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ABSTRACT

The Satellite Technology Demonstration (STD), through its unique field services network (the STD's Utilization Component), was able to develop and insure Project credibility among its many regional, state, and local participants. How the field service mechanism was used to maintain positive relationships between the STD and its many constituents was the focus of this report. Specifically covered were how federal and regional policies (reduction in Project funds) altered the STD's organization, programing, salary scales, training program, site selections, broadcast schedules, future plans, and equipment purchases. A description of how the field services network was used to insure acceptance of those changes among participants with no loss of support or enthusiasm for the STD is also presented. (Author/HB)

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SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION



FEDERATION OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES, INC.

technical report

TR0334

FIELD OPERATIONS
AND
FEDERAL AND REGIONAL POLICY CHANGES

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the greatest threat to federally-funded projects is a lack of credibility. Too often, projects are started, then dropped when funds are no longer available. Enthusiasm for similar projects wanes.

The Satellite Technology Demonstration (STD) was an exception. Through its unique field services network, the STD's Utilization Component was able to develop and insure Project credibility among its many regional, state, and local participants.

Some projects depend on their technology and programming to generate acceptance among their constituents. The STD depended on its field services network.

At the beginning of the Project, Utilization staff members visited potential sites, talked with potential users, and collected demographic data--an activity which required close coordination with governors, state department of education officials, school board members, teachers, community representatives, and others. This demographic data was used to help STD content specialists determine levels of greatest educational need and to develop programming to fill that need.

As the Project matured, Utilization became the structure through which user (or participant) input was solicited, then channeled into other Project components (Broadcast and Engineering, Programming, and Research). Frequent contacts and honest discussion of problems between field service personnel and users led to a relationship between the STD, states, and sites that was based on trust and candor. This "trust" relationship helped to insure state and local acceptance of federal and regional policy changes. In short, it helped to insure Project credibility.

This paper is not concerned with the development of the field services network, which has been discussed in another technical report.* Instead, the paper describes how the field service mechanism was used to maintain positive relationships between the STD and its many constituents.

Specifically, this paper covers how federal and regional policies (for example, reductions in Project funds) altered the STD's organization, programming, salary scales, training

*Technical Report TR0333, "The Development of a Field Services Network for a Satellite-Based Educational Telecommunications Experiment"

programs, site selections, broadcast schedules, future plans, and equipment purchases; it also shows how the field services network was used to insure acceptance of those changes among participants, with no loss of support or enthusiasm for the Demonstration.

The Effects of Budget Cuts on Organization

In January, 1973, the field staff consisted of: a state coordinator; an early childhood content liaison; and a career education specialist. All three positions were funded by STD grants to state-sponsoring agencies. In spring, 1973, the STD's new federal sponsor (the National Institute of Education) reduced Project funds substantially, and the field staff was reduced from three persons to one coordinator in each state.

The STD feared that this reduction easily could undermine confidence and trust in the Project at the state level and that one or more states would withdraw from the Project. To avoid such a disaster and to restore lost confidence in the STD, the Director of the Utilization Component visited the heads of all eight sponsoring state agencies. He assured each agency that the STD, though reduced in scope, still could make significant contributions to developing a telecommunications system and testing educational programming via satellite. The states accepted the information with some apprehension.

State appointments were made jointly by the sponsoring agencies and the STD. In five cases, the original state coordinator remained; in the other three, former career education liaisons were named state coordinators. This example showed how rapid field service action helped to renew state-level support for the STD and to avoid negative reactions by key state officials.

The Effects of Budget Cuts on Programming

As a result of the same budget cut, the STD's planned programming was reduced from career education and early childhood education to career education only. Many sites, however, had been selected for--and subsequently had agreed to participate in--the Demonstration based on their interest in early childhood education. At this stage in the Project, the STD would have had difficulty in reassigning sites, because all the sites required Federal Communications Commission (FCC) clearances, and FCC deadlines had already passed.

Instead of reassigning sites, the STD decided to have its state coordinators visit each site to explain why early childhood education had been eliminated. The coordinators then stressed the importance of continued participation in the Project and convinced site personnel that the STD's major goals still could be accomplished. All sites agreed to remain with the Project.

The Effects of Budget Cuts on Salaries

The STD originally planned to provide site support in the form of materials and personnel. For experimental purposes, the level of support would be varied across sites. Part-time site coordinators would be hired at some sites; full-time, at others. A full-time coordinator--recruited from the local community--would be paid \$6,000. His/her responsibilities included implementing STD programs and procedures at the local level.

