

Division of Older Worker Programs
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The Nine "Best Practices" of HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SCSEP PROJECTS

Lessons in What Makes These
Projects a Success

The National Council on the Aging, Inc.
A Joint Effort of the Workforce Development Division
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The National Council on the Aging, Inc.

Founded in 1950, NCOA is a private, nonprofit association of organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting the dignity, self-determination, well-being, and continuing contributions of older persons through leadership and service, education and advocacy. NCOA members include senior centers, adult day service centers, senior housing, congregate-meal sites, faith congregations, and area agencies on aging. Over the past 50 years, NCOA has helped to develop dozens of innovative programs, such as Foster Grandparents, Meals on Wheels, and Family Friends, which serve the needs of older Americans and their families. For more information, visit www.ncoa.org.

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PREFACE

As we enter the twenty-first century, it is increasingly clear that tapping into the talents of all of America's available workers isn't just good values, it's good business. As our population becomes more diverse and global competition expands employers can't afford to underutilize any segment of the American talent pool.

—U.S. Department of Labor, *Futurework:Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century*

SINCE 1965, THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP) AND ITS predecessor, Operation Mainstream, have enabled economically disadvantaged older Americans aged 55 and above to help themselves while helping others in communities throughout America. Public and private nonprofit community agencies benefit from the valuable experience, skills, work ethic and productivity that SCSEP participants bring to the work environment. The Program helps address urgent needs that might otherwise go unmet while empowering participants to become self-sufficient, thus avoiding public assistance as they provide essential community services and gain the necessary confidence and job skills for obtaining unsubsidized employment.

The SCSEP and Operation Mainstream have been evaluated on numerous occasions. Both programs have always received bipartisan support and positive assessments, whether from independent evaluators, program participants, training sites or employers. For example, Solomon G. Jacobson, former Vice President of Morgan Management Systems, provided an exceptional assessment of SCSEP when he advised a House Congressional unit: "The Senior Community Service Employment Program is the most effective program I have ever evaluated, and in my opinion it should be retained and strengthened."¹

As currently structured, the SCSEP is cost-effective, returning approximately \$1.50 for every dollar invested by empowering individuals to become self-sufficient productive, tax-paying members of their communities. About 80 cents of every dollar is expended on participant wages and fringe benefits; less than 15 cents of every dollar is expended on administration, one of the lowest rates among federal programs. The balance is expended on participant training, counseling and related expenses.

Today's Senior Community Service Employment Programs are pursuing many new older worker strategies, striving constantly to balance the needs of individuals with those of employers—and, at the same time, to assess their own critical role in workforce development reforms.

In recent years there has been a major shift in America's workforce development programs aimed at providing universal access to an array of employment, training and support services. The Workforce Investment Act, enacted in 1998 and administered at the federal level by the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor, focuses on the integration of workforce development programs through partnering at the local, state and federal levels. While such integration can bring real benefits to the nation's employers and workers, it is necessary to assure that the unique employment-related needs of special populations are addressed.

One such population consists of America's older adults, especially those with limited financial resources. For many in the SCSEP program, work is an economic necessity, retirement a luxury many can ill afford. According to DOL, nearly three in four SCSEP participants, now, are women. For most, the biggest barriers are a lack of experience and training. Women are traditionally the family caregivers, and a scattered work history is a reality of many women's lives. Many older adults also lack basic literacy skills. Workers in rural areas face additional hurdles, and people who speak English as a second language face barriers as well.

America's workforce is growing older and becoming even more diverse. By 2005, government estimates indicate that over 30 percent more persons age 55 or older will be at work than in the 1990s and over 30 percent more older workers will be unemployed. In the new economy, workers' opportunities and work systems are changing. Many thousands across the country need help to keep in step, build skills and confidence. The only employment and training program in the nation that is aimed exclusively at low-income older persons is the Senior Community Service Employment Program which is authorized by title V of the Older Americans Act. Services provided by SCSEP now reach only a fraction of those who are eligible. With the pool of low-skill jobs shrinking, SCSEP training is more critical than ever.

This publication showcases some of the significant ways SCSEP projects around the country are succeeding in this challenging environment and some of their innovative, collaborative activities and strategies. There is obviously not a single road map to follow, but The National Council on the Aging (NCOA) hopes that this “Best Practices” review will help to stimulate thinking, discussion, and practical problem-solving in these challenging times.

SCSEP projects located in seven states—California, Florida, Idaho, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia, participated in this “Best Practices” study:

1. AARP Foundation SCSEP, Richmond, VA
2. Green Thumb, Inc., Oregon/Washington Operation, Beaverton, OR
3. Idaho Commission on Aging SCSEP, Twin Falls, ID
4. National Asian-Pacific Center on Aging SCSEP, Asian American Senior Citizen Service Center, Orange County, CA
5. The National Council on the Aging SCSEP, Palm Beach County, FL
6. National Senior Citizens' Education and Research Center SCSEP, Miami Beach Community Development Corporation, Miami Beach, FL

7. National Urban League SCSEP, Dallas Urban League, Dallas, TX
8. The National Council on the Aging SCSEP, Vermont Associates for Training and Development Inc., St. Albans, VT

The study, which was funded by the Workforce Development Division of NCOA under a grant from DOL, involved interviews with staff at each of the locations. A national advisory committee was charged with developing selection criteria and nominating “Best Practices” projects. The criteria that helped guide the search included: (1) success in meeting/exceeding enrollment rates, (2) success in meeting/exceeding unsubsidized placement rates, and (3) evidence of challenges met and opportunities grasped. An effort was made to include SCSEP projects **from** different regions of the country that had “lessons to share” with other programs.

Note: In this document we use the terms National Sponsor to refer to the national parent organization and sub-grantee or local sponsoring organization to refer to the local “parent” organization. In keeping with Department of Labor guidance, the term “participant” is used to refer to the SCSEP program enrollee or trainee. More detailed descriptions of the “Best Practices” projects, as well as greater detail on the study design and methodology, are included in the Appendix.

The findings from this study demonstrate that the “Best Practices” projects not only have a vision of the SCSEP program for the future, but also are finding better ways of advocating for older workers’ interests today. The “Best Practices” projects consistently have many of the following qualities:

- They are proactive in networking and partnering with area employers
- They set high and clear standards for host agencies
- They commit to continuous improvement
- They foster and value teamwork
- They exhibit strong leadership
- They focus attention on the participant as a “whole person”
- They engage the strong infrastructure of the parent organization
- They build vibrant community collaborations
- They provide value-added service to the community

Using This Report

In the end, this publication should be thought of, not as a blueprint, but more as an idea bank to help trigger your unique strategies. Our hope is it will be a source of inspiration, information, and “doable” ideas. Our interest is not to displace what is now working for you, but rather to encourage trying out “lessons learned from the field” that may lead you in new directions.

Some ideas are sustained activities that require a long-range outlook. Others are more immediately applicable. The goal is to find the seed of an idea then adapt it or build on it. Pick and choose to fit your needs. Try out an idea for a trial period—see if it works.

Contact the sites directly for additional information about specific best practices. (See Appendix A for names and addresses.) Avoid rejecting an idea because the city or the participants seem different from yours: many of these practices can be transferred to very different settings. In fact, many of the specific practices that are attributed to one project are actually operating at several of the sites we visited regardless of size or location.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication is dedicated to the eight SCSEP “Best Practices” projects, which are profiled in these pages, for serving as our inspiration. All graciously endured our questions, provided useful information, and shared many examples, illustrations, and ideas that helped ground our discussions of exemplary SCSEP practice.

