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## ABSTRACT

The Youth Offender Demonstration Project (YODP) combined oversight of youth offenders with services to support youth offenders' passage into the world of work by providing recommended social development strategies for youth offenders. YODP demonstration projects were funded in the following categories: (1) model community projects; (2) education and training for youth offenders initiatives; and (3) community-wide coordination projects. The YODP technical assistance effort consisted of seven specific tasks designed to identify barriers to project implementation, recommend options for working through the identified barriers, and arrange for expert, situation-tailored assistance to address barriers. The technical assistance and evaluation teams identified the following attributes of projects successfully implementing the coordinated spectrum of services to the target population: (1) created a well-conceived plan; (2) had previous experience with the juvenile and criminal justice system; (3) collected and maintained data; (4) developed a community support network; (5) maintained strong grantee involvement; (6) connected the workforce and justice systems effectively; (7) leveraged resources through collaboration and partnership; (8) developed a continuous improvement process; and (9) shared leadership and information. The technical assistance team also gleaned 12 lessons pertaining to the following areas: the philosophy of technical assistance; sequencing of issues in technical assistance; the structure of projects; and relationships. (Contains 14 references.) (MN)

**YOUTH OFFENDER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

January 2002

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## Preface

There is a growing consensus among youth development experts that youth who come under court supervision have multiple issues that must be addressed in comprehensive and coordinated ways if they are to attain employment at wages that will sustain a constructive life path. The Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration, working with the Department of Justice/Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, developed a demonstration project that focused on providing such coordinated services for youth. Its goal was to help youth find employment that would reduce dependency and break the cycle of crime and recidivism.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999) reports that more than one million cases of delinquent behavior were heard in court in 1996 and that more than 100,000 youth were retained in residential correctional facilities in 1997. These youth reside in or will return to local communities across the nation. Developing local capacity to meet the needs of and to direct these youth along constructive paths is an investment in them and in the community's social and economic strength. Further, research demonstrates that economic self-sufficiency is a protective factor in reducing or preventing juvenile delinquency (Brown, et al. 2001)

Coordination of vision and services is easily recommended but difficult to attain. The Youth Offender Demonstration Project (YODP) required government agency and nonprofit organization staff to implement a method of working together across organizational boundaries, different accountability structures, and diverse ways of operating and reporting. The Department of Labor, recognizing the challenges these pioneering organizations would meet, provided technical assistance to the projects.

This volume describes technical assistance approaches and activities used during the project. It attempts, moreover, to develop a public management model for implementing other cross-agency cooperative service delivery operations. Further, this report examines the technical assistance process itself in order to plan and sequence similar efforts more effectively in the future.

Although the YODP tested a variety of service delivery strategies in a diverse set of communities, ultimately the purpose of the demonstration was to deduce effective practices that have *universal* application. As a result, the demonstration identified a set of nine effective organizational attributes shared by the most successfully implemented demonstration projects. These have been incorporated into a public management model, which provides an approach that has shown to be effective in *administering* programs targeting youth offenders and youth at-risk of court or gang involvement.

While the project does not prescribe one specific service strategy, it reflects the hypothesis that organizations that structure their work around the public management model will be better able to formulate and implement an effective service delivery strategy that responds to a community's unique needs. Further, the public management model is expected to assist projects to: (a) assess the unique needs of the community; (b) identify key stakeholders and partners integral to the success of the programs; (c) map and access resources within the community; and (d) better implement an effective integrated service strategy tailored to meet the community's specific needs. The public management model, developed during the first round of the YODP, will be further developed and refined during the second round of demonstrations.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Congress set aside \$13.1 million in the Department of Labor's Pilot and Demonstration budget in the 1998 Program Year for programs to address the needs of youth who were, had been, or were at risk of coming under justice supervision. The Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) collaborated with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Department of Justice (DOJ) in announcing solicitation SGA/DAA 98-015. The Solicitation for Grant Applications focused on projects designed to get youth at risk of criminal involvement, youth offenders, and gang members between the ages of 14 and 24 into long-term employment at wage levels that would prevent future dependency and would break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency.

Scholars studying juvenile offenders have called for a balance between strategies to control youth offender behaviors and efforts to build up the youths' assets, recognizing that there is a tension between assuring community and victim protection and meeting the social development needs of the youthful offenders themselves (Bazemore and Umbreit 1994). For the Youth Offender Demonstration Project (YODP), the role of surveillance of youthful offenders was maintained by the court and probation officers while services and case management support were provided through the employment training agencies and nonprofit organizations in the community. The YODP, combining oversight of the youth while delivering services to support their passage to the world of work, provided a theoretically driven demonstration of recommended social development strategies for youth offenders.

Scholars reviewed 30 years of research, noting the relationship between causes of delinquency and the chronological age of the children (family factors at younger ages, school experiences, followed by peer groups); they called their theory a social development theory because it followed the social development of the youth. They recognized the research findings that delinquency occurs with greater frequency with co-occurring risk factors (Hawkins and Catalano 1993, quoted in Howell, Krisberg, and Jones 1995). Common risk factors, such as availability of drugs, lack of commitment to school, family management problems, and early academic failure were useful in predicting behavior problems. Research revealed that the more risk factors present, the greater the risk of juvenile problem behavior. Protective factors that buffer children from the adverse effects of risk factors included "healthy beliefs and clear standards for productive, law-abiding behavior, and bonding with adults who adhere to these beliefs and standards." (Steiner 1994).

DOL awarded grants to 14 round one YODP sites in June 1999<sup>1</sup>. Demonstration projects were designated according to one of three categories:

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<sup>1</sup>Subsequent to the award of this initial round of grants, ETA funded additional rounds of Youth Offender Demonstration Project grants to state and local areas.

- **Category I - Model Community Projects** were set in high-poverty neighborhoods where comprehensive, community-wide approaches to dealing with youth already had been established:

- (1) Denver, Colorado;
- (2) Houston, Texas;
- (3) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;
- (4) Richmond, California; and
- (5) Seattle, Washington.

- **Category II - Education and Training for Youth Offenders Initiatives** provided comprehensive school-to-work education and training within juvenile correctional facilities as well as follow-up services and job placement when youth left correctional facilities and returned to their home communities:

- (6) Columbus, Ohio;
- (7) Indianapolis, Indiana; and
- (8) Tallahassee, Florida.

- **Category III - Community-wide Coordination Projects** worked with local youth service providers to develop linkages that strengthened the coordination of prevention and aftercare services for youth in small to medium-size cities with high poverty and high crime:

- (9) Clifton, New Jersey;
- (10) Bakersfield, California;
- (11) Knoxville, Tennessee;
- (12) Minneapolis, Minnesota;
- (13) Pensacola, Florida; and
- (14) Rockford, Illinois.

The projects operated for 24 months from the time of grant negotiation, generally from summer 1999 to summer 2001. The first six months were for planning; the remaining 18 months for implementation.



In May 1999, Research and Evaluation Associates received a task order from DOL to provide technical assistance support to the 14 projects. In June 1999, Research and Evaluation Associates received a task order to provide a process evaluation of 12 of the 14 sites. Two Category II sites, Tallahassee and Indianapolis, were evaluated under a DOJ contract as possible candidates for an outcomes evaluation based on a randomized design methodology.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DELIVERY**

The goal of the technical assistance (TA) effort was to identify barriers to project implementation, to recommend options for working through these barriers, and to arrange for expert assistance, tailored to the situation, to address them. The purpose of the TA was to provide problem-solving and alternative strategies to assure that projects could adequately demonstrate the value of the integrated services model, that is, delivering a coordinated spectrum of services intended to address the multiple needs of the target population.

The technical assistance consisted of seven tasks:

- Task One.** Conducting introductory conferences for the grantees.
- Task Two.** Assigning lead contact persons to each grantee.
- Task Three.** Providing technical assistance in specialized areas as needed by the Category I Model Community and Category II Education and Training grantees.
- Task Four.** Collecting administrative crime data at baseline and at 18-month follow-up from the police precincts in Category I Model Community sites.
- Task Five.** Assisting the Category II Education and Training grantees in setting up management information systems (MIS) to track the characteristics, services received, and outcomes of youth served.
- Task Six.** Preparing three separate technical assistance guides based on the experiences of the Category I Model Community, Category II Education and Training, and Category III Community-wide Coordination projects. (This task was eliminated when the process evaluation of the projects was funded.)
- Task Seven.** Preparing a final report on the accomplishments of the grantees and suggestions to DOL for improving such projects in the future.

Technical assistance is the process of providing help to resolve a problem or create innovative approaches. In the YODP, projects' staff were encouraged to make requests for technical assistance based on their assessment of barriers and opportunities. Research and Evaluation Associates, responding to their requests, provided technical assistance to the demonstration projects in many ways:

- on-site visits;
- telephone and e-mail contacts with project staff;
- conferences and workshops;
- information dissemination; and
- regular conference calls with demonstration projects, DOL and OJJDP.

Three conferences or workshops were organized for the projects' staff. The conferences combined presentations by topic area specialists and program staff persons with related experience. Two meetings involved all the participant projects and the third focused on the three Category II projects.