When the STD's budget was reduced, the dollar allocation for site support also was reduced. When the time came to hire site coordinators, only \$900 was available for each Receive-Only Terminal (ROT) site and \$1,500 for each Intensive Terminal (IT) site. The IT's two-way audio and data capability required more site coordinator time and manpower than required by the ROT's one-way capability. The STD expected difficulty in hiring qualified coordinators for such small sums of money, but this was not the case, because Utilization developed an alternative. Working with site administrators, the field service staff decided to assign site coordinator duties and salary to a teacher or to other school personnel. Thus, qualified coordinators were hired for a salary that was shared equally by the schools and the STD. Here, then, was another example of how the field mechanism helped to maintain Project credibility: The transition from a \$6,000 to \$1,500 site support budget was possible only because field service staff had developed a strong relationship with site personnel--a relationship based on trust.

The Effects of Budget Cuts on Inservice Training

The inservice training program originally was conceived as an inservice program for the career development teacher(s) involved with the STD junior high school program at each site; it was designed to assist the teachers in implementing the STD curriculum. However, there was

Project concern that such an emphasis would limit the number of potential participants in each site, even though the inservice training program would be available to other teachers, counselors, and administrators. The course was redesigned as a general career development inservice course to address classroom concerns at all grade levels and in all subject. The STD felt that this broad approach would address the concern for the number of participants which had been expressed by the federal funding agencies.

Project personnel decided that interest and participation in a general course could be developed by offering the course for credit through state colleges and universities and for recertification credit through state departments of education. Utilization, through its regional representatives and state coordinators was, therefore, asked to promote the course, based on the following:

1. The series of programs would be sequential; integration would be insured by having regional staff members work with speakers to develop the series.
2. Experts would be employed to prepare quality mediated programs that would help teachers implement career education concepts in their classrooms.
3. The availability of the interactive capability would be stressed, especially the ability to question nationally-known experts.
4. A detailed course outline and a list of the presenters would be available to the interested colleges and universities by February, 1974, to enable them to make their decisions.
5. Field personnel who contacted the colleges and universities would encourage the institutions to participate fully in the program.

Simultaneously, contacts were made with state department of education officials to encourage the states to use the program for recertification credit.

However, production delays forced the STD to modify its policy regarding inservice training. The training program became less integrated than had been anticipated; a sequence of relatively independent presentations was developed, and the STD served more as a host than as an integrater. Also, budget constraints forced the STD to reduce its production costs. As a result, the programs were little more than lectures, unless the presenters provided their own

visual aids. Further, the STD did not have time to develop a course outline, specifying the content and the list of presenters. At the time the course outlines were to have been available, only program topics had been defined. Some presenters were not identified until late summer, 1974.

These circumstances led many colleges and universities to question the credibility of the Project. The fact that regional policy changes were not fully clarified until detailed information was available did not satisfy college schedule requirements. Some colleges canceled planned participation because of the lack of timely specifics. However, several colleges and universities proceeded with credit plans, relying on the judgment of the field representatives regarding the programming. Institutions of higher education in six of the eight STD states have offered credit for teacher participation in the inservice training program.

The Effects of Organizational Change on Site Selections

Project personnel planned to select over 500 sites in an eight-state region to participate in the Demonstration. Delivering programs to this many sites would have impacted heavily on developing career education in the Rocky Mountains. But in mid-1975, NIE replaced the U.S. Office of Education as the STD's federal sponsor. As a result of this move, the STD became more experiment oriented than service oriented, and the number of planned sites was reduced to 68, including 12 public television stations in the eight-state region.

A project servicing 7 to 10 sites per state was, of course, quite different from a project planning to service 60-plus sites in each state. The STD again feared that the Project would lose credibility at the state level. Utilization personnel, therefore, openly admitted the Project's experimental aspects. In discussions with state and local constituents, the field representatives noted that the major goals of the Project were to test the technology as delivery of social services via satellite. Without constant reinforcement of these goals, participants probably would not have realized the abstract long-range utility of their associations with the Project.

The Effects of Site Clearances on Broadcast Schedules

Federal Communications Commission deadlines for site clearance required that site personnel be selected long before actual STD programs were produced. Although sites were asked

to participate in the Project without first seeing the "product", they were assured that they would get STD program samples by fall, 1973. Unfortunately, construction of the studio, as well as production of the programs was delayed, because the STD's federal sponsors couldn't decide on how much money to budget to production. Consequently, the sites did not see a sample program until August, 1974.

In spring, 1974, Utilization and other STD component staffs wrote descriptions of the program content and format. These materials were presented to site personnel at four-hour orientation meetings at each of the sites. Through this face-to-face contact and information sharing, interest in the Project was maintained even without a sample program.

The Effects of Short-Term Grants on Long-Term Plans

The STD had been described and promoted both at the national and regional level on the premise that it was the first of several phases in developing satellite telecommunications capability devoted to delivering social services. The federal government was seen as a catalyst in this effort, and its participation was anticipated for the initial phases.