Beyond the local project staff, we interviewed past and current participants, leaders of the parent organizations, staff at host agencies and training programs, and also employers. We appreciate their willingness to talk with us.

The members of the national advisory committee deserve many thanks for their contributions in getting this initiative off the ground. All were unflaggingly helpful and supportive—participating in advisory group meetings, nominating “Best Practices” projects to visit, providing rich background information on those projects, and working to enhance the usefulness of this report.

Special thanks to Donald L. Davis, Vice President of NCOA's Workforce Development Division, whose impetus and guiding direction for this study of SCSEP “Best Practices” were invaluable. Also, we would like to acknowledge Margaret Erickson, Government Project Officer at DOL, consultant William H. Holmes, Binod Suwal, Program Associate at NCOA, and Janette K. Hoisington, Head Librarian at NCOA, for their expert advice, ideas, and collegial support.

Nancy A. Whitelaw, Ph.D., Vice President of NCOA Research and Demonstration Division, directed the project, with the assistance of Bonita L. Beattie, Deputy Director of Research and Demonstration. Barbara A. Hirshorn, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina, consulted on the overall study design, led the site visit teams, and prepared this report. Susan Coombs Ficke provided valuable review and editing

¹ Testimony by Solomon G. Jacobson “The Older Americans Act and Fiscal Year Budget” Subcommittee on Human Services, House Committee on Aging February 23, 1983.

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THE NINE “BEST PRACTICES”

ALTHOUGH SCSEP “BEST PRACTICES” PROJECTS DIFFER, TOGETHER, IT IS POSSIBLE TO isolate some key characteristics of excellence. This “Best Practices” study identified nine overarching themes that capture these characteristics:

1. Proactive and Cooperative Relations with Employers
2. High and Clear Expectations for Host Agencies
3. Commitment to Continuous Improvement
4. Managing for Effective Teams
5. Strong Leadership
6. Attention to the Whole Person
7. Strong Infrastructure Support
8. Vibrant Community Collaborations
9. Value Added to Community

Digging deeper, the study zeroed in on how projects both big and small push themselves to reach out and focus their resources—to serve clients and communities better. The eighteen success strategies in these pages offer examples based upon evidence from the projects visited.

1 Proactive and Cooperative Relationships with Employers

“BEST PRACTICES” PROJECTS DEVELOP PROACTIVE, DIRECT AND ON-GOING relationships with prospective employers. Together, project staff members know the local job market and also how area employers operate. They engage in continuous networking. They also emphasize the value of older workers to employers and actively seek out employers who are “age positive”—who value older workers both for specific skills and for such attributes as maturity, wealth of knowledge and experience, punctuality and loyalty.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #1: Careful tending of relationships with employers

“Best Practices” projects stay attentive to meeting the needs of both prospective employers and those who have previously hired SCSEP participants.

For instance, to open up information technology (IT) jobs to seniors, Green Thumb’s project in Oregon capitalized on the presence of the software development industry “at its own back door,” by setting up an IT-based 502(e) private sector training project that specifically took “an employer-driven perspective.” The region is marked by considerable urban-rural distinctions in both the availability and level of IT jobs, so this 502(e) program customizes participant training to meet differing labor market needs.

At the AARP Foundation SCSEP, in Richmond, Virginia, both the 30- and 90-day follow-ups are used not only to “nip any problem in the bud” but also as a marketing tool to “remind” employers about the SCSEP project and to commend them for “hiring an older worker.”

SUCCESS STRATEGY #2: Showcase success stories

“Best Practices” projects routinely network with area employers at “showcase events” targeted at workforce development.

A prime example of a win-win approach is a community networking initiative, sponsored by an area business community, to educate employers on the local labor market and on workforce development. In Palm Beach County, Florida, a large baby boom generation nearing retirement is expected to lead to a workforce shortage and need for trained older workers.

In addition to general information sharing, events held twice each month throughout the year offer a chance to showcase employment development programs so employers can connect directly to particular worker populations. Participation, in turn, leads the National Council on the Aging, Inc. (NCOA) Palm Beach County's SCSEP project to new unsubsidized placement possibilities. At these meetings, SCSEP staff can get printouts of employers seeking workers and participate in roundtable discussions on specific local issues (e.g., transportation as a barrier to workplace access.)

Key Points

Proactive relationships with employers can provide:

1. Opportunities to capitalize on the local economic climate and to be responsive to changes in the labor market
2. Formalized activities maximizing participant exposure to area employers and employer knowledge of the older worker population
3. Understanding of employer needs for integration into project planning and placement practices

The potential results are:

1. Improved and faster employer exposure to participants
2. Greater employer appreciation of older workers and a willingness to hire them
3. Increased placement rates and fewer placement “bad fits”

2 High and Clear Expectations for Host Agencies

AT “BEST PRACTICES” PROJECTS, AGREEMENTS WITH HOST AGENCIES ARE EXPECTED TO yield concrete commitments for both *training* and *placement*—and with some deliberate speed. “High expectations” call for training, assisting in the search for unsubsidized employment, and making a commitment to hire one or more participants. For the host agency and the SCSEP project, a well-focused win-win attitude is invaluable. For the host agency, training customized and targeted to the local job market is good for both employees and employers. For the SCSEP project, measurable outcomes are high quality training and high enrollment and placement rates.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #3: Clearly mapped out goals

Several of the “Best Practices” projects investigated are making a concerted effort to move participants into unsubsidized jobs. Agreements with host agencies stress a commitment to training and to taking an active role in finding unsubsidized employment.

The Idaho Commission on Aging sponsored SCSEP, in Twin Falls, for example, sets placement expectations right up front with both the host agency supervisor and the participant. Both are told: “SCSEP is a gateway to employment; the object is to transition off the project.” If a permanent position at that host agency is unlikely for a particular employee, then SCSEP personnel make it clear that active assistance in the search for permanent employment elsewhere is the alternative expectation.

The National Asian-Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) Orange County project, in southern California, collaboratively works with host agencies to tailor on-the-job training for participants of different languages and cultures. Considerate of diverse linguistic and cultural traditions, the project director begins at the ground level by negotiating every participant assignment to maximize host agency commitments to training and permanent placement or to help the participant to get a job elsewhere. Because several of these agencies were former JTPA training sites, the director has worked hard to “re-orient” them toward current SCSEP training goals and the benefits of hiring participants as permanent employees.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #4: Build Value

The “Best Practices” projects’ role is to assure a “good fit” between the preferences of the host agency and the needs of the participant. Work on this “good fit” is ongoing— from assessment, to placement, to monitoring. Key to the match is the supervisor-participant relationship. If the relationship is not working, SCSEP staff addresses difficult issues, promptly and decisively.

A key to a “good fit” is placing an informed and qualified participant in an appropriate training slot. A host agency supervisor working with the NCOA Palm Beach County project said he appreciates his in-depth interview with the SCSEP project director to elicit exactly what skills and attributes he is looking for. His needs: (1) having phone

interviewing skills, (2) having reliable transportation, and (3) wanting to learn basic database management skills. The project director made it clear to him that only program applicants who met his specifications would be placed in his organization for training.