Each project had a Research and Evaluation Associates technical assistance specialist who assisted it with arranging technical assistance. These technical assistance specialists conferred with the project staff to clarify their requests and arranged for the delivery of the appropriate response. All such technical assistance events and activities were evaluated by the projects and by the specialist(s) arranging the technical assistance. The Research and Evaluation Associates specialists also designed a Youth Offender Demonstration Project Website and developed a data collection template for the projects. They arranged conference calls by project category for mutual learning, and they engaged the resources of the National Youth Employment Coalition for peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Based on their interactions with the projects the technical assistance and evaluation teams, working with project officers at DOL, identified a public management model of demonstration administration, that is, nine attributes of projects that were successfully implementing the coordinated spectrum of services to the target population:

1. **Created a well-conceived plan:** Projects that had a clear vision and plan with achievable outcomes were more likely to implement projects in a timely way, even when the plan needed changing at various milestones.
2. **Had previous experience with the juvenile and criminal justice system:** Projects that had prior experience with the justice system were more likely to receive court or probation referrals and to work effectively with the target population.
3. **Collected and maintained data:** Projects that collected key information about their operations were more likely to manage the projects better.
4. **Developed a community support network:** Projects that developed a broad network of supporters and stakeholders were better able to find resources within the community.

5. **Maintained strong grantee involvement:** Projects that were led by a grantee that remained involved were more likely to keep the partnership working well and avoid goal displacement.
6. **Connected the workforce and justice systems effectively:** Projects that established close working relationships with key leaders in the two systems and used their resources were better able to recruit and train target youth.
7. **Leveraged resources through collaborations and partnerships:** Projects that leveraged resources through partnerships and collaborations were able to bring more services and more diverse services to the target population. They were also more likely to remain in partnership after the demonstration.
8. **Developed a continuous improvement system:** Projects that remained open to staff and organizational development, including technical assistance, were more likely to implement their projects effectively and in a timely fashion.
9. **Shared leadership and information:** Projects that shared leadership and information were more likely to have stakeholder ownership and loyalty.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Although some lessons gleaned from this demonstration were related to the public management model, DOL and Research and Evaluation Associates also learned some important lessons about effective practices for providing technical assistance. In comparing projects, four general themes surfaced in relation to delivery of technical assistance:

- **Philosophy of Technical Assistance:** A philosophy of technical assistance should be based on openness to, and willingness of, the projects to continue to learn.

**Lesson 1:** Technical assistance needs to be introduced as a resource for continuous improvement. Every opportunity needs to be exploited to demonstrate that using it is a good management technique and not a sign of weakness.

**Lesson 2:** Technical assistance from outside the partnership is essential to facilitate the clarification of roles and responsibilities, especially when there are some emotions attached to current operating procedures. An outside facilitator can maneuver the group through the tensions as well as support their efforts to deal with technical issues of organizational responsiveness and accountability.

- **Sequencing of Issues in Technical Assistance:** It is important that technical assistance is sequenced appropriately, that is, to recognize that partnership development and planning are early issues needing attention, while other issues emerge as the project engages the youth. Some issues cannot be addressed until the fundamental programming is in place.

**Lesson 3:** Developing partnerships should anticipate needing technical assistance early--before months of struggle have left some members of the partnership frustrated and angry with other members of the partnership.

**Lesson 4:** Technical assistance is a valuable resource in developing a realistic Implementation Plan early in the project period.

**Lesson 5:** Programming issues may not emerge until the demonstration is under way, and technical assistance can be very valuable in keeping the project staff from becoming overwhelmed by the individual differences among the youths' needs.

**Lesson 6:** Responses to technical assistance requests need to be attentive to the timing of the issue. Projects may not be able to attend to one set of issues until others have reached a more stable footing.

**Lesson 7:** Fundamental orientation issues need to be revisited. In the continuous-improvement mind set, this is an easy and comfortable process; for others, it might be an embarrassment to request technical assistance on issues carefully presented in the early stages of the project.

- **The Structure of Projects:** The project structure is important, and it is important to allow it to change, perhaps repeatedly, until the goals of serving the youth are met adequately.

**Lesson 8:** The members of the partnership need to be aware of and committed to meeting the diverse and multiple needs of the target population. Relationships and arrangements need to be forged to meet these unusual demands.

**Lesson 9:** Technical assistance is valuable in freeing project leadership to re-invent itself, perhaps several times. Leaders need to be encouraged to experiment with the demonstration model until it effectively meets the needs of the youth it is designed to serve. The value of the courage and persistence of project teams in struggling to provide the nation with workable models cannot be overstated.

- **Relationships:** Relationships undergird the technical assistance efforts; they are built on trust and candor.

**Lesson 10:** Technical assistance requires both clarity of analysis and gentle candor with all parties. It is not enough to have made an accurate assessment of a situation; the follow through must be conducted in a way that improves the projects and keeps the relationships intact.

**Lesson 11:** There is a difference between providing technical assistance and monitoring. Trying to combine the two functions reduces the openness of projects to seeking or receiving technical assistance.

**Lesson 12:** Sustaining a climate that encourages collegial peer-to-peer relationships among project teams is an important dimension to technical assistance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Future Technical Assistance Efforts**

Future technical assistance specialists need to consciously forge partnerships with the projects' staff and the DOL project officers in their common search for workable models to assist court supervised youth and youth at risk of gang or criminal involvement to make a successful transition to employment at wages that prevents future dependency or criminal activity:

- Create an environment that frees project leaders to try new approaches and that assesses the outcomes carefully is based on strong and trusted communication and
- Create technical assistance plans to facilitate the continuous improvement process.

Future technical assistance needs to be more conscious of the likely issues of concern at various points in the development and implementation of the integrated services model.

### **Future Demonstration Projects**

Future demonstration projects need to be designed to account for the multiple and varied nature of issues the youth face to help them transition to employment.

- Partnerships in the future need to include state and local health care, housing and educational systems.
- The public management model needs to be tested and re-evaluated in subsequent demonstrations.

When future demonstrations show promise, it will be important to find ways to track the youth for a longer period of time to allow for an assessment of long-term outcomes. The ability to hold a job, establish independent living, open a bank account, or remain free of the court system are long-term outcomes that could not be determined because of the nature of this demonstration.



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## Section I

### INTRODUCTION

Congress set aside \$13.1 million in the Department of Labor's Pilot and Demonstration budget in Program Year 1998 for programs to address the needs of youth who were at risk of coming under criminal and juvenile justice supervision. The Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) collaborated with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Department of Justice (DOJ) in announcing SGA/DAA 98-015. The solicitation for grant applications focused on projects designed to get youth at risk of criminal involvement, youth offenders, and gang members between the ages of 14 and 24 into long-term employment at wage levels that would prevent future dependency and would break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency.

The design of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project (YODP) reflected a social development approach to understanding juvenile offenders. Scholars, studying the factors affecting juvenile delinquency, reviewed 30 years of research and developed a social development theory of delinquency based on the relationship between causes of delinquency and the chronological age of the children (family factors at younger ages, school experiences, followed by peer groups). In effect, they argued that youth offenders were not as socially developed as they theoretically should have been for their age (Hawkins and Catalano 1993).

The social development theory reflected in the design of the YODP points to an understanding of the concepts of risk and protective factors. James Howell (1995) noted that risk factors existed in multiple domains (community, family, school, individuals/peers) and that common risk factors, such as availability of drugs, lack of commitment to school, family management problems, and early academic failure, were useful in predicting diverse behavior problems. Risk factors had consistent effects across different races and cultures. Further, research also revealed that the more risk factors present, the greater the risk of juvenile problem behavior (Mendel 2000).

Protective factors helped buffer exposure to risks. Protective factors included "healthy beliefs and clear standards for productive, law-abiding behavior, and bonding with adults who adhered to these beliefs and standards" (Steiner, 1994). Researchers (Benson, Galbraith, Espeland, 1995) analyzed the survey results of more than 270,000 young people in 600 communities across the United States and found that the difference between troubled teens and those leading healthy, productive, and positive lives was strongly affected by the presence of "developmental assets." The more developmental assets the young people had (such as family support, self-esteem, and hope) the less likely they were to use alcohol and other drugs, and exhibit other problem behaviors.

Delinquency prevention and intervention strategies in reducing juvenile crime showed positive benefits when they were based on theory-driven prevention practices. When they had knowledge about the risk factors that confronted youth, communities could develop and implement effective prevention and

intervention programs to strengthen community institutions and buffer children from the effects of the identified risk factors.

Promising approaches in delinquency prevention, intervention, and treatment have resulted in the development of key principles and a comprehensive strategy for preventing and reducing adolescent problem behavior:

- strengthening families in their role of providing guidance and discipline, and instilling sound values as their children's first and primary teachers;
- supporting core social institutions, including schools, churches, and other community-organizations, to alleviate risk factors and help children develop to their maximum potential; and
- promoting prevention strategies that reduce the impact of risk factors and enhance the influence of protective factors in the lives of youth at great risk of delinquency.

The emerging professional consensus was that communities needed comprehensive strategies or models to combat youth crime, reduce recidivism and gang involvement, and assist youth to secure employment at livable wage levels. The YODP provided communities with a theory-driven, research-based prevention framework. It also provided for local control of program planning and implementation. The project grantees were also assured that they would receive the tools, training, and technical assistance needed to bring community members together to build on that framework. This process and grant funding enabled communities to design and implement comprehensive programming for the targeted population.

The following issue areas were important components of the youth offender demonstration model and provided the framework for planning and developing programming for youth.

- **Community-wide Collaboration.** The YODP strove to change ways of thinking about youth program planning. Representatives from a variety of community sectors, including workforce development boards, courts, schools, police, healthcare, human services, and community organizations, were working together and learning first-hand how prevention and intervention efforts could be implemented successfully. The approach was to develop the coordination that would drive a better application of resources and reduce duplication of effort that often occurred within human services.
- **Employment and Training.** Schools and communities were to view the school dropout problem from both prevention and intervention perspectives. Intervention approaches could use regular or alternative schools, or develop ties to the business community to provide academic or job training that addressed the needs and interests of students. These programs would provide students not only with a high school diploma or its equivalent, but also a certificate of achievement for learning a skill or trade that would help them gain entry to employment after school.

