

NETWORK NEWS

FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF HUD INSURED AND ASSISTED HOUSING

**DELIVERING
TECHNOLOGY
ACCESS TO
AMERICA'S
COMMUNITIES**

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Using Peer Support to Find a Job

Developing new strategies to help people find a job can be challenging, but a check of proven techniques provides a model that Neighborhood Networks centers can incorporate into their own array of services. Structured group job searches or *job clubs*, developed in the 1970s, are powerful employment-seeking tools that centers can use to identify and create new opportunities for residents moving toward self-sufficiency. This model follows the concept that peer support motivates jobless people to intensify their search for work and provides a larger network of resources from which they can draw strength and ideas.

A job club usually has three components: (1) classroom instruction; (2) an active job search; and (3) the use of a telephone room. There are no fixed rules about how large a job club should be or how long a job search should last; however, skilled leaders working with groups of approximately 20 participants generally can balance individual attention with positive group dynamics over a 3–4 week period. Characteristics of an effective job club include:

- Sets a goal of locating jobs for participants;
- Combines classroom instruction with actual job search;
- Provides a well-equipped telephone room;
- Uses hands-on approaches to teach practical job-search skills;
- Motivates participants to do consistent job searches;
- Encourages participants to make numerous job contacts;
- Treats the job club like a job;
- Secures qualified instructors; and
- Celebrates individual and group successes.

A job club is a structured setting for the purpose of finding immediate employment. Through a combination of classroom activities and job hunting, participants increase their likelihood of finding a job and building the skills needed to maintain employment. Some





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successful job clubs offer classroom programs in the morning and reserve the afternoon for job hunting. Other clubs divide the week into classroom days and job-hunting days. Either approach can be successful, depending on participants' needs.

A successful job club does not need large amounts of equipment, but telephones are crucial. Telephones allow participants to apply skills learned in the classroom by calling prospective employers, learning about job openings, and arranging interviews. Telephone rooms also should contain other resources for contacting employers such as telephone directories, classified advertisements from daily newspapers, job leads provided by center staff, and access to one-stop and other electronic job listings. Participants, especially individuals who do not have telephones or who need alternatives to their home environments to respond to potential employers, can also use telephones to retrieve messages.

A successful job club curriculum should help participants develop jobseeking skills and should support them as they identify and pursue suitable work opportunities. Topics covered include:

- Job-searching skills;
- Résumé writing;
- Cover letter writing;
- Application completion;
- Telephone techniques;
- Interview and communication skills;
- How to cope with change and develop contingency plans; and
- Building personal and social skills for the workplace.

An enthusiastic instructor plays a vital role in teaching new skills and in ensuring that participants stay motivated during their job search. The instructor can emphasize the importance of working and help participants identify strengths and unrecognized skills, thus increasing motivation and self-esteem. More than any other staff member, the job club instructor needs to be motivating, outgoing, engaging, and skilled in group facilitation. However, the most important motivation in a job club can come from the participants themselves: as successful participants find jobs, the mood of the group changes. Pressure to succeed increases as peers leave to start their new jobs.

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Finding a job is a numbers game. Participants should be encouraged to conduct a thorough job search by making as many contacts and applying for as many jobs as possible. Job clubs should emphasize successful outcomes by calculating the number of contacts or interviews rather than the number of hours spent searching. Public recognition of each individual and group achievement provides reinforcement that will encourage and inspire all participants.

A job club also provides a chance to acclimate participants to the world of work. An attendance requirement and a dress code helps participants understand proper workplace etiquette. Group activities can enhance interpersonal and communication skills.

The job club peer group model provides an economy of scale for job searching because it takes about the same amount of time and resources to work one-on-one as it does to work with a group of 20. The job club model presents opportunities for natural leaders to emerge from within each group; these leaders can form a networking resource for employment. Contacts made by individual participants can be shared readily with other participants. Participants also learn the skills needed to locate employment now and in the future.

For additional information about developing a job club, see *Job Club Counselor's Manual: A Behavioral Approach to Vocational Counseling*, by Nathan H. Azrin (ProEd, paperback, 1981). [NW](#)

Rural But Not Remote

During the past century, rural areas were often the last part of the country to benefit from new technological advances. Rural areas were last to receive electricity, telephones, cable television, and, finally, computer technology and Internet access. Along the central coast of California, in rural farm communities, one organization is working to provide computer training, hardware, and continued support to predominantly Latino, low-income, and limited-English-speaking communities.

