

Job Training and Support Programs: An Assessment for The Green Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Job creation in the Phillips neighborhood is one of the primary goals of The Green Institute. In an effort to better serve employees with work readiness barriers and guarantee that a reliable workforce is available for the enterprises of the Institute, The Green Institute is seeking to create an effective job training and support program. This research was undertaken in an effort to lay the foundation for such a program.

In an effort to design a job training and support program that is appropriate for the Institute and its various programs, an assessment was conducted of the Institute's job training and support needs. The staff identified five key areas that should be addressed by a job training and support program, they are: recruitment, assessment, training, support, and career assistance.

Six organizations that are active in training and support locally were interviewed in an effort to identify best practices and to ascertain the degree to which their programs would meet the needs of The Green Institute. These programs include: Alliance Apartments - Eden Programs, Goodwill Industries/Easter Seal, Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center, Phillips Community Development Corporation, Train-to-Work, and Whittier Works. A short overview of these programs is included in this report.

Also several key issues concerning job training and support programs arose during this research. Which population the program should serve, whether to use one support staff member or several separate support positions, and the feasibility of developing a broader training network are addressed in the section on key assumptions.

Incorporating these assumptions and utilizing the information gathered from the other programs and the needs identified by Green Institute staff, a job training and support model for the Institute was created.

This model utilizes a support person to work with program participants throughout their application process and employment at The Green Institute. The support person provides some services directly and works with other organizations to contract for other services. The support person carries out the recruitment and assessment, provides an orientation and soft skills training, follows up on new employees regularly, and provides career assistance as participants begin seeking new jobs within or outside the Institute. This support person also networks with other training programs that offer relevant technical skills training, with social services agencies that provide in-depth support, and with other employers or advanced training programs that may hire or accept Green Institute employees.

INTRODUCTION

One of The Green Institute's primary goals is the creation of jobs in the Phillips neighborhood. The Institute has focused its job creation efforts on hard-to-employ, low-income residents of the Phillips neighborhood. Over the past few years, the Institute has discovered that its efforts to continue to create jobs and develop its programs have been hampered by the need to provide support for this hard-to-employ population. Program managers have provided as much support as possible in the past, but the need to do so has proven too time consuming and may be beyond the abilities of a given program manager. The Green Institute's programs cannot expand unless the program managers are freed from the responsibility of providing the primary support to employees. An integrated, Institute-wide job training and support program is needed if The Green Institute hopes to expand its programs and create new jobs while adequately supporting and training its employees. This research was conducted to lay the foundation for such a program.

As a first step in this process, an assessment of The Green Institute's job training and support needs was conducted through interviews with various staff members. The eight interviews revealed four key areas of need for the Institute: assessment, training, support, and career assistance.

Next, a long list of job training and support programs that operate in Minneapolis was compiled. (This list appears in Appendix A.) These organizations were contacted to learn more about their programs. Six of these organizations were chosen for in-depth interviews. These programs were: Alliance Apartments – Eden Programs, Goodwill Industries/Easter Seal, Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center, Phillips Community Development Corporation, Train-to-Work, and Whittier Works. These programs were evaluated to determine which components are most effective and to identify which programs might be able to meet the specific needs of The Green Institute. This report contains an overview of these six programs.

Several key issues concerning job training and support models arose during the course of this research. These assumptions, including the population targeted by the program, whether to use a single support person or separated support functions, and the ability for a broader network to provide training and support services, are discussed and related to the model chosen for The Green Institute.

Finally, drawing on the needs of The Green Institute, the key assumptions, and the elements that have been effective for other organizations, a job training and support model for The Green Institute was created. This model is described in detail in the final section of this report.

THE GREEN INSTITUTE

The Green Institute is a nonprofit economic development organization focused on sustainable enterprise. Incorporated in 1993, the Institute originated from an environmental justice

movement against the siting of a large garbage transfer station in a residential area of the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis.

Working to reduce waste while enhancing the development of an aging urban area, the Institute's mission is to create urban development through sustainable job development and environmental education. It has a commitment to serving low-income, hard-to-employ residents of the Phillips neighborhood while providing jobs with living wages and full benefits.

In an effort to fulfill this mission The Green Institute operates five different programs: the ReUse Center, DeConstruction Services, the Phillips Eco-Enterprise Center, Green Ed, and the Phillips Environment and Transportation Committee.

The *ReUse Center* is a retail operation that markets and sells salvaged, reusable construction materials. The 26,000-square-foot store employs a staff of twelve. *DeConstruction Services* was initiated in the fall of 1997 to provide the ReUse Center with high quality merchandise, increase the amount of construction debris that could be diverted from the landfill, and to create additional living wage jobs. To date, DeConstruction has created eleven jobs and expects to have up to fifteen positions by the end of the year.

The *Phillips Eco-Enterprise Center* (PEEC) will be a 64,000-square-foot commercial-industrial facility located on the site originally intended for the garbage transfer station. The building will break ground in the late summer of 1998. The PEEC will attract established environmental businesses and serve as an incubator for emerging businesses in this sector.

The Green Institute also is home to an environmental education program called *Green Ed* and the *Phillips Environment and Transportation Committee*, which coordinates community gardening and greening, studies transportation issues, and is developing a neighborhood environmental resource center.

Across all five programs The Green Institute employs over forty staff members and has an annual budget of \$1.6 million.

The ReUse Center, DeConstruction Services, and the PEEC are the main job creation programs and will be the primary users of job training and support services. The ReUse Center and Deconstruction Services hire employees directly, while the PEEC will offer these services to its tenants. The ReUse Center and DeConstruction Services have been growing quickly and will employ close to thirty people by the end of 1998. Construction on the PEEC is expected to begin in late 1998 and the building will eventually house up to one hundred new jobs.

PURPOSE

Job training and support are important issues for many employers these days. With The Green Institute's commitment to providing living-wage jobs for hard-to-employ individuals, this issue is of special importance. In an effort to address this issue, The Green Institute has undertaken a research project to identify an appropriate job training and support model for its programs.

The purpose of the project is to:

- understand the needs of the Institute
- research local job training and support programs
- create a model for delivering these services within The Green Institute

The end result of the project, then, will be a job training and support model specifically adapted to the needs of The Green Institute and the tenants of the Institute's PEEC project. It is hoped that this research will create a system that will connect employees with jobs and help them reach their full potential in those jobs. In doing so, both employers and employees should benefit from the job training and support program.