Court- and gang-involved youth, or youth at risk of such involvement, often were unsuccessful in the traditional school system and found it difficult to learn marketable skills or compete for jobs. Yet research demonstrated that employability was critical to the success of youth who were at risk for delinquent acts. The project recognized the link between crime and lack of economic and educational opportunity. It also required concerted attention through collaboration among employers, the juvenile justice establishment, the educational system, and the workforce development system.

- **Alternative Sentencing and Community Service.** A justice system based on the balanced approach differed from traditional systems in that competency development, accountability, and community protection objectives provided clear outcomes directed at the offender, the victim, and the community. All three components were to receive balanced attention and gain tangible benefits from their interaction with the justice system. Bazemore and Umbreit's Balanced and Restorative Justice model (1994) stressed that offenders should leave the justice system capable of being productive and responsible citizens; victims and communities should have their losses restored, and should be empowered as active participants in the juvenile justice process; and the justice system must protect society by providing a range of intervention alternatives (mostly community-based) geared to the varying risks presented by offenders.
- **Gang Initiatives.** The underlying assumption of the Spergel Model (1990) was that gang problems were largely a response to community social disorganization, where key social institutions such as schools, family, police, and businesses were unable to address the problem collaboratively. The key idea of the model was to have organizations and representatives of local communities join forces to engage and control the behavior of young gang members, and encourage them to participate in legitimate societal activities.
- **Aftercare for Youth Returning from Detention.** David Altschuler (1998) and other researchers theorized that if juvenile offenders received intensive intervention while they were incarcerated, during their transition back to the community, and when they were under community supervision, they would benefit in areas such as family and peer relations, education, employment, substance abuse, mental health, and recidivism. The Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP) model stressed collaboration among the juvenile justice system, probation and parole, and community-based service providers to address the specific needs of youth offenders.

## **Overview of the Youth Offender Demonstration**

In June 1999 DOL funded 14 round one sites for the YODP in three categories:

- **Category I - Model Community Projects** were set in high-poverty neighborhoods where comprehensive, community-wide approaches to dealing with youth had been established:

- (1) Denver, Colorado;

- (2) Houston, Texas;
- (3) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;
- (4) Richmond, California; and
- (5) Seattle, Washington.

■ **Category II - Education and Training for Youth Offenders Initiatives** provided comprehensive School-To-Work (STW) education and training within juvenile correctional facilities as well as aftercare services and job placement when youth left correctional facilities and returned to their home communities:

- (6) Columbus, Ohio;
- (7) Indianapolis, Indiana; and
- (8) Tallahassee, Florida.

■ **Category III - Community-wide Coordination Projects** worked with local youth service providers to develop linkages that strengthened the coordination of prevention and aftercare services for youth offenders in small to medium-sized cities with high rates of poverty and crime:

- (9) Bakersfield, California;
- (10) Clifton, New Jersey;
- (11) Knoxville, Tennessee;
- (12) Minneapolis, Minnesota;
- (13) Pensacola, Florida; and
- (14) Rockford, Illinois.

In May 1999, Research and Evaluation Associates received a task order from DOL to provide technical assistance support to the 14 projects. In June 1999, Research and Evaluation Associates received another task order to provide a process evaluation of 12 of the 14 sites. Two Category II sites, Tallahassee and Indianapolis, were to be evaluated under a DOJ contract as possible candidates for an outcomes evaluation based on a quasi-experimental research design.

The goal of the technical assistance (TA) effort was to identify barriers to project implementation, to recommend options for working through these barriers, and to arrange for expert assistance, tailored

to the situation, to address them. The purpose of the technical assistance was to provide problem-solving and alternative strategies to ensure that projects could adequately demonstrate the value of the integrated services model, that is, delivering a coordinated spectrum of services intended to address the multiple needs of the target population.

### Overview of the Technical Assistance Effort

The technical assistance effort consisted of seven tasks:

- Task One.** Conducting introductory conferences for the grantees.
- Task Two.** Assigning lead contact persons to each grantee. These contact persons were to provide on-going technical assistance to the grantees, including site visits. Contact persons were to play an active role in providing technical assistance to the Category I Model Community and Category II Education and Training grantees, including several site visits over the two years covered by the project. Technical assistance to the Category III Community-wide Coordination grantees was to consist mainly of answering inquiries by the grantees, including only one site visit to these grantees during the project.
- Task Three.** Providing technical assistance in specialized areas as needed by the Category I Model Community and Category II Education and Training grantees.
- Task Four.** Collecting administrative crime data at baseline and at 18-month follow-up from the police precincts in Category I Model Community sites.
- Task Five.** Assisting the Category II Education and Training grantees in setting up management information systems to track the characteristics, services received, and outcomes of youth served.
- Task Six.** Preparing three separate technical assistance guides based on the experiences of the Model Community, Education and Training, and Community-wide Coordination projects. These technical assistance guides were to be aimed toward high-poverty communities, cities, states, and juvenile detention facilities wishing to learn from or replicate these demonstration projects. These guides were to focus on what works and what doesn't work, and what lessons were learned from each of these grant categories. (This task was eliminated in order to fund the process evaluation.)
- Task Seven.** Preparing a final report on the accomplishments of the grantees and suggestions to DOL for improving such projects in the future.

The following section describes the technical assistance effort task-by-task. Section III focuses on the lessons learned as patterns of effective practices emerged during the later months of the projects'

operations. The final section offers recommendations for future technical assistance efforts and future demonstration projects.

## Section II

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DELIVERY

Technical assistance is the process of providing help to resolve a problem or create innovative approaches related to the YODP. Grantee projects' staff were encouraged to make requests for technical assistance based on their assessment of barriers and opportunities. Research and Evaluation Associates, responding to their requests, provided technical assistance to the demonstration projects in many ways:

- on-site visits;
- telephone and e-mail contacts with project staff;
- conferences and workshops;
- information dissemination; and
- regular conference calls with demonstration projects, DOL and OJJDP.

The delivery of technical assistance and training to the demonstration projects occurred in two phases. During the first phase, technical assistance was provided in a general way while the structure of the demonstration projects was still evolving: Answering inquiries and finding resources for projects on components of the integrated services model. During the second phase, technical assistance became more outcome-focused, for example, working with the project staff to reconfigure the flow of youth through the project. Essentially, patterns started emerging in the more successfully implemented demonstration projects that led to the development of a public management model, or attributes of successful projects, that served as desirable indicators for tailoring future technical assistance.

This section describes the technical assistance effort according to the order of tasks listed in the DOL task order.

#### **Task One: Introductory and Follow-up Conferences**

At the outset of the project, a Research and Evaluation Associates technical assistance team visited each project site to gain a better understanding of the context, opportunities, and challenges the site faced. It was also an opportunity to get acquainted with the project's key stakeholders and staff and to identify possible project implementation issues. The information collected from the site visits was the springboard in the design and content of the introductory conference for demonstration grantees, "Reducing Crime and Increasing Employment," held September 14-15, 1999.



The conference was the initial vehicle for providing technical assistance to demonstration grantees. Attendees shared ideas about effective ways to bring about systematic change in communities in order to reduce the incidence of juvenile crime and rates of recidivism, and to increase the number and percentage of youth who successfully obtain long-term employment. Workshops and plenary sessions covered the following topical areas, some in category-specific workshops:

- Developing community linkages and building community capacity;
- Providing Bi-level Case Management services;<sup>2</sup>
- Identifying risk and protective factors in families, schools, peers, communities and within him/herself;
- Developing effective youth employment programs;
- Managing and monitoring grant budgets;
- Identifying apprenticeship opportunities;
- Developing employment opportunities by using the Federal Bonding Program;
- Developing employment opportunities by using the tax incentives;
- Coordinating education programs and School-to-Work;
- Exploring career opportunities in the telecommunications industry;
- Developing strong employer connections;
- Best practices in juvenile crime reduction;
- Best practices in youth employment and training; and
- How to access technical assistance.

There were, however, few requests for technical assistance in the months following this conference. Several reasons seemed to delay these requests: many projects remained in the start-up phase, where major activities and barriers concerned staffing the projects and securing facilities for service delivery. Furthermore, DOL project officers were unable to travel to their assigned project sites due to government travel restrictions at that time. In several cases, community leadership groups needed DOL prodding to move the YODP into a more active phase.

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<sup>2</sup>Bi-level Case Management is a process for coordinating the management of clients across multiple agencies, assuring that the agencies know what the youth should have received and what services they did receive.

### **Conference Two: Tampa Winter Workshop**

Research and Evaluation Associates' technical assistance team worked closely with the DOL project team to craft a strategy to jump start the projects that were stuck in the start-up phase. The first step in this strategy was hosting the Youth Offender Demonstration Winter Workshop in Tampa, FL, from January 31, 2000 through February 2, 2000. This workshop was designed to further assist demonstration grantees with understanding the project models and implementing important components of the demonstration, such as:

- School-to-Work systems;
- Gang prevention, intervention, and suppression initiatives;
- Effective and sustainable collaborative efforts;
- Alternative sentencing and community service;
- Process evaluation and needs for management information systems;
- Youth development and employment; and
- Intensive Aftercare Program model.

### **Conference Three: Category II Lakeland, FL Workshop**

Category II Education and Training projects requested a category-specific conference to focus more attention on the specific characteristics of their integrated services model: school-to-work systems in correctional facilities, transitions back to communities, and intensive aftercare. The grantees further requested that the conference be held near one of the Education and Training project sites. Consequently, a workshop took place in Lakeland, FL, on March 14 and 15, 2001.

The goals for the meeting were to:

- Discuss/share ideas and concerns;
- Identify data collection needs;
- Identify Intensive Aftercare Program Principles; and
- Develop strategies for implementing YODP enterprises.