Along the same lines, in Richmond, one small business operator who serves as both a host agency and an employer of older workers said he is confident that the AARP SCSEP project's participants "are both qualified for the job and knowledgeable about what we want out of someone filling the position." Boosting his confidence was the work of the project director that focused on (1) intensive screening of applicants for participant-host agency match and (2) orienting the selected participant to the characteristics of his business and responsibilities of the job. This way, he said, "None of our time is wasted, nor is the trainee's."

And at the National Senior Citizens' Education and Research Center (NSCERC) Miami Beach site, the SCSEP project tries to match the applicant to a host agency or an employer "from day one." Supervisors are invited to participant quarterly meetings so that participants and host agency trainers can get to know each other as "real people" outside the work setting. Each comes to have a better understanding of and appreciation for the other, then, that carries over into the work place.

Key Points

High and clear expectations for host agencies can provide:

1. An up-front commitment to both *training* and *placement*
2. A positive supervisor-participant relationship
3. Increased opportunity for hard-to-place participants to be matched with appropriate host agency placement and training

The potential pay-offs are:

1. A greater number of participant-host agency "good fits" from the start
2. Host agencies play an active role in securing unsubsidized employment following training
3. Stronger host agency attachment to the project

3 Commitment to Continuous Improvement

"BEST PRACTICES" PROJECTS SET HIGH GOALS FAR BEYOND THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS. Whether it is participant assessment, training, community service employment, job development, or unsubsidized placement, the aim is to improve the quality of service. The key of this work is connecting process improvements to real outcomes. As a simple example, a new SCSEP recruitment strategy results in higher enrollment rates. Continuous improvement, in short, requires a willingness to learn from experience—"what works" and "what does not." Likewise, it requires a whole team effort in making improvements.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #5: Discovery + flexibility = growth

"Best Practices" projects really are committed to learning from experience and getting better at what they do.

For the Idaho Commission on Aging sponsored SCSEP, in Twin Falls, switching to the one-stop's computerized assessment form was a logical step. This change greatly facilitates the interaction with one-stop staff and the enrollment of SCSEP participants in one-stop programs.

As another strategy of continuous improvement, an educational program that works with NCOA Palm Beach County's SCSEP project uses feedback from employers to assess training needs, successfully improve curriculum, and individualize one-on-one counseling. In order to gain this valuable feedback host agency site supervisors and employers of older workers are typically called three times.

During the first call, the staff inquires about resume quality and suitability of an applicant applying for a position. Next, after the job interview, faculty or staff call and ask for first impressions (e.g., appearance and behavior, communication skills, and suitability for the position). Then, a final follow-up call is made during the new employee probationary period. This call gives a final assessment on whether or not the employee is a good match for the position. The educational program uses the information gathered during these contacts to improve the quality of training and placement.

As with NCOA Palm Beach, the NCOA SCSEP project in Vermont solicits feedback to create "high performance workplace training." All aspects of training, including curriculum, are looked at again and again and refined as needed. Their seven-module specialized curriculum focuses on how to negotiate the labor market and how to be an effective and productive member of the labor force, whatever the job or skill level. In the spirit of maintaining excellence, the project team actively looks for curriculum innovations and refines the curricula as appropriate.

Similarly, the Green Thumb Oregon project has refined and polished its job skills training procedure for its special information technology 502(e) training program. Preparation activities are carefully planned for the terminal skills certification test. Additionally, staff members not only strive to ensure the optimal learning environment, but also reinforce workplace "realities" regarding the work-a-day schedule, dress, and turnaround on assignments. Two lessons learned can apply to the development of any training:

- Using a training "facilitator" on-site for just one hour-a-day provides for great flexibility in maximizing both the amount of self-paced classroom activity and the funds available for participants.
- A pre-exam test "dress rehearsal, by familiarizing participants with the test experience, increases pass rates for exams." After rehearsal, evaluate to determine if the participant is really ready for the certification test.

Key Points

A “continuous improvement” strategy in daily operations provides:

1. A way to strengthen communication and collaborations with host agencies and other workforce development partners
2. Improved “customer satisfaction” with host agencies and employers
3. More appropriate protocols and tools and training curricula

These improvements result in:

1. Increased likelihood of long-term collaboration for host agencies and other partners
2. Increased efficiency—particularly in participant assessment, IDP, and training
3. Increased skills and competency for participants

4 Managing for Effective Teams

“BEST PRACTICES” PROJECTS INSPIRE TEAMWORK. THEY WORK HARD TO BUILD THEIR capabilities through (1) close, team-based coordination of activity, (2) open communication and information exchange among staff members, (3) shared values and goals, and (4) a shared accountability. By harnessing the initiative and power of all involved, they create a well integrated, smooth-running operation that delivers exemplary service—whatever the available resources.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #6: Cross training

Regardless of project size, managing and developing staff may involve working towards building skills for a specific job and fostering shared skills across duties so that team members can cover for one another.

One example of how a project has embraced the teamwork concept is found at the AARP SCSEP, in Richmond. Here, employees are assigned to specific areas, however, everyone is cross-trained to perform a range of office tasks, including intake and assessment. Cross training broadens employee skills and creates a team of workers who are more knowledgeable and can support each other when needed.

The NCOA Vermont project staffing, likewise, is collaborative, emphasizing “staff specialization with coordination.” The “first floor team” at the Vermont project includes (1) a recruiter, (2) a job developer who works out of the NCOA SCSEP project and the local one-stop, and (3) an in-house trainer in basic computer/office skills and job-finding skills. The team meets first thing each morning for half an hour to talk about recruitment possibilities in the larger community, current participants, training options, and employment opportunities. Team members stay in touch throughout the day, sharing additional information learned as they go about their specialized jobs.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #7: Team building

Strong management and staff development also involves a range of activities to strengthen communication about participants, employers, host agencies, and funding, and to make sure that “everyone is on the same page.”

In Texas, monthly staff meetings lasting half a day are a key team building strategy at the National Urban League (NUL) Dallas project. The time allows staff to participate in key decisions, and also enhances communication and creative thinking skills. The challenge is to build an agenda that allows everyone to participate. A typical agenda looks something like this:

- **Pending issues**—e.g., changes in host agencies; positive (or negative) feedback from an employer;
- **Upcoming events**—e.g., job fair; presentation to local Chamber of Commerce;
- **Participants’ progress** toward unsubsidized employment, with an eye on identifying who needs additional support or service—for example, people with multiple physical, social or emotional needs, people experiencing difficulties in training; people who are ready to begin active job seeking.

Another example comes from Green Thumb’s project in Oregon. Here, the leadership conducts an annual staff retreat. The objective is team building and strategic planning. The meeting runs one week and is participatory. While on retreat, staff members explore and talk, discuss issues, and share ideas and information. Communication with the outside world during the week is kept to a bare minimum. The director sees her role at the retreat—to moderate small group discussion and to listen and learn—as a key management responsibility.

