

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION, INC.

DIRECTOR'S INTERIM REPORT

Background & Information

Washington County Community Action Organization is a private non-profit organization incorporated under Oregon law. The Washington County Community Council was the parent organization responsible for the early thinking and organization which led to the establishment of Washington County Community Action Organization. WCCAO was established with the express purpose of applying for EOA funds to conduct a study of poverty among Washington County residents and to make EOA funds and programs available in Washington County. Early development work took place during 1964 and 1965 with OEO recognition received in late 1965. OEO funding was received in July of 1966.

Philosophy and Priorities For Action

The goal of this organization is to help the people of Washington County to effect a permanent increase in the capacity of individuals and groups within our community who are afflicted by poverty to deal effectively with their own problems so that they need no further assistance.

This philosophy translated into priorities for program consideration is as follows:

1. To promote and facilitate maximum utilization of existing resources.
 - A. Identify needs of low-income people in the county.
 - B. Disseminate information about available resources to persons needing such help and facilitate communication between needy persons and resources.
 - C. Promote more adequate and realistic relating of existing services and resources to low-income needs.
2. To promote the development of new resources needed to combat poverty in Washington County.
 - A. Encourage existing groups and organizations to develop needed activities.
 - B. Make OEO funding available for developing needed activity and search for funding sources outside of OEO.

WCCAO seeks to provide a means for better co-ordinating and focusing the resources existing in or potentially available to Washington County on the needs of the poor.

WCCAO philosophy and policy dictates that priority be given to those activities which may contribute to a long term permanent improvement in individual functioning as opposed to those which will satisfy short term or daily needs. However, we realize the importance of providing necessary short term

or supportive help so that the person may organize his personal strengths and resources for a major long term improvement effort.

Scope And Method of Operation

Having identified poverty in Washington County as being predominately rural we attempted to arbitrarily divide the rural portion of the county into units which could be easily worked within with a minimum of personnel and program expense. Criteria used in this division were transportation patterns, trade habits, social orientation, economic similarities, and geographic characteristics. Each of these areas are fairly contiguous and represent rural concentration of low-income and otherwise impoverished families.

In keeping with WCCAO philosophy we believe that the key to any success in helping the poor to make permanent improvements in their situations is to involve them in program development and conduct. In this way the real feelings and needs of the poor are considered in programing, not just middle class interpretations of low-income needs.

By helping each of these areas to develop a neighborhood or area council charged with the study of problems, establishment of programs, and overseeing of programs, we hoped to develop a process which would facilitate communication between all socio-economic groups in the community. An equally important outgrowth of that communication is the sharing, learning, and understanding that goes on between community persons of varying socio-economic experience and background. It should be apparent to any observer that this process is two way with the poor and non-poor learning equally from each other even though it is the poor who have the most to gain from the process.

In order to provide impetus and focus for the above neighborhood activity it was necessary to provide a facility which may be focused on and within which programs may be conducted.

The Neighborhood Service Center/Area Council program became central to WCCAO programing and has proved to be a highly successful approach to focusing community resources on the War-On-Poverty.

It must be recognized that poverty is not totally economic and is not necessarily individual. A community may be poor in its services to its inhabitants and the opportunities available to them even though not all people in the community are individually poor. "Poor" may be a physical or mental condition as well as or instead of an economic one.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY WCCAO

Program Development and Outreach

The original 6 month grant period was devoted to a simplified study of poverty in the county and a one-shot outreach program designed to convince people that there was poverty in the county and that something should and could be done about it. This effort applied to all groups in the county with over 250 house meetings being held, 127 meetings held with 106 clubs, groups, and organizations, and 2700 people interviewed. Many more affluent groups were not aware that poverty existed in the county and many more were not aware that anything could or should be done about it. The poor knew there was poverty in the county but most were not aware of resources to combat it or thought it was outside their capacity to affect a change. Early demonstration efforts served to counter these ideas and to build an inventory of successes and improvements that could be used to start the ball rolling. The early outreach and referral program was an example that referred 521 individuals to existing resources for help. Four-hundred eighty-three of these followed through on the referrals with often spectacular results.

Neighborhood Service Centers

During this program development period WCCAO initiated the community service center idea in response to requests for programs in rural areas and realization that one of the county's most serious problems was centralization of services and resources. The service center approach was conceived to provide a focal point for the community and a means of taking needed services and resources out to where the people are.

Four area service centers were established during the fiscal year 1967 program. The four areas involved were Timber, North Plains, Sherwood and Gaston. Each of these efforts evolved at different times and paces and each has evolved an individual program emphasis. In this way the program is guided by local people to meet local needs.