The Latino Issues Forum (LIF), a public policy and advocacy institute, created the Rural Technology and Information Project (R-TIP) to enhance the educational achievement of low-income students in rural school settings. Technology and curriculum are

used to link students, teachers, parents, and the community in a common goal of improving computer education and increasing access to the tools necessary to succeed in the modern workplace. LIF works to educate, mobilize, and increase public participation by the Latino community in advocacy efforts concerning telecommunications and consumer protection issues brought before the California Public Utilities Commission and California State Legislature. “We are constructing a total learning environment that benefits families, students, and teachers,” states Ana Montes, LIF director of technology and consumer education.

LIF first developed the R-TIP model in San Francisco during the late 1990s. Under the name Signature Learning Project (SLP), LIF created a program that responded to a growing need to offer meaningful technology education in two of the city’s primarily Latino and African American communities. “The program that we developed at the Fairmont Elementary School confronted a lot of the challenges in incorporating technology education to enhance the achievements of the students and their families. That is why it was chosen for the pilot project,” adds Montes. With the assistance of local partners, LIF raised the capital necessary to start the project. “We helped refurbish the school with brand-new computers and built computer labs that are available to the community,” relates Montes.



The model developed by Montes and LIF includes weekly 3-hour workshops held over a period of 4 weeks, and provides home computers and Internet access to participants along with ongoing technical support and training. Coursework begins with basic computer instruction and troubleshooting and moves on to learning Microsoft Word by developing a résumé, using the Internet, and sending and receiving e-mail.

“Our curriculum is very basic and responsive to the needs of the community. We don’t provide advanced training but rather focus on the basic skills necessary to move into a job or to interest [participants] in additional courses through adult education, the local college, or other community technology programs,” says Montes. At the end of the 4-week session, the students and their families take home a computer to use for the remainder of the school year. “This really provides family members with an opportunity to practice what they learned and offers them time to reinforce their skills in an environment where they feel comfortable,” adds Montes.

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LIF Director of Technology
and Consumer Education*

Working in partnership with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, the city of Watsonville, the Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE), and the University of California at Santa Cruz, LIF trains teachers to integrate computers into their lessons. The program empowers parents and allows them to experience the value of technology in their children's education and increase communication with the school. "As parents become more comfortable with the technology and develop their own computer skills, better employment opportunities open up for them," Montes remarks.

To help improve communication between the school and parents, the district offers participants free Internet access. "Some teachers have developed their own Web pages that students and parents can access to stay informed about homework or other important information," she says.

The curriculum recognizes the importance of reaching all residents of the community; it places a computer, printer, modem, and Internet access in each family's home, which provides the family with an opportunity to use e-mail and spend time on the R-TIP Web site. Many residents in the district are non-English speaking, so LIF has developed the curriculum in both Spanish and English. "We are trying to offer an opportunity to learn the skills in class and then return home to practice what they learn in a comfortable environment at their own pace," adds Montes.

Training sessions are held at the Alianze Charter School and the Watsonville Community Center. According to Montes, "Establishing the learning centers at existing community-based organizations also gives families ready access to employment counseling, continued education, literacy classes, ESL [English as a Second Language] classes, citizenship classes, and emergency services."

"We ask the community to make a commitment to continue the program after 3 years," she adds. "You really need to connect to the local community-based organizations and to the people themselves." Montes and LIF initially approached some of the major technology companies in Silicon Valley for capital to fund the project, and eventually found a willing partner in the local banking community.

"We identified areas of interest to the banks and showed them how they could benefit from this type of education program," she says. The banks realized that a new group of workers who were technology-literate and bilingual could help them make inroads

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into the region's Latino farm communities. "This community is an unbanked population that relies on expensive check cashing companies. By developing partnerships with the banks, participants can receive help with opening checking accounts and getting ATM cards," adds Montes. "The banks have been wonderful partners. They even offer to teach additional classes that help our families become better educated about technology and banking."

AMAE has taken over the task of managing the project in Watsonville and replicating it in other schools. LIF now provides them with technical assistance. LIF also is working on posting its curriculum on the organization's Web site (www.lif.org) and has been asked by other California farming communities to introduce the model into their schools. "Moving forward, we would like to see our organization providing technical assistance to develop centers as the communities raise the money necessary to start and continue the program," concludes Montes.