ASSESSMENT OF THE GREEN INSTITUTE'S NEEDS

In an effort to assess the job training and support needs of The Green Institute, seven staff members and one potential tenant for the PEEC were interviewed. The staff interviews included the staff member in charge of Human Resources, the staff member in charge of business development and the PEEC, the two staff members most involved in hiring entry-level employees, and three entry-level employees.

These interviews were used to compile an assessment of The Green Institute's current and near future needs in terms of job training and support. Recruiting, assessing, training, and supporting employees, and providing career services were identified as important elements for the Institute. In addition, three other miscellaneous elements were identified as critical to The Green Institute's goal of helping neighborhood residents succeed in jobs.

Recruitment

The programs of The Green Institute have grown quickly. This quick growth and the high turnover experienced by both The ReUse Center and DeConstruction Services has given rise to the need for a pool of candidates from which both programs can hire. In order to fill openings quickly and efficiently, The Green Institute needs a recruitment strategy that provides access to a number of qualified candidates. Currently, both programs post job openings at the ReUse Center, in storefronts throughout the neighborhood, and with numerous community agencies. While this strategy has provided a few quality employees, the Institute needs a more proactive strategy that will provide its programs with enough candidates to fill their positions.

While The Green Institute does not limit its recruitment to the neighborhood, it does give preference to Phillips residents. The Institute also has received funding through the federal Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals (JOLI) program to employ and train low-income individuals. For this reason, the Institute also seeks to recruit low-income individuals.

Therefore, it is important that the Institute's recruitment policy focus much of its efforts on

Phillips and that it be able to reach low-income job seekers.

Assessment

Assessing potential employees was identified as the next important step to job training and support at The Green Institute. This initial screening needs to assess math and reading skill levels, ascertain level of job "maturity", identify any language barriers, and look for potentially disruptive qualities such as addictive behaviors. The screening should also be used to begin educating potential employees about the goals and policies of The Green Institute. While math and reading levels are important and should be included in the assessment, staff stressed that it was even more important to learn the employees' level of commitment to working and the presence of any potentially problematic factors.

Tests have been used in the past to judge math and reading levels, as well as to identify disruptive behaviors and job maturity. The general consensus was that, while tests may help to some degree, they can be intimidating and are not as helpful as in-person interviews. In-person interviews also allow the interviewer to ask the tough questions that are necessary if many of the potential barriers to employment are to be identified. Many of these questions are of a sensitive nature and employment law forbids employers from requiring the information or even asking the question. For this reason, it would be beneficial to have a person outside of The Green Institute perform the initial assessment, because an outside person or agency would be allowed to ask these tough questions.

Finally, it is important that potential new employees learn as much as possible about The Green Institute, its mission, and its policies during this initial assessment. It is essential for the employee and employer to learn as much as possible about one another in this first step.

Training

Training was another important element raised by The Green Institute staff. The training needs identified include: orientation, soft skills training, and technical skills training. An extensive orientation was mentioned as an important way to introduce new employees to the mission of The Green Institute as well as the resources available to them at the Institute.

Soft skills training needs include a wide variety of work readiness topics that are applicable across many jobs. These topics include communication, conflict management, time management, financial management, and job maturity. It is important that these topics be addressed early in the process, either before employment begins or during the first weeks of employment.

Technical skills training is job specific and designed to give employees marketable skills. Because these skills are specific to individual jobs and often involve significant set up costs and economies of scale, it is difficult for small organizations to provide this training themselves. Although on-the-job technical training should be provided continuously by the various programs and businesses working with new employees, the additional technical skills training that is needed would most likely be provided on an as-needed basis by another agency.

While the orientation session is needed for all employees, the soft skills and technical training components need to be flexible and optional so that they can accommodate the different levels of experience and job maturity that new employees possess.

Support

Providing support for employees with multiple barriers to employment was also identified as an essential element for The Green Institute. At the moment, supervisors provide as much support as they can to individual employees. While this can help employers understand the challenges their employees are facing, it creates a number of problems. When supervisors provide on-going support to employees for personal issues, it erodes the employer-employee relationship. Issues of confidentiality can also become a problem when a supervisor is providing support for personal problems. Employees may not be able to speak with their supervisor about a number of issues as well. For example, many new employees feel uncomfortable talking with their supervisor about a conflict at work or a problem with their childcare and may simply stop showing up rather than talk with their supervisor about the problem. Also, if an employee has a lead on a new, better job they may be uncomfortable talking with their supervisor about the job lead. In these cases it would be easier for an employee to talk with someone outside of their program.

The most significant drawback to a supervisor serving as the main support for employees, however, is the lack of time available for such support. Supervisors have many other activities to monitor and manage and are usually unable to devote the time necessary to help employees find the appropriate assistance.

These are further reasons why it is important for the person providing the support services to be perceived as separate and independent of the Institute's individual programs.

New employees should have consistent contact and support from one person. This consistency is important to build trust and helps the employee navigate the many steps to overcoming barriers and achieving successful employment. It is also important that new employees be provided with accurate information and a stable work environment. A changing work environment may be too volatile for many new employees who are dealing with a variety of other personal issues.

The Green Institute needs someone to establish and maintain connections with social service resources in the neighborhood into which employees can tap. While there are many social service agencies available, it is often a daunting task to locate the appropriate place to receive assistance. In addition, many of the agencies can be slow to react to an initial call. A support person who can help employees find the appropriate agency and encourage them to take action would be an important resource for employees in need of personal support. The initiative needs to remain with the employee to take responsibility for getting assistance, but the presence of a support person with a variety of contacts with social service agencies can smooth the process by helping the employee determine which choices are available.

A support person is needed to provide regular follow up with employees to check on any problems that may arise. Often employees with significant barriers to employment fail to notify their employer that a problem exists at work. Proactive support will help solve these issues. Follow up is also needed with the supervisors to handle any issues that arise for them. This follow up should include checking in with employees who fail to call in when they miss work. This support is most critical during the first month of employment, but should continue for up to six months or as long as the individual employee needs the support.

