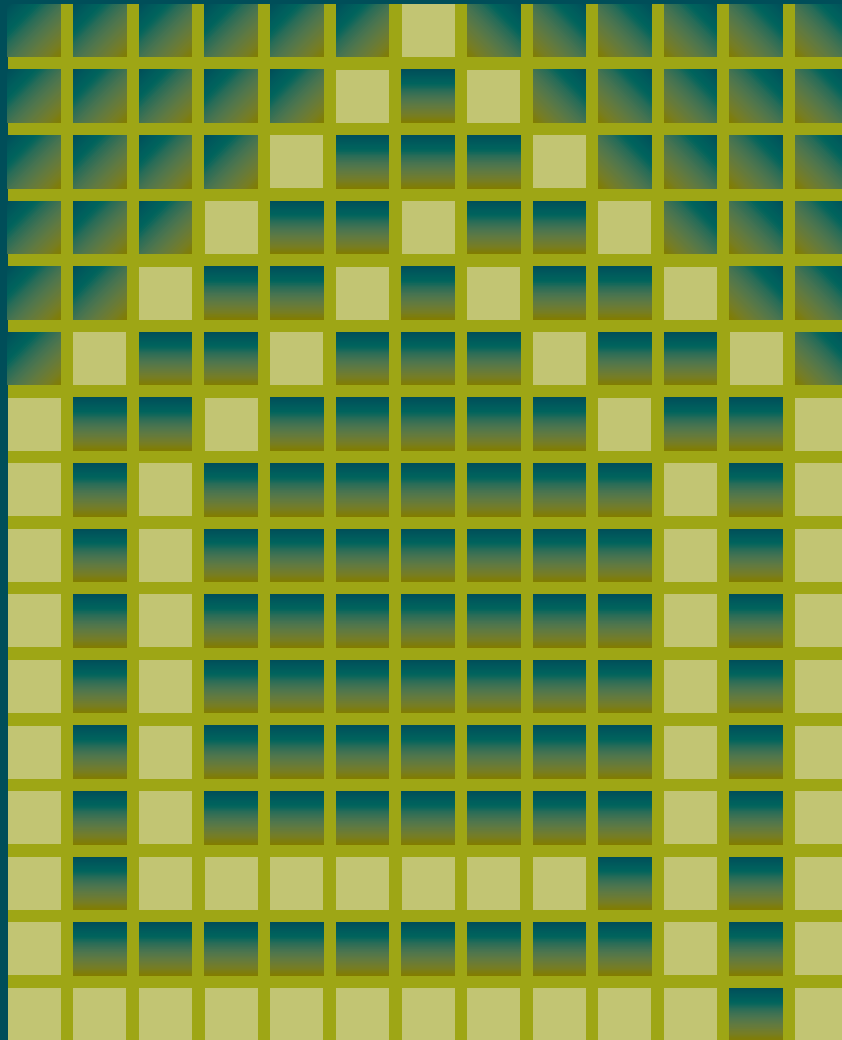


# Helping Public Housing Residents Find and Keep Jobs

A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS BASED  
ON THE JOBS-PLUS DEMONSTRATION



Susan Blank  
Donna Wharton-Fields



**A How-to Guide**  
**Helping Public Housing Residents Find and Keep Jobs**  
**A Guide for Practitioners Based on the Jobs-Plus  
Demonstration**

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**December 2008**



## **Jobs-Plus Funding Partners**

U.S. Department of Housing and  
Urban Development  
U.S. Department of Health and  
Human Services  
U.S. Department of Labor

The Rockefeller Foundation  
The Joyce Foundation  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
The James Irvine Foundation  
Surdna Foundation, Inc.  
Northwest Area Foundation  
The Stuart Foundation  
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Washington Mutual Foundation

Funding for this report was provided by The Rockefeller Foundation.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following funders that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The Starr Foundation. MDRC's dissemination of its education-related work is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Citi Foundation. In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, The Sandler Family Supporting Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

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## Overview

This guide contains practical advice on implementing a program model — known as the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (Jobs-Plus) — aimed at helping public housing residents find and keep jobs. The most rigorously evaluated employment initiative ever tried in public housing, Jobs-Plus has shown strong potential for improving the employment outlooks of low-income workers and job-seekers. The guide draws on the experiences of six programs based in public housing projects across the country that took part in MDRC’s national Jobs-Plus demonstration.

As implemented during the demonstration, Jobs-Plus combined three components: (1) employment-related services; (2) financial incentives, in the form of changes to rent rules to help make work pay, sometimes supplemented with efforts to raise residents’ awareness of other available work incentives such as the Earned Income Tax Credit; and (3) community support for work, which consisted of meaningful opportunities for public housing residents to promote work among their neighbors, especially by participating in efforts to recruit other residents to Jobs-Plus and publicize its services.

Research results show that when all three components are implemented properly, Jobs-Plus can make a substantial difference in residents’ earnings outcomes. The large positive earnings effects that were generated in the demonstration were observed for housing developments in very different cities and for diverse racial and ethnic groups.

While the test occurred in public housing, its results may also be relevant to other subsidized housing programs. Furthermore, since the expectation is that the program will be planned, managed, and overseen not by public housing authorities alone but by partnerships that bring these agencies together with welfare and workforce agencies and resident leaders, the Jobs-Plus experience offers lessons on how different safety-net systems can collaborate with one another and with residents of low-income communities to promote economic self-sufficiency.

In addition to presenting lessons on forming effective partnerships, this guide covers various organizational issues, including aspects of developing a Jobs-Plus governance structure, staffing, predicting costs and securing funding, planning for the use of space, and marketing services to residents. The guide also offers in-depth programming advice on how to implement each of the three Jobs-Plus components — employment services, financial incentives to work, and community support for work — and discusses how best to operate the program in multiethnic settings. The guide aims to provide practical advice to help practitioners adapt Jobs-Plus to new settings and situations.



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## Preface

The joblessness and poverty that plague many inner-city communities are particularly acute in the nation's public housing developments. Could an employment initiative that is located *inside* these developments help residents work, earn more money, and improve their quality of life? To find out, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Rockefeller Foundation, and MDRC launched an ambitious enterprise in six cities in 1996 called the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (Jobs-Plus). Jobs-Plus employed a three-part strategy: employment-related services, conditional rent reductions that allowed residents to keep more of their earnings, and the promotion of social ties among residents to create community support for work.

Evaluation findings from this demonstration, published in 2005, provide convincing evidence that a strategy like Jobs-Plus can help people in high-poverty housing developments succeed in the labor market. Jobs-Plus markedly increased residents' earnings at the sites where the program was implemented well, boosting average annual earnings during the last four years of the study by 14 percent, or \$4,563. The earnings increase in the fourth year alone was nearly 20 percent. These results were seen in good economic times and bad and among many different groups of residents; men as well as women and both immigrants and native-born residents showed large earnings gains. As this report went to press, we learned that in two sites for which we have longer-term data, the gains were sustained for three years after the program ended.

This guide offers practical lessons for practitioners about how to develop and run a Jobs-Plus-like intervention of their own. Mounting this type of initiative is no easy task. Living conditions in public housing are difficult, and the challenges of developing a comprehensive employment program are myriad: creating real collaboration among housing authorities, social service agencies, and residents; marketing rent incentives and services to diverse groups of residents; and dealing with enduring issues of safety, substance abuse, and other family crises. The six study sites in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, as well as the many funders who provided support, deserve great credit for their steadfast work and commitment through this nearly decade-long project.

In an era of scarce resources, when policymakers increasingly require information about whether programs work, Jobs-Plus offers hard evidence that an employment-focused intervention based in public housing developments *can* be effective. We hope that this guide will assist practitioners to adapt the Jobs-Plus model to new settings and situations and achieve similarly positive results.

Gordon L. Berlin  
President



## **Acknowledgments**

A number of people contributed generously to the development of this how-to guide. Joyce Gerren, a former site representative for the Dayton Jobs-Plus site, was a key contact for the authors and provided details of site activities. We are especially grateful to Darren Walker of the Rockefeller Foundation for his long-term commitment to this project. At MDRC, James Riccio, Fred Doolittle, John Wallace, Sharon Rowser, John Hutchins, and Margaret Bald reviewed early drafts and provided helpful comments and suggestions. Jeffrey Berman developed charts and tables, and Adam Wodka provided fact-checking assistance. Alice Tufel, with Margaret Bald, edited the report, and David Sobel prepared it for publication.

The Authors



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This guide is for readers interested in improving the quality of life in public housing developments by helping as many of their residents as possible find and keep jobs and raise their earnings. The guide gives pointers, observations, and practical information on how to operate a particular program model called the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (Jobs-Plus). While the guide focuses mainly on how this program model has so far been translated into operations, it also includes suggestions about how to vary aspects of the program while remaining true to its original thrust and purposes.

As designed by MDRC, Jobs-Plus combines three components, or strategies:

- Employment-related services
- Financial incentives, including changed rent rules — called “rent-based incentives” — to help make work pay
- A strategy called “community support for work,” which consists of efforts to involve residents in neighbor-to-neighbor information-sharing about work opportunities, financial incentives, and other program benefits

The most rigorously evaluated employment initiative ever tried in public housing, Jobs-Plus was the focus of an MDRC research study that lasted from 1998 to 2003. The study, also known as a *research demonstration* (see Box 1.1), examined the operations and impacts of six Jobs-Plus programs based in high-poverty public housing developments in six different cities around the country — Baltimore, Chattanooga, Dayton, Los Angeles, St. Paul, and Seattle (see Table 1.1).<sup>1</sup> (This guide refers to the six programs as “the demonstration sites” or “the sites.”)