Key Points

The benefits of teamwork are:

1. Shared sense of accountability and group cohesiveness
2. Input to short-term decisions and strategic planning
3. Ways to refine communication among staff members

This results in:

1. An effective action-oriented team for the SCSEP
2. More effective recruitment, training and job development
3. Employee empowerment

5 Strong Leadership

MUCH OF THE SUCCESS OF “BEST PRACTICES” PROJECTS IS DUE TO STRONG leadership. A big picture outlook is paramount. In pursuing excellence, leaders can provide clear insight into and a vision of the benefits which older workers, host agencies and employers derive from their participation in SCSEP. Leadership skills are unrelated to project size. Part-time or full-time, these leaders monitor day-to-day operations carefully. They ensure older workers are respected, valued, trained, and placed. They commit to delivering the highest quality service.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #8: Perspective, flexibility, good communication skills

Behind every SCSEP “Best Practices” project is a leader who is visionary, tuned into the real world, strategic, motivational, compassionate, persistent in attention to day-to-day activities and details, and determined to reach or surpass project goals.

Visionary leadership can take many forms. The secret, as one director described it, is to aim high. At this particular SCSEP, the director routinely tries to meet and then double the national sponsor’s placement goal. “You’ve got to constantly move the goal post up for your own internal satisfaction,” this leader says.

Slightly different, another “Best Practices” director is inclined to “sustained flexibility.” On many occasions, despite changes in the labor market and in the workforce policies and resources, this director has successfully made the necessary changes in project operations, staff, and community collaborations. Such flexibility is reflected in a commitment to the SCSEP project over the long haul and the vision to work out broad strategy and concrete details that are conducive to change.

At yet another SCSEP project, the director knows when to share responsibilities and when to take the lead. The director and job developer work closely as a collaborating team around assessment, training and job placement. They make it their business to carefully and thoughtfully monitor every SCSEP participant. They are noted for their constant attention to details about participants’ well being and progress. When it comes to establishing long-term strategy and making hard decisions, the director knows how to listen and how to lead.

Along the same lines, the director at another SCSEP project is described as a “visionary” leader who capitalizes on new opportunities, such as the 502(e) program, and makes these opportunities a success. Here, the director encourages experimentation and sees failure as another learning experience. At the same time, this individual is mindful of practical realities and tailors project activities accordingly—for example, customizing training to respond to employer needs in the workplace.

Key Points

The most effective leaders:

1. Constantly communicate with staff members, training partners, and the larger community network
2. Lead by example and set high standards
3. Try out new ideas and learn from mistakes

This results in:

1. Sustained high quality service
2. Increased training, enrollment, and placement
3. A high performing project

6 Attention to the Whole Person

WHAT SETS "BEST PRACTICES" PROJECTS APART IS HOW WELL THEY TAKE TIME TO know each participant as a "whole person." Not incidental to their success, the staff pays close attention to details and life circumstances. They see each participant in a holistic sense, seeing each person in all their dimensions with a wealth of both positive and negative life experiences. They recognize, too, that participant needs and circumstances change continuously and that they must respond to those changes.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #9: Assessment and reassessment of skills, interests, circumstances

At "Best Practices" projects, attention to the "whole person" is especially evident in the participant intake and assessment process, in the crafting of the Individual Development Plan, and in arranging for needed services.

The AARP SCSEP project, in Richmond, for instance, goes a step beyond the routine required assessment procedure. Here, employees use a very in-depth assessment tool that allows them to size up "the whole person"—not just their employment history but also their personality, personal background, and non-work activities and skills (hobbies, household activities, church-related activities and so on). This information, coupled with knowledge of the current labor market, expedites the training and placement process for the participant.

Similarly, NSCERC Miami Beach's SCSEP project makes a focused effort to "know the whole person" by launching training for every participant with a week of office work and personal development work in the project office. Handled with five to six participants at a time, the "home office week" is considered part of the assessment process. At the end of this pre-job training, the participant is placed in senior community service training or directly into unsubsidized employment.

At the NUL Dallas project, in Texas, staff uses the intake and assessment process to identify many long-term barriers to employment (chronic medical conditions, vision and/or hearing loss, caregiving responsibilities, alcohol abuse, unsatisfactory housing, abusive families, lack of transportation) that need to be addressed. While working with host agencies on training, staff members are also working with multiple community agencies and NUL SCSEP participants to address these needs. Diligent follow-up on the problems identified in the assessment is a key to successful placement.

A fourth approach is illustrated at the NAPCA Orange County project. Here, participants reflect a broad range of (1) ethnic backgrounds, (2) degree of facility with the English language, and (3) comfort relating with the dominant American culture. Staff members are sensitive to the wide variety of nationalities and cultures in the area, and they have customized recruitment and training to be culturally responsive. They pay considerable attention, within cultural groups, to needs of people who are new or recent migrants to the United States.

"Whole person" practices at this NAPCA "Best Practices" project include:

- **A culturally sensitive intake form translated** into the mother tongues of the various client populations;
- **An application process with close appraisal of language and family challenges**, with a goal of providing extra support for those particularly hard-to-place;
- **A very thorough, intensive assessment process** tied into the IDP to provide a wealth of personal and social information in addition to particulars regarding the participant's job-related skills and experience.

Since the NAPCA SCSEP project director already knows the needs of the host agency, attention to the "whole person" really pays off when she sees a potential "match" and can move immediately to position the participant. Through the local sponsoring agency, meantime, the project has access to a diverse and multi-lingual staff that assists her in effectively working with a highly diverse population of potential participants, as well as with host agencies that represent different cultures.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #10: Inspire self-esteem

Embedded in many of the "Best Practices" projects' Care Values is the commitment that "What we do is build self-esteem—and that transforms the participant." To promote self-esteem, these local projects develop a strong language of encouragement that displays confidence in participants' ability to succeed.

At the NCOA Vermont project, the leadership believes strongly that self-confidence, resilience and adaptability are important to achieving independence, taking into account individual needs of participants. Hence, key strategies for work preparation in Vermont include, among other things, assisting participants in developing a personal goal focus.

As another example, NSCERC Miami Beach's SCSEP project focuses on "attitude change" to motivate participants to take training and interview for jobs and, most importantly, to *sustain* that motivation. Each paycheck includes a newsletter with job

leads. Other tools that help to build self-esteem are "self-confidence quotes" and frequent "special events" to promote healthy aging. To fill a participant with the energy that helps them thrive in the workplace is one of the most important benefits of these esteem building activities, according to the SCSEP director.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #11: Close, constant communication

Communicating with participants is a top priority for "Best Practices" projects. The benefits are clear: improved service, a clear picture of changing circumstances, and older worker empowerment.

NCOA Palm Beach County's SCSEP project has many effective avenues of communication. Significant time is spent with participants. Staff members stay in frequent phone contact, especially during such critical transition times as between assessment and training assignment, during the early weeks of training or community service assignments, and during active job seeking.

Additionally, small group meetings or support groups are a back up for NCOA SCSEP participants who need extra encouragement or help to complete training and actively seek paid employment. Quarterly meetings, typically half a day, are held in both English and Spanish and include participants and their families. These meetings leave plenty of time for overview and updates on SCSEP rules and regulations, and a lively "question and answer" session.

In Green Thumb's Oregon project, communication is a valuable part of the computer training experience. Teachers give frank and honest feedback to each Green Thumb SCSEP participant. Self-paced learning modules moreover provide each Green Thumb participant with regular, objective measures on progress and indicate which skills need attention. Participants are supported and guided in techniques that lead to improvement, but they are not sheltered from "bad news." To take control of learning empowers.