For more information about the Latino Issues Forum and the Rural Technology and Information Project, contact Ana Montes at (415) 284-7208 or Francisco Rodriquez at (831) 786-2100, extension 455 (these are not toll-free numbers). [vii](#)

Consortia Corner—Marketing Strategies to Publicize Achievements and Recruit New Members

How can Neighborhood Networks consortia raise their community profiles, publicize their activities, and recruit new centers and other local partners? Existing consortia can offer several effective strategies from the field, as described below.

Participate in Neighborhood Networks Week 2004

During the June 20–26 celebration, centers will highlight how they are "Connecting Families With the Future." For Neighborhood Networks consortia, this week also provides many opportunities to publicize their accomplishments and recruit new members:

- Sponsor Neighborhood Networks Week planning workshops to help centers design their own activities and incorporate consortium events into center celebrations;

Regional and local conferences, such as meetings of affordable housing groups, apartment managers, community colleges, or workforce development organizations, provide excellent opportunities to network and to market a consortium.

- Issue press releases about Neighborhood Networks Week, including center and consortium activities;
- Develop consortium exhibits to display at area centers during the celebration;
- Hold consortium events at member centers during Neighborhood Networks Week. For example, sponsor a grantwriting workshop or a partners' roundtable about community resources available to centers; and
- Sponsor contests for consortium member centers. For example, the consortium might reward the center with the largest turnout during Neighborhood Networks Week or with the greatest number of poster contest entries. Award prizes, such as educational software or an afterschool ice cream party, to the winning centers.

Create a Brochure About the Consortium

Hand out the publication to community stakeholders, local businesses, and centers to educate the community about the consortium and to market it to prospective partners.

Exhibit at Area Conferences

Regional and local conferences, such as meetings of affordable housing groups, apartment managers, community colleges, or workforce development organizations, provide excellent opportunities to network and to market a consortium. "The Alabama Neighborhood Networks Consortium (ANNC) gives out brochures that it prepared about the organization. Members have also set up booths with information about the consortium at our local Southeastern Affordable Housing Management Association conferences and have given out door prizes," says Sarah Richey, Alabama Neighborhood Networks Coordinator.

Issue Press Releases and Public Service Announcements

These marketing tools can help raise the consortium profile in the community by publicizing consortium activities such as center grand openings, general equivalency diploma classes, or grantwriting workshops. For example, Washington consortium Digital Promise, Inc., issued a press release publicizing its charity auction benefit for member centers. A consortium can also develop announcements publicizing contributions by their partners, such as a community college that provides student interns to teach computer classes or tutor children.

Participate in Center Grand Openings and Events

Attending these center events gives consortium members opportunities to talk to residents, elected officials, community groups, and local businesses about their programs, plans, needs, membership, and resources.

Publicize Benefits of Consortium Nonprofit Status

According to Richey, “When people contact other members or me about Neighborhood Networks, they are referred to the consortium and told about the 501(c)(3) privileges of membership. Most people who contact the consortium end up joining ... and 501(c)(3) has been a selling feature.”

Join the Local Chamber of Commerce and Nonprofit Associations

Networking with the local chamber and associations that are involved in community development can have great potential for promoting consortium activities and recruiting business and nonprofit partners.

Sponsor Workshops for Centers and Partners

In addition to helping existing members, workshops can be effective marketing tools for recruiting new centers and local partners.

- Digital Promise sponsored monthly brown bag lunches to bring together owners, managers, center directors, and volunteers. Local businesses and nonprofit groups presented interesting topics that made it worthwhile to attend; for example, one workshop presented ways in which centers could access surplus hardware or software. At another meeting, property owners with onsite computer learning centers told their peers about benefits such as reduced vandalism and less isolation for elderly residents.
- The National Capital Area Neighborhood Networks Consortium sponsored a series of workshops on forming resident associations.
- To help ANNC members write their Beaumont Foundation grant applications, the group sponsored a grantwriting workshop. According to ANNC President Frewin Osteen, the goal was to help each center develop a proposal framework that it could complete by the application deadline. Using the computer lab at Prichard Public Housing Authority’s Neighborhood Networks center, the 21 participants accessed the Beaumont Foundation’s



online application and set up accounts with passwords for future access.

Use Web Marketing

In contrast to more costly printed brochures and announcements, the Internet offers an effective, low-cost marketing tool. By developing their own Web sites, consortia can:

- Attract potential partners and volunteers;
- Raise their visibility in the community;
- Recruit new centers;
- Provide information about center programs available to the community; and
- Promote fundraisers and special events.