The communities where the developments are located are primarily census tracts populated by people of color, in which households headed by single parents are common and large numbers of adults do not have a high school diploma. Three of the six Jobs-Plus developments (in Los Angeles, St. Paul, and Seattle) are located in tracts where a high proportion of residents were foreign born, and five of the six developments are located in tracts where 37 to 62 percent of families were living in poverty — rates that are generally well

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<sup>1</sup>For an in-depth description of the key features of the programs once they had matured, see Kato (2003). Note that Los Angeles operated a Jobs-Plus program at two housing developments: William Mead Homes and Imperial Courts. However, Imperial Courts was not included in the impact analysis because no appropriate comparison development was available for it.

### Box 1.1

#### **Jobs-Plus Under a Research Microscope**

The MDRC Jobs-Plus initiative was not only a cluster of operating programs but a research demonstration. In other words, it tried out a new model by studying one or more programs that embodied the model and examining what happened to them over time. The goal of such an initiative is to determine whether the intervention, or aspects of it, succeeded and, if so, to give others a basis for replicating it. Often, as in the case of Jobs-Plus, the programs are newly created for the purposes of the study.

As part of its evaluation, MDRC studied the implementation of Jobs-Plus — how it was operated at each site — as well as its impacts and, to a lesser extent, its costs. MDRC’s impact study compared (1) what happened to the employment, welfare status, and earnings of residents in the six housing developments where the demonstration programs operated, and (2) the same outcomes for groups of residents living in similar developments, known as comparison programs, where Jobs-Plus was not implemented. (See Appendix Table A.1 for an overview of the sites’ experiences in implementing Jobs-Plus.)

above the threshold commonly used to designate “high-poverty” areas. Moreover, most of the Jobs-Plus sites were characterized by high poverty in their respective regions compared with the poverty rates of the surrounding counties, and four of the six sites had higher unemployment rates as well. All the housing developments in the Jobs-Plus sites were mainly low-rise units but were relatively large, each with more than 400 households in residence. The buildings varied in terms of physical condition and proximity to commercial districts via public transportation.<sup>2</sup>

The residents at the Jobs-Plus sites in Baltimore, Chattanooga, and Dayton were primarily African-American, while residents of the other Jobs-Plus developments were of more varied ethnicity, including large numbers of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander households and substantial numbers of immigrants from South Asian and East African countries. There were, as well, native-born U.S. citizens, with residents speaking as many as 22 different languages. Females made up the majority of residents at the Jobs-Plus sites, while households with two or more adults ranged from 14 percent to 74 percent (most highly represented in the sites with high proportions of immigrants). Finally, there was considerable turnover in the resident populations at all sites during the course of the demonstra-

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<sup>2</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).



## The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

**Table 1.1**

### **Cities and Public Housing Developments in the Jobs-Plus Impact Study**

City	Housing Development Where Jobs-Plus Was Operated
Baltimore	Gilmor Homes
Chattanooga	Harriet Tubman Homes
Dayton	DeSoto Bass Courts
Los Angeles	William Mead Homes
St. Paul	Mt. Airy Homes
Seattle	Rainier Vista Garden Community

NOTE: For a detailed description of the Jobs-Plus study sites, see Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).

tion, with 42 percent of the 1998 cohort moving out of the Jobs-Plus developments over the subsequent three years.<sup>3</sup>

MDRC's impact study found that:

- When the Jobs-Plus programs were run well, they boosted residents' average earnings substantially.
- The gains were sustained and occurred in both good and bad economic times. The positive impacts applied to very different kinds of residents living in very different cities, suggesting that Jobs-Plus is a program that travels well.

At the same time, the study suggests that operating a strong Jobs-Plus program, which combines three different strategies for improving the employment outlook of residents in a public housing development, takes energy, commitment, willing partners, and steady attention to the kind of implementation and other issues that are covered in this guide.

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<sup>3</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).

## Why Jobs-Plus?

The evidence that Jobs-Plus can make a difference should be read against the background of both the needs that the program addresses and the opportunities on which it capitalizes. The needs are significant: Public housing developments are ranked among the most economically deprived neighborhoods in the country. Many have high rates of joblessness, underemployment, and poverty. In some developments, residents are among the hardest to employ among welfare recipients and other low-income groups. Many have poor educational backgrounds and job skills and meager work-relevant credentials, and they face an array of personal problems or circumstances that make it difficult to work or to work steadily.<sup>4</sup>

But this picture of need has nuances. Challenging conventional stereotypes about the work ethic of people living in public housing, MDRC found that when Jobs-Plus began, most residents in the demonstration's six housing developments had worked in the formal labor market during the booming 1990s.<sup>5</sup> It is true that many of these residents did not work in steady jobs or in positions offering good pay and fringe benefits, and some of them probably would have been unemployed in a less favorable economic climate. Still, the employment patterns found in these diverse housing developments strongly suggest that planners of new Jobs-Plus programs can expect to find many residents who are ready to hear the program's work-oriented message.

The other main opportunity to help solve employment problems in public housing developments is that the developments lend themselves to *place-based services*. Rather than having to recruit and serve participants from a dispersed area, a Jobs-Plus program can try to reach a large number of people in a concentrated community. This guide includes discussions of how best to take advantage of that opportunity.

## The Core Components of Jobs-Plus

In its research study, MDRC called Jobs-Plus a *saturation program*, meaning that it is directed to *all* working-age, nondisabled residents in its host housing developments (see Box 1.2). The aim is to infuse the developments with work-focused encouragement, information, incentives, and active assistance.

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<sup>4</sup>Riccio (1994), p. 4; Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005), p. 26.

## Box 1.2

### What Does It Mean to Be a Jobs-Plus Participant?

In the Jobs-Plus demonstration sites, any resident who worked was eligible for the program and its financial incentives. But in order to help these residents make an explicit connection between the incentives and a work effort — as opposed to, for example, suddenly noticing a rent reduction on their bills and not being sure why their rents had dropped — programs typically specified that to receive incentives, residents had to sign up for them, and thus officially become Jobs-Plus participants. Demonstration sites undertook active marketing efforts (described later in this guide) that encouraged as many participants as possible to sign up for financial incentives and use Jobs-Plus employment services.

As noted earlier, Jobs-Plus consists of three core components:

- **Employment-related services** encompass activities such as help with job searches (facilitated by the program’s job development efforts), coaching to help residents adjust to the world of work, vocational training (usually short-term), General Educational Development (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, subsidized supported work positions to help especially hard-to-employ residents make a transition to the world of work, occasional help with starting or running small businesses, and finally, a range of support services such as child care arrangements that make it easier for residents to work. Some services are conveniently provided on site in a job center located within the housing development, while others are provided in the community. As discussed later, to operate this component of Jobs-Plus, programs often have relied to some degree on staff members from one or more other agencies who have been outstationed at the housing development.
- **Financial incentives** help make low-wage work pay by allowing working residents to keep more of their earnings. As discussed in more detail later in the guide, when low-income people decide to go to work, they can face penalties — hidden or not so hidden — on their new earnings. For example, public housing residents can be subject to rent increases because rent is calculated as a percentage of income. Programs in the Jobs-Plus demonstration offered working residents so-called *rent-based incentives*. These were either a flat rent — one that does not rise as the household’s income rises — or an income-based rent set lower than the standard rate of 30 percent of income that is stipulated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the federal agency responsible for public housing. Other strategies used during the demonstration included safety-net provisions for residents

who lost jobs (for instance, the option for residents to revert from a Jobs-Plus flat rent to the normal public housing income-based rent if they could no longer afford the flat rent), and sometimes small program contributions to savings accounts established for working residents.

Besides offering rent-based incentives, Jobs-Plus programs are encouraged to help residents learn about and take advantage of other work-related financial incentives that are not designed specifically for Jobs-Plus but that can help make work pay. For example, Jobs-Plus staff can help residents apply for the federal and, in some cases, state and local Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Or staff can check whether residents are eligible for the standard rent incentives to reward work that HUD offers to some categories of residents living in all public housing developments.

- **Community support for work** typically involves recruiting, training, and supervising a small cadre of residents who encourage their neighbors both to use Jobs-Plus services and to generally try to improve their employment situations. Residents who are selected to play this role usually receive stipends as compensation for their contributions.

Designers of Jobs-Plus thought that combining these three mutually reinforcing components in one comprehensive program — and doing so in a way that tried to reach a large share, not just a selected group, of residents — was the most effective way to boost employment in the developments.

The assumption of the Jobs-Plus demonstration was that sites would try to implement all three components of Jobs-Plus. Of course, the guide can also be consulted for ideas about how to construct an intervention limited to one or two of the three components. But since the MDRC study covered only programs that combined all three components, the study — and therefore the guide — cannot speak to what kind of impacts a program using only one or two of the approaches might produce. However, it is worth taking account of one pattern (by no means definitive, but still suggestive) that emerged from the impact study of the six demonstration programs: Impacts were found only for those sites that implemented all three components well.