Key Points

"Whole person" attention provides:

1. A knowledge base of each participant, such as non-work roles and activities, skills, personality and history, any of which may impact employment
2. Capacity for staff to gain understanding of, and ability to work with, people of a variety of nationalities and cultures
3. Strategies for improving communication between project staff and participants

This results in:

1. More culturally customized approaches to recruitment, assessment, and training
2. Expanded training and placement options for all participants, and especially for the hard-to-place

3. Greater participant self-efficacy and empowerment
4. Enhanced project reputation in the community

7 Strong Infrastructure Support

AROUND THE COUNTRY SCSEP ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS VARY. WHAT distinguishes “Best Practices” projects is a strong connection with their local sponsoring organizations. Local sponsoring organizations of “Best Practices” projects go well beyond administrative oversight by actively helping projects to achieve enrollment, training, and placement goals.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #12: Collaborative infrastructures optimize SCSEP resources

Local sponsoring organizations do more than administer; they elevate the visibility of the SCSEP project in community networks. They intimately understand and embrace the SCSEP effort organization-wide. Every member of this larger team works diligently at strengthening relationships.

Important to the success of the NAPCA Orange County project, in southern California, is its local sponsoring organization's active community networking. Here, there is close daily interaction between the NAPCA SCSEP director and the local organization's leadership and staff. The local sponsoring agency, in turn, uses its extensive networks of community contacts to further SCSEP project aims. It aggressively markets the NAPCA SCSEP project through numerous local activities involving private industry, schools, churches, and the media: publishing an article on the SCSEP project, for example, in a local, widely circulated, Chinese language newspaper.

Another effective communication vehicle is the local sponsoring agency's own newsletter. The newsletter, published monthly for 800 residents and area businesses, frequently features articles on the NAPCA SCSEP project. Also, the local agency's community networking supports the NAPCA SCSEP project's mission of finding prospective participants, host agencies and employers. This collaboration has freed the part-time SCSEP project director to concentrate on individual training and placement functions.

With respect to the larger infrastructure, for several years, now, the Idaho Commission on Aging has focused on developing working networks involving local SCSEP projects in Idaho, the Workforce Investment Board and one-stops statewide. Essential steps have been (1) securing funding from the state's executive branch workforce development unit to plan how to integrate older workers into the one-stop framework and (2) demonstrating this integration process through model projects around the state. These funds are earmarked for the local one-stop center, which then, in turn, provides them to the local SCSEP project such as Twin Falls.

The NSCERC Miami Beach project, meantime, has strong support of and draws on assistance from two local sponsoring or sub-grantee organizations. Sub-grantee I, the social service non-profit sponsor, participates in community networking and is committed

to supporting the NSCERC SCSEP project in attaining its goals. Activities include direct partnership in training and hiring NSCERC SCSEP participants. Sub-grantee II, the local Community Development Corporation, is a management support umbrella for all the non-profits in the community, such as the NSCERC SCSEP project, which have no internal financial officer.

Key Points

Strong support from a “hands-on” sponsoring organization provides:

1. Project promotion and marketing to a broader network of community-based organizations
2. Local organization resources—for example, personnel, physical space
3. Capacity to integrate and coordinate project activities with those of other units of the local sponsoring organization

The potential pay-off is:

1. Expanded placement opportunities
2. Enhanced recruitment possibilities
3. Reallocation of project staff time and effort to training and placement activities

8 Vibrant Community Collaborations

PARTNERSHIPS HOLD TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR SCSEP PROJECTS OF ALL SIZES. TO optimize and maximize opportunity “Best Practices” projects create a culture of collaboration. Partnerships include one-stop networks, local SCSEP counterparts, employers, and a multitude of community agencies and organizations. In some areas, the working relationship is formal: roles and responsibilities of each partner are clearly defined. In other areas, collaboration partners work together informally. In all cases, they aim to give mature and older workers a successful training and placement experience. They ascribe to a “win-win” philosophy. The secret of success is jointly pooling and leveraging resources to meet common and individual goals.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #13: One-stop alliances

The SCSEP “Best Practices” project partners with a component of the local one-stop, or, in some way, is formally connected to the one-stop service delivery system. Within a specific community, the SCSEP project may be collocated with the one-stop.

SCSEP projects link with one-stop networks in different ways. Consider the NCOA SCSEP Vermont project, for example. A major organizational unit of Vermont Associates for Training & Development, Inc., NCOA SCSEP Vermont has positioned itself to be “in sync”

with the one-stop service delivery system for several years. NCOA SCSEP Vermont routinely uses the state of Vermont's Employment and Training one-stop tracking data on one-stop registrants 55 and older to identify potential recruits.

In some respects, the Idaho Commission on Aging Twin Falls SCSEP project is similar. Although organizationally a unit of the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), for several years now the Twin Falls SCSEP and the local one-stop have worked under one umbrella. The expanded project recognition and exposure have resulted in substantially increased enrollments and placement, according to this SCSEP.

For both the Idaho Commission on Aging Twin Falls SCSEP and one-stop, the partnership is important. For example, the Twin Falls SCSEP and one-stop refer participants to each other. Staff regularly shares information at one-stop meetings. And formal cost sharing allows the Twin Falls SCSEP to access a broad array of one-stop resources (job development, consultants). The one-stop's labor market analyses include information about the availability of Idaho SCSEP participants as part of the package of inducements to prospective employers.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #14: Linked employment development networks

The SCSEP project is a component of a considerably larger local network of employment development specialists.

In the Miami area, for example, the five SCSEP projects collaborate and connect by sharing information, typically at periodic "district meetings" and in activities/policies resulting from those meetings. Recently, too, SCSEP projects in Broward County and Monroe County (the Keys) are being brought in (if not physically to the meetings then through communications). Collaborative efforts taking place help the participating SCSEP projects to:

- **Prevent unintended overlap** in training (host agency) assignment;
- **Coordinate training assignments or permanent placements**, including sharing opportunities that exist when one project knows of a training or placement opportunity but does not have an available slot (thus, participant) to fill it;
- **Respond collectively to critical policy issues** as they come up. Example: to jointly respond as a network to a threatened funding cut;
- **Build a network** with non-SCSEP employment and training providers in a coordinated fashion.

In Virginia, the AARP SCSEP Richmond has long been part of a winning employment development network that the state has embraced as a model for replication. The model looks something like this:

- **Meetings every month** so that members can learn what others in the network are doing;
- **Employer participation at monthly meetings** so that network members can showcase their projects, so that employers can relate their hiring needs, and so

that the individual network members can take that information back to the office and convert it into placement possibilities;

- **One-on-one communication** between meetings.

The secret to success, according to the AARP SCSEP director, in Richmond, is the “total focus” on employment development. One of the program’s credos is especially insightful: “Collaboration and the sharing of information fuel the success of *anything*.” An essential component of this model is continual information sharing region-wide—about job leads, clients, market needs, networking possibilities, and outreach.

To make it easier to communicate, for more than a decade this alliance has had everyone “sitting at the table.” Members of the group include employers and private sector organizations, government agencies, a local university, as well as employment development organizations narrowly defined.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #15: Integrated service delivery systems

“Best Practices” projects are an integral part of the community network (government, community health, housing, aging services, and other agencies). Working together, often in collaboration, these networks help the SCSEP projects to provide seamless service.