The **Digital Promise Web site** (www.digital-promise.org) illustrates how consortia can design an informative Web site to describe missions, activities, and volunteer opportunities, and include information on how and why to donate.

For more information about Neighborhood Networks consortia:

- Visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site (www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).
- Phone (888) 312-2743 or (800) 483-2209 (TTY) (toll-free); or
- Send an e-mail to neighborhoodnetworks@hud.gov. 

E-Government Is Changing the Way Government Works

On July 10, 2002, in a statement on the importance of e-government, President George Bush said, "... Effective implementation of E-Government is important in making government more responsive and cost effective."

So what is E-Government? Is it the uploading of government forms on the Internet or something more? E-Government is the use of information technologies to transform interaction with individuals, businesses, and other government agencies. This interaction can result in better delivery of government services to individuals, providing them with service in minutes or hours



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instead of days or weeks, as well as improved interactions with business and industry.

In addition, E-Government enables agencies to align efforts to significantly improve service and reduce operating costs. When E-Government initiatives deploy effectively, conducting business with the government is easier for the public.

Round-the-clock Internet access to information and accounts gives individuals the opportunity to complete tasks anytime and increases the likelihood that the information received is accurate and up to date. Government employees can do their work easily, more efficiently, and more effectively through one single point of service.

E-Government Initiative for e-Grants

The e-Grants initiative is an important part of the overall E-Government program. This will allow applicants for federal grants to apply for and ultimately manage grant funds online through a common Web site, simplifying grants management; eliminating the burden of electronic and paper-based data collection requirements; protecting the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of data; and facilitating greater coordination among those responsible for delivering such services. The e-Grants initiative is led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense, Education, Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor; HUD; the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and the National Science Foundation. Other participants include the Office of Management and Budget; 15 other federal grantmaking agencies; universities and other academic institutions; state, local, and tribal governments; nonprofits; and faith-based and community initiatives.

An effective E-Government strategy will result in significant improvements in the federal government, including:

- ◆ Simplifying delivery of services to Americans;
- ◆ Eliminating layers of government management;
- ◆ Making it easier to locate information and services;
- ◆ Simplifying agencies' business processes and reducing costs through integrating and eliminating redundant systems; and
- ◆ Streamlining government operations to guarantee rapid response to people's needs. ◆

For more information about E-Government, visit the President's E-Government initiative at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov or HUD's e-government Strategic Plan at www.hud.gov/offices/cio/egov/eplan.cfm.

Technical Assistance Guides

The following Technical Assistance guides are available from the Neighborhood Networks Web site. They can be downloaded at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/resourcesforcenters/nnwpublicationsguides.cfm>:

Special Event Planning Guide (2004)

Lessons Learned in Starting and Operating a Neighborhood Networks Center (2004)

How to Design and Deliver an Effective Employment Program (2002)

Neighborhood Networks Guide to Information, Training and Technical Assistance Providers (2002)

How Neighborhood Networks Centers Can Support Microenterprises (2002)

Youth Education Programs for Neighborhood Networks Centers (2002)

Growing a Garden and a Community (2002)

Engaging Education: Integrating Work, Technology, and Learning for Adults (2002)

No Car? No Problem! Innovative Transportation Solutions (2002)

How to Design and Deliver an Effective Outsourcing Program: Creating New Businesses and Jobs for Residents (2002)

Starting a Neighborhood Networks Center: A How-To Guide for Property Owners and Managers (2002)

Connecting to the Internet: A Guide for Neighborhood Networks Centers (2002)

Creating Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Youth (2002)

Media Relations Guide for Neighborhood Networks Grand Openings (2002)

Helping Residents Achieve Self-Sufficiency: How to Design and Deliver Career Growth and Advancement Assistance (2002)

The Childcare Challenge: Models for Childcare Services (2002)

How to Design and Deliver an Effective Job Development and Placement Program (2002)

Engaging Adults in Literacy Programs (2002)

Neighborhood Networks Centers Proving Their Value to HUD Property Owners and Managers

One Stop Resource (2001)

Funding Educational Programs at Neighborhood Networks Centers (2000)

Lifelong Learning from 8 to 80: Creating a Lively Learning Environment for Seniors and Young Adults (2000)

Health Care That's Very Close to Home (2000)

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