## **More on the Evaluation Findings**

The MDRC evaluation of Jobs-Plus (which encompasses the implementation and impact studies) indicates that the program has a strong potential for making a difference in

the economic outlooks of public housing residents. Key points from MDRC's final report on the demonstration are as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- When properly operated, with all three components in place, Jobs-Plus produced substantial and enduring increases in residents' earnings, even after many of those residents left public housing (and were, therefore, no longer in the program). In the three sites that fully implemented and sustained the program (Dayton, Los Angeles, and St. Paul), Jobs-Plus markedly increased the earnings of residents relative to the comparison group. Those earnings gains averaged \$1,141 per year (a 14 percent improvement) over the demonstration's four-year follow-up period.
- The size of the earnings gains *grew larger over time*, reaching \$1,543 (a 20 percent improvement) in the final year, with no sign of abating.
- Cumulatively over the four years, the earnings gains totaled almost \$4,600 per resident (averaged overall for all residents, including nonworkers), and nearly \$6,000 per *working* resident.
- As a result of Jobs-Plus, some residents who were not working began to work, and many residents who were *already* working began to work more consistently, for more hours, or at better-paying jobs than they would have without the program.
- The large and sustained positive earnings effects achieved through Jobs-Plus were observed in three very different cities — and for a wide range of residents, including men, African-American single mothers, and legal immigrants from many different parts of the world.
- Program costs were reasonable. For a group of residents followed by the research, the overall government expenditure per person, including rent-based incentives — that is, the amount above the normal level of government expenditures made to encourage self-sufficiency in public housing developments in the comparison group — totaled roughly \$150 per month.

In addition, the evaluation's implementation study gives a picture of what happened inside the sites to help explain the program's impacts. The study drew on both qualitative observations from MDRC fieldwork and on quantitative information — for example, program-by-program data on how many and what kinds of residents used Jobs-Plus services. It

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<sup>6</sup>For further information on the evaluation results, see Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).

highlights the many challenges managers and staff faced in operating Jobs-Plus programs and describes strategies used to meet those challenges.

Lessons learned through this implementation study are the starting point for this guide. The guide's recommendations and observations can be read either sequentially or — for planners and managers interested in a particular facet of the Jobs-Plus experience — selectively.

Readers can find out still more about Jobs-Plus by consulting MDRC's final report on the effectiveness of the program,<sup>7</sup> and a series of reports that examine how the program was implemented. (See Appendix B for a complete list of these reports.) MDRC's Web site ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)) also contains helpful information, including published downloadable reports, on evaluations of other employment programs with themes and approaches that resonate with Jobs-Plus. Some additional sources of information on other employment programs are presented in Appendix C.

MDRC believes that one of the most important criteria for the success of a program evaluation is whether it is useful to people working in the field. It is hoped that this guide, which is intended to help the Jobs-Plus study meet that need, will allow practitioners to take important next steps in adapting Jobs-Plus to new settings and situations.

## **This Guide: Its Audience and Its Contents**

### **Who's the "You"? Who's the Reader?**

Like many guides, this one often recommends that "you" consider something or look into something or do something. Broadly speaking, "you" refers to anyone who takes the lead or plays a key role in one or more aspects of planning and operating Jobs-Plus. Notably, these readers may be public housing officials; residents who want to improve their housing developments; managers and staff from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, which manages federally funded "One-Stop Career Centers," and from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant system, which is responsible for public assistance; or managers and staff from other governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations. Depending on the situation and the reader, "you" may also mean actors from not just one of those spheres, but from several, all of which are committed to jointly implementing a local Jobs-Plus agenda. (Later, the guide offers more in-depth discussions of both designat-

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<sup>7</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).

ing lead responsibility and sharing power in Jobs-Plus, a program that by its very nature calls for a great deal of cross-agency interaction and collaboration.)

The guide should also be valuable for another group of potential readers who are not covered under the “you” umbrella — policymakers, political leaders, and others who are concerned about public housing conditions and poverty but who are not directly engaged in Jobs-Plus planning and implementation. The guide offers such readers a kind of front-row operational view of a place-based program that has been shown to make a difference in the employment outlook of some of the poorest families in the country.

### **Chapter by Chapter**

The next chapter (Chapter 2) explores the three interrelated components of Jobs-Plus — employment-related services, financial incentives to work, and community support for work — by taking a step back to ask and answer an initial question: *What kind of plans for the program’s organization and structure will give the three components the best chance of working?*

Chapter 3 then takes a close look at how to design and operate the components themselves, while Chapter 4, which focuses on what happens once the program has passed the planning stages, returns to implementation issues that mainly apply to the program as a whole — marketing the program, addressing sensitivities and concerns associated with operating a partnership program, serving a culturally diverse group of residents, and operating an employment services program that defines the group of people to be served by where they live.





## Chapter 2

# First Steps

Before most good social service programs ever open their doors, planners have invested significant amounts of time and energy figuring out what kind of people the programs should expect to serve, how the programs should be operated and governed, what qualifications should be sought for their managers and staff, how to monitor progress, what the programs are likely to cost and how to fund them, and what kinds of space and equipment are needed. This chapter presents ideas and recommendations that focus on those issues for Jobs-Plus.

### Getting the Lay of the Land: Residents and Resources

If you are reading this guide, chances are you already have many concerns and ideas about the employment and related needs of residents in the public housing development (or developments) on which you are focusing. You may also have a sense of which services are now available or are lacking in the relevant housing developments and their surrounding areas. But now is the best time — during the planning stage and not when the program is already up and running — to check and add to your initial impressions.

#### Local Needs Assessment

**To begin, get a clear picture of the people you intend to serve and their employment needs by putting together a local needs assessment.** In producing a needs assessment, you will be trying to the best of your ability to determine *exactly* what *your* potential service population looks like. You will be seeking demographic and related information — for instance, residents' educational levels, levels of English-language proficiency, and countries of origin. The logical starting point is the administrative data the housing authority routinely collects about residents. But also be aware that:

- Other government agencies, such as your state department of labor or employment security department, local department of health, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) agencies, and education department, collect and analyze data, often by community district or census tract.
- City or regional planning departments and economic development agencies frequently conduct neighborhood-by-neighborhood surveys or needs assessments. Your local community foundations, public charities, and the United Way may have done this kind of research.

- The housing development's Resident Advisory Council — a group of residents elected to advise the development's management on the problems, needs, and interests of tenants — may collect and analyze its own data on residents.

Besides giving you key information about residents, a local assessment that highlights residents' employment potential and related needs can strengthen the case you make for the project to potential funders and partners.

In addition, to put your local assessment in context — for instance, to compare conditions for the prospective service group with national trends — you may want more background information about conditions of urban poverty and joblessness in the United States and about initiatives that have been tried to solve these problems. For a list of selected organizations that address these issues, consult Appendix C.

### **Identifying Existing Services**

**To avoid duplication of services and to begin to connect with program partners, scan the housing development and its neighborhood to find out what organizations and programs that help residents are already in place.** You can begin by creating an inventory of relevant local service organizations and their contact information. Some good starting points for determining what resources exist are the local United Way and any resident organizations in the development. The Web site GuideStar ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)) has information about the services and programs provided by local nonprofit organizations.

Make sure you have an up-to-date picture of what services are offered at your local WIA (Workforce Investment Act) One-Stop Career Center, one of the multiservice local employment centers run as part of the WIA system around the country. As discussed later in this chapter, a WIA staff member may be outstationed to Jobs-Plus — and that person will likely have a very good sense of which One-Stop Center services will work best for Jobs-Plus when the program refers participants to the facility. (Sometimes, however, as also discussed later, you may decide to offer a version of certain services on site that are already provided at the One-Stop, to ensure that Jobs-Plus is convenient and user-friendly.)

### **Constructing a Strong Jobs-Plus Framework**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Jobs-Plus focuses on three components of services and supports: employment-related services, financial incentives to work, and community support for work. (Chapter 3 gives recommendations based on the experiences of the demonstration sites about how to structure and provide each of those three components.)

But like almost any program, and especially one that uses multiple strategies to reach its goals, Jobs-Plus will be a successful provider of services and supports to its participants only if it first rests on a *strong institutional framework*. Accordingly, this section presents ideas about what has to happen during the planning phase to ensure that Jobs-Plus is institutionally sound. In addition, Chapter 4 offers pointers on how to *maintain institutional success and stability* once Jobs-Plus starts to operate.<sup>8</sup>

### **Creating an Institutional Partnership and Governing Body**

A number of strategies can be used to ensure that the Jobs-Plus framework is based on a strong partnership and governing body. Such strategies are described below.

#### **Beyond the Public Housing Authority**

**The public housing authority (PHA) should not be the exclusive sponsor of Jobs-Plus.** The program will make the most of local resources and expertise if it is structured as a partnership of public and private agencies and resident leaders. With its three components, Jobs-Plus is too ambitious and far-reaching a program model to be best planned, operated, and funded by a single agency. Thus, during MDRC's Jobs-Plus demonstration, each local program was structured as a coalition of at least four mandated *core partners*: the public housing authority, resident representatives (also known as resident leaders), the local welfare department (the agency that administers the federally funded TANF program), and the workforce development agency (the agency operating under the federal WIA). (See Box 2.1)

#### **Designating a Lead Agency**

**Even among core partners, one organization should be designated as the Jobs-Plus lead agency.** Planners of the Jobs-Plus demonstration were clear that one prerequisite for smooth operations was designating a "first among equals" to serve as a program's lead agency. (In the case of the demonstration programs, it was the PHA.) The lead agency signs contracts with program vendors, and receives and disburses funds for operations. And although the program's core partners should try hard to reach a consensus about important Jobs-Plus decisions, when they cannot agree, the lead agency has the final word on how to proceed.

The PHA, however, need not be the lead agency for Jobs-Plus. PHAs are in many ways the logical lead agencies for Jobs-Plus, but if they do not wish to take on this role,

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<sup>8</sup>For an in-depth analysis of organizational and institutional collaboration in Jobs-Plus, see Kato and Riccio (2001).