The NUL Dallas SCSEP project, for instance, has succeeded in integrating three local networks—a real accomplishment in strengthening its ability to meet enrollment and placement goals. Building on relationships of the National Urban League, it has solid ties with the local business community (including the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce) and key agencies that serve diverse minority groups. In addition to identifying employers and host agencies, this network has helped leverage resources and services for the NUL SCSEP in Dallas as well as for participants.

As important, the NUL Dallas project is well connected to the local aging network—essential to the project’s mission for this reason: Many participants have needs related to health, dental and eye care, housing, utility bills, and transportation that must be met for successful training and placement. Similarly, the project also has a close relationship with a major hospital system that provides easy access to health care. The alliance combines expertise: the staff from the hospital, for instance, speak at project quarterly meetings—and the NUL SCSEP in Dallas is an essential component of the hospital’s extensive outreach programs.

For the Green Thumb SCSEP project in Newport, on Oregon’s central coast, collaborations are necessary. In this rural setting, the jobs are certainly not there for the “plucking.” Through complementary coordination and pooling of resources, this Green Thumb SCSEP project works with a broad-based network of organizations to (1) improve the skills of the local workforce and (2) promote the well being of area residents (via housing, education). The key strategic imperative is to leverage scarce resources.

The network here consists of:

- **The Green Thumb SCSEP project;**

- **The one-stop center**, offering nine hours of computer pre-training to identify the participant's "comfort level";
- **The community college**, giving more advanced information technology training;
- **The local housing authority**, allowing participants to practice what they are learning through training experience on the housing authority computer equipment.

As a result of joint action, the community has a growing number of trained older workers who can now capitalize on the employers' needs for already trained workers—particularly for those qualified in information technology (IT).

Moreover, thanks to the coordination and planning of this organizational network these well-prepared older workers are positioned to take advantage of the increased demand for "technologically prepared" workers as the region commits itself to recruiting technology companies as part of its economic development plan. Some examples of benefits to the community are these:

- While doing IT training at the computers in subsidized housing facilities, SCSEP participants are able to help residents learn computer skills;
- A Green Thumb SCSEP graduate is now an instructor in computer fundamentals for older students at the community college. Encouraged by both their increasing competence and the experience of having an older instructor, many of these older community college students then decide that they want (1) more community college classes and (2) Green Thumb SCSEP project employment training, which is also at the community college.

In Twin Falls, creative collaboration extends Idaho SCSEP resources and also accents the role of the community college. Here, the local community college provides the bulk of IT training including access to a self-paced computer lab. The college, too, provides a tuition-free "Gold Card" to students 60 years of age and older. In addition, the college's counseling center offers ready-to-work training and emotional support services, when necessary.

By leveraging resources the Idaho Twin Falls SCSEP project frees up funds to supplement training, including contributing to the cost of books and supplies and other participant needs. In the community, there are many other ties, as well, which enhance Idaho SCSEP capabilities. Through the umbrella of the local Area Agency on Aging, for instance, Twin Falls SCSEP participants have ready access to ancillary support services (housing, legal issues, long-term care and so on).

Key Points

Community partnerships and collaboration offer:

1. Access to alternative sources of funding
2. A wider array of training and placement opportunities
3. Access to potential participants
4. A mechanism for sharing resources (space, staff, equipment, other)

This translates into:

1. The most efficient use of resources
2. Lower training costs
3. A stronger relationship with the community

9 Value Added to Community

TODAY'S SCSEP "BEST PRACTICES" PROJECTS ARE A RESOURCE OF VALUE TO employers. They know what mature and older workers have to offer as well as how to market the skills and attributes of these workers to local employers. But the value of these projects goes beyond the direct benefits to employers by enhancing the entire community. These projects support the communities' economic viability by adding to the workforce and the tax base. SCSEP participants help to staff dozens of human service organizations that benefit the community. Moreover, SCSEP projects and their local sponsoring organizations provide older adults in need with direct services and linkages to local resources. All told, SCSEP projects offer a great return on investment. For individuals, agencies, employers, and the community at large, the SCSEP is the vital link.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #16: Service to the Community — Impacts Well Beyond Paychecks

Participants in "Best Practice" SCSEP projects work at a broad array of local service organizations. Participants fulfill many duties and many play a vital role in helping these organizations fulfill their missions.

Here is a public health example, which opens a window into the value-added rewards of SCSEP: In 1990, a broad-based local network of some 200 organizations formed a coalition to aggressively raise the childhood immunization rate in Dallas. The NUL Dallas SCSEP, working in concert with the Community Council of Greater Dallas and the local public health department, placed participants at the health department.

Their job assignments: making reminder phone calls to families, mailing post card reminders, and preparing packets of information for nurses to take to immunization clinics and for distribution at health fairs. In addition, NUL Dallas SCSEP participants were recruited for special events, such as the initiative's education booth at the State Fair. By 2001, the childhood immunization rate in the Dallas area had increased from 30% to 74%. Coalition members credit NUL Dallas SCSEP participants with playing a vital role in day-to-day activities and the overall success of the coalition.

The AARP Richmond project offers another dramatic example. Here, AARP SCSEP participants make up an important adjunct to the successful operation of the Virginia Science Museum.

Under the direction of the Virginia Department of Education, some 1,200 regional school children visit the Virginia Science Museum each day as part of their science curriculum. Since operations are conducted under limited state budgets, with periodic

hiring freezes, the training of AARP SCSEP participants in various security positions, host and docent roles, and ground maintenance ensures the smooth operation of the museum.

Not only is the museum's management committed to AARP SCSEP training but it also draws from this pool of participants as vacancies occur and has actively pursued hiring them as new permanent employees through the state budgeting process.

SUCCESS STRATEGY #17: Job Creation

SCSEP “Best Practices” projects positively impact the community, the region, and society at-large by decreasing unemployment rates among older residents and by enabling them to become independent contributors to the economic well being of the community.

With its large concentration of older residents, the community served by the NCOA Palm Beach County project would face the burdens of a much larger unemployed older population—absent the critical role played by the project in training and placing this segment of the labor market.

Moreover, many local nonprofit host agencies in the community, especially those serving Spanish speaking immigrants and the large elderly population would be seriously understaffed, and consequently, unable to provide needed services, without the help of the NCOA SCSEP workforce.

In Orange County, myriad social and health service agencies provide support to clients representing a wide array of ethnic backgrounds. Many of these clients, although older, are recent immigrants to the United States with few personal resources and limited opportunities to transfer job skills from their home country. Consequently, these organizations are thankful that the NAPCA SCSEP project “helps their people get started in a new land.”

SUCCESS STRATEGY #18: Safety Net

Exemplary SCSEP projects bring visibility to issues which concern the community's older residents. “Best Practices” projects stress the value of tailoring services to the needs of different individuals: “No one ought to walk away from our office without receiving assistance.” Consequently, these projects provide a safety net for all people 55 and older in the labor force.

At both the NSCERC Miami Beach and NCOA Palm Beach County projects, for example, the quarterly meetings provide an opportunity to familiarize participants and their family members with community resources. Friends and family are invited to these meetings to offer support to current participants, and to recruit new participants as well by familiarizing them with the program elements.

For the NSCERC and NCOA SCSEP projects, these outreach meetings are an excellent way to link community seniors with community services and to facilitate peer-to-peer interaction.