A highlight of this workshop was the visit to the STREETSsmart headquarters in Lakeland and the tour of the Avon Park Academy. Activities included meeting the youth, visiting the vocational training

workshops, academic classrooms, and living quarters, and speaking to the youth, their mentors, and their teachers.

### **Task Two: Lead Contact Persons**

Research and Evaluation Associates assigned a technical assistance specialist to serve as the main point of contact for each project. One technical assistance specialist was the Assistant Project Manager for Community Programs, who was the liaison for the five Category I Model Community projects and one Category III project. The other was the Assistant Project Manager for Technical Assistance and Training, who was the liaison for the Category II Education and Training projects and the remaining five Category III Community-wide Coordination projects.

The two technical assistance specialists visited each project and maintained contact with project leadership on an on-going basis. They used these contacts to identify conference or conference call topics and resource materials of common interest. They arranged the conferences, conference calls and developed a YODP Website.

The technical assistance specialists served as liaisons between the projects and DOL on certain technical assistance requests and issues. It was they who urged DOL to intervene in certain operations, and it was they who supported the requests from Category III projects to get more assistance.

The technical assistance specialists kept the focus of the demonstrations on the key components of the coordinated service strategy, that is, they continued to urge project leadership to develop or strengthen components in which the leaders may have had less interest. Several employment and training organizations were less interested in gang prevention and suppression, for example, not realizing how involved were the youth they were serving. Similarly, the technical assistance specialists urged the projects to continue revising their service delivery profile and processes when initial efforts seemed ineffectual. Several projects sought out more sources of funding or leveraged resources as the range of needs became more apparent.

Most important, however, was their role in brokering technical assistance between consultants or PEPNet specialists and the projects. This brokering role was related to their role in maintaining the focus of the projects on the integrated services model. By helping project leadership understand the challenges they were facing, these technical assistance experts were also in a position to recommend help to move the projects through the barriers they were encountering.

### **Task Three: Providing Technical Assistance in Specialized Areas as Needed by the Category I Model Community and Category II Education and Training grantees.**

Research and Evaluation Associates technical assistance specialists visited each project before the first conference. During the site visits, the lead contact persons met with key staff members from each project and members of various community partnerships who would be contributing to the projects. Community-based service agencies and correctional facility visits were conducted when feasible. The lead contact persons also collected copies of project implementation plans and administrative crime data when available. Site visit reports summarizing the activities conducted during the visit, project coordination, outcomes of the visit, recommended courses of action for the site, and follow-up technical assistance activities were prepared by the lead technical assistance person for each site visit. Copies of the site visit reports were forwarded to the appropriate project officer.

Category III project staff asked for the opportunity to request technical assistance while at the Tampa meeting. Heretofore, they had been limited to one technical assistance visit at the beginning of the project. Originally, the Category III projects were considered smaller in scope and more focused on networking among existing service delivery partners than offering new service delivery models or new services. In time, it became clear that the projects were trying to forge new partnerships and leverage additional services for the target population. They were, moreover, meeting challenges similar to those faced by projects' staff in Categories I and II.

Because requests for technical assistance were slow to surface, even from projects struggling to implement their programs, Research and Evaluation Associates' technical assistance specialists outlined a new strategy. This new technical assistance strategy involved working with DOL project officers and demonstration grantees to develop technical assistance plans for each project site. The goal was to help the sites implement all the components of the demonstration model and to introduce a continuous improvement process after the model components were in place. By having a technical assistance plan, the projects were able to move into a regular series of staff and organizational development training sessions that did not connote a crisis, but rather an effort to provide on-going staff training and project development.

Following the development of the modified technical assistance delivery strategy and the implementation of site-specific technical assistance plans, technical assistance to the demonstration projects moved into the mature phase. On-site technical assistance provided opportunities to strengthen required components in each of the three categories of the demonstration. Experts or experienced peers helped grantees strengthen their programming to ensure that program models were consistent with best practices in employment and training, and juvenile or criminal justice. This more aggressive strategy assisted the projects to move forward. (See Tables 1, 2, and 3.)

Several Category I projects, for example, had not added a gang prevention and suppression strategy to their program plans. Their technical assistance plans called for one or more sessions with gang prevention and suppression specialists. From those sessions, the projects became aware of how gang-involved their youth were and were able to select the strategies that fit with their other programming to address the implications of the gang presence. Another project had the rudiments of an aftercare program, but the case load of youth to case worker was 40 to 1. Few resources were available, moreover, to address substance abuse, personal anger management, or for strengthening family

relationships. After a series of technical assistance visits, the project was able to find grants to augment the aftercare program, especially by reducing case loads by half.

Table 1. Summary of On-site Technical Assistance to the Category I Demonstration Projects

DENVER, CO	HOUSTON, TX	PHILADELPHIA, PA	RICHMOND, CA	SEATTLE, WA
<p>1. August 23-24, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi, DOL and OJJDP staff jointly conducted the initial site visit to meet with project staff and partners, and gained a better understanding of the proposed project, including the opportunities and potential challenges.</p> <p>2. January 19, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi conducted a workshop on Performance Measurement to assist the project team with developing indicators of success.</p> <p>3. March 23-24, 2000: Tom English facilitated workshops on gang initiatives, aftercare, and building collaborations. The purpose was to use existing resources to provide and strengthen the components of this model.</p> <p>4. August 15, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi provided telephone TA on programming for 14 and 15 year old clients, resulting in a shift in program emphasis from pre-employment training to high school completion.</p> <p>5. October 2000. Scheduled site visit was canceled due to the sudden departure of Denver's project coordinator, Mario Salinas. However, Abel Ekpunobi provided telephonic TA and recommended that DAYS work closely with Metro Gang Coalition to incorporate gang prevention/intervention strategies into its existing curriculum.</p> <p>6. January 31-Feb 2, 2001: Tom English facilitated a planning meeting with project partners to once again clarify their roles in the project and strengthen program components such as gang prevention/intervention and alternative sentencing.</p>	<p>1. August 30, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi conducted the initial site visit to meet with project staff and partners, and gained a better understanding of the proposed project, including the opportunities and potential challenges.</p> <p>2. April 18-19, 2000: Linda Reed provided on-site TA. She facilitated a planning session with project partners to assist the project develop protocols and deadlines for recruiting, processing and serving clients.</p> <p>3. June 15, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi conducted a site visit to assess program implementation and determine further TA needs. Presented the principles of performance management to agency administration.</p> <p>4. September 10-13, 2000: Tom English worked with the Mayor's Anti-Gang Program to strengthen gang suppression activities; and with U-Turn project staff to refine goals, develop measurable outcomes for each goal, and strategies for their accomplishment. He also made a presentation to project key partners regarding current juvenile justice research and its relevance to the U-Turn Project.</p> <p>5. February 4 - 8, 2001: Tom English facilitated a series of meetings designed to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the new advisory body, Partnership for At-Risk Youth Strategies (PARYS). The session assisted project partners clarify their roles and develop protocols for cross agency collaboration.</p>	<p>1. August 16, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi, Peggy Richmond, DOL and OJJDP staff jointly conducted the initial site visit to meet with project staff and partners, and gained a better understanding of the proposed project, including the opportunities and potential challenges.</p> <p>2. May 30-31, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi and DOL staff conducted on-site visit to assess program implementation and determine TA needs.</p> <p>3. July 24-25, 2000: As a follow-up to the May site visit Linda Reed facilitated planning sessions to address problems associated with programming, program implementation, and cross agency collaboration.</p> <p>4. November 6-7, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi assisted project staff with modifying their project design to also serve eligible youth who did not qualify for placement at TOPS or Twilight. A new implementation plan and client flow diagram was developed. A new client database developed by Research and Evaluation Associates was provided to the client for their use.</p> <p>5. March 7-8, 2001: Abel Ekpunobi conducted a site visit to assist the project assess the implementation of the new program design and review program performance.</p>	<p>1. August 11, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi conducted the initial site visit to meet with project staff and partners, and gained a better understanding of the proposed project, including the opportunities and potential challenges.</p> <p>2. March 29, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi, DOL and OJJDP staff jointly conducted a site visit to assess program implementation and identify TA needs.</p> <p>3. June 10, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi coordinated with the National Training and Technical Assistance Center to provide information on Substance Abuse Treatment and funding resources.</p> <p>4. September 19-20, 2000: Constance Davis facilitated a planning session to assist project partners clarify goals and objectives, develop a clear understanding of individual agency and collective roles, review and refine the local implementation plan, and define measurable benchmarks.</p>	<p>1. August 9-10, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi conducted the initial site visit to meet with project staff and partners, and gained a better understanding of the proposed project, including the opportunities and potential challenges.</p> <p>2. December 14-15, 1999: Arnie Adams conducted on-site TA workshops on Bi-Level Case Management and cross agency collaboration.</p> <p>3. March 27-28, 2000: Abel Ekpunobi, DOL and OJJDP staff jointly conducted the initial site visit to assess progress and identify TA needs. He suggested ways to facilitate client enrollment and ease backlog in case processing.</p> <p>4. May 17, 2000: Coordinated with NYEC to provide peer-to-peer TA through a PeppNet partner on developing career opportunities for clients. The TA was postponed at Seattle's request and never reactivated.</p>



Table 2. Summary of On-site Technical Assistance to the Category II Demonstration Projects