### Box 2.1

#### **Public Housing Authorities and Resident Leaders: Why These Partners?**

Of course, public housing authorities (PHAs) control and are the experts on policies that shape housing developments. But for a strong Jobs-Plus program to emerge, PHAs will benefit from the know-how — and resources — of the governmental welfare (TANF) and workforce development (WIA) agencies that provide employment and social services to low-income people. At the same time, if these agencies are involved in Jobs-Plus, they need input from the PHA on housing matters and on the specific circumstances of public housing residents. Also, welfare agencies can look to the place-based Jobs-Plus program as a promising way to reach TANF recipients who live in public housing and who can be among the most difficult to put to work.

Resident leaders, or representatives, are critical members of the Jobs-Plus partnership. They can contribute an in-depth awareness of their communities and service needs to the planning process and, at the same time, they can promote trust in Jobs-Plus and buy-in for the program among their neighbors.

another organization — for example, the local welfare department or WIA agency or a strong nonprofit organization — can assume that responsibility.

Whether or not the PHA is the program's lead agency, planners should think twice about moving forward without a strong commitment from senior PHA officials to the Jobs-Plus enterprise. Because Jobs-Plus is based in public housing developments, the local PHA's cooperation is critical. At a minimum, this cooperation is needed for acquiring space for staff and conducting activities on site, hiring staff, procuring equipment and services, and restructuring rent policies and procedures to fit the program's financial incentives component.

While Jobs-Plus may not be the first or only employment program to be based in the development(s) you plan to serve, it is important to bear in mind that a PHA's traditional mission and priorities focus on housing maintenance, management, and lease enforcement. Thus, a new Jobs-Plus program may well make unfamiliar demands on the PHA and its different divisions. It is unlikely that those demands will be well met unless the PHA's executive director and other top managers are strongly committed to the program.

#### The Collaborative as Governing Body

**A top priority is the formation of a strong and efficient Jobs-Plus governing body.** To govern Jobs-Plus, the MDRC demonstration programs formed local governing organizations known as *Collaboratives*. (Following their lead, the guide uses that term to

refer to Jobs-Plus governing groups.) The Collaborative sets the program's overall direction and priorities, and specifies the general content of the three main Jobs-Plus components. The group writes the job description for and selects the project director, who is responsible for managing the overall program at a particular site — and sometimes does this for other main leaders and for staff — and it makes key funding decisions. Once the program is operating, the Collaborative oversees and makes decisions and recommendations on how each of the three components should be carried out. The Jobs-Plus project director reports to the Collaborative, attends its meetings, and, as discussed later, is in charge of organizing the meetings, producing agendas based on members' priorities, and following up on Collaborative decisions (ideally with staff assistance).

To avoid cumbersome decision-making, membership in the Collaborative should be limited to a relatively small group of partners. In the demonstration, it was mandated that representatives of the four core partners sit on the Collaborative. In some cases, other organizations from the community — for example, local service organizations — were invited to join. But in several sites the result of trying to involve a large group of partners in the Collaborative was an unwieldy governance structure. Reaching decisions was often difficult, and many partners came to feel that their time was not well spent. If you are able to use the MDRC demonstration approach of designating the PHA, TANF, and WIA systems, plus resident leaders, as the program's four core partners, restrict Collaborative membership to those groups. Or, if you have assembled a different constellation of core partner organizations, you can similarly limit Collaborative membership to their representatives.

Still, while some organizations will not take part in the governing Collaborative, they can be considered, along with the core partners, as members of a *broader Jobs-Plus partnership or coalition* — and, as discussed below, they can make valuable contributions to your program.

### Small and simple

**It is also important to make sure that the Collaborative has the autonomy to move Jobs-Plus planning and operations along expeditiously.** Once the Collaborative members vote on a particular decision, they should not be expected to seek further approval from the broader group of Jobs-Plus partners. Of course, Collaborative members will want to communicate with the nongoverning partner organizations regularly and to seek advice and guidance from them, thus maximizing the chances that those groups understand and support Collaborative decisions.

## Nongoverning partners

**At the outset, identify substantive roles that will keep nongoverning partner organizations engaged in Jobs-Plus.** You will almost certainly find that some key agencies, such as local service providers or training organizations that are interested in being part of Jobs-Plus, will not want a formal role in governing the program as a whole. But those groups can make many other contributions that will help them function as true partner organizations. (In other words, rather than just being listed on the Jobs-Plus masthead, they will be involved in many of the key decisions and activities that shape the program.) For example, nongoverning partner representatives to Jobs-Plus can:

- become members of Collaborative subcommittees, which in many cases will not demand the same levels of time and commitment as Collaborative membership
- be invited to partner information-sharing and networking meetings convened by the Collaborative
- be invited to have one or more of the employees of their agencies outstationed as Jobs-Plus staff members on site
- take part in *Jobs-Plus Operational Advisory Groups* — nongoverning groups that advise on the programs’ day-to-day operations (see “Promoting a Team Effort: The Operational Advisory Group” later in this chapter for a rationale for and fuller description of these groups)

Insofar as is possible, these roles should be set early. Being proactive reduces the chances that, down the line, it is discovered that a nongoverning partner is inactive in, or even disaffected from, Jobs-Plus.

## Collaborative operations

**In terms of operations, don’t hesitate to spell out in detail how the Collaborative will function.** Formal governance mechanisms like bylaws and memoranda of understanding are certainly not enough to ensure that Jobs-Plus will function smoothly as an institution — that takes ongoing positive communication and consultation between and among Jobs-Plus partners, staff, and resident leaders. But so long as these formal documents are presented in straightforward language and are succinct, they can be extremely useful to a program like Jobs-Plus — one in which authority is shared, resources are likely to be relatively substantial, and not all partners begin with equal power (for example, resident representatives versus top PHA officials).

Collaborative bylaws or other similar documents can set forth guidelines that focus on issues such as frequency and purposes of meetings, committee structures and roles, and mechanisms for soliciting feedback from the broader resident population. Similarly, clearly written, relatively brief memoranda of understanding between partner organizations that are members of either the Jobs-Plus governing Collaborative or of the broader partnership can be extremely helpful. Because past positive relationships between organizations do not guarantee smooth collaboration in a new setting, formal agreements have value even when the groups have already worked together. The memoranda can require partner agencies to specify, in detail, the services or resources they will provide and/or the responsibilities they will assume. As part of this function, they can specify processes for selecting and reviewing the performance of program vendors (functions that can be shared among partners even though the program's lead agency ultimately signs vendor contracts). And, as suggested by discussions later in this section, memoranda of understanding or similar interagency agreements can also be a useful starting point for deciding how to handle issues related to the outstationing of staff from partner agencies at Jobs-Plus.

#### Sustained involvement of senior leadership

**Finally, make sure that senior officials of the core-partner agencies participate in the governing Collaborative.** Typically, these individuals are the officials who are in a position to shape decision-making within their own agencies on behalf of Jobs-Plus. They can cut through red tape to approve the procedural changes and the personnel and resource decisions that help Jobs-Plus function smoothly. Too often, higher-level agency staff are involved in the early planning stages of programs like Jobs-Plus, while missions and main goals are first being articulated. But then mid-level staff are assigned to ongoing governance meetings. However, *sustained senior involvement is essential.*

#### The Public Housing Authority

**During the planning period, the central PHA should be encouraged to streamline as many of its procedures as possible that could stall implementation.** Like other public agencies, the PHA is expected to ensure fairness in hiring and spending decisions by requiring that such decisions comply with personnel and procurement rules and that they be reviewed by multiple divisions of the agency. But these rules and regulations can seriously delay Jobs-Plus procurement and staffing decisions. During the MDRC demonstration, such delays were particularly troublesome during program start-up phases, when there was strong interest in getting services up and running. Some delays were attributable to communication and coordination problems among PHA divisions that were responsible for handling Jobs-Plus requests and that were accustomed to operating as self-contained entities.



During the Jobs-Plus planning period, senior PHA officials should be enlisted in efforts to overcome bureaucratic obstacles to timely program start-up. (For example, they may be able to find ways to fast-track Jobs-Plus procurement requests.) Alternatively, while maintaining governance authority and/or lead-agency oversight, the PHA may decide that the most efficient way to run Jobs-Plus is to subcontract day-to-day operations to an outside organization. Among other advantages, an outside agency may have more flexible procurement and personnel regulations than the ones that govern the PHA itself.

Along with making sure that PHA top leaders are involved in Jobs-Plus, try to get early buy-in from the housing manager and other PHA staff who are on site. With their responsibilities for, among other things, collecting rent, building and ground maintenance, monitoring lease compliance, and orienting new tenants to the development, on-site housing managers and their staff are the PHA representatives whom residents are likely to know best. These managers are also in an important position to influence whether and to what extent the housing development has access to PHA resources and to shape the way in which PHA rules, regulations, and initiatives are implemented. Thus, their support for — or opposition to — Jobs-Plus can significantly affect the program. Try to involve housing managers in the Jobs-Plus partnership early on — for instance, by including them in program design meetings or possibly inviting them to sit on governing Collaboratives.

#### The Jobs-Plus Project Director and Outstationed Staff

**The Jobs-Plus project director, who manages the program (see “Developing a Staffing Plan,” later in this chapter), should start out with significant authority over staff from various public and private agencies who are co-located with staff hired directly by Jobs-Plus.** Co-locating some staff at the Jobs-Plus housing development is an excellent way to draw on partner agencies’ expertise and resources, but it does not automatically lead to good service coordination. Co-located staff may take direction primarily from their home agencies, making little effort to adapt to the approaches of other agencies on site or of the overall program. As a start, consider developing a memorandum of understanding, co-signed by the home agency and Jobs-Plus, stipulating that Jobs-Plus frontline staff must work together as a team and spelling out procedures to support that goal.