Another important element identified by Green Institute staff was peer support among employees

working to overcome barriers to employment. Soft skill or other training that is conducted in small groups of co-workers helps employees form a support group of peers. Accountability was identified as a key element by employees who had been through successful job training programs. Employees should be supported in their efforts to overcome barriers to employment, but they also must be held accountable for their actions. Accountability to the employer and accountability within their peer group are both important.

Finally, supervisors need support and guidance as well when it comes to working with employees with significant barriers to employment. A specific training and support component for supervisors should teach techniques for dealing with issues that may arise and provide an added resource when problems do arise.

Career Assistance

The Green Institute is a unique employer. It not only seeks to create jobs, but also to empower and build capacity in its employees. In its efforts to assist in the economic development of the Phillips neighborhood, the Institute aims to serve as an entry point and capacity building organization that people can use to rebuild their lives. For this reason, the Institute seeks to provide its employees with marketable skills so that they are able to qualify for and achieve better jobs beyond The Green Institute, if they so choose.

Career assistance, therefore, is an important component for the Institute's job training and support program. This assistance should include career and goal identification, job hunting skills, and job placement support. While working for The Green Institute, employees should be able to assess their career interests and learn resume writing and interviewing skills.

Part of this career assessment process needs to include identifying jobs within The Green Institute that may provide employees chances to advance and grow. Career assistance should be provided to help employees set goals in order to obtain these advancements. If an employee's career goals cannot be met by employment at the Institute they should be given assistance in locating another job. One way of assisting employees with job searches is to identify and document career paths that utilize the skills learned at the Institute. Examples for the DeConstruction program include: the carpenters' union apprenticeship program, the laborers' union apprenticeship program, an apprenticeship with an independent carpenter, serving as a work supervisor for a Habitat for Humanity site, or manager training for a retail building supply store. By identifying these career paths The Green Institute could help employees set realistic career goals and assist them in establishing relationships with people and organizations that might lead to their next job or training opportunity.

Career assistance should involve helping employees identify the skills they need to reach their career goals. If these skills are not available through the Institute, such as G.E.D. or English as a second language classes, the Institute should point employees in the right direction, so they can find these resources on their own.

Information about starting your own business was one of the specific pieces of career assistance that was requested.

Other

In the process of assessing the job training and support needs of the Green Institute several other important elements were identified. For many job seekers it is important that they are able to begin earning money quickly. Many employees that are in need of a job training and support program are also financially vulnerable. For this reason, it is important that the assessment and soft-skill training either be paid or not last too long and prevent the job seeker from starting to earn money in a reasonable amount of time.

Employees that have been through similar job training programs recommended that the program incorporate dignity, discipline, and high expectations for new employees. They indicated that treating every employee with dignity is very important, but that firm standards, discipline, and high expectations are also vital to a successful job training and support program. Many employees will meet high expectations if challenged to do so.

Finally, it was recommended that the program include strong connections with the neighborhood. This was considered important if The Green Institute wants to ensure that as many new employees as possible are from the Phillips neighborhood. A job training and support program with connections to the neighborhood is more likely to recruit and place people from the area. Also, it is important for outside support services to be local so that they can be accessed conveniently by employees.

JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS RESEARCHED

With this assessment of The Green Institute's needs as background, six job training and support programs that operate in Minneapolis were interviewed. In these interviews, the organizations were asked about their recruitment and assessment processes; their training, support, and career assistance programs; and whether they were interested or able to contract out their services. From these interviews we hoped to identify the elements of these programs that were successful and why, as well as the degree to which they matched the needs of The Green Institute.

The organizations interviewed for this report include: Alliance Apartments, Goodwill/Easter Seal, Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center, Phillips Community Development Corporation, Train-to-Work, and Whittier Works. Brief descriptions of these programs are included below.

Alliance Apartments -- Eden Programs

Background

Alliance Apartments is a supportive housing program for single men and women who have completed a drug or alcohol treatment program. The program expects all residents to be productively engaged and drug and alcohol free. Services offered include: case management, short-term counseling, peer support networks, training and work programs, support group such as A.A. and N.A., social and recreational activities, employment opportunities and coordination, employment and educational activities, peer/resident activity coordinators, and referrals to outside services. The support services are provided by Eden Programs, one of the partners in the

project.

Recruitment

Alliance Apartments does not recruit participants beyond its residents. All residents work with a case manager, who suggests that they meet with the Employment Specialist when they are ready.

Assessment

The assessment process at Alliance Apartments involves participants meeting with their case manager. Case managers help residents create a life plan. After this initial assessment, and when participants are ready to begin discussing employment, they are introduced to the Employment Specialist. The Employment Specialist meets with participants to help them identify their talents from their backgrounds and strengths. He also helps participants identify their values to ensure that they match the career/job path chosen.

Training

Alliance Apartments/Eden Programs does not provide training itself. The Employment Specialist will refer participants to educational opportunities, but this is usually done in conjunction with finding a related job.

Support

Through Eden Programs, Alliance Apartments provides a wide variety of support services for its residents. The primary support offered is supported, sober housing. The program's caseworkers provide many additional support services, including helping individual residents deal with personal problems. The Employment Specialist forges a relationship with the employers that hire residents, but he does not contact them on a regular basis; contact only occurs when initiated by the employer. Contact between the Employment Specialist and participants is more regular, but informal as well. Most of this contact takes place casually as they meet in the apartment complex. Problems come to the Employment Specialist's attention as a result of these casual meetings, from information received from the case manager, or from a phone call from the employer. Systematic, long-term follow-up is not part of the services provided by Eden Programs.

Number of participants per support personnel: 31

Retention Rate: not recorded, participants that leave jobs are found new ones

Career Assistance

The career services provided include the goal setting and identification of strengths that takes place during the initial assessment.

Contract Out?

Alliance Apartments/Eden Programs only provides services to its residents, so contracting their services is not possible.

Goodwill Industries/Easter Seal

Background

For over seventy-eight years Goodwill/Easter Seal has provided education, employment, and training services for people with disabilities or disadvantages. Today, Goodwill/Easter Seal provides services to any individual with barriers to employment, including: people with physical

and mental health disabilities, people who are homeless, public assistance recipients in Hennepin County, migrant workers, and special education students from area school districts.

Goodwill/Easter Seal provides a variety of services including assessment, employment services, and skills training. Their employment services include work adjustment training, work experience, job seeking skills training, placement, job coaching, and long-term support. The specific skills training provided by Goodwill/Easter Seal includes retail skills, service technician skills, construction skills, and cash register skills.