<p><b>FLORIDA</b> Avon Park Youth Academy</p>	<p><b>INDIANA</b> North Central Juvenile Facility</p>	<p><b>OHIO</b> Hudson Youth Development Center Mohican Youth Center</p>
<p>1. September 8, 1999: Michael Prioleau conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. May 24-25, 2000: David Altschuler facilitated a workshop on implementing the Intensive Aftercare Program Model (IAP).</p> <p>3. February 1-2, 2000: Michael Prioleau coordinated training through NYEC. Two staff members received peer-to-peer TA through a PEPNet awardee in Baltimore, MD. Training focused on effectively engaging employers and establishing business opportunities.</p> <p>4. March 27-28, 2001. David Altschuler followed up on the TA provided May 24-25, 2000. He observed some positive changes since his 1<sup>st</sup> visit, but noted many staffing and programmatic circumstances that merited reexamination and change.</p>	<p>1. August 26-27, 1999: Michael Prioleau conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. December 13, 1999: Michael Prioleau facilitated a workshop on identifying community resources and working with employers.</p> <p>3. April 12-13, 2000: Doris Humphrey facilitated a workshop on Implementing and Sustaining Effective School-to-Work Systems.</p> <p>4. November 29-December 1, 2000: Michael Prioleau assisted the project refine their implementation plan and develop outcome measures.</p> <p>5. February 1-2, 2000: Michael Prioleau coordinated training through NYEC. Two staff members received peer-to-peer TA through a PEPNet awardee in Baltimore, MD. Training focused on effectively engaging employers and establishing business opportunities.</p>	<p>1. August 12-13, 1999: Michael Prioleau and Peggy Richmond conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. May 22-23, 2000: Doris Humphrey facilitated a workshop on Implementing and Sustaining Effective School-to-Work Systems.</p> <p>3. October 30-31, 2000: Troy Armstrong facilitated a workshop on implementing the Intensive Aftercare Program Model (IAP).</p> <p>4. May 21-23, 2001. As a follow-up to the TA provided in October 2000, a three-person TA team provided information to illustrate the IAP practice, framework, and procedures. Troy Armstrong provided instruction on the Aftercare model, Lonnie Jackson on the importance of Aftercare in addressing disproportionate minority confinement (DMC), and Julienn Meyers on gender specific and family-based interventions.</p>

In mid 2000, all three sites received an electronic copy of a data collection/management instrument that could be used as is, modified, or as a guide for developing a database, to capture program and client information.

Table 3. Summary of On-site Technical Assistance to the Category III Demonstration Projects

BAKERSFIELD, CA	CLIFTON, NJ	KNOXVILLE, TN
<p>5. August 13, 1999: Abel Ekpunobi conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>6. August 17, 2000: Barbara Duffy from MY TURN, Inc. (Massachusetts Youth Teenage Unemployment Reduction Network) provided Technical Assistance on Developing and Maintaining Community Support for At-risk Youth. The TA was provided through the collaboration with NYEC.</p>	<p>1. August 26-27, 1999: Michael Prioleau and Peggy Richmond conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. October 13 2000: Rebecca Taylor facilitated a Technical Assistance Workshop on Establishing and Maintaining Effective Community Collaborations. This TA was provided through a collaboration with National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC).</p>	<p>1. August 19-20, 1999: Michael Prioleau conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project would be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. September 25-26, 2000: Anne Adams facilitated a workshop on Bi-level Case Management.</p> <p>3. February 1-2, 2000: Two staff members participated in the NYEC sponsored training session in Baltimore, MD. Training focused on engaging employers and establishing business opportunities.</p>
MINNEAPOLIS, MN	PENSACOLA, FL	ROCKFORD, IL
<p>1. August 3-4, 1999: Michael Prioleau conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project will be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. February 1-2, 2000: Two staff members participated in the NYEC sponsored training session in Baltimore, MD. Training focused on engaging employers and establishing business opportunities.</p>	<p>1. August 9-10, 1999: Michael Prioleau conducted the initial site visit to gain information about how the project will be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. February 1-2, 2000: Two staff members participated in the NYEC sponsored training session in Baltimore, MD. Training focused on engaging employers and establishing business opportunities.</p>	<p>1. August 23, 1999: Initial site visit to gain information about how the project will be implemented, meet key personnel, and collect baseline data.</p> <p>2. March 31, 2000: Anne Adams facilitated a workshop on Bi-level Case Management.</p> <p>3. August 24, 2000: NYEC sponsored Nick Briggs from the Gulf Coast Trade Center to provide Technical Assistance on Case Management.</p>



## **Process for Receiving Technical Assistance**

After the site visits, the technical assistance specialists remained in contact with the project staff through telephone, e-mail, and conferences. Together, these staff prepared a brochure describing the available technical assistance and the ways to request it. They facilitated communication among projects' staff by providing contact information for all the projects.

At the Tampa conference, the technical assistance team presented a brochure: "How to Access Technical Assistance and Training for the Youth Offender Demonstration Projects." The brochure described the project and listed 39 subjects for which technical assistance could be provided. Requests were to be received in writing, but the information to be provided was simple: contact person, agency name, contact information, program area of the request (gang prevention, for example), relevance to the project goals, needs and skills required, resources required (a training team, a training package, etc.), committed resources (meeting space, for example), time frame and expected outcomes.

Category I and Category II projects were encouraged to request technical assistance; and after the Tampa conference, Category III Community-wide Coordination projects could also make requests for assistance through the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network, called PEPNet, and for one additional site visit by technical assistance specialists from Research and Evaluation Associates or one of its consulting associates.

Once a request for assistance was received at Research and Evaluation Associates, the Assistant Project Manager for Community Programs or the Assistant Project Manager for Technical Assistance and Training began to broker the arrangements for it. The assigned assistant manager began by contacting the requestor to clarify the request, always an important step.

One project, for example, asked for leadership training for front line staff. After a careful discussion with the assistant manager, it became clear that the front-line staff of different agencies were not working well with each other. When one agency's staff considered youth work ready, the job developer complained that the youth could not keep a job. When the agencies tried to resolve the issues, the work readiness trainers were fearful that their agency would lose money if it tried, single-handedly, to close the gap between the youths' readiness and the requirements of the marketplace. The technical assistance evolved into a two-day workshop to clarify roles and expectations, shared standards, and shared definitions of key terms, such as work readiness, and subsidized employment.

When a request became clear, the respective assistant manager arranged for the technical assistance by a subject area specialist or through peer-to-peer assistance from the National Youth Employment Coalition's Promising and Effective Practices Network, PEPNet.

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) had received funding from DOL to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance to communities working on improving opportunities for youth employment, including employment for youth offenders. When peer-to-peer assistance appeared to be an appropriate response to the technical assistance request, Research and Evaluation Associates contacted the director of the PEPNet program. PEPNet staff identified a good match from among its award-winning projects. Generally, a PEPNet awardee visited a YODP site; but in one instance,

representatives of several projects visited an exemplary PEPNet program, Fresh Start in Baltimore, MD, for peer-to-peer consultation.

Research and Evaluation Associates had recruited a cadre of technical assistance experts to guide and facilitate the implementation of the demonstration projects. These consulting associates brought expertise to the grantees in: youth employment, partnership development, case management, juvenile justice, intensive aftercare, alternative sentencing and community service, gang prevention and reduction, work readiness, school-to-work systems, gender-specific programming, and reducing disproportionate minority youth confinement.

### **Conference Calls**

In addition to the on-site technical assistance, category-specific conference calls were instituted to provide collegial technical assistance, and mutual support. Callers learned first-hand how other grantees were implementing the components of their projects, the challenges they faced during implementation, and how they were addressing the challenges. In addition, Category I grantees were surveyed by telephone to determine their progress in priority areas, including identifying and involving key stakeholders, and ensuring that youth had access to the program.

The kinds of issues that came up in conference calls were: recruitment strategies, the value of incentives for progress made, and ways to connect project youth with employers. Some projects had to recruit youth while others had youth assigned through the courts or probation departments. Those who needed to recruit youth had tried flyers and presentations at schools, but they found that personal contacts were the only strategies that worked effectively.

Some projects gave small gifts at various benchmarks of progress (a six-pack of Coke or an unlimited weekly public transportation pass) while others used only personal contacts to keep youth engaged. In this instance, no one decided that either approach was more or less effective, but other projects had options to consider.

Job fairs, job clubs and employer contacts were all used by most projects for connecting youth to jobs, but one project in an economically depressed area was reduced to following newspaper advertisements because the employer contacts had little work available. Projects shared the names of corporations and industries that had proved open to employing youth offenders and youth more generally.

### **Project Website**

A Youth Offender Demonstration Project Website was introduced during the second year of the project and made available to all the projects and to the technical assistance team. It was envisioned as an easy way for projects to share information, learn about conference and workshop opportunities, and report quarterly data elements.

These objectives were never fully realized. Some project staff did not have access to the Internet. Those who did failed to get in the habit of checking the Website regularly. The technical assistance

team came to believe that the Website would be under-utilized until it became necessary for conducting routine business, and there was little interest by the projects' staff to expand its use. With a new round of projects and a greater use of the Web by the general public, the projects' staff may prove to be more open to using a Website in the future.

### **Client Satisfaction with Technical Assistance**

Assessment of technical assistance activities were conducted in several ways:

- Participant feedback, either written or oral;
- Assessment by the workshop leader as part of his/her report; and
- Follow-up telephone calls by the Research and Evaluation Associates' technical assistance specialists.

Written evaluations for workshops were generally based on a five-point scale where one was low and five was high. Averages were calculated for various dimensions of the workshops, including presenter's knowledge, relevance to the participants work, and value of the information presented at the workshop.

The presenters generally reported a positive response to their workshops, and the written comments they appended to their reports were positive. The written comments often asked the presenter to return for an encore workshop at a future date. Presenters also assessed the progress that had been made and their general sense of project operations. The judgment of the technical assistance experts helped to shape the follow-up technical assistance inquiries by the Research and Evaluation Associates' staff.