But unless outstationed staff feel at least somewhat accountable to the project director for their Jobs-Plus performance, such agreements are not nearly enough. Thus, project directors should be granted some authority over all outstationed staff. Directors should have veto power over the selection of staff members to be located on site, should submit performance reviews of outstationed staff to home agencies, and should have the authority to terminate assignments of outstationed staff members if they perform poorly.



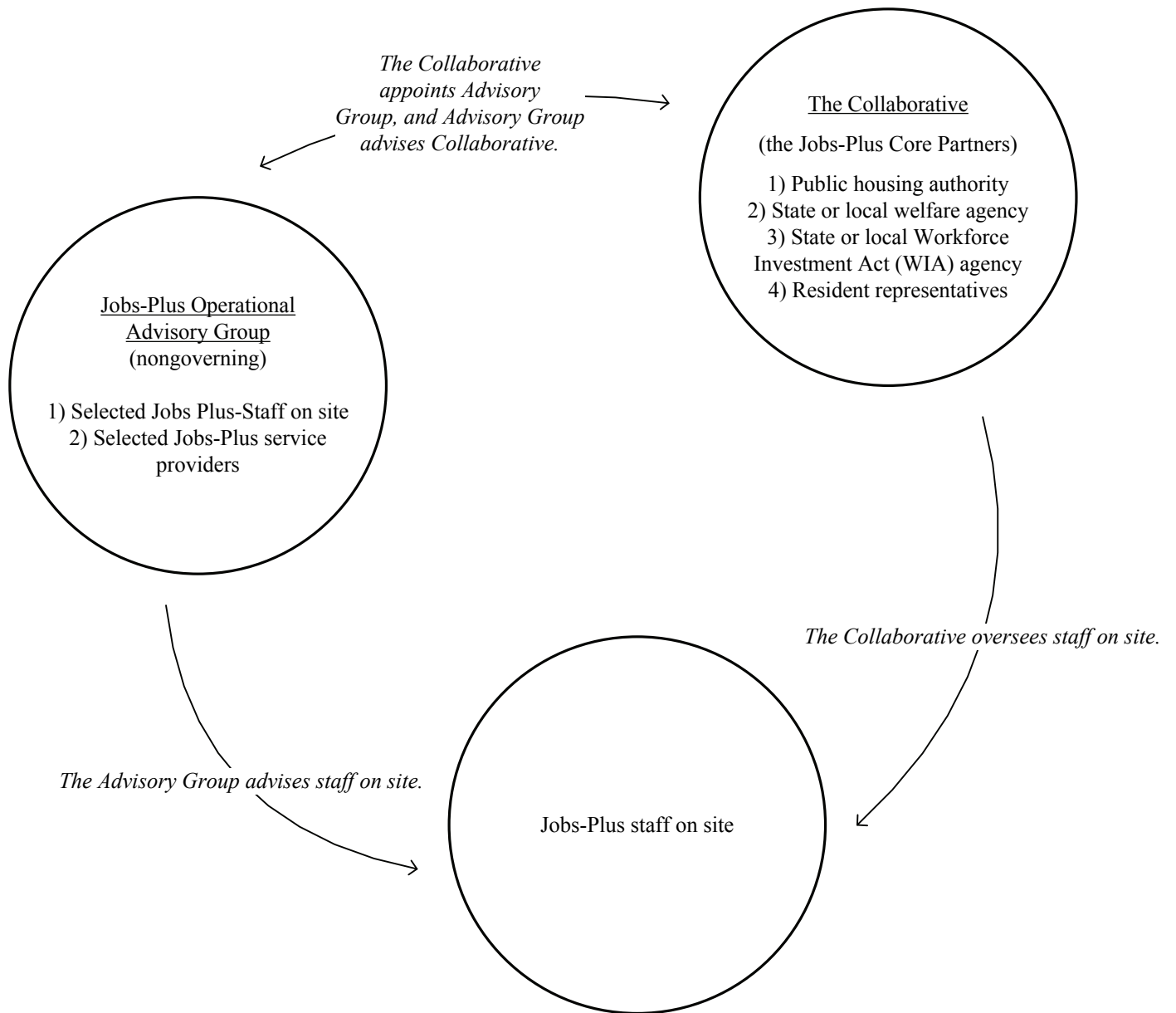
In addition, it is helpful to try to establish agreements for the flexible use of funds contributed to Jobs-Plus by agencies that outstation staff in the program. Funding rules of such “home agencies” can often limit the categories of Jobs-Plus participants whom their staff members can serve — for example, they may be able to work only with participants who have particular problems in which the agency has expertise. Interagency agreements that promote more flexible mixing of resources can help the program operate more coherently.

### Promoting a Team Effort: The Operational Advisory Group

**To ensure that frontline and mid-level staff of the main Jobs-Plus service providers function as a team and contribute their know-how to the program, think about forming a Jobs-Plus *Operational Advisory Group*.** Jobs-Plus involves employment-related services that are offered by a variety of local institutions, both on site and off. Some are provided under contract or other types of interagency agreements, while others may be offered on a more informal but routine referral basis. The result is that Jobs-Plus staff members must work with staff from a dispersed network of service providers that are connected to the program in different ways. Under this kind of arrangement, it is essential to minimize duplication of effort and conflicting requirements of different agencies, and to ensure that rather than falling through the cracks, residents can take advantage of a coherent package of services.

Organizing the program’s main service providers into an Operational Advisory Group can help further these goals. Such a group would, for instance, consist of representatives of on-site Jobs-Plus staff along with representatives of as many external Jobs-Plus service providers as possible. (If a Jobs-Plus program is operating in several public housing developments, it may be a good idea to create a distinct advisory group at each participating development.) Members of this group can meet regularly to share ideas on how the program can be improved, exchange information about new resources and service options, and discuss how to best coordinate their day-to-day services to residents. And if the meetings establish a friendly and cooperative tone, just the experience of taking part in them may encourage members to invest energy in coordinating services for Jobs-Plus participants. Figure 2.1 illustrates one possible structure for integrating an Operational Advisory Group into the Jobs-Plus governance structure.

**The Jobs-Plus Demonstration**  
**Figure 2.1**  
**Sample Structure for Jobs-Plus Governance**



## Reaching the Local Business Community

**While good relationships with the business community are critical, local businesspeople may not be eager to spend time attending Jobs-Plus meetings. In that case, look for other ways to connect with them.** At the start of MDRC’s Jobs-Plus research demonstration, it was widely believed that employers should be included in program planning groups, in the governing Collaboratives and/or their subcommittees, and in any broader Jobs-Plus partnership meetings. Typically, however, employers did not turn out to play these roles. (This pattern is somewhat similar to the reluctance, discussed earlier, of some service provider agencies to sit on governing Collaboratives.) Project directors concluded that it was very hard to interest employers in an extended planning effort and that it was best to approach them with a program already in place, with residents ready to work.

But how, then, can programs tap employers’ perspectives? One possibility is that rather than focusing on individual employers, the program can invite representatives of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) — the organization that decides how federal WIA funds are spent in a locality — and members of local employer associations, such as the chamber of commerce, to sit on the Jobs-Plus Operational Advisory Group. Another idea is to invite a small group of employers to periodically (semiannually or annually) review Jobs-Plus plans and progress. Recognize, too, that some Collaborative members from the nonprofit and public-sector worlds are likely to have past business experience. If you make a point of soliciting their input on typical employer concerns, they can bring a business perspective to your discussions. Finally, and more broadly, once the program is operating, its job developers — who help residents connect with employers — should be expected to keep a sharp eye on the needs and interests of all the employers they cultivate. (For more on the role of job developers, see the following section, “Developing a Staffing Plan.”)

## Developing a Staffing Plan

The Jobs-Plus program will, ultimately, be only as strong as its staff. To ensure that your program is staffed efficiently, begin with a staffing plan. The staffing plan should cover the following key program functions:

- Outreach to prospective participants
- Job development
- Marketing the financial incentives component in cooperation with regular PHA staff
- Coaching and counseling focused on helping residents to find and keep jobs, climb career ladders, use financial incentives, and secure benefits

- Managing the Collaborative
- Data collection and analysis
- Administrative support

(See Box 2.2 for typical Jobs-Plus staff positions in the MDRC research demonstration.) A few further comments about staffing: First, none of the demonstration sites had budgets large enough to be able to hire associate directors. As is discussed later, however, such a position, which could be part time, could be very valuable for supporting a busy project director, especially by helping the director interact with the governing Collaborative.

Second, a Jobs-Plus program encompassing more than one housing development will be best managed by designating a project director to be responsible for the overall program, with program coordinators who report to the project director taking charge of day-to-day program operations in each development.

Third, during the demonstration, MDRC took the lead in analyzing participation data and provided guidance on how it should be collected. Staff in a program without a major evaluation attached to it would collect far less data. Nevertheless, as discussed later in this chapter, using data to monitor participants' progress is essential for any Jobs-Plus program, whether or not it is being formally evaluated. In the absence of a research organization like MDRC, data analysis would likely be handled by a computer programmer and researcher, by an analytical unit of the PHA, or by a partner agency — for example, a university — or other paid vendor. Nonetheless, all professional staff should be involved in assessing the information about their services that comes from the data that have been assembled.