As the launch of the ATS-6 was awaited, development and planning proceeded on the ATS-G and H respectively. During the major federal cutbacks, these satellites were eliminated, creating another problem in the field: The Project's long-term capability which had been promoted and sold to Project participants was no longer available. States and sites were concerned regarding available satellite capability when the ATS-6 was moved to serve India, as per prior agreement. This indefinite status plagued not only the Project, but also the states and sites, especially in relationship to future planning. States could not be certain if they were committing resources to a one-year experiment or to a potential long-term concept of service delivery. This problem was further complicated by the lack of a firm decision on the part of the federal government regarding the status of the ATS-6 following its scheduled year of transmission in India. Assuming the return of ATS-6, state and site agencies reaffirmed their commitment to follow on satellite demonstrations.

Legitimate questions were raised by both state and local personnel about what would happen to the huge investment--not only in federal dollars, but also in efforts of the regional organization and the commitments and investments of state and local agencies--if the Project

was dropped or if the government didn't decide to continue this capability. Through whom could future satellite capability be available--the federal government, private providers, or a public service satellite network? The STD had been cast in the role of being an information base for future developments, but at this time was left without information and answers to these specific queries from the field. The field staff continued to reinforce the experimental nature of the Project and shared available information about potential future developments.

The Effects of School Budgets on STD Equipment Purchases

Involvement in the STD posed policy questions and decisions to local boards of education. For example, a decision by the NIE to fund a Materials Distribution Services (MDS) had considerable impact on local equipment purchases throughout the region. To participate in the MDS by storing films and tapes in an archive, the schools had to purchase a videotape recorder and large quantities of tape. Sites had previously been told that only a television monitor would be necessary for full participation. To promote the MDS, field personnel held meetings at each site to discuss the advantages of this service.

In addition, engineering personnel determined the best model videotape recorder which would be compatible with STD equipment. A report of the results was prepared and distributed to sites; the report included helpful shopping hints and sample ordering procedures. Also, arrangements were made with a distributor for a reduced group price for the STD schools. Without these efforts, the sites probably would not have realized the benefits of the MDS in time to purchase compatible equipment. All but three sites elected to purchase videotape recorders and tape. Purchases varied from \$1,600 to \$9,700 per site, depending on the number of machines and amount of tape acquired. This decision also allowed sites to videotape other STD-delivered programs for future presentations. The STD's equipment recommendations influenced most schools to buy a single brand of television monitors and, to a lesser extent, a single brand of videotape recorders. By these purchases, the sites indicated a willingness to participate fully in all aspects of the STD project.

However, this decision by the local sites was negatively impacted at a later date when the lack of long-term copyright clearances for both the career development series and the

Materials Distribution films became evident. There was a feeling on the part of some sites that their extensive investment in tapes and video equipment was negated by the lack of copyright clearances on the career education programs and on MDS films. The Utilization staff helped to prepare options for local sites, including the purchase of copyright restrictions through a supplemental grant from the NIE, use of project funds, or purchase of clearances at a reduced rate by the local sites. The result of these efforts was that all school sites were able to purchase the Materials Distribution programs at one-third their normal cost.

SUMMARY

The preceding pages discussed several examples of federal and regional policy changes and the STD's response to these changes. This paper does not condone such changes; obviously, plans are made to be changed. However, the paper does recognize two realities. First, in a less than ideal world, multi-faceted experimental projects are likely to experience mid-course corrections and changes. Second, changes in orientation, reductions in scope, modification of operational procedures, and even expanded services all impact heavily on the attitudes, performance, acceptance, and eventual utilization of project services by project participants. The direction of that impact can be either positive or negative, depending on the specific local situation and on how changes are communicated and implemented. In the STD, the field services network helped to insure that federal and regional policy changes would not have a negative impact on the Project.

Sites were continually informed of changes and the context in which changes were made. Sites were aware of the decision-making process and frequently participated in that process. An awareness of the problems inherent in any federally-funded project enabled sites and state agencies to accept changes and respond to them in a positive rather than negative manner. These results are different from those been observed in projects which, lacking a field service orientation, simply dictated decisions.

In terms of implementing changes, the field service network functioned as a marketing agent--a retailer of concepts explaining the reasons and expectations for Project modifications. It also functioned as a negotiator or arbitrator, accepting and analyzing input based on user

need to help Project operations respond to individual or local situations. Further, it functioned as a creator of local options, presenting sites with ideas for effective utilization of Project services. Finally, the field service network operated as a humanizing element, allowing participants to deal with Project decision-makers--not indirectly by written communiques, but rather by face-to-face discussions. These marketing and support elements helped to generate and maintain enthusiasm for the STD among its many regional, state, and local constituents.

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