Follow-up telephone calls by Research and Evaluation Associates' staff were made to the project leadership to learn their impressions of the workshop and the next steps in moving their project forward. Considering the technical assistance overall, the projects found the assistance helpful, even when the workshops had been difficult because serious problems surfaced.

### **Task Four: Collecting Administrative Crime Data at Baseline and at 18-month Follow-up From the Police Precincts in Category I Model Community Sites.**

Crime data on youth offenders were not generally available from the Category I Model Communities projects. Much of the information was considered confidential given the ages of the offenders. Grantee staff knew who among the participants were youth offenders, either because of court assignment or through contacts with the probation office. Projects recorded whether a youth was incarcerated after enrolling as a participant in the program. Incarceration may not have implied that the youth committed a new crime after enrolling because some youth were awaiting a court date when they enrolled.

The only Category I project that attempted to track the change in behavior of participant youth was Seattle's New Start project. The "King County Phase II Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan" set as a goal not building another juvenile correctional facility. In summer 2001, two staff from the Superior Court were developing an outcomes evaluation of the New Start project in an effort to gain on-going King County support for it as one effective graduated sanctions strategy for keeping youth from residential correctional facilities. As a preliminary step, they compared data on a sample of the New Start youth 10 months before the project started and 10 months after it started. See Table 4.

**Table 4. Data on a Sample of 31 New Start Youth 10 Months Before and 10 Months After Project Initiation**

	10 Months Before Enrollment	10 Months After Enrollment
Average Number of Referrals to the Prosecutor per Youth	.94	.42
Average Number of Convictions per Youth	.61	.23
Average Number of Admissions to Detention per Youth	1.26	.74
Average Number of Days in Detention	18.6	8.9

While the data in Table 4 were suggestive, the comparisons involved only two snapshots of a small number of project participants. The youth were being compared with themselves, so it may be possible that the reductions in their court involvement were based more on their growing maturity than on results of the demonstration. The group assigned to this effort, The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Work Group, will broaden the study, however, and will gather additional data to provide comparison group analysis and to shed more light on the reduction of risk factors and the addition of protective factors in the youths' lives. Such impact studies will substitute for changes in city-wide crime rates as a way of studying program outcomes.

**Task Five: Assisting the Category II Education and Training Grantees to Set Up Management Information Systems to Track the Characteristics, Services Received, and Outcomes of Youth Served.**

All the Category II Education and Training projects collected and reported data on a regular basis. The issue for the Category II projects was that there were no integrated data sets that tracked the progress of youth from the correctional facility and its school, through the transition home, and during aftercare. A presentation on project information systems was made at the Tampa Conference, and

each project received a recommended template for gathering information developed by the technical assistance team several months after the conference.

The lack of a project-based information system, however, was the main impetus for the Lakeland, FL, workshop where developing a common template was the featured topic. Each project presented the information system format and content its staff maintained.

Almost all the demographic information was comparable, but skills and risk assessment data were not uniformly reported even though all the projects collected them. Similarly, some project data systems included employment information (length of employment, whether work was in the area of training, wage levels) while others did not. Some projects did not report school-to-work information, diagnoses of such disabilities as attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficient hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conditions of release, information about parents, records of subsidized employment, recidivism, or whether the youth were themselves parents. Nor were all projects gathering information about the duration, intensity and attendance at services. Generally, the data collection forms lacked categories for reporting the outcome information that DOL had requested in the grant solicitation. The group concluded that they could not use standard forms across projects. They could, however, use standard codes for comparable data elements across projects, and they could include all the relevant information.

During the Lakeland meeting, the Ohio and Indiana project staff examined the management information system (MIS) that the director of STREET Smart had designed for the Florida YODP aftercare portion of the project. During the summer of 2001, Ohio built a similar data base of participant information. During the same period, the project leadership in Indiana changed, but a rudimentary MIS was in place.

A fundamental issue for the Category II projects was that the project leadership resided within one partnering system, such as juvenile justice, and was not able to insist on a change in data collection and reporting in other partnering systems, like the school system. The data bases were designed by the aftercare programs using some information they received from the correctional facility and some based on their own needs assessments and service delivery data. Typically, the educational information was not available to the projects from the correctional facility schools. The school at Avon Park was run by Securicor, a private firm; the school at one facility in Ohio was run by the state Department of Education, and the other was a regular part of the Cleveland Public Schools; in Indiana, the correctional facility hired teachers to assist students in improving reading and math skills using specially designed software (NovaNet). There was, therefore, no common reporting system, and there was little information available about the school-to-work portion of the Category II model.

### **Management Information Systems in Category I and Category II Projects**

While Task Five focused on Category II projects' MIS needs, the technical assistance teams learned that all the projects needed encouragement and assistance to develop project-specific data bases that could be used for tracking the youths' progress through the program. All the partners participating in the projects collected data and sent the information to someone within their accountability path. Few

of the projects, however, had a project-specific data base that was able to assess the progress the project was making in recruiting, training, and placing youth in employment.

During the fall of 2000, DOL requested that the projects begin reporting 10 data elements on a quarterly basis:

- Enrollment goal;
- Enrollment;
- Number referred for other services ( substance abuse, anger management, parenting skills, etc.);
- Number enrolled in pre-employment and educational training;
- Number enrolled in school;
- The number employed;
- The number who joined the military;
- The number enrolled in college;
- The number receiving follow-up services (follow-up services after employment); and
- The number incarcerated after enrollment in YODP.

The requirement to provide quarterly information nudged the projects to begin collecting more information about the project. These data elements were also important in alerting the technical assistance specialists about problems that were not surfacing in other ways.

One project, for example, enrolled 67 youth in the first months of the project and then enrolled an additional 15 in the following six months. Enrollment, it turned out, had been halted because several partners lacked the capacity to provide the services they had agreed to; and the partnership, as a whole, needed to be reconstituted.

The data elements were, nonetheless, not appropriate for many cross-site comparisons because of the variations in program design. One project, for example, always reported large numbers of employment placements because the design provided for a work crew experience that the project used to assess work readiness and work related attitudes at the beginning of the program. Other projects, in contrast, worked with younger youth (14-16 years old) who were not placed in employment until they were old enough, perhaps one or two years after enrolling in the project. Similarly, several projects reported almost no recidivism while others reported larger numbers of incarcerated youth. Knowing more about the projects, one can understand that the latter projects recruited more youth offenders who had been in serious trouble with the law than many other projects.

The technical assistance specialists also tried to expand the project-specific data collection by developing and providing a database template and offering to work with local MIS staff to apply it. At about this time, the data system requirements associated with the Workforce Investment Act were

causing project communities to redesign their workforce databases. While the template was not used, some YODP-specific data elements found their way into the community databases.

**Task Six: Preparing Three Separate Technical Assistance Guides Based on the Experiences of the Model Community, Education and Training, and Community-wide Coordination Projects.**

These technical assistance guides were to be aimed toward high-poverty communities, cities, states, and juvenile detention facilities wishing to learn from or replicate these demonstration projects. These guides were to focus on what works and what doesn't work, and what lessons were learned from each of these grant categories.

When the evaluation of the YODP was authorized, the funding for it was subtracted from the technical assistance budget. The responsibility for Task Six became contingent on the availability of funds. Since funds were unavailable, the three guides were not prepared. The technical assistance and evaluation teams, however, collaborated in developing an overarching framework of factors that seemed to be related to implementation success. This framework came to be called the public management model.

**Developing the Public Management Model**

As the demonstration projects matured, working in partnership with DOL staff members, Research and Evaluation Associates' technical assistance and evaluation teams began to observe patterns of attributes among successfully implemented projects. The patterns coalesced into nine topical areas, which then served as the backbone for assisting the demonstration grantees to accomplish project goals in the last months of the demonstration.

The public management model became a guide for assisting the demonstration grantees to incorporate the principles and practices that make for well-managed and implemented demonstration projects. Table 5 illustrates the public management model.

**Table 5. Attributes of the Public Management Model**

Attribute	Patterns
1. Created a well-conceived plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clear and focused vision and mission.</li> <li>■ Realistic and measurable goals and objectives.</li> <li>■ Involvement of stakeholders during program development and implementation.</li> </ul>
2. Had established partnerships with the justice system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Previous working relationship with the juvenile and criminal justice system.</li> </ul>
3. Collected and maintained data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Regularly collected and reported program information.</li> </ul>
4. Developed a community support/network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Involvement of youth and family serving agencies including community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and public service agencies.</li> </ul>

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5. Maintained strong grantee involvement.	■ Actively involved as lead agency, providing direction and coordination for the project. ■ Continuous involvement and support.
6. Connected the workforce development and justice systems.	■ Coordination with and utilization of resources available through the workforce development and justice systems.
7. Leveraged resources through collaboration and partnerships.	■ Identified and utilized other resources and funding streams.
8. Developed a continuous improvement system.	■ Conducted self-assessment and utilized available technical assistance.
9. Shared leadership and information sharing.	■ Shared decision making and information with project partners.

The public management model provides an approach that has shown to be effective in *administering* programs targeting youth offenders and youth at-risk of court or gang involvement. While the model advances a public management approach, it does not prescribe one specific service strategy. Rather, it reflects the hypothesis that organizations that structure their work around this public management model will be better able to formulate and implement an effective service delivery strategy that responds to a community's unique needs. Further, the public management model is expected to assist projects to: (a) assess the unique needs of the community; (b) identify key stakeholders and partners integral to the success of the programs; (c) map and access resources within the community; and (d) better implement an effective integrated service strategy tailored to meet the community's specific needs.