Recruitment

Goodwill/Easter Seal participants are usually referred from another social service agency. Agencies that work with individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment refer clients who are seeking employment or training to the Goodwill/Easter Seal programs.

Assessment

Goodwill/Easter Seal provides two weeks of "situational assessment" for many of its participants. This paid training helps participants identify their strengths, interests, and abilities to determine their employment goals; includes practice working at a variety of jobs to determine their interest and ability level; and incorporates an interest inventory, basic reading and math tests, and manual dexterity tests. Participants in its Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) receive a briefer assessment than the participants in Goodwill/Easter Seals programs. MFIP participants are provided with some job searching skills and then are required to begin searching for jobs immediately.

Training

Goodwill/Easter Seal provides technical training in four areas: retail, service technician, construction, and cash register training. All of the training is a combination of hands-on, on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Each type of technical training is located at a different work site. Retail training is provided at Target, service technician training is offered at Valvoline Instant Oil Change, the construction skills training is provided at Habitat for Humanity sites, and cash register training is provided at Goodwill retail stores. The mix of on-the-job and classroom varies by subject area. For example, the retail training includes one and a half-hours of classroom training and one and a half-hours of on-the-job training each day during the first two weeks. The remaining six weeks of retail training is all on-the-job. All four technical training areas include some soft-skills training intermixed with the technical subject matter.

Support

Goodwill/Easter Seal participants meet with a Placement Specialist to identify their job goals. After setting these goals and getting a job, participants meet with a Support Consultant who provides long-term support. This support takes a variety of forms depending on the needs of the individual participants. Generally, follow up support contact is more structured and frequent during the first several weeks of employment and becomes less frequent (usually at least two times per month) the longer the employee stays on the job. For some participants, follow up support includes site visits as well as other contact. Goodwill/Easter Seal builds long-term relationships with employers and the Support Consultants stay in contact with them as well when a new employee is hired.

Number of participants per support personnel: 20-30

Retention Rate: for 1997 the 90 day retention rate was 80%, for the first half of 1998 the 90 day retention rate was 93%

Career Assistance

Career assistance provided by Goodwill/Easter Seal includes the situational assessment, which helps participants identify their skills and strengths and set employment goals. In addition, the employment services program includes job seeking skills training and placement support.

Contract Out?

Goodwill/Easter Seal has formed a variety of partnerships around job training and support in South Minneapolis. With Whittier Works, PPL, and PCDC Job Bank, Goodwill/Easter Seal has created Connections to Work (an MFIP provider for Hennepin County). Goodwill/Easter Seal is also working with the Lake Street Council to set up specific training for the four industry groups represented on the Council -- retail, light manufacturing, financial services, and food service. In addition, they are working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a training program for the homeless in Hennepin County.

Goodwill/Easter Seal is very interested in forming a partnership with The Green Institute. They suggested that they may be able to coordinate the programs they are involved with in South Minneapolis to funnel participants into jobs at The Green Institute. This may be a very good match. It is less certain how and from what site they might be able to provide assessment and long-term support for Green Institute employees.

Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center

Background

The Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center (MRC) has worked for over thirty-five years to open up job opportunities for people with disabilities. More recently, the organization has also begun to provide opportunities for individuals who are economically disadvantaged. The MRC works with a Business Advisory Council (that includes 145 businesses) that helps ensure that the training provided by the MRC is applicable to business needs. The MRC provides five main categories of services, including: Vocational Evaluation, FlexWork Technical Computer Training, FlexWork Non-technical Computer Training, Employment Services, and Job Retention Services.

Recruitment

Most of the Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center's trainees are referred to the organization from other social service agencies, such as Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, The Veterans Administration, and Qualified Resource Counselors.

Assessment

The MRC provides an initial assessment for participants through its vocational evaluation. Various employment tests and a planning conference are utilized to help participants identify appropriate employment goals and the steps needed to attain those goals.

Training

Both technical and non-technical training courses are available at the MRC. Technical training includes COBOL Programmer Training and Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) Training, is full-time, and lasts from six to nine months. The non-technical training includes keyboard training,

Microsoft Office Professional training, accounting support training, non-technical customer help desk training, and office technology training; is part-time; and lasts from two to four months. Soft-skills training is interwoven into these training courses. Representatives from the Business Advisory Council businesses often speak to participants about employer expectations in the workplace.

Support

The MRC provides support for participants through its job retention program. MRC retention staff stays in contact with participants for the first six months of their employment. Contact with the employer and the employee is made by phone on a weekly basis during the first month of employment. After the first month, contact is maintained monthly. The retention staff refers participants to other community agencies or to First Call for Help contacts when issues outside of work arise.

Number of participants per support personnel: 25

Retention Rate: 87% of training graduates are placed, 85% of placed graduates stay on the job for 90 days, most of these make 6 months

Career Assistance

The MRC's career support takes place in two stages. During the initial vocational evaluation participants identify their career goals and create a plan for reaching that goal. After training has been completed, the MRC provides placement services for its participants with some 500 employers.

Contract Out?

While much of the training provided by the MRC does not fit the needs of The Green Institute, the organization is accustomed to working with other community agencies and is willing to design customized training. For example, Jean Upshaw, the Training and Services Manager, indicated that the MRC would be willing to design a stand-alone soft-skills course to meet the needs of the Institute. The MRC is very interested in the possibility of working with The Green Institute to provide soft-skills training and support services.

Phillips Community Development Corporation

Background

The Phillips Community Development Corporation (PCDC) offers a variety of job search resources for Phillips residents who are looking for work. Currently, PCDC has one Employment Specialist and one Program Assistant who help participants compose a case plan, conduct a job search, connect with training courses, and stay on the job through follow up and mediation. PCDC is in the process of hiring another Employment Specialist and is working with Project for Pride in Living, Whittier Works, Seward Redesign, and Goodwill/Easter Seal to form a South Minneapolis employment alliance. This collaborative hopes to share resources and responsibilities for participants of the individual programs that are placed at the same firms. This would save time by allowing a support person from one agency to do a site visit and check in on employees who are participants in several of the programs.

Recruitment

PCDC recruits its participants through neighborhood newspaper advertisements, word of mouth,

and referrals from other community social service agencies. In fact, PCDC holds off-site orientations for its employment program at seven other community locations. These off-site orientations are usually held once per month, although they are held as often as four times per month at some sites.

