

RF Board of Trustees
6/91

**Special Program Update:
MFSP Dissemination**

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The short-term MFSP findings have helped identify a promising new job training and employment strategy referred to as "training first," developed by the Center for Employment Training (CET) in California. Analysis shows the training-first strategy led to a significant improvement in the employment and earnings of its participants while the popular "schooling-first" approach - used by the other three MFSP programs - showed no evidence of short-term economic impacts.

As an indication of the relevance of the MFSP findings to current policy, three federal agencies responsible for poverty programs - Health and Human Services, Education, and Labor - are already utilizing the findings. HHS, the agency responsible for implementation and evaluation of the Family Support Act, in coordination with the departments of Labor and Education, has named the CET model as an "exemplary program design" in its technical assistance work with state agencies. These agencies are encouraging states to look at the CET approach as a possible innovative model for their JOBS program design. CET, it should be noted, is the only private-sector program so highlighted in the workshops; the other five are state welfare program models. Russ Tershy, Executive Director of CET, and Phoebe Cottingham, Associate Director, Equal Opportunity, are making presentations on the research and program model at six regional workshops over the next four months.

As a result of MFSP briefings at the Department of Labor, CET was invited to submit a proposal for providing technical assistance to groups who want to adopt or start CET programs. DOL's aim is to develop enough CETs in other regions of the country to have a base for fuller testing and evaluation of the CET model with differing populations and labor markets.

In anticipation of this federal support and in response to an overwhelming number of requests for CET "site visits" stimulated by the Foundation's dissemination efforts, CET began holding workshops with RF support for representatives from a variety of organizations, agencies, and funders seeking to learn how the CET program operates. The first three-day workshop, held in April, led to the creation of a technical assistance unit, CET Development Systems, to assist workshop participants with follow-up.

Attendees at the first workshop included community colleges with responsibilities in their areas for JOBS programs, city and county agencies, several community-based organizations, and a representative from the Alberta (Canada) Department of Employment who has asked to set up a CET in that province for evaluation demonstration purposes. Commissioner Josephine Nieves and three staff members from the New York City Department of Employment also attended, and are conducting follow-up discussions with CET to establish a significant CET presence in New York. This would offer a first trial of the west coast program in a key eastern city. New York City will apply to the federal government for additional support of demonstration research.

The MFSP findings, because of their implications for both job training and for adult and youth education strategies more generally, can stir deep reactions. While there is general acknowledgement that replication research and more careful evaluations of education strategies will be necessary to begin to answer questions raised by the more positive outcomes of the "training-first" approach, many in the education community are particularly perplexed and unsettled by the research.

Some policy analysts believe broader questions are raised by the MFSP findings regarding education and training strategies in many poverty programs. Staff in the President's Domestic Policy Council are exploring these questions through meetings and other activities. It is possible that these activities could lead to broader testing of job training along the CET lines and challenges to mandated participation in education as a prelude to eventual job training. Significant federal resources are involved - \$5 billion in job training, \$8 billion in vocational education, and equivalent amounts in state funds that community college and adult education programs could draw on to provide educational services to welfare recipients and others mandated to participate in return for public assistance.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. is completing the 30-month follow-up findings that will include non-economic as well as economic impacts. These findings will be released this fall, as the most comprehensive report on the MFSP. As noted last fall, the 30-month economic findings offer no evidence for expecting late emergence of large long-term impacts at the three schooling-first MFSP sites, and support the persistence of impacts at CET. Nevertheless, the Foundation is supporting a five-year follow-up study, with a final report due in 1993.