### Application of the Public Management Model

The following examples of the public management model attributes were taken from Category I and II projects that were specifically targeted for on-site technical assistance. Further, the projects were still operating as demonstrations, and other dimensions of the model may yet surface as the projects continue to operate. No project had operated long enough, moreover, to assess the expected outcomes for the project as a whole.

1. Successful projects appeared to have a **well-conceived plan** with clear and focused vision and mission, realistic and measurable goals and objectives. Stakeholders, including community partners, family member representatives, and front-line staff were actively involved during program development and implementation. This attribute, which should ideally occur at the start-up phase of projects, was absent in some of the demonstration projects well into the implementation of the projects. For example, intensive technical assistance was provided to Houston and Philadelphia almost a year into the demonstration to assist them with clarifying project goals and objectives, roles of partners, and project implementation. Further, technical assistance provided to Richmond during the second year of its demonstration grant appeared to have helped redefine the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and sustain the partnership.
2. From the outset of the demonstration, it became apparent that grantees who had **experience working with the justice system** appeared to be moving their projects along at a much faster and sustained pace than grantees who were not experienced with working with the justice system. This experience appeared to assist the projects because they already had earned the trust of the courts and probation officers. This attribute does not apply to Category II projects



which were justice-oriented projects by design. Seattle and Richmond had previous experience working with the justice system. They participated in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's demonstration project designed to prevent youth from joining gangs, help gang members leave gangs, and suppress gang activity that exposed youth to the risk of violence and other delinquent behavior. Also, the Denver project had a history of working with the court system to provide alternative sentencing and community service opportunities to court-involved youth. The technical assistance provided to both Houston and Philadelphia included planning sessions to assist these projects in partnering with the juvenile and criminal justice systems and connecting the justice and workforce systems through collaboration.

3. As described under Task Five, collecting reliable program data from grantees was quite a challenge. Many projects were tardy in submitting project information as required. Even when they submitted their data, the information was not always reliable because partners provided information under different categories or they failed to collect all the information needed. There were several issues that hindered timely submission of data elements: case managers entered data intermittently or data were collated by hand rather than electronically. The major issue, however, appeared to be associated with **inadequate systems and procedures for collecting and reporting program information**. During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2000, Research and Evaluation Associates' technical assistance team started collecting quarterly program information from the grantees and aggregating the information for analysis and, then, made it available to DOL. Technical assistance resources were used to create tables and formats which the projects utilized for reporting their data. Furthermore, the technical assistance team had regular telephone and e-mail contacts with site project staff to provide additional information about the required data elements and address any concerns they had. In mid-2000, the technical assistance team developed an electronic data collection instrument and guide which was shared with the projects. The team surveyed project sites for their input regarding important data elements to capture. The prototype was utilized by projects such as Philadelphia to guide the development of a database system. At least two Category II sites, Indiana and Ohio, also used the prototype to inform the development of their information systems.
4. The projects that had strong **community support** appeared to fare better than projects without this level of community support. For example, the Denver and Avon Park, FL, projects used the services of their work crews to benefit community parks and recreational facilities. Denver encouraged the active participation of parents and stakeholders by hosting the community periodically for a dinner (prepared by the youth) and an awards ceremony, and it provided community access to its computer facilities. These projects enjoyed significant community support. Similarly, Seattle's outreach program to targeted youth and communities also mobilized community support for their project. Technical assistance was provided that encouraged projects like Philadelphia to expand the membership of their advisory board to include community representatives, such as youth, parents of program clients, the media, area businesses, and faith-based organizations.
5. Both Philadelphia and Richmond began their projects by allowing another partner-agency to take the lead role in their respective projects. In one case, the lead agency re-directed the

project away from DOL goals; and in the other, the lead agency saw itself as first among equals, unable to challenge other partners who were not doing their share of the work. It soon became apparent that since the grantee agency was responsible and accountable for the demonstration project the **grantee had to be the lead agency, actively providing direction and coordination for the project, and providing sufficient support through active and continuous involvement.** In Denver and Seattle, the project coordinators worked for the grantee and the grantees' involvement in the projects was evident, active, and continuous. Technical assistance activities supported the Denver, Houston, Philadelphia, and Richmond projects with facilitated planning sessions geared toward clarifying the roles of the partnership, including the leadership structure.

6. It is encouraging when the workforce development and the juvenile justice systems work together on behalf of youth, sharing information at community meetings and referring youth within their network. However, **both systems needed to be truly connected and partnering in a significant way** in order for projects to maximize the benefits that accrue through coordinated resource utilization. An objective of the targeted technical assistance was to assist the projects to coordinate and utilize resources through multi-agency case management training. The Seattle, Richmond, and Rockford projects were among the beneficiaries of this type of technical assistance. In Denver, the technical assistance team helped the project leverage additional resources through OJJDP to sponsor a retreat for project partners and provide additional technical assistance on cross-agency collaboration.
7. One goal of the demonstration was to assist youth and family agencies to collaborate in addressing the problems of youth in their respective jurisdictions. The coordinated systems model of service delivery that underlies the YODP has a higher probability of sustainability success when partnerships collaborate to sustain local efforts beyond the grant period. This demonstration sought to encourage inter-agency collaboration and resource sharing so that vulnerable youth populations would receive the services they needed to complete their education, gain employment, remain free of the justice system, and lead productive lives. **Many projects effectively identified and utilized other resources and funding streams to support project goals.** Richmond leveraged Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars to take its program participants on college tours to some historically black colleges and universities in the southern states. Seattle tapped into foundation resources to provide after school tutoring for program youth. Houston established a system to use other funds targeting youth for the benefit of eligible youth participating in the demonstration project. Ohio was particularly successful in obtaining foundation grants and in tapping into WIA funds to expand and enhance its intensive aftercare program.

Technical assistance in this subject area was rendered to the Indiana project. The goal was to create collaborations within the community for the YODP. The two and a half hour workshop process included:

- Developing a customer-focused approach to creating collaborations;

- Identifying existing and potential community partners;
  - Identifying what the Indianapolis YODP had to offer partners;
  - Gaining knowledge on how to reach, serve, and satisfy community partners;
  - Sharing ideas and best practices for creating partnerships;
  - Determining possible strategies to attract new partners and retain current partners; and
  - Developing an action plan.
8. One attribute which was found across projects was **dedication to continuous improvement**. To varying degrees, all projects conducted self-assessments and actively sought and accepted available technical assistance. This dedication to continuous improvement was most apparent in Philadelphia where technical assistance was provided to overcome major political and administrative difficulties and allowed the project to move forward. This demonstration reconstituted its fundamental partnership arrangements not once, but twice, after technical assistance helped the project leadership clarify its goals, the responsibilities of the various partners, and assess the capacity of the partners to meet the demands of the target population. The Houston and Richmond projects also experienced significant changes geared toward improving the design and performance of their demonstration projects after similar efforts to clarify roles, responsibilities and organizational capacities. Technical assistance provided to all demonstration projects embodied this philosophy and the process evaluation of the projects provided a continuous feedback mechanism for program improvement.
9. **Sharing leadership and information with stakeholders** took place in many projects but was challenging to others. Although there was evidence to suggest that collaboration among agencies preceded the demonstration grant, the control of the purse strings by grantee agencies created superordinate/subordinate relationships in some jurisdictions. Such relationships reduce the level of shared project ownership and loyalty. For example, Richmond started the demonstration with a fluid leadership structure but ended by consolidating leadership and decision-making in the grantee agency. Some intervention had been needed, but the loss of shared ownership created bitterness and frustration among some partners. Technical assistance was provided to help projects, with planning sessions designed to strengthen inter-agency collaboration. The Denver, Houston, Richmond and Philadelphia demonstration projects benefited from this technical assistance to identify the commitments and values of partnering organizations so that these strengths were available to the whole partnership.

The public management model, developed during the first round of the YODP, will be further developed and refined during the second round of demonstrations.

**Task Seven: Preparing a Final Report on the Accomplishments of the Grantees and Suggestions for DOL for Improving Such Projects in the Future.**

This report is the completion of Task Seven.

To summarize, the strategies used to deliver technical assistance evolved over time. In the startup phase of the demonstration project, the delivery of technical assistance consisted of conducting site visits to gain an understanding of the projects, hosting conferences to provide instruction on important topics about program design and implementation, and providing technical assistance, on request, to meet identified needs. As the demonstration matured, it became apparent that the more successful demonstration projects exhibited at least nine observable characteristics. These nine attributes of well-managed and successful demonstration projects became the focal point for providing customized training and technical assistance to assist the demonstration sites meet their objectives.

The next section of this report discusses lessons learned from delivering technical assistance.

## Section III

### LESSONS LEARNED

Some lessons learned are reflected in the previous section describing the public management model that isolated factors that seemed to be associated with success in implementing the integrated services model for assisting target youth. Reviewing the technical assistance effort as a whole, other lessons for technical assistance delivery emerged: the importance of a philosophy of technical assistance, the appropriate sequencing of technical assistance issues, the partnership structure of the projects, and the importance of relationships.

#### **Philosophy of Technical Assistance**

Some project leaders assumed that technical assistance requests were an admission of failure while others viewed technical assistance as a resource in a continuous improvement process. The admission-of-failure school of thought led to few requests, grudging acceptance of help, and a tendency to gloss over the problems everyone connected to the project recognized. The continuous-improvement-process mind set led to viewing technical assistance as a readily available resource for on-going staff and organization development. Projects comfortable with the continuous improvement approach to management organized regular staff meetings, inviting local resources in for presentations and workshops, as well as peer-to-peer workshops from the National Youth Employment Coalition and specialized technical assistance from subject area specialists.

