

COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE

The community action program setup is to involve local residents in the planning, policy making, and operation of the program. Some of the many activities that can be supported and coordinated within a community action program to attack poverty are remedial reading, literacy courses, employment counseling, homemaker services, job development and training, consumer education, vocational rehabilitation and health services.

Federal assistance is available to cover the costs of a community action program. For the period ending August 20, 1966, this assistance will not exceed 90% of the cost of a community action program. However, in circumstances determined by the Office of Economic Opportunity, Federal assistance may exceed this limit. After August 20, 1966 the level of Federal assistance will not exceed 50% of the program cost, except when determined by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Non-Federal share of the community action program cost may be contributed in cash or in kind. A contribution is treated as "in-kind" if it consists of the use of services or property owned by, or loaned to, the community action program. For example, a contribution which consists of the estimated rental value of a building shall be considered as an in-kind contribution. (a church perhaps) In-kind contributions shall be valued at actual cost for personal services and at rental value for property and equipment. The services of a full-time volunteer shall be valued at \$3,000 per year for example; those of a part time volunteer shall be valued accordingly provided the volunteer spends at least 20 hours a week on the community action program.

Time spent by committee members during the planning and operation of the program or any costs or contribution of services made prior to the effective date of a grant by the Office of Economic Opportunity, may not be included as a contribution to the non-Federal share. Applicants interested in obtaining information on the amount of funds likely to be available to them, for general information should communicate directly with Community Action Program, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C..

Non-discrimination and civil rights assurances Each agency must comply with the Civil Rights Act and the Office of Economic Opportunity Civil Rights Regulations which require that no person in the US shall, on grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program to which this part applies. It is therefore necessary that in setting up a community action program, an attempt is made to publicize and involve both local Negroes and whites.

Definition of a Community Although the Office of Economic Opportunity is very flexible in regard to this question it is advised that the community action program be organized at least along parish lines. But communities containing very

small populations can also combine their efforts with adjacent parishes to ensure the creation of an adequate resource base.

Eligible agencies-grants for the development, conduct, and administration of a community action program may be made to a public agency or to a private non-profit agency. To be eligible for Federal assistance, a community action program group must have adequate authority to enter into contracts with and to receive grants from the Federal Government and to carry out the program for which it is requesting assistance, either directly or by contract or agreement with other groups. If there is another body involved from whom approval is needed before making application, or before expending program funds, or in establishing policies, the other body must approve the proposed community action program prior to submission of the application.

An application which is a private non-profit organization must be either: an institution of higher education; an institution or organization which has had a concern with problems of poverty prior to application for Federal assistance; or be sponsored by a public agency, or by one or more private institutions or organizations which have had a prior concern with problems of poverty.

Any organization formed since the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act August 20, 1964 will be presumed in need of sponsorship unless a substantial involvement in an anti-poverty action can be demonstrated. If the community action program is formed from a group having a concern with poverty prior to application, the continuity of the organization must be demonstrated. This would be required if an unincorporated association became a non-profit corporation for the purpose of applying for Federal assistance. The community action program should attempt to bring the various service systems (education, health, employment, housing or family welfare) together in a concerted attack on poverty. Each community action program must demonstrate its ability and intention to mobilize community resources against poverty through the establishment of linkages and within service systems and through other means.

Resident participation-The Economic Opportunity Act requires that a community action program be developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of the residents of the areas in which the program will be carried out. Some means of participation are representation on committees of the community action program, use of existing neighborhood organizations and the creation of new ones to advise on policy, provision of meaningful opportunities for residents, to protest or to propose additions to or changes in the ways in which a community action program is being planned or undertaken, by employment of the residents of areas being served in jobs created as part of the community action program itself.

The most effective and desirable community action program is one which is broadly based, organized on a community-wide basis, and involves the coordination of a variety of anti-poverty actions.

- To be broadly based, a community action agency must provide ample opportunity for participation in policy-making by the major public and private agencies responsible for services and programs concerned with poverty, other elements in the community as a whole, and the population to be served by the community action program. The opportunity for representation shall include either membership by representatives of these three categories on the on the policy making or governing body of the community action agency or, where such membership is not feasible, on a policy making advisory committee. The functions of such a policy advisory committee shall be to assist in review and establishment of program policies, personnel policies and recruitment, and to act as a hearing board for any citizen groups who may want to propose additions to or changes in the community action program. The following list includes the minimum standards for representation, either on the governing body of the community action agency or on a policy advisory committee. Applicants which are unable to meet these standards may request a waiver, by submitting a justification and an explanation of how adequate representation will be achieved.