### The Project Director

**Look for a project director with managerial acumen, expertise in employment issues, and, preferably, familiarity with both public housing and employment services.** Ideally, the project director should have a good working knowledge of both public housing issues and of efforts to promote economic self-sufficiency for low-income people. If not, he or she should have expertise in at least one of those areas. Whether or not the project director starts out with much knowledge of employment programs, that person should understand and be comfortable with overseeing the Jobs-Plus rent-based work incentives, not just the services side of the program. Likewise, the project director should be ready to maintain a steady focus on the main Jobs-Plus mission by always being clear that *improving residents' economic self-sufficiency* is the program's primary goal. (See sections on program monitoring later in this chapter for fuller discussions of prioritizing employment goals.)

## **Box 2.2**

### **Typical Jobs-Plus Staff Positions and Staff Responsibilities for Sites in the MDRC Research Demonstration**

#### **Project Director**

Usually on the public housing authority (PHA) payroll, assigned full time (or close to it) to Jobs-Plus, the project director was responsible for the day-to-day management of the program, for overseeing program progress, and for serving as the main liaison to and manager of the Collaborative.

#### **Job Coaches**

Job coaches were usually either welfare agency staff outstationed at the development by the welfare department or newly hired by the PHA for Jobs-Plus. They assessed residents' employment and training needs, arranged for services and monitored their use, and helped residents arrange for child care, transportation to work, and other support services. They usually helped residents learn about and get access to Jobs-Plus financial incentives and, similarly, were expected to help residents take full advantage of other existing incentives to make work pay (for example, the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, child care subsidies, and Medicaid).

#### **Job Developers**

Typically, these individuals were staff members on loan from the local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system. They made contact with prospective employers, otherwise helped residents locate job openings, and, in some cases, helped residents file applications and prepare for job interviews.

#### **Community Coaches (Outreach Workers)**

Community coaches were usually people (often residents themselves) who were newly hired for Jobs-Plus. They encouraged residents to become involved in the program and in work. If community coaches were also residents, they were usually compensated with stipends, not full salaries.

#### **Administrative Assistants**

Administrative assistants helped the project director and others with the logistical and other tasks needed to keep the program functioning smoothly.

Insofar as the project director is responsible for managing the Collaborative, he or she should also possess a set of somewhat intangible but very important qualifications related to coalition-building. For example, the project director should be:

- Ready to listen to both agency and resident representatives, not only by soliciting their input during meetings but also by seeking their advice and ideas in times *between* meetings
- Skilled at getting a decision-making group not just to *discuss* but also to *decide*
- Capable of ensuring that once decisions are made, steps are taken to move them along
- Skilled at mediating conflicts (for example, between the PHA and residents)
- Comfortable working with people from many different socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds

As observed earlier, it is also important to provide support to project directors for the work involved in managing the governing Collaborative. In the MDRC demonstration, project directors served as the main liaisons to and managers of the Collaborative from the Jobs-Plus operating program. Among other things, they were responsible for ensuring that agendas, minutes, reports, and other meeting materials were carefully prepared and well disseminated, and that meetings were well organized. The experience of the demonstration sites was that this work can often take a back seat to the director's other responsibilities in managing the program's day-to-day operations.

It would be extremely helpful for a Jobs-Plus program to have a paid staff member whose role would be to assist the project director in managing the Collaborative. Ideally, this individual would be an *associate director*, who would be hired on a part-time basis and who would have the background and knowledge to handle substantive matters — for example, making some decisions about how to structure the Collaborative agenda. If budgets are too tight to allow for this position, a less expensive alternative is for the PHA to pay for the dedicated time of a staff member to handle those responsibilities.

### General Staff Characteristics

**Make it a priority to look for staff who are enthusiastic about trying new approaches and service combinations, and who are ready to function not as representatives of separate agencies that happen to share space, but as a unit.** When public housing residents try to find and use employment, child care, transportation, housing assistance,

and health care services, they are too often confronted with a bewildering array of agencies, each with different eligibility rules and procedures. For example, a new Jobs-Plus participant could be offered coaching on job search techniques by a program job developer when she is already enrolled in a workshop elsewhere in the community that provides intensive coaching in this area. But, in such a situation, services need not remain duplicative if, after discussing the situation with the resident, a Jobs-Plus staff member takes the initiative to contact a member of the workshop's staff (ideally, in a three-way conversation that includes the participant) to discuss whether that person should continue with the workshop or shift to coaching on site at the housing development. By operating in this way, Jobs-Plus tries to offer residents a coherent, user-friendly set of employment and support services tailored to what residents and their families really need.

For Jobs-Plus staff, putting together those service packages means functioning as a team, both with one another and with staff of other agencies who partner with the program. Thus, try hard to hire creative, proactive people who understand that their *roles go beyond their job descriptions*. (This topic is discussed in greater detail later in the guide.)

Finally, because the reputation of a community-based program can be quickly established, hard to change, and critical to its success, look for staff who will be respectful of residents, friendly, and enthusiastic. Many public housing residents have seen employment programs come and go, and they will naturally be skeptical about what Jobs-Plus has to offer. A flexible, respectful, committed staff — one that is willing to go the extra mile to provide high-quality services and referrals to residents — can create the positive reputation that will encourage people to use the program.

## Costs and Funding

Few planning activities are as important as getting a handle on the likely costs of a new program and developing a funding plan. Following are insights on those activities based on the Jobs-Plus demonstration and its evaluation.

### Evaluating Program Costs

**While the Jobs-Plus evaluation did not include a detailed cost analysis, it does provide information on the scale of investment needed to operate the program, and it shows that program costs were reasonable.** The Jobs-Plus evaluation offers a very rough estimate of program costs. It suggests that the immediate budgetary cost of operating the *on-site features of the program* (including the financial incentives) could amount to approximately \$150 per targeted, or eligible, resident in any given month. For example, a housing authority with 250 eligible, working-age residents may need an annual budget in the vicini-

ty of \$450,000 to provide the on-site services and financial incentives — although, for reasons discussed below, this may represent a high-end estimate. In the MDRC Jobs-Plus research demonstration, about 35 percent (\$158,000) of the estimated annual budget was spent on financial incentives, while about 65 percent (\$292,000) was used for all other budgeted expenditures.

But the actual added cost to the government may be considerably lower. Even in the absence of Jobs-Plus, housing authorities would have spent money on alternative self-sufficiency services and financial incentives. (That is, in fact, what they did for numerous residents living in the so-called comparison developments — the developments with which the demonstration sites were compared during the MDRC evaluation.) Consequently, the *incremental* investment needed to operate the on-site features of Jobs-Plus would be lower than the gross cost estimate given above. The extent to which it would be lower depends on what other employment-related services and incentives were already being provided.

A number of factors could make the on-site operating costs of a Jobs-Plus program higher or lower. One crucial driver of costs is the rate at which residents move into a development and how long they stay. The service-related costs of assisting newer tenants is likely to exceed the costs of serving longer-term tenants; in general, residents who continue living in the development will eventually reduce their involvement in the program because some will have gone to work or found better jobs. All other things being equal, the sustained costs of operating a Jobs-Plus program are likely to be lower where resident turnover is lower. Costs may also be lower if the program is operated more efficiently as an ongoing program than it was as a new demonstration project with a protracted design and trial-and-error period, or if the program is operated across more developments in a city, thereby creating substantial administrative economies of scale.

Of course, higher employment rates and more sustained employment would mean greater costs for rent-based work incentives. However, if overall resident earnings are greater in a given year than they would be in the absence of Jobs-Plus, the cost to the housing authority for those incentives would be offset to some degree by increased overall rent payments. (Under Jobs-Plus rules, working residents generally pay less rent than under regular U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] rent rules, but they nevertheless pay more rent than they would if they were not working.)

### **Funding Support for Jobs-Plus**

**TANF and WIA funds can be tapped for cash contributions to help support Jobs-Plus.** During the demonstration period, the public agencies involved with Jobs-Plus, including welfare agencies, provided in-kind contributions (such as guaranteed service slots — for example, payments for a set number of TANF recipients who would use Jobs-Plus



services) rather than investing flexible dollars that the program could use to pay for staff, administrative costs, overhead expenses, or service contracts.

But revised federal regulations governing the use of TANF funds by states and localities now make it easier for programs like Jobs-Plus to draw on these funds for a variety of purposes. Efforts should thus be made to gain access to those resources, which may be more flexible than has traditionally been the case for welfare dollars.

**You can also explore the funding implications of transferring Jobs-Plus funds to an independent entity.** As has been discussed, Jobs-Plus administrative operations may be streamlined if authority for the program is transferred to an outside agency — for example, a community-based nonprofit organization. This arrangement also has potential advantages for how dollars can be raised and used. For example, if not only the PHA but also the local TANF and WIA agencies turn over to the outside organization funds earmarked for Jobs-Plus, the program will have a good supply of flexible funding with which to operate. Also, since government agencies are very rarely eligible to compete for corporate and foundation grants or for other city funding, if the outside organization is a nonprofit entity, it can seek funding for which the housing authority would be unlikely to apply.

Housing authorities are facing a climate of declining funding, both in general and in particular for economic self-sufficiency initiatives like Jobs-Plus. During the demonstration period, PHAs were able to tap into funds from two HUD grant programs — Economic Development and Self-Sufficiency (ED/SS) and the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP) — and some resident groups contributed funds received from the Tenant Opportunities Program (TOPS) to Jobs-Plus.