**Lesson 1:** Technical assistance needs to be introduced as a resource for continuous improvement. Every opportunity needs to be exploited to demonstrate to projects that using it is a good management technique, not a sign of weakness.

**Lesson 2:** Technical assistance from outside the partnership is generally needed to facilitate the clarification of roles and responsibilities, especially when there are some emotions attached to current operating procedures. An outside facilitator can maneuver the group through the tensions as well as support their efforts to deal with technical issues of organizational responsiveness and accountability.

#### **Sequencing of Issues in Technical Assistance**

The Youth Offender Demonstration Project brought together members of well-defined service delivery systems, each member with its own mission, vocabulary, accountability structure, standards, and processes. Partners often struggled initially with the competing demands to meet each other's expectations; yet few projects requested assistance with partnership development early in the project. It was only after the more pro-active technical assistance strategy was implemented that the technical

assistance team was able to arrange for consultant specialists to work with the project staff to clarify roles, relationships, and responsibilities and to develop common goals, terms, and procedures.

**Lesson 3:** Developing partnerships should anticipate needing technical assistance early--before months of struggle have left some members of the partnership frustrated and angry with other members of the partnership.

An implementation plan was required by DOL from each grantee. For some, the plan was a "compliance document," that is, a document that honored the requirement, but did not serve as a useful guide for the project. In a demonstration project one should expect that plans will change and may change often. A strong implementation plan, however, serves as a compass for the development of the project and keeps the vision and priorities clear even as the plan needs to be changed.

**Lesson 4:** Technical assistance is a valuable resource in developing a realistic implementation plan early in the project period.

Some projects did not recognize the gaps in youth services until the youth were working their way through the program. It often became clear that some youth were not getting the services they needed, others needed more of a given service, and some were not ready for a service when the program had scheduled it for them. Some youth needed drug abuse and/or mental health interventions in projects for which there was no provision for substance abuse or mental health treatment. Some youth needed more education than some projects had prepared to provide. Some projects found that youth were not old enough for work readiness, but the project had designed a "lock step" sequence in its programming. Several projects learned that young women needed different interventions and supports than young men. There were several case management experts available to assist projects with these difficult programming issues that emerged as the project was getting underway.

**Lesson 5:** Programming issues may not emerge until the demonstration is under way, and technical assistance can be very valuable in keeping the project staff from becoming overwhelmed by the individual differences among the youths' needs.

Several projects did not initially have all the components of the integrated services model. Few employment and training specialists, for example, fully appreciated the effects of gang involvement on the youth in their work readiness and job placement programs. Projects seemed unable to attend to these issues until the fundamental hiring, recruiting, programming, and service delivery issues were resolved.

**Lesson 6:** Responses to technical assistance requests need to be attentive to the timing of the issue. Projects may not be able to attend to one set of issues until others have reached a more stable footing.

Staff turnover was an issue in many projects, particularly for those in front line positions. Knowing the duration of the demonstration, some newly hired staff were looking for more stable employment almost from the time they were hired. After a year, many of those who had received a careful orientation to

the integrated services model, attended conferences and participated in conference calls were no longer the staff delivering the services.

**Lesson 7:** Fundamental orientation issues need to be revisited. In the continuous-improvement mind set, this is an easy and comfortable process; for others, it might be an embarrassment to request technical assistance on issues carefully presented in the early stages of the project.

### **The Structure of the Projects**

The projects often referred to themselves as partners or teams, but the structure of the project actually may not have been more than a series of contractual relationships. Some projects took the time to develop a shared vision for troubled youth and a common philosophy for interacting with them. Some worked through the difficult process of agreeing to common terms, shared assessments and protocols, mutually acceptable standards, and a process of decision-making across agency partners.

Real difficulties emerged for those projects that relied on contractual parameters for working together. A work readiness partner, for example, had agreed to provide a certain number of hours of training for a certain number of youth; it had met its contractual obligation when these inputs were delivered. Yet some youth were not able to keep a job at that point. In a partnership, the members must accept that the youth may need something more or different and then leverage resources among themselves and with other community agencies to ensure that youth are assisted in ways that were effective.

**Lesson 8:** The members of the partnership need to be aware of and committed to meeting the diverse and multiple needs of the target population. Relationships and arrangements need to be forged to meet these unusual demands.

Some partnerships changed markedly over the duration of the demonstration. The original plan did not accommodate the needs of the youth; the difficulties of the labor market were not sufficiently clear at the outset; some of the partners lacked the capacity to deliver the services they had agreed to. Projects that asked for organizational development assistance were able to find new partners to replace or augment the original set; some continually sought more partners from within the community, leveraging resources beyond the original scope of the demonstration.

**Lesson 9:** Technical assistance was valuable in freeing project leadership to re-invent itself, in some cases several times. Leaders need to be encouraged to experiment with the demonstration model until it effectively meets the needs of the youth it is designed to serve. The value of the courage and persistence of project teams in struggling to provide the nation with workable models cannot be overstated.

## Relationships

Technical assistance is built on levels of trust which establish that revealing a problem with project operations will not be exploited to hurt project staff or the reputation of the community; that the technical assistance specialists have the best interests of the youth and the community at heart; and that candid observations will not be repeated to cause dissension within a project.

There must also be a trust relationship with DOL project officers which acknowledges that they will receive the most accurate picture of a project's functioning by the technical assistance specialists and that serious problems will be noted in a timely way. These two sets of relationships do not compete, but they may appear to do so at times. The competition surfaces when important information is shared with DOL that has not been shared with the project or vice versa.

**Lesson 10:** Technical assistance requires both clarity of analysis and gentle candor with all parties. It is not enough to have made an accurate assessment of a situation; the follow through must be conducted in a way that improves the projects and keeps the relationships intact.

Conference calls were initiated to provide opportunities for staff across projects in a given category to learn from each other. DOL project officers participated in these calls. Occasionally, a project officer's questions turned to issues of monitoring (asking about a delay in project implementation or the whereabouts of a project deliverable). Moreover, grantee project sites were themselves re-competing for additional DOL funds and this led to a decreased enthusiasm for open dialogue among the project teams. The enthusiasm for the calls diminished when monitoring questions were pursued or there was competition among the projects. A safer environment is needed to maintain enthusiasm for mutual sharing.

**Lesson 11:** There is a difference between providing technical assistance and monitoring. Trying to combine the two functions reduces the openness to technical assistance.

**Lesson 12:** Sustaining a climate that encourages collegial peer-to-peer relationships among project teams is an important dimension to technical assistance.

The following section examines the recommendations for the future role of technical assistance in the YODP.



## Section IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Youth Offender Demonstration Project (YODP) was initiated to identify more effective ways of serving youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement. If policy leaders knew the solutions to the problems facing this population, there would be less need for such demonstrations. The role of technical assistance recognizes that the projects' staff were trying to work on processes that were only partially understood (preparing youth for the world of work) with a group of youth who have multiple needs. A community willing to undertake such a project has already recognized the challenges and is willing to tackle them. In effect, DOL formed a partnership with these communities by offering them a program of technical assistance.

#### **Future Technical Assistance Efforts**

Future technical assistance specialists need to consciously forge partnerships with the projects' staff and DOL project officers in their common search for workable models to assist court supervised youth and youth at risk of gang or criminal involvement to make a successful transition to employment at wages that prevent future dependency or criminal activity. Since there can be as much learning from an apparent failure or misguided tactic, these three partners need to create a safe environment that emphasizes a continuous improvement approach and willingness to try different ways to accomplish similar goals.

Creating an environment that frees project leaders to try new things and that assesses the outcomes carefully is based on strong communication. The assessments of the technical assistance and evaluation specialists need to flow back to the project leadership; the project leadership needs to be clear about the special circumstances that distinguish its project from other efforts and how it plans to address the issues raised.

Creating technical assistance plans facilitates the continuous improvement process because it allows the project to plan for training on all the important aspects of the demonstration without having to wait for a crisis to occur. Such plans also allow the technical assistance teams to make the most judicious use of time and expertise: Scheduling conference calls and small workshops for projects on topics of more general interest while investing time to develop tailored strategies with projects that are addressing especially difficult situations.

Future technical assistance needs to be more conscious of the likely issues of concern at various points in the development and implementation of the integrated services models. Recognizing that partnership development and planning are critical early issues, and that client flow and retention issues arise later will help ensure that technical assistance is sequenced effectively.

## Future Demonstration Projects

The nature of a demonstration is short-term, and short-term outcomes (such as completing high school or passing the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) exams, getting a driver's license, or getting a job) can be encouraging. The YODP worked essentially with two major systems: the workforce development system and the adult and juvenile justice system. These projects were often strained beyond their ability to respond to youth employment needs by the many other issues facing youth: substance abuse, mental health problems, absence of safe homes or caring parenting, teen parenting and lack of educational skills. The demonstration projects did evince new knowledge about how to organize the delivery of comprehensive services to the target population. And, further demonstrations need to:

- Consider testing the organizational attributes associated with the public management model to determine their broader application or their need for revision;
- Be designed to account for the multiple and varied nature of the issues the youth bring to the effort in order to transition them more successfully to employment;
- Partner with other organizations, such as, state and local health care, housing, and educational systems to leverage the range of resources required to meet youth's needs; and
- Find ways to track youth for a longer period of time to allow for assessment of long-term outcomes.

A goal of DOL's solicitation for this demonstration focused on projects designed to get youth at risk of criminal involvement, youth offenders and gang members between the ages of 14-24 into long-term employment at wage levels that would prevent future dependency and would break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency. The ability to sustain long-term employment and establish associated stability factors, such as living independently, opening a bank account, or remaining free of the court system, are long-term outcomes that are not in the nature of this demonstration to determine.

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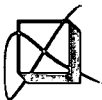


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