Assessment

Participants are given an introduction to PCDC's employment programs and fill out an application in their first meeting with PCDC staff. Next, participants meet one-on-one with the Employment Specialist and create a case plan for their job search with PCDC. The case plans are drawn up utilizing the information that the participant provides the Employment Specialist and the participant's employment goal. Case plans may stipulate the number of days that participants must actively search for a job at PCDC, how many basic computer skills classes they must attend, or that they must complete their G.E.D.

Training

In the past, Connections to Work has held some soft skills training courses at PCDC. These morning classes were poorly attended by PCDC employment program participants and are, therefore, no longer offered. PCDC is in the process of developing a training course of its own. This course will be three hours per day for two weeks and will consist of classes in work readiness, developing backup plans for childcare, résumé writing, interviewing, and dressing for the job. The classes will be offered in the evenings and a stipend or free childcare may be offered for participants. This training will not be required for all participants, as some are already work ready. For those participants who are required to attend per their case plan, they will be ineligible for support services until they have completed the course.

PCDC refers participants to Phillips Community Computer Center located in the Franklin Avenue Library for free basic computer classes and to other community resources for G.E.D. and other education and training opportunities. PCDC does have a small amount of money that it can use to help some participants attend training.

Support

The Employment Specialist currently follows up with both placed employees and employers on an ad hoc basis. PCDC has recognized that follow up is important and is working to ensure that it occurs on a more regular basis. The Employment Specialist would like to implement a system where within the first thirty days all newly placed employees are contacted weekly, a site visit is conducted, and the employer is contacted twice. PCDC is currently working to develop its employer relations to generate new job leads and to better assess employers' problems. The follow up schedule outlined by the Employment Specialist may be hard to maintain, however, with the current caseload.

PCDC offers free bus passes to participants that are currently seeking a job, can pay for some training, and can give participants fifty dollars towards the purchase of work clothing or other work requirements once they have been hired. The Employment Specialist directly provides most of the program's support. If a participant has problems with chemical dependency, however, he or she is referred to Hennepin County chemical dependency services.

Number of participants per support personnel: 250

Retention Rate: not recorded

Career Assistance

PCDC's employment program provides significant career assistance for its participants. A case plan for their job search is drawn up; participants are given access to the NET, a city-wide listing of job openings, as well as other job openings; and the new training course will provide résumé writing and interviewing classes.

Contract Out?

The Green Institute is currently contracting out some screening and assessment services from PCDC.

Train-to-Work

Background

Train-to-Work was started in September 1997 by the Project for Pride in Living (PPL) and Abbott Northwestern Hospital to help residents of the Phillips and Powderhorn communities obtain living wage jobs in their communities. The program also seeks to increase neighborhood access to employment at Abbott Northwestern Hospital and Children's Health Care while reducing turnover in departments with ongoing shortages of qualified employees. Program participants are prepared for dietary, housekeeping, clerical, nursing assistant and other positions at the two hospitals. So far, the program has graduated 41 participants in 5 classes.

Recruitment

Train-to-Work recruits its participants through word of mouth and referrals from other community agencies. In this early stage of the program's development the majority of participants have come to the program through word of mouth. However, Train-to-Work would like to increase the number of qualified referrals that it receives from other agencies in the future.

Assessment

The initial assessment process for Train-to-Work is extensive. Prospective participants first complete an application and then have an initial interview. During this interview participants are asked about any issues they have that might interfere with work. Following this interview there is a background check, work related references are contacted, and proof of current immunizations is requested. Finally, there is a second interview before the applicant is admitted to the program. Additionally, an Adult Basic Literacy Exam is given to those applicants who have not finished high school, an office skill assessment is done by Sister Kenny Institute staff for clerical job candidates, and a certification check is required for all Nursing Assistant candidates.

Training

Once an applicant has been accepted to the Train-to-Work program he/she takes part in four weeks of employment skills training. Participants are paid \$6.50 per hour during this training period, which includes three weeks of classroom instruction and one week of job shadowing. Some of the work readiness issues covered in the classroom include goal setting, self-esteem, attitude, punctuality, and job search skills. The classroom training also includes visits by supervisors who talk about what the jobs are like and their expectations for employees.

Support

Once participants have been hired they are supported by the program's Retention Specialist. The Retention Specialist is in contact with both the employee and employer on a regular basis.

Contact is made with the employee once per week during the first month of employment. This contact is sometimes made by phone, although the Retention Specialist attempts to meet people at their place of work, either before or after work or during a lunch or other break. After the first month on the job, the Retention Specialist is in contact with employees about once per month. Although the program is still new, the plan is to contact employees once per quarter after the first four or five months of employment.

The Retention Specialist also stays in contact with the supervisor. He calls each supervisor once or twice per month during the first month of an employee's tenure and after that drops down to one call per month. This phone call allows the Retention Specialist to ensure that there are no issues that have arisen that the employee is reluctant to talk about.

The Retention Specialist helps the participants deal with non-work related issues within the context of the job. He addresses the issue of how these problems affect their job. For other issues, the Retention Specialist refers participants to the resources of PPL's Self-Sufficiency Program, which has staff trained to deal with a wide variety of issues.

Number of participants per support personnel: 34

Retention Rate: 75 % of graduates are still working (the program is only 8 months old)

Career Assistance

As mentioned above, some career assistance is provided during the four-week training course. The job search skills included in the training are: filling in applications, mock interviews, and resume writing.

Contract Out?

Train-to-Work is not available to contract out. The funders for this program include the two hospitals, which are primarily interested in filling jobs within their organizations. PPL, however, has considered setting up similar programs elsewhere.

Whittier Works

Background

Whittier Works was established three years ago to help connect employers who have a difficult time retaining entry level employees with Whittier residents who have had a checkered work history. The program employs two job coaches who screen, train, place, and provide follow-up support for employees. Traditionally, Whittier Works has formed long-term relationships with manufacturing firms that hire a large number of employees each year. Whittier Works also seeks to work with companies that pay living wages for their entry-level employees.

Recruitment

Whittier Works recruits participants almost solely through word of mouth. The program does receive a few referrals from other agencies, but mostly relies on participants spreading the word about the program.