For the NSCERC Miami Beach project, a key interest is to ensure that everyone who walks in the door (even those not eligible to enroll) leaves with some form of information or support that addresses immediate needs. The job development and placement team directs non-qualifying older applicants either to immediate job prospects or to training opportunities within the one-stop service delivery system. Staff also provides basic information about non-work-related needs, such as transportation or child-care for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Key Points

"Best Practices" project activities are "value-added" to the community because they provide:

1. Expanded capacity due to enhanced staffing in a variety of community-based constituencies and organizations
2. Valuable economic production and means to buy goods and services at the local level
3. A "first access point" to training, referrals, and needed support services for older residents

For the project, this results in:

1. Greater project visibility and strong community supports
2. A ready-made endorsement network that can positively impact recruitment, training, and placement goals

CONCLUSION

THIS REPORT DESCRIBES THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM A STUDY OF EIGHT SCSEP “BEST Practices” projects across the country. These findings derive from hours of interviews and observation “on the front lines” of SCSEP and are summarized here to capture key action strategies. Although no single project we saw practices all the “successful strategies” described in the report, all go to great lengths to practice at least several of them—adapted to their own situation.

All eight projects share common characteristics with local SCSEP projects across the country. They operate under the auspices of different sponsors. Some are directly managed and some are subcontracted. A few have several staff, most projects have two, and one, only a part-time director. Some serve elders from rural areas, some from the suburbs, some from minority neighborhoods. Some face the struggle of poor transportation options, others have participants with no English language skills, many have participants who are widowed or divorced women—looking for a job for the first time in their lives.

Across these eight projects, common strategies for success are being applied in very different environments.

Overall, the projects we saw exhibit two dominant qualities: all of them are consistently and persistently collaborative and caring. In the face of many challenges—downturns in the economy, changing preferences of employers, uncooperative “partners,” budget cuts, reorganizations, inadequate staff, dispirited participants—these projects keep asserting the benefits of collaborating with all parts of the community, to make it possible for participants and vulnerable citizens to live with dignity.

In the final analysis, SCSEP “Best Practices” projects are community players. They help local citizens develop skills and abilities so they can enter the local workforce. They support the local economy and other members of the community. They participate in local workforce and community support networks. The projects we have described are *local* programs succeeding in their *local* environments. We hope that you can link some of the elements of “best practices” described in this report to “where you live”—to meet and exceed program goals.

APPENDIX A: SNAPSHOTS OF THE EIGHT “BEST PRACTICES” SITES

1. AARP Foundation, Richmond, VA

AARP Foundation, SCSEP
1806 Chantilly Street #100
Richmond, VA 23230
Ms. Carolyn Crighton, *Project Director*
(804) 355-3600

Administered by the AARP Foundation, AARP SCSEP Virginia services a regional client base in the central Piedmont region of the state—reaching into minority communities and enrolling hard-to-place older job seekers. The project “capitalizes” on its location in Virginia’s capital to partner with a broad array of public agencies and non-profit organizations. For over a decade, it has been a member of a proactive, collaborative local workforce development network. Their alliance now serves as a model for replication across the state of Virginia.

KEY FACTS

▼
“BEST PRACTICES” SCSEP: AARP Foundation SCSEP, Richmond VA
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 68 (76 enrolled)
AVERAGE AGE: 63
DEMOGRAPHICS: 74% African American; 25% Caucasian
GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Mixed urban-rural
UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 74%

2. GREEN THUMB, INC., Oregon/Washington

Green Thumb, Inc.
Oregon/Washington Program
4900 SW Griffith Drive Suite 120
Beaverton, OR 97005
Mary Miller, *State Director*
(503) 644-4212

Green Thumb is the country’s oldest and largest provider of mature-worker training and employment. One of the strengths of Green Thumb Oregon-Washington is its 502(e) Private Sector Initiative (PSI) information technology-training program. Operating out of Oregon, the new program takes advantage of the software industry environment literally “at its back door.” In rural areas of the Pacific Northwest region, Green Thumb project sites often are part of close collaborative organizational networks that know how to leverage limited resources to meet residents’ needs.

KEY FACTS

▼
"BEST PRACTICES" SCSEP: Green Thumb, Inc.
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: Oregon 301, Washington 112, 502 (e) 24
AVERAGE AGE: 60
DEMOGRAPHICS: 68% female; 89% high school graduates
GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Rural
UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 76%

3. IDAHO COMMISSION ON AGING, South Central, ID

Area IV Agency on Aging SCSEP
College of Southern Idaho
315 Falls Avenue, PO Box 1238
Twin Falls, ID 83303-1238
Peggy Jackson, *Program Manager*
(208) 735-2026

Idaho's Older Worker Programs have received wide praise for service provider coordination and have achieved excellent results. For seven of the past ten years, the Department of Labor ranked Idaho's SCSEP first for success in placing low-income seniors in jobs off the program. Today, the Idaho Commission on Aging is a full-fledged partner with Idaho's workforce development network. Working locally in collaboration, Twin Falls SCSEP is a unit of the Area IV Agency on Aging (AAA) and a strong partner in a local integrated service delivery network that cuts across public, non-profit and private sectors. It is also structurally integrated into the community's local one-stop center. Every member of this network is committed to success of the SCSEP program.

KEY FACTS

▼
"BEST PRACTICES" SCSEP: Area IV Agency on Aging SCSEP, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls ID
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 7 participants
AVERAGE AGE: 57-61
DEMOGRAPHICS: Caucasian
GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Rural
UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 55%

4. NATIONAL ASIAN-PACIFIC CENTER ON AGING, Orange County, CA

Asian American Senior Citizen Service Center
309 W. Civic Center Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92701
Ms. Sue Liu, *Project Director*
(714) 560-8877

This southern California SCSEP, run by the Asian American Senior Citizen Service Center, is a local program of the National Asian-Pacific Center on Aging. Its constituency is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse. Many of the residents in this urban community just south of Los Angeles are recent immigrants not fluent in English, and the barriers to employment are quite high. Project outcomes have grown exponentially recently as project staff work closely with a range of host

agencies to secure appropriate training and placement opportunities for Asian Pacific elders in their community.

KEY FACTS

▼
“BEST PRACTICES” SCSEP: Asian American Senior Citizen Service Center, Santa Ana, CA
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 71
AVERAGE AGE: 63
DEMOGRAPHICS: Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, and Korean
GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Urban
UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 25% (of allocated slots)

5. NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING, INC., Palm Beach County, FL

NCOA
 2051 Martin Luther King Blvd.
 Riviera Beach, FL 33404
 Ms. Nedra Savoia, *Program Manager*
 (561) 841-0241

The National Council on the Aging’s directly administered project in Palm Beach County, Florida has an urban, ethnically mixed constituency. Their local partnership has an especially strong working relationship with a private sector training site and high placement rates. The placement rate reached was over double from the previous year. Most importantly, the project also works closely with a local workforce development initiative, sponsored by the business community, which allows it to showcase participants and keep abreast of changes in the local labor market.

