to this blurring of relationships so that the "customer" would also define needs and how they are met. In many ways, the redirection falls in line with many of the stated objectives of governmental reform, mainly self-management and self-sufficiency. For some staff at the hub, this kind of hybridization, however, has created some discontent as many of rules for program participants are being applied to staff as well. Additionally, while many staff like the freedom to articulate and design their own programs and work away from their supervisor's direct gaze, there is also the added stress and responsibility entailed with making many individual decisions that fall in the gray zones. Based on my research, I am skeptical that a sincere integration of users in the decision-making and work of the center can truly occur within the present MFIP structure bounded by a disciplinary framework.

Finally, I'd like to thank the staff at the Eastside Work Resource Hub and all the people I had chance to meet and interview--both for sharing their thoughts and for wading through a very complex process.

Resources:

Center for Community Change: has published many studies to promote grassroots organizing that emphasize the vital role decent jobs play in lives of people living in low-income communities. Summaries and assessments of the experiences of groups similar to the hub support their research. CCC has published many reports which can be downloaded from their website under "publications" (www. communitychange. org) as well as on the HUD website (www.HUD.gov). This research was supported by the Office of Policy Development and Research of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts and its Fund for Urban Neighborhood Development. Some of the reports I found particularly useful in preparing this report were:

"Linking Human Services and Economic Development" By Emily Gantz McKay and Cristina Lopez (1997). This study explores some ways organizations can help reform the delivery of human services so that people can receive better care and gain greater access to jobs and economic opportunities.

"Jobs: Some Organizing Strategies" By Leigh Dingerson (1997). This study focuses on the types of issues and policies that can be the subject of campaigns by groups taking on the issues of jobs, targeted hiring and improved wages and benefits.

"Making Connections: A Study of Employment Linkage Programs" which examines three programs that try various ways of linking inner city residents with jobs in the mainstream economy.

"New Avenues into Jobs: Early Lessons from Nonprofit Temp Agencies and Employment Brokers" which focuses on nonprofits that have used temporary work as a way to integrate low-income people into the world of work.

"Saving and Creating Good Jobs: A Study of Industrial Retention and Expansion Programs" which examines four efforts to save and increase local manufacturing jobs.

Center for Community Change's most recent training manual is Getting Good Jobs: An Organizer's Guide to Job Training. Cost is $ 10. It can be ordered at Center for Community Change 1000 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007, Attention Publications; Tel. (202) 342-0567 ext. 330; Fax. (202) 333-5462.

Non-Profit Work Employment Agencies and Work-Related Groups:

Affirmative Options Coalition: is a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals advocating and organizing for a comprehensive approach to welfare reform and economic security. This includes investments in living wage jobs, job supports, and a safety net. Some participating organizations currently are listed as: Access to Employment, AFSCME Local 66, Chicano Latino Affairs Council, Children's Defense Fund-MN, Educational Opportunity Center, Employment Action Center, Goodwill Industries, Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, Harriet Tubman Center, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless · Minnesota Community Action Association, Minnesota Food Share, Project for Pride in Living, Ramsey Action Programs, Urban Coalition, and WomenVenture.

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Tel. (651) 642-1904, ex. 29. Fax (651) 642-1517. E-mail: jwalsh@mncn.org
Website: http://www.mncn.org

Bus Riders Union: Labor/Community Strategy Center, 3780 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90010; (213) 387-2800 Website: http://www.lgc.apc.org/lctr

Columbus Works: 36 West Gay Street, 3rd Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215. Tel. (614) 224-8009. Fax (614) 224-1552.

Job Oasis/Suburban Job-Link Corporation: 2343 South Kedzie Avenue, Chicago, IL 60623. Tel. (630) 595-0010. Fax (630) 595-0081.

Labor Connection/Chrysalis: 1837 Lincoln Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90404. Tel. (310) 392-4117. Fax (310) 314-2087.

Milwaukee Careers Cooperative: 2040 West Wisconsin Avenue, Bockl Building, Suite 10, Milwaukee, WI 53233. Tel. (414) 937-8260.
Fax (414) 937-8266.

New Unity, Inc./Pillsbury Neighborhood Services:
Center for Neighborhood Employment and Training
2507 Fremont Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411 Tel. (612) 529-9267. Fax (612) 529-4743

Working Partnerships USA: 2102 Almaden Road, Suite 100, San Jose, CA 95125. Tel. (408) 269-7872. Email: WPUSA501c3@aol.com

For Further Reading:

Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a public policy research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and domestic violence, and women's civic and political participation. Past issues of their newsletter have analyzed housing, reproductive issues, post-secondary school opportunities and domestic violence in relation to welfare reform. This project is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation.
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Washington, DC 20036 Tel. (202) 785-5100.
Email general inquiries wpr@iwpr.org Website: http://www.iwpr.org/

Resources for Reproductive Issues Related to Welfare Reform:
Alan Guttmacher Institute. Washington office: 1120 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 460, Washington, DC 20036; Tel. (202) 296-4012; Fax. (202) 223-5756; e-mail: policyinfo@agi-usa.org. New York office: 120 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005. Tel. (212) 248-1111. Fax. (212) 248-1951.
E-mail: info@agi-usa.org Website: http://www.agi-usa.org

"Welfare Recipients Who Find Jobs: What Do We Know About Their Employment and Earnings?" November 1998. By Sharon Parrot (November 1998) of the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**.
The report uses information from unemployment insurance records and surveys in various states. Employment rates, earnings, occupations, and benefits of TANF recipients who receive jobs are explored. The report is
available from the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**, 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington DC 20002; Tel. (202) 408-1080, Fax(202) 408-1056 E-mail: center@cbpp.org; Website: http://www.cbpp.org

Child Trends: 4301 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008.
Tel. (202) 362-5580. Fax (202) 362-5533. E-mail: webmaster@childtrends.org
Website: http://www.childtrends.org

"In Our Own Words: Mother's Needs for Successful Welfare Reform." March 1998. By Laura Wittmann. Project of the **Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative**. Parkside, WI: University of Wisconsin, Parkside.