Assessment

Assessment is done informally in the Whittier Works program. Those interested in participating in the program meet with one of the job coaches to learn more about the program and to tell the job coach a bit about themselves. In an effort to identify any potential barriers to employment,

the job coaches ask very direct questions of the applicants, such as "Do you use drugs?" The coaches also ask about the participants' families, if they have kids, what their backup plans are if their childcare falls through, etc. The job coaches use this meeting to judge the barriers that individuals may face in employment and to begin to build a personal relationship with the applicant. Further informal assessment is conducted during the program's training sessions.

Training

Whittier Works has recently reorganized its training program. In the past, participants were required to attend two-hour training sessions on three consecutive Saturdays. Participants would work and attend training simultaneously. The job coaches felt that six hours was too little time to fully assess, let alone alter, behavioral problems that might negatively affect job performance. For this reason, the staff has created a new training program that will last one week, meeting for three hours each day. This class will be used to learn as much as possible about the applicants and to teach them soft skills. The staff also plans to bring in guest speakers from area businesses to share success stories. Peer support is an important part of this training and is fostered as much as possible throughout the class. Training is unpaid in an attempt to identify and train those who are truly serious about finding a job.

Support

Whittier Works' job coaches provide long-term follow up support to the employees and employers involved in their program. All employees placed by Whittier Works are required to call their job coach at least once per week during their 90-day probation period. In addition, the job coaches spend a significant amount of time at each job site and see some employees as many as three or four times per week, especially if they are encountering a problem. The site visits also give the job coach a chance to talk with the supervisor to address any problems that may have arisen. After the probation period is over, employees can be hired on permanently by the employer and are no longer required to call their job coach. Job coaches do remain available to support both employers and employees past the end of the probation period, however.

Number of participants per support personnel: 37 (they recommend 20-25)

Retention Rate: 35% for employees that stay for at least one year

Career Assistance

No specific career counseling is offered, other than generally acclimatizing participants to the world of work.

Contract Out?

Whittier Works provides its services free of charge to a variety of employers. However, it has not yet provided services to a nonprofit agency.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

In the process of this research, several important issues pertaining to job training and support programs were encountered. Each of these issues was important to consider as the job training and support model for the Green Institute was developed. A brief discussion of the target

population, whether to utilize integrated or separated staff functions, and the possibility of creating a city-wide training and support network will explain some of the assumptions that were made in the process of creating this proposal for the Green Institute's job training and support program.

Population to Serve

The best job training and support programs serve a particular niche of the population. Doing so allows them to tailor their services to meet the needs of their particular niche. The Green Institute's primary focus for its job creation and job training and support programs is the Phillips neighborhood and specifically, within the neighborhood, hard-to-employ individuals with low incomes.

This target population includes a broad spectrum of people with a wide variety of barriers to employment. Those with the largest number and most severe barriers require a significant commitment of time and energy and are, therefore, very difficult and expensive to support in employment and training. The model described below is not designed to work with this population. This job training model provides consistent support, but is not designed to deal with participants who need constant supervision or intensive support. For example, the program described in this report is not meant to provide the same kind of support that a program like Alliance Apartments provides for its residents. At Alliance Apartments, residents live in a supportive environment with support services for a variety of problems -- employment support being just one component. The Green Institute model only provides employment support. It is designed to help participants overcome barriers to employment and is meant to serve those who have a strong desire to work. The Green Institute will work with programs, such as the Alliance Apartments, to complement their services but the Institute will not provide the same comprehensive services for its employees.

The programs described above provide different levels of support for participants. Moving from the least intensive to the most intensive the programs are PCDC and Whittier Works, Train-to-Work, MRC and Goodwill/Easter Seal, and Alliance Apartments. The Green Institute model described below fits toward the less intensive side of the spectrum, providing roughly the same level of support as Whittier Works. This level of support was chosen because it meets the needs of The Green Institute and is financially feasible. Operating at this level means, however, that this job training and support program will not be able to assist those with the most and most severe barriers to employment.

Integrated vs. Separated Staff Functions

Another issue to consider when selecting a job training and support program is whether the support functions should be integrated or separated within the organization. Some of the larger organizations have different personnel that work with different portions of the training and support process. For example, in some organizations one staff person does assessment, another does placement, and still another provides follow-up support. As a participant moves through the program, he or she works with a different staff person at each stage. Each staff member, then, specializes in one of the functions.

While this system may prove efficient for large organizations, it is important for many

employees with barriers to employment that they work with a stable, consistent environment and that they can build trust with their support staff. This consistency and trust is often easier to provide when an organization uses an integrated support system -- where one employee works with participants throughout the process. Many of the smaller organizations use a completely or partially integrated system of support. For example, participants in Whittier Works work only with their job coach throughout the program. Train-to-Work and Alliance Apartments use a partially integrated system where participants may deal with more than one staff member, but employment and support services are primarily provided by one person. These integrated systems are more personal and have been very successful, partially due to the level of trust that support staff are able to establish with participants. Due to the size of The Green Institute's programs and the importance of building trust and consistency within the program, a more personal, integrated system was selected.

Can Job Training and Support be Done by a Broader Network?

There are a large number of organizations working on job training and support issues in Minneapolis. The list of organizations put together for this report included sixty-nine programs and this list only scratched the surface of organizations operating in the City of Minneapolis.

Many of these programs, like the model that was developed for The Green Institute, are organizationally specific, working with one vocation or one set of businesses. Train-to-Work, for example, provides training and support for Abbott Northwestern Hospital and Children's Health Care. Whittier Works, on the other hand, mainly provides support for metal finishing firms. While many of these programs serve different vocations or businesses, they often offer similar or identical services.

This begs the question of whether job training and support services could be provided on a wider-scale. Could a broader network provide some of the basic job training and support services so that individual organizations did not have to duplicate services?

While many of the programs that provide job training and support services do look similar, they often serve niche populations and businesses and tailor their services to fit these niches. Some of the skills taught are universal and could be used across niches. Many of the programs, however, integrate these components with more specific training or use specific examples to illustrate the lessons taught in these more universal sessions. For example, Train-to-Work's classroom sessions include topics such as goal setting, punctuality, and employer expectations. All of these topics are addressed through health care and hospital job examples. For instance, it is hospital supervisors who come in and talk with participants about expectations in the hospital setting.