KEY FACTS

▼
“BEST PRACTICES” SCSEP: National Council on the Aging, Inc., Palm Beach County, FL
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 116
AVERAGE AGE: 67
DEMOGRAPHICS: 32% Hispanic; 29% African American
GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Urban
UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 81%

6. NATIONAL SENIOR CITIZENS’ EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER, INC., Miami Beach, FL

Miami Beach Community Development Corporation
 1701 Normandy Beach
 Miami, FL 33141
 Mr. Raymond Adrian, *Project Director*
 (305) 867-0051

The National Senior Citizens’ Education and Research Center, Inc. (NSCERC) Miami Beach based Senior AIDES Employment Project is an alliance of the Miami Beach Hispanic Community Center. The project team has had great success training and placing an urban, largely Hispanic population. Many are new or recent immigrants who have difficulty with English or speak no English at all. A recipient of the NSCERC award for outstanding leadership, the project director is one of the program’s greatest assets. NSCERC is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

KEY FACTS



"BEST PRACTICES" SCSEP: National Senior Citizens' Education and Research Center, Inc., Miami Beach, FL

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 60

AVERAGE AGE: 66

DEMOGRAPHICS: 84% Hispanic

GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Urban

UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 96% SCSEP; 100% 502(e)

7. NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, Dallas, TX

Dallas Urban League
4315 South Lancaster Road
Dallas, TX
Ms. Treva Mainor-McDaniel
(214) 915-4612

The mission of the National Urban League, a national SCSEP sponsor, is to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights for African Americans and others. For the last five years, the SCSEP in Dallas, Texas, sponsored by the local Dallas chapter, has won the National Urban League's "outstanding project" award for meeting and exceeding the Urban League's unsubsidized placement goals. This program collaborates with a broad-based network of local educational and health and social service organizations, and relations with the umbrella organization are strong.

KEY FACTS



"BEST PRACTICES" SCSEP: National Urban League Dallas, TX

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 116

AVERAGE AGE: 64

DEMOGRAPHICS: 69% African-American; 21% Hispanic

GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Urban

UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 47% SCSEP; 90% 502(e)

8. VERMONT ASSOCIATES FOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT, INC.

Vermont Associates for Training and
Development, Inc.
PO Box 107
St. Albans, Vermont 05478
Ms. Pat Elmer, *Executive Director*
Telephone: (802) 524-3200

Vermont Associates is a non-profit corporation specializing in the design and operation of employment and training programs exclusively for the mature worker. One of the National Council on the Aging's local partners, it has received national recognition for the development of assessment and work search programs for this population, and has been identified as a model program by the U.S. Department of Labor. Founded in 1983, Vermont Associates is a statewide organization that is well integrated into the workforce development network in the state. It offers services through twelve regional training centers and receives Department of Labor funding from both NCOA and the State Office on Aging.

KEY FACTS



"BEST PRACTICES" SCSEP: NCOA /Vermont Associates for Training & Development, Inc.,
St. Albans ,VT

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PARTICIPANTS: 200

AVERAGE AGE: 65

DEMOGRAPHICS: 97% Caucasian; 1% Asian

GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Rural

UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT: 35% (NCOA); 116% (State Office on Aging)

APPENDIX B: BEST PRACTICES PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY WAS TO IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE UNIQUE, PROVEN “BEST Practices” at local SCSEP projects that could be transferred to other employment and training programs focusing on older workers around the country.

These “Best Practices” emerge from many aspects of programming: management, recruitment, assessment, counseling, training, placement, or community networking. Although “Best Practices” can be found in many locations around the country, the focus of this study was to identify the best practices in “exemplary projects”—projects that are meeting goals and have a reputation for exemplary performance overall.

This project was led by a team consisting of staff from the Research and Demonstration Division of The National Council on the Aging, Inc. and Barbara Hirshorn, Ph.D., from the University of South Carolina.

A project advisory committee was created, comprised of representatives from the various national DOL-sponsored contractors, the National Association of State Units on Aging and from the U.S. Department of Labor. In addition to providing general guidance and assistance throughout the project, the advisory committee identified project components of site structure, processes and practices that might reflect “Best Practice.” These characteristics were used to guide the data gathering and interview phases of the study.

The research team and advisory committee developed criteria for nominating and selecting outstanding local SCSEP projects for on-site study. These criteria included:

- Success in meeting/exceeding enrollment rates
- Success in meeting/exceeding unsubsidized placement rates
- Evidence of challenges met and opportunities grasped

The research team members chose eight local projects to visit based on the criteria and, keeping in mind, also, the need to ensure geographic and population diversity.

In preparation for each site visit, the research team reviewed workload summaries, enrollee characteristics, and performance and activity reports. Additionally, information describing the particular project’s local, regional, or state demographic, industrial, and labor force activity was collected and reviewed—as was other information that might be key to an understanding of the local project’s social, physical and economic context.

A “semi-structured” interview guide was designed to assure that key topics would be covered at all projects. To lay the groundwork for each site visit, preliminary telephone interviews were conducted with (1) a national sponsor representative who had in-depth knowledge of the “Best Practices” project and how exceptional outcomes are

achieved, and (2) the project's program director or manager who gave an overview of the "Best Practices," and the key players contributing to the project's success. These phone interviews were used to develop the specific itinerary for each site visit.

Site visits to projects were conducted between March and July 2001. The visits provided a detailed perspective of key elements of project operations and activities through interviews with SCSEP project, host agency, and employer personnel and, as warranted, with other key individuals and groups in the community. These site visits also included observations of training activities and discussions with current and past participants.

This report was prepared during late summer 2001 by Barbara Hirshorn, Ph.D., with the assistance of other team members. In advance of publication, the advisory committee and the local project directors reviewed the "Best Practices" descriptions to assure their accuracy.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

AARP FOUNDATION

Paul Mayrand, *Manager, SCSEP*
AARP Foundation
P. O. Box 51040-GPCD
Washington, DC 20091
(202) 434-2020

GREEN THUMB, INC.

now known as **EXPERIENCE WORKS**
Sally Boofer, *Director of Program Operations*
Green Thumb, Inc.
2000 North 14th Street, Suite 800
Arlington, Virginia 22201
(703) 522-7272

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UNITS ON AGING

Theresa Lambert, *Associate Director for Productive Aging*
National Association of State Units on Aging
1225 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 898-2578

NATIONAL ASIAN-PACIFIC CENTER ON AGING

Polly Chang, *SCSEP National Director*
National Asian-Pacific Center on Aging
1511 Third Avenue, Suite 914
Seattle, Washington 98101
(206) 624-1221

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HISPANIC ELDERLY

Henry Rodriguez
234 East Colorado Boulevard, Suite 300
Pasadena, California 91101
(626) 564-1988

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING

Donald L. Davis, *Vice President*
Workforce Development Division
The National Council on the Aging
409 Third Street, SW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 479-6331

NATIONAL SENIOR CITIZENS' EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER

Dorinda Fox, *Assistant to the Executive Director**
National Senior Citizens Education and Research Center, Inc.
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 1200
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3314
(301) 578-8900
**Formerly Director Employment and Community Programs, NSCERC*

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

Robert F. Mizerak, *National Director*
SCSEP Program
National Urban League, Inc.
120 Wall Street
New York, New York 10005
(212) 558-5440

USDA FOREST SERVICE

Bridget Harris, *Program Manager*
USDA Forest Service
1621 North Kent Street, Room 1010
Rosslyn Plaza - PO Box 96090
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209
(703) 605-4853

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Margaret Erickson, *Workforce Development Specialist*
Employment and Training Administration
200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room N4644
Washington, DC 20210
(202) 693-3764