The large PHDEP grants were eliminated in 2001, and earlier, in 1999, ED/SS and TOPS were replaced with the Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) program. ROSS funds are subject to the appropriations process and annual nationwide competition, and the trend has been a steady decrease in the number of ROSS funding categories, in the overall amount of funding available, and in the ceilings for individual grants. At the same time, the level of overall operating subsidies for housing authorities has been declining. In this fiscal climate, creating a vehicle to seek supplementary funding is extremely desirable.

Some major costs and likely public- and private-sector funding sources for Jobs-Plus are listed in Box 2.3.

### Box 2.3

## Major Cost Elements and Likely Funding Sources for Jobs-Plus

### Cost Elements

- Rent-based incentives to work
- Salaries
- Subcontracts/service contracts
- Space: renovation costs, utilities, Internet connection
- Equipment/utilities: computers, phone, fax copiers
- Other office supplies: software, books, miscellaneous supplies

### Funding Sources

#### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) Program/Family and Homeownership funding stream
- ROSS/Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency (PH/FSS) Coordinator funding stream
- Public housing operating subsidy resident participation funds\*
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

- Local Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) agency: cash or in-kind services

#### U.S. Department of Labor

- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) agency: cash or in-kind services

#### Private funding streams

- Private foundations

\*Most PHAs are required to include in their annual operating budget an amount totaling \$25 per occupied unit per year to fund resident participation. The funding may be used to support training, resident organizing, and other activities. PHAs are required to pass these funds through to resident councils to enable them to design site-based programs and activities. In accordance with Notice PIH 2001-3, the funds are distributed after consultation between the PHA and resident groups and must be used in accordance with a written agreement.

## Making Provisions for Monitoring Progress

Like many elements of Jobs-Plus, monitoring really starts before the program begins. As discussed in the next chapter in connection with employment-related services, once the program is up and running, staff will need to be involved in monitoring by continually turning to their network of colleagues and to participants themselves to assess the quality of services that participants are receiving, especially off site. But provisions for the more quantitative aspects of monitoring — collecting and analyzing data on patterns of service use and what happens to service users — should be made before any participants walk in the door.

There can be resistance to quantitative monitoring. It's frustrating to be planning to spend time collecting data and entering it into computers when we have so many real-life needs to meet. Many dedicated directors and staff members of programs serving low-income people have probably had this reaction, at least occasionally. But at another point, most of these very same professionals will likely affirm that it is critical to have good data systems for illuminating what happens both to individual participants and to the entire group of people touched by the program. The following planning steps are recommended to help make quantitative monitoring as meaningful and efficient as possible.

- **Jobs-Plus should hold itself accountable for outcomes in three well-defined areas: (1) job placements, (2) job retention, and (3) improvements in residents' income and career outlooks. Patterns of service use should be evaluated in terms of their capacity to advance progress in these three main areas.**

When designing tracking systems, your program should create indicators to capture outcomes for job placements, and for job retention and career advancement rates. Include, but do not be satisfied with, data on interim steps to realizing these goals — for instance, referrals to or participation in education or training programs. Likewise, while support services are vitally important to Jobs-Plus, and their use should be carefully tracked, provision of these services, in and of itself, does not answer key questions about whether Jobs-Plus is actually improving residents' employment situations.

- **A plan for collecting relevant data on participants and their progress, and especially on key outcome data, should be in place before operations begin. As soon as possible, planners should agree on what indicators they will collect to measure progress and on the frequency of monitoring and reporting.**

For example, while most HUD grant programs require semiannual reporting, the Collaborative should monitor performance more frequently. Be aware that to monitor progress in career advancement and increases in income, your program must initially establish a system to acquire this information from participants and their employers.

- **At a minimum, partner agencies should be ready to give each other timely information on their shared clients. It may also be feasible for some agencies to develop common computer coding systems to track participation.**

Program staff and partner agencies should make it a priority to ensure that the information they give each other about shared clients is up-to-date. Some agencies serving Jobs-Plus participants may be able to add codes to their management information system that let them easily identify which residents are participating in activities offered elsewhere.

- **Ideally, partner agencies should use common intake and assessment forms.**

Common intake and assessment forms (or common subsections of forms), which collect equivalent demographic and background information and assess an individual's status and progress, can help determine a participant's service needs at one sitting. They thus save time and money, and they help to avoid the waning interest that new participants often experience in the face of long waits between enrollment and becoming actively engaged in a program.

Recognize, though, that for service providers, the process of creating shared forms can be demanding. For instance, it usually takes considerable time and effort for agencies to negotiate common definitions of different — even if overlapping — informational categories that they had been using on their own. Agencies are most likely to want to undertake the process of designing common forms if Jobs-Plus participants make up a significant share of their caseloads.

## **Finding a Home for Jobs-Plus**

Although not all program activities will take place on site, it is important to base the Jobs-Plus management office and some services in or adjacent to the housing development, in order to provide a convenient place for staff and residents to meet and for residents to meet among themselves. (Later sections of this guide discuss how an office location on site can help make services more accessible and responsive, and less intimidating, than at some organizations located away from the development.) The facility should contain enough private office space for staff to conduct confidential interviews with residents.

While participants will very often be referred to locations outside the development for education, training, and support services, a number of key activities are likely to take place at the Jobs-Plus office. These activities include program outreach, marketing, enrollment, assessment, case management, and help with job search. (Also, PHA staff located in offices elsewhere in the development will be involved in the administration of Jobs-Plus financial incentives, including signing up residents for these supports. In addition, staff members of the PHA's application department will promote enrollment of new residents in Jobs-Plus.)

Other factors to consider when planning the Jobs-Plus office space are as follows:

- It is essential for programs to provide space in the Jobs-Plus office for outstationed staff of the local welfare (TANF) and workforce development (WIA) systems. Welfare staff can handle TANF benefits for Jobs-Plus participants along with other residents of the development, while, as noted, WIA staff can serve as job developers.
- A project director of a multisite Jobs-Plus program may be based in PHA administrative offices rather than in a housing development. But in that case, separate program coordinators who report to the project director should work out of the Jobs-Plus offices.
- If space is tight, consider remodeling an apartment unit or another facility at the housing development. Apartment units can be taken off line and remodeled into office space. Alternatively, the program can look for space that was once used by PHA programs that are no longer operating. Remember, however, to allow for the considerable investment of time and energy that it typically takes to negotiate for these spaces and for the funds and workers to reconfigure them.
- Make certain the office contains a job search resource center with enough of the right kind of equipment needed to help residents look for work. Internet access is a basic requirement for job search. Other basics include résumé-writing software, computers for keyboarding practice, a photocopier, fax machine, typewriter, and phone lines dedicated to residents, which they can use to call prospective employers.
- Identify any extra security measures to help residents feel safe when they come to program offices, especially outside of normal business hours. It is obvious that if residents fear gang or drug-related activity near the office, they are less likely to use the program. Results of a survey of residents living in

Jobs-Plus demonstration developments at the start of the demonstration indicated that feelings of vulnerability to crime were strong, although residents in some sites appeared to be more susceptible than people living in other places. For example, 81 percent of respondents in one development compared with 15 percent in another said that people using drugs in the development was a “pretty big” or “very big” problem. More than half of the respondents in one site (56 percent) described “gangs causing trouble” in the development as a “pretty big” or “very big” problem; in other sites, this response (ranging from 27 percent to 33 percent) was less common, although by no means trivial.<sup>9</sup> If residents in the development or developments in which you are planning to establish a Jobs-Plus program do express anxiety about the safety of using the program, think about providing extra security guards or escorts to apartments during off-hours for people who hesitate to walk by themselves.

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<sup>9</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).

## Chapter 3

# The Building Blocks of Jobs-Plus

This chapter focuses successively on the three major components of Jobs-Plus — employment-related services, financial incentives to work, and community support for work. The chapter provides guidelines aimed at helping project directors and staff make each of the building blocks as strong as possible.

## Employment-Related Services

Jobs-Plus seeks to transform low-work, high-welfare public housing developments into high-work, low-welfare communities — and, as noted, employment-related services are seen as one of the three important pathways to that goal. These services include:

- **Job search instruction and assistance.** The main activities are (1) help in finding job leads (often using computers for Internet job searches and other aids found in Jobs-Plus offices); (2) coaching participants on job-hunting and interviewing techniques; and (3) coaching participants on what the employment field calls “soft skills” — for example, the importance of arriving at work on time, reporting absences, dressing appropriately, and managing relationships with supervisors and coworkers. The demonstration programs typically provided all three kinds of help on site, but did sometimes refer participants — especially ex-offenders, substance abusers, and people with other special needs — to outside partner agencies, often because such organizations have expertise in those special areas.
- **Educational and vocational training.** This training includes services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Educational Development (GED) preparation courses, and vocational training, especially short-term courses. As discussed later, help in starting small businesses may also be appropriate, but this option should be weighed carefully (see the section on “Self-Employment” later in this chapter).
- **A small number of “work experience” or “supported work” positions.** These kinds of jobs are characterized by “on-the-job training,” like an internship. Typically low-paying and at least initially temporary, they are viewed as stepping stones to help hard-to-employ people acquire the experience that can lead to more permanent employment. The positions are usually subsidized by public and nonprofit organizations.

- **Support services.** These services not only help with child care and transportation, but with needs in many other areas that can affect employment.

As often as was feasible, staff in the demonstration sites initiated participants' use of employment-related services with written service plans, which were developed jointly by a participant and a staff member and which outlined the goals that that person hoped to reach with the help of Jobs-Plus and the steps to be taken to achieve them. The aim was to periodically revisit and update the plans.