Also, as mentioned above, many of the job training and support programs are successful due to the personal relationships that support staff are able to develop with participants. These personal relationships would be much harder to create if some of the training were provided by a broader network. For example, if a city-wide organization provided some of the basic, universal training and then participants moved into further training, placement, and support programs that were specific to particular industries or businesses, the consistency of one support staff member following a participant through the process would be lost.

For these reasons, it would be difficult to rely on a broad organization to provide general training

and support. It does make sense, however, to limit the duplication of services as much as possible when it comes to technical training. Often technical training requires significant resources to start up and has increasing returns to scale. It does make sense, therefore, for individual job training and support programs to utilize outside resources to accomplish any technical training they may need to provide.

The most efficient system may be individual organizations providing rudimentary soft skills training and on-going support for participants while operating within a broader network of training organizations that provide technical training and training for staff involved in job support programs. The Green Institute, for example, could then provide work readiness training and support while referring their participants to other organizations that provide technical skills training. The same is most likely true of specific support services, such as chemical dependency support. Individual organizations could provide the on-going general support that is tailored to their needs, while referring participants in need of specific, in-depth support to outside agencies. This preserves the consistency of the staff support while utilizing existing community resources and avoiding as much duplication as possible. This model for a network of support and training services is the one laid out in The Green Institute job training and support program described below.

JOB TRAINING MODEL SELECTED

Using the assessment of The Green Institute's job training and support needs, the work done by the six job training and support programs that were interviewed for this report, and the key assumptions described above, the following model was created specifically for The Green Institute. This model seeks to incorporate the best practices of those organizations that work in South Minneapolis and meet the needs of The Green Institute, while keeping in mind a realistic picture of the financial resources that are available for such a program. The model revolves around the five key needs of the Institute: recruitment, assessment, training, support, and career assistance (see Table 1).

While this model relies on a variety of actors inside and outside of the organization, much of the support and coordination for the program would be the responsibility of a single support person. This position would be the one person that program participants have contact with throughout the process, as well as the person who would line up the various other supporting agencies and personnel to help carry out the training and support.

Recruitment

The support person would set up a recruitment system that would provide The Institute with a large pool of qualified candidates, the majority of which should come from The Institute's targeted populations -- hard-to-employ, low-income Phillips residents. In order to accomplish this, a network of job posting and referral sites needs to be created. The support person would foster relationships with employment referral agencies, housing agencies, and other Phillips organizations to establish a network from which to recruit new employees. A list of varied sites

at which job openings can be posted would be helpful, but in order to recruit enough qualified candidates for all of the openings that are expected, it will be necessary to create a network of organizations that actively feed candidates into The Green Institute's job training and support program.

Assessment

The assessment of potential program participants is a major step in the job training and support program. The support person would assess each candidate through a variety of methods, including an application, an in-person interview, and a series of tests. This assessment may take place over two meetings, one to fill out the application and take tests and the second to discuss the test results and talk more in-depth with the applicant. The most important factors to discover in this assessment are the applicant's work maturity, their potential barriers to successful employment, and their ability to do the job.

While math and reading tests that are specific to the job that the person is applying for may be helpful in determining their ability to carry out the job, they are not the most important part of the assessment process and should not be overvalued or become intimidating for the applicant. More important than the specific skills that applicants possess is their work maturity and the presence of potential barriers to employment. While some of this information can be obtained through various tests, it is most readily discovered through frank, personal conversations with the applicants. Employment law forbids employers from requiring some personal information or even asking many of the tough questions that reveal barriers to employment. For this reason, a support person who does not work for the Institute would be able to obtain more information from potential employees. This is an important reason why the Institute should consider contracting with another organization to provide this service.

It would also be useful to undertake a mid-course assessment part way through an employee's training period. This assessment would help determine the effectiveness of the employee's training -- both soft-skills and technical training. This assessment, carried out by the support person and shared with the employee, would help to determine if the employees are progressing towards their goals and the effectiveness of the training offered.

There are a number of organizations that provide assessment services similar to those described above and while contracting with an organization to provide just assessment is possible, there are a number of disadvantages. First, if a separate program provides assessment, it does not allow participants to work with one support person throughout the entire process. This would make it more difficult to develop the trusting relationships between support person and participants. Second, it is advantageous to have the same person provide assessment and follow-up. Providing both services allows the support person to better track the effectiveness of the assessment and training processes, to more easily and fully recognize the assessment factors that cause difficulty for employees later on, to better understand the true needs of the employers, and to witness the long-term challenges and successes of participants. For this reason, it is preferable that one person provide all four aspects of the support and training program.

Training

There are four types of training that would be utilized in this job training and support program.

The first type of training is an orientation to The Green Institute and an initial period of soft skills training. This training would take place after employees have been hired and placed, but before they have begun working. In an effort to get employees working as quickly as possible this training would be kept short -- one to two half days would be appropriate. The orientation should include information on The Green Institute, its programs and values, and the expectations of the supervisors. A short session where supervisors directly discuss their expectations would be most useful. The initial soft skills training should include work readiness issues, the importance of punctuality and a good work ethic, and how to make one's job a priority in life.

Orientation and the initial soft skills training should be provided often throughout the year, so that all new employees will have a chance to participate in it before they begin working or, in the very least, shortly after they have begun. It could be offered on an as-needed basis, but would be most effective when offered to a small group of employees at one time. This would help build the peer support that is an important element for job training and support programs. Orientation and the initial soft skills training should be conducted by the support person in conjunction with The Institute's Human Resources capacity and the employees' new supervisors.

The second type of training is on-going soft skills instruction. This training could take place periodically after employees have started working. It could occur one to two times per week for the first month of employment, with each session lasting from one to two hours. Supervisors should make arrangements for employees to miss work for several hours in the morning or afternoon once or twice per week as they attend these classroom sessions. This training seeks to continue the soft skills education started in the previous training while integrating it with work experience and allowing participants to begin work as quickly as possible. Topics for these sessions should include: communication skills, problem solving skills, self esteem, conflict resolution, boundary setting, and goal setting. These sessions should be organized and carried out by the support staff member.

Each program handles the issue of payment for soft skills training differently. Some organizations use fairly extensive, unpaid soft skills training as a way to weed out potential participants who are less serious about working. Other organizations feel that requiring unpaid training puts too large a burden on those who truly need employment and the paycheck that it will provide. For this model, it makes sense to give employees time away from work and pay for the time they spend on the orientation and initial and further soft skills training.