Some generalizations about the programs conducted in the centers can be made. Each center provides a home base for the area council, conducts outreach and referral services for many resources such as Welfare, Health Department, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and many more. Each center provides the basic organization in which area people can examine local needs and organize an attack on the problem. Examples are Timber residents raising funds to patch roads the county won't keep up and approaching the sheriff's office for increase patrol and law enforcement which has been achieved. Several areas have established youth groups and Boy Scout Troops. Timber is turning the old school gym into a skating rink for local use. All of the centers are conducting betterment and skills improvement programs. Creative Job Search classes are being conducted in co-operation with the State Department of Labor. The Oregon State Employment Service stations counselors in the centers on request for job clinics. Many area employers have hired help through the centers with 63 persons referred to jobs in the Sherwood area alone in December, January and February. Sixteen of these resulted in hirings and many are still pending.

GED classes have been conducted in all areas with the help of Valley Migrant League and many local volunteers. Individual tutoring classes have been

established in North Plains for high school drop-outs and NYC workers.

The Extension Service has conducted homemaking and abundant food classes in several centers. These are only a few of the activities carried on in the centers.

HEADSTART.

During 1966 WCCAO was approached by a group of North Plains parents and requested to help get a Headstart program operational in that area. Because of bureaucratic inefficiency within OEO this effort took 14 months and final recourse to our Congressional Delegation to resolve. During the summer of 1967 North Plains had a summer Headstart for 30 students conducted in the grade school, administered by the local school principal and responsible to the North Plains Headstart Parents Advisory Committee. This committee is made up mainly of low-income parents and is now a committee of the Area Council. This group was responsible for the design of the original program, writing of subsequent programs and the requests to the WCCAO Board for funding. During F.Y. 1967 a fall Headstart was funded for North Plains and the summer Headstart is being moved to the Buxton/Manning area in order to provide this resource to more disadvantaged children. The same development and supervisory processes outlined above are being employed in the new area to insure local control by the people affected.

At present it appears that there will not be additional funds available to start any new Headstart efforts.

LEGAL AID

A Legal Aid application has been prepared in conjunction with the County Bar Association who will be the administering agency. This program should be funded within the next four months. A committee of lawyers, low-income, and community people will oversee this program and much of the outreach and educational effort will be conducted within the service centers.

CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATION

Conduct and Administration provides the central administration and over-all co-ordination of all WCCAO programs. C & A also is responsible for co-ordination of WCCAO programs with other community resources. All bookkeeping, reporting, and purchasing is done through this component.

CO-ORDINATION OF OTHER OEO PROGRAMS

Community Action was originally conceived as the presumptive sponsor or local co-ordinating and control body for all War-On-Poverty programs conducted within a community. For many reasons bureaucratic and political this never came to pass. The more powerful old line agencies saw OEO as a threat to their empires and promptly and effectively started political and administrative maneuverings to siphon off OEO money and otherwise reduce OEO influence in areas they considered private. OEO at the same time was neither politically powerful enough nor administratively sophisticated enough to force recognition and retention of the original thinking basic to the OEO concept. This has resulted in Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, and other agencies spinning off OEO money and operating programs of very mixed success with it. In most cases this has resulted in a lack of citizen

participation in planning and control. The same weaknesses have encouraged the development within OEO of the situation in which many programs such as Title V Work and Training, Upward Bound, and Migrant Programs are funded directly from OEO Washington, D.C. without involvement or meaningful consideration of Community Action.

Community Action supposedly has a sign-off on all OEO funded programs but in actuality this is rarely ever honored other than lip service. When a program is being conducted contrary to community Action recommendation it is rarely that Community Action complaints are investigated or honored. Honoring of the sign-off procedure depends strictly on co-operative arrangements between the CAA and the administering agency such as has been established between WCCAO and the NYC programs in this county.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE 1967 LEGISLATION

It has become apparent that Congress over-reacted to southern courthouse politics and big city problems in enacting the 1967 amendments to the OEO Act. At the same time some of the changes necessary under the new legislation can bring some major strengths to OEO in general and Community Action specifically. However, it hardly seems logical that the legislative changes should bear so heavily on Community Action and not apply to other OEO funded programs such as Upward Bound and Migrant Programs. But possibly the strengthening of Community Action through increased community and political involvement can be the key to bringing these other programs more closely under the community and CAA control.