- a. Representation from private and public agencies shall include at least one representative of the chief elected official, or officials of the community, the board of education, the public welfare agency, and the major private social service agencies. Consideration should also be given to representation by the public health agency, the public housing and urban renewal agencies, the local office of the State employment services, any non-public school or school system responsible for the education of a substantial number of children from poor families, and private social and education agencies headquartered in low income areas.
- b. Representation from the leadership of important elements in the community such as labor, business, religious, and minority groups.
- c. Representation from residents of the areas and members of the groups to be served, including at least one representative selected from each of the neighborhoods or areas in which the community action program will be concentrated.

Single-purpose agencies-The existence of a broadly based community action agency is not a prerequisite to the granting of Federal assistance. However, applicants for programs of limited scope from communities where a broadly based agency has been or is being created to provide adequate evidence why they are unable to combine their efforts with those of the broadly based agency. If there is a broadly based agency in the community, but operating within it is not possible, a single-purpose agency must provide evidence that it has made every reasonable effort to coordinate its activities with those of the broadly based agency. Applicants from communities where there is no broadly based agency shall provide evidence as to why it is not possible to develop such an agency, as a preliminary step in applying for aid to a program of limited scope. An applicant for a program of limited scope need not meet the conditions set forth in the above section for representation of major public and private agencies and of elements of the general public.

It is a fundamental premise of the community action concept that the basic responsibility for achieving meaningful results lies with the local community. The responsibility for selection of personnel rests primarily with the applicant agency and any del-

• egate agencies, but each applicant is expected to adhere to certain basic standards in its employment practices. Each applicant will be expected to employ only capable and responsible personnel who are of good character and reputation, are sympathetic with the objectives of the Economic Opportunity Act and are not members of subversive organizations. While the attainment of a high level of education and prior experience may be essential to performance in certain capacities, every consideration should be given to providing opportunities to poor persons who have been denied the benefit of formal education and who are willing to learn to perform new functions.

The applicant agency has considerable flexibility in determining what activities it will undertake, the manner in which these activities will be undertaken, and the families and individuals that will be assisted. Each community action program agency must first be able to show that it is focusing on the needs of low-income families and individuals. The applicant will be required to provide adequate evidence that any proposed activity will indeed be concentrated on the needs of the poor. The following statistics should be kept in mind-number and proportion of low income families, extent of unemployment, welfare recipients, school dropout rates, military service rejection rates, other evidence of low educational attainment, incidence of disease, disability and infant mortality, housing conditions, adequacy of community facilities and services and the incidence of crime and juvenile delinquency. The applicant may identify additional factors which indicate evidence of poverty, particularly as they relate to specific needs to be served by proposed programs.

Many communities at the outset, may be unable to initiate coordinated community action programs which link different programs and service systems in an effective and efficient attack on poverty. With establishment of such a coordinated program as its goal, a community may decide to use a "building block" approach in the development of its community action program, beginning with one or two essential projects and subsequently adding others. This approach enables an applicant to start a community action program in the shortest amount of time. It should be recognized, however, that the individual initial projects must eventually become component parts of a broader coordinated effort.

Examples of eligible activities

remedial and non-curricular education
employment, job training, and counseling
health and vocational rehabilitation
housing and home management
welfare
consumer information, education, and mutual aid
legal aid and information on the rights of the poor
resident participation-tied to needs, problems, and concerns of the poor
neighborhood centers
VISTA and Job Corps activities
administration of community action programs
evaluation of accomplishments

Once a program is approved by the Office of Economic Opportunity no financial assistance may be provided unless a plan setting forth the proposed assistance has been submitted to the Governor of the State and is not disapproved by him within thirty days after the submission.

Applicants should submit their applications directly to the Office of Economic Opportunity; they are not required to transmit applications through the Governor or any state agency. Applicants are, however, encouraged to keep appropriate State Officials informed of their efforts in submitting an application for Federal assistance.

Application Procedure-An application for approval of a community action program shall be submitted to the Regional Office of the Office of Economic Opportunity. To obtain the address of the Regional Office write to Community Action Program, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C. 20506. (A Regional Office is now being set up in Austin, Texas). In Washington the men to call (collect) for information on Community Action Programs are: FRED HOLT, RUSSELL JEWERT, or HERBERT TYSON at area code 202- 382-6391. We have requested a large number of the original Community Action Programs Guide and as soon as they arrive we'll send them out to you.

MEMO: If there are any questions concerning a community action project, please get in touch with me or some one in the program department in the New Orleans CORE Office or in Baton Rouge.

-Judith Fleiss