The third type of training is on-the-job training. This training would be provided by participants' supervisors and co-workers. It would occur every day, on-the-job as the new employees interacted with their supervisors and co-workers. It would be job-specific and could include cashier training, construction techniques and terminology, and computer training.

The final type of training in this model is off-site technical training. This training would be provided by outside training institutions or organizations and would be arranged as needed for all employees. Supervisors and program managers would make arrangements with the support staff member to set up such training sessions to upgrade the skills of their employees. An example of such a training session is the construction training that the DeConstruction crew attended at Goodwill/Easter Seals.

Support

Providing adequate support for employees is perhaps the most important aspect of a successful job training and support program. This model calls for the support person to provide frequent, long-term support to program participants. During the first month of employment the support person should have weekly contact with program participants. This contact should take place outside of work, either by telephone or in person just before or after work. During the second and third months of employment, contact should be made twice a month and during the fourth through sixth months contact could take place once per month. After six months contact for most employees will no longer be necessary. However, there may be some cases in which the support person chooses to maintain contact for additional months and the support person should always be available for support after six months if sought out by an employee.

The support person should also maintain regular contact with the supervisor of the employee. This contact can occur less regularly, perhaps twice per month during the first three months and once per month during the second three months. After six months this contact could also be discontinued, but, as with employees, the support person should be available if the supervisor requests assistance after an employee's first six months.

This follow-up support is meant to assist employees in dealing with on-the-job conflicts, lateness or attendance problems, conflicts with co-workers and supervisors, transportation issues, etc. By contacting both the employee and the supervisor, the support person can discover these issues and help the employee deal with them effectively before they result in a termination. Supervisors should be able to call on the support person each time an employee fails to call in or show up for work. The support person can then check up on the employee to find out what is happening, while freeing up the supervisor to carry out their other duties.

The support person should also be available to help connect the employees with outside resources that can assist them with non-work related issues. Because these issues are so varied, it would be impossible for the support person to handle all of the issues themselves. Therefore, the support person should establish and maintain contact with a variety of community resources that employees can utilize when the need arises. For example, the support person should not seek to help an employee who has a chemical dependency problem, but instead refer the employee to a reliable organization or individual who may be able to provide that person with adequate support. It is vital that the initiative remain with the employee to find help for themselves, but the support person can assist by pointing out how a problem can affect work and by identifying and suggesting programs that are available and reliable. Utilizing outside resources, the support person can help employees deal with childcare issues, personal financial management, dependency and abuse issues, affordable housing, family criminal justice issues, and health care.

From conversations with other programs that provide similar types and levels of support, it appears that the support person should be able to work with from twenty to thirty participants at one time. This caseload does not allow the support person to directly provide support for issues that are outside of work. But working directly with work-related problems, this caseload does allow the support person to make frequent contact with program participants.

In addition to support provided by the designated support staff member, support should be provided by and nurtured among other participants. This peer support is very effective in helping

employees overcome barriers to employment and should be integrated into group training sessions as much as possible.

Career Assistance

Because The Green Institute seeks to serve as an entry point into the workforce for hard-to-employ individuals and to enhance the capacity of its employees, this job training and support model would include a career assistance component. First, the program would include a variety of career and job seeking sessions, including: career goal setting, job-hunting skills, interviewing skills, and resume writing. These sessions would be led by the support person and would help participants assess their career goals and decide if those goals can be met at The Green Institute. If the goals cannot be met at the Institute, these sessions would help participants prepare for further career opportunities. Career assistance sessions should be held periodically and participants should be invited to join when it is appropriate for their situation.

Second, the support staff member should establish and maintain connections with employers and training programs that might be interested in Green Institute employees. For example, connections could be made with the carpenter's and laborer's union apprenticeship programs and with independent carpenters who may be interested in admitting or hiring DeConstruction employees. Connections could also be made with manager training programs at area building supply stores and to tenants in the PEEC that may be interested in hiring ReUse Center employees.

Through job hunting training and an established network of training and employment options, The Green Institute could assist its employees with moving to their next job.

Sequence and Coordination of Services

The components of this model do not operate in isolation or strictly sequentially. Many of the elements would occur simultaneously (see Figure 1). Recruitment is the first step in the process, followed by assessment. The early stages of career assistance, such as goal setting, would follow directly after assessment as the support staff member helps participants identify their career goals. Career assistance would continue, then, on an individual, as-needed basis until the participant finds another job. After the assessment phase, participants would be hired and placed in a job.

Before work begins they would participate in the orientation and initial soft skill training sessions. Beginning simultaneously with the orientation, participants would be able to consult with the support person if they are in need of other, community support services. This support would continue until the participant finds another job.

After orientation and the initial soft skills training participants would begin working. Participants would also simultaneously receive on-the-job training, continued soft skills training, and follow up support from the support staff member. On-the-job training and the follow up support would continue until the participant finds another job. The soft skills training would continue for the first month of employment. Additional, off-site technical training would occur as needed throughout the participant's employment with The Green Institute. Once the participant has been placed in a new job, the services provided by The Green Institute would cease.

The services have been sequenced in this way to ensure that participants are able to begin working as quickly as possible while receiving all of the training and support that is necessary to help them succeed. The sequence of services and which services each participant receives are flexible so that the needs of individual employees can be met.

Just as the individual components of this job training and support model cannot operate alone, it is important that the program not operate in isolation from The Institute's Human Resources department. While there are definite advantages to contracting with an outside organization to perform these duties, it cannot function completely separate from The Institute. It is essential that such an entity remain in close contact with The Institute's Human Resource department. The support function and the Human Resources department need to coordinate on a number of issues, including: personnel paperwork, personnel policies, hiring needs, and employee evaluations and terminations.

In order to accomplish this coordination, the support function needs to remain in close communication with the Human Resources department through frequent meetings and updates. The support person could be asked to attend personnel committee meetings to remain up-to-date on human resource developments within The Institute. It may prove most beneficial to have the Human Resources department oversee the contract with the support organization.

The support function also needs to remain in direct, close contact with the supervisors and program directors that work in The Institute's various programs. This will ensure that the training and support provided is meeting the needs of The Green Institute.