Increased involvement of public officials should also improve the co-ordination and co-operation between agencies and lend increased muscle and legitimacy to Community Action in program operations and bargaining processes. WCCAO is not so chauvinistic or bureaucratic that we think we gave the only answers to poverty or the only means to attack poverty. We are interested in seeing that the job gets done and that the legitimate influence of the poor themselves is maintained in the program. We feel very strongly that the effective involvement of a representative Board including people from all segments of our population and economy is vital to any War-On-Poverty program to be conducted.

If the County Board of Commissioners sees fit to recognize WCCAO as the legitimate CAA for Washington County we will work closely with the elected officials of the county to effect the changes necessary to provide representation on the existing Board.

If the Commission decides to designate itself as the CAA authority in Washington County we will work with the county to establish a meaningful program and to carry out an orderly transition of programs. WCCAO is not committed to any specific program form but is heavily committed to program philosophy and content.

CONSIDERATION FOR DESIGNATION DECISION

Several considerations should be examined by the Commission in reaching a decision on how to handle Community Action.

Can the county afford to underwrite the collection of approximately \$40,000 local share during F.Y. 1968 and approximately \$55,000 during F.Y. 1969? Especially in view of the 1½% property tax limitation threat? In what areas such as space costs, clerical services, and accounting can the county make contributions to the program and to what extent? What effect would the several alternatives available to the county have on local share collection? How must the CAA budget be dealt with in respect to the present county budget system? And what would be the implied effect on other county agencies and operations such as civil service if the county assumed CAA function?

BUDGET INFORMATION

Present OEO funding levels are frozen and no appreciable increase in this funding source is likely in the near future. Increased programming is necessary especially in the areas of basic education and rehabilitation training. Funding for these efforts will have to be developed from local and state sources.

Present OEO programs require a minimum of 10% local share. This minimum will raise to 20% in 1969. Obviously, as federal regulations require increased local funding additional funding sources will have to be developed.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

<u>F.Y. 1967</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>Non-Federal</u>	<u>Total</u>
Conduct & Administration	\$29,116.00	\$ 2,187.00	\$31,303.00
3 - Service Centers	67,583.00	16,444.00	84,027.00
11 - Summer Headstart	11,886.00	3,039.00	15,525.00
13 - Fall Headstart	36,042.00	8,151.00	44,193.00
		\$29,821.00	\$175,040.00
<u>F.Y. 1968</u>			
Conduct & Administration	\$36,613.00	\$ 2,190.00	\$38,803.00
Service Centers	85,260.00	14,200.00	99,460.00
Summer Headstart	11,886.00	3,582.00	15,468.00
Fall Headstart	53,561.00	10,299.00	63,860.00
64 - Legal Aid (Anticipated)	78,370.00	15,700.00	94,070.00
			Total \$311,661.00

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PROGNOSIS

WCCAO Plans

Assuming that Community Action is maintained in Washington County in substantially the same functional form as at present several activities are indicated. The service centers have become an effective community force and this potential should increase in the future. Two of the centers have substantially altered the patterns of community thinking in their areas already and the other two should become fully effective within the coming year. Once the communities have become fully committed to their area councils and the service center idea, the centers will be able to move away from the community organization function and spend more time in development and rehabilitation functions.

Timber in co-operation with Vernonia is presently exploring the establishment of a Forest By-Products business. This would be set up as a Co-operative with employees holding ownership through stock shares and should provide adequate year around employment within the community for close to 100 families. WCCAO is working closely with this group and is presently attempting to attract \$5,000-6,000 of OEO money to pay for a comprehensive marketing and feasibility study to be done in co-operation with Oregon State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Extension Service. This project should be established within the year.

WCCAO is presently negotiating with the U.S. Department of Labor, Extension Service, Tigard High School and the Washington County Intermediate Education Board to have the IED assume the joint NYC program for the county. This process should be completed by September 1968.

The Headstart programs have been run by WCCAO in the past and we would hope that the next two years will see these programs delegated on favorable terms to the participating school districts.

A Legal Aid application has been prepared in conjunction with the County Bar Association and will require considerable effort to establish in the next 6 months.

OEO'S FUTURE

OEO is a politically impotent agency established to operate on a cabinet level for several reasons most of which are a matter of personalities involved. At the same time OEO has made several mistakes and created numerous enemies both political and administrative. For these reasons OEO is the most vulnerable agency on the national scene and could quite possibly be killed by the next Congress.

These problems make it mandatory that Community Action work hard at developing programs and processes which will be able to carry out the philosophy of this organization with or without federal funding and which will be able to survive OEO and Community Action.