### **How to Offer Employment and Related Support Services**

The rest of this section presents insights and recommendations, drawn from the experience of the demonstration sites, on how to offer Jobs-Plus employment and related support services to program participants.

#### **Satisfying Welfare-to-Work Requirements**

**Make sure that Jobs-Plus employment services will count as welfare-to-work activities mandated by federal welfare legislation.** Successfully negotiating with welfare agencies (as almost all demonstration sites did) to permit Jobs-Plus work-related activities to satisfy Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) welfare-to-work participation requirements ensured that welfare recipients were not burdened by having to take part in TANF activities separate from those offered through Jobs-Plus. The arrangement also gave some sites leeway to develop and refer people to services that the welfare system might not otherwise have recognized as satisfying its welfare-to-work obligations.

Planners should try to codify this change in public housing authority (PHA)-welfare agency agreements. Many demonstration sites found that these agreements were facilitated by senior-level welfare officials who sat on Collaboratives advocating for the change as Jobs-Plus was being designed.

#### **Clarifying New Rules**

**When, during the planning period, top officials negotiate any new rules to allow Jobs-Plus activities to count for TANF participation, take steps to translate those new rules into frontline practice.** As is often true with new policies, the demonstration sites found that high-level agreements on how Jobs-Plus and the welfare system should relate to one another were not enough to ensure that mid-level and frontline staff understood the change. Some Jobs-Plus staff — and sometimes participants themselves — found that they were the people who tried to explain the new rules to welfare case managers.



Jobs-Plus and its partners can try several strategies for bridging this kind of information gap. For example, the Baltimore district welfare office added a requirement to its standard intake procedures calling on case managers to refer welfare recipients who were potentially Jobs-Plus-eligible to the program. It may also be useful for the Jobs-Plus project director to attend regular TANF case manager meetings.

One particularly helpful strategy that demonstration sites tried was to conduct joint TANF/Jobs-Plus staff trainings, designed to orient staff to one another's systems. The sessions alerted TANF staff to the need to count Jobs-Plus as a qualifying welfare-to-work assignment, while Jobs-Plus staff were able to learn about the complex TANF participation requirements and time-limit rules that affect many residents. Frequent repeats of these cross-trainings are recommended because of the rapid staff turnover in many local welfare agencies.

### One-Stop Career Centers

**Jobs-Plus can serve as a “feeder source” — or “portal” — for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop Career Centers.** To encourage residents to become One-Stop users, develop strategies that will ease their way once they get there. Complementing this effort, define Jobs-Plus itself as a One-Stop “satellite.”

WIA One-Stop Career Centers are an important focus of the nation's workforce development efforts. Jobs-Plus can refer residents to these helpful centers — and, in the process, the program can enhance what the centers do in two ways: First, the One-Stop assistance will naturally be a part of the broader Jobs-Plus package that, besides employment services, includes financial incentives and activities related to community support for work. Second, because Jobs-Plus staff are based where residents live, they can provide additional monitoring of and follow-up to participants' One-Stop experiences.

But a number of residents, especially the less employable, may be reluctant to go to a One-Stop, finding it inconvenient and/or intimidating. One strategy to help solve this problem is for the One-Stop to make special efforts to ensure that Jobs-Plus participants, who are apt to be less experienced job-seekers than many other One-Stop users, know how to take advantage of One-Stop resources. This approach was taken in the Dayton One-Stop, which, with eight acres of space, is the nation's largest. Specific welfare agency staff at the One-Stop were assigned to work with Jobs-Plus participants. In addition, these staff and Jobs-Plus job coaches were given joint training in one another's operations and procedures. There was also a direct line of communication between One-Stop and Jobs-Plus staff, meaning that when a Jobs-Plus participant registered at the One-Stop, Jobs-Plus staff knew that they would be kept abreast of the participant's progress in the facility.

Still, especially for those residents who are hardest to employ, the Dayton program had difficulty becoming a feeder program to the One-Stop. Instead, participants were more likely to get employment help at the Jobs-Plus program itself. In cases like these, the Jobs-Plus program can in essence serve as a satellite One-Stop Career Center. Planners of new Jobs-Plus programs will probably wish to consider this “satellite strategy” in tandem with the idea of securing special guidance for Jobs-Plus participants who do avail themselves of the centralized centers. As noted, because Jobs-Plus job developers are often WIA employees, it is very likely that they will be coming to Jobs-Plus from the local One-Stop and will know their way around the facility, thus fostering natural connections between the One-Stop and Jobs-Plus as a One-Stop satellite center.

### Quick Entry into the Labor Market

**Program experience suggests — and many residents will agree — that the best first step for many new participants, especially those with little or no work experience, is to immediately look for jobs.** Rather than automatically steering people to education and training, Jobs-Plus has generally encouraged residents, especially those with weak employment records, to get work experience by entering the labor market quickly, even in low-wage positions. Residents themselves have typically favored this approach. In fact, some who were eager to find work had little patience with program intake procedures like needs assessments. While your program obviously must have the solid information about its participants and their employment needs that comes from good intake procedures, try very hard to minimize the time and paperwork associated with these procedures.

### Meeting the Needs of Local Employers

**Savvy job development that is attuned to the needs of local employers can be one of the program’s strongest assets.** Following are recommendations and ideas culled from the techniques used by job developers and other relevant staff in the demonstration sites.

- Most WIA One-Stop Career Centers, which post hundreds of job openings weekly, will be a major source of leads for a Jobs-Plus program. Residents should be able to find out about the listings not only in One-Stops but in their own developments — for instance, by going online at the Jobs-Plus offices or reading about the positions in notices that Jobs-Plus posts, or in flyers that the program distributes to residents. To learn more about emerging trends in the local labor market, program job developers — who, as noted, may sometimes themselves be WIA employees — should make regular visits to One-Stops or otherwise consult routinely with One-Stop staff.

- Besides the WIA system, the state can also be a source of help. Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes in Los Angeles established a partnership with California's Employment Development Department (EDD). EDD gave Jobs-Plus an Internet link to a state database of job openings and placed a part-time job developer in the program, supplementing the efforts of the program's own full-time job developer. Besides assisting with job searches, the EDD job developer helped some residents apply for unemployment insurance, worked on job fairs and community events, and offered the program connections to large employers, such as FedEx, UPS, and Macy's.
- Exclusive or preferential hiring relationships with large and medium-sized employers are worthwhile only if the Jobs-Plus program is big enough to guarantee a sizeable, continuous pool of qualified applicants. (Jobs-Plus programs with multiple sites in one locality are most likely to fit this description.) Nonetheless, using resources such as the local chamber of commerce or even metro business directories, job developers can still be effective by focusing on smaller local employers.
- Job developers can turn to Collaborative partners for help, asking them to give participants priority for interviews, establish on-the-job training positions and internships for participants, or simply to contact prospective employers in their own networks on behalf of Jobs-Plus.
- To ensure good coverage of different sectors in the local economy, the job developer can target a different industry — for example, hospitality or manufacturing — on a regular basis, perhaps monthly. Employers in that sector can be asked to arrange group interviews for program participants whom Jobs-Plus recruits. To make the interviews more convenient, the job developer can follow a practice sometimes used in the demonstration sites and drive interviewees to these events. In another similar approach, the job developer can arrange for employers to conduct group interviews at the development.
- Job developers can target public agencies, such as departments of public works, or the PHA itself, which often have trainee slots for entry-level jobs. Jobs-Plus staff can help residents navigate the application process and prepare for the civil service exams that many trainees must take to make the transition to permanent jobs in public agencies.
- Job developers should follow up with employers who hire Jobs-Plus participants and encourage them to hire others. Likewise, employed residents can be a source of information about openings at their workplaces.

## Career Advancement: Helping Residents Who Are Already Employed

**Be prepared to help residents who already have jobs. Be sensitive to the reasons why they may resist trying to move up career ladders, but maintain career advancement as a priority goal.** The need for career advancement into better jobs with benefits — or more generous ones — should always be on the radar screens of programs that serve working-poor families. The need is especially critical now that welfare recipients face lifetime limits on benefits. Under federal welfare law, recipients who have settled into entry-level jobs to comply with TANF work mandates will eventually find that they no longer can claim TANF payments to supplement low earnings, and to receive welfare-related child care help and, in some cases, Medicaid.

Still, it can be very difficult to encourage working residents to pursue additional education and training that would qualify them for better jobs. Most education and training requires tuition; moreover, most of these residents already lead very busy lives. On the program side, another obstacle is that even staff with good skills in helping people find jobs typically have considerably less experience helping them climb career ladders.

Nonetheless, there are ways to make education and training more viable options for workers. To start, career advancement can be stressed in any staff training on employment services. Next, Jobs-Plus programs can particularly look for training programs that are short term but that can help residents earn more money and secure better benefits — for example, training that focuses on truck driving, construction, or becoming a certified nurse assistant.

Jobs-Plus should have on hand extensive, up-to-date information about postsecondary education and training programs that are offered off site, and especially their financial aid opportunities, and staff can help residents fill out enrollment and aid applications. Jobs-Plus programs themselves can try to offer small scholarships toward tuition and expenses, and staff can help some participants prepare for college admissions and placement tests.

## Maintaining Regular Contact with Participants

**Expect some residents to turn to Jobs-Plus when they have pressing needs and to drift away once a crisis has abated. Likewise, be prepared for people cycling in and out of the workforce.** With lives beset by chronic financial instability, which makes long-term planning difficult and emergencies virtually unavoidable, residents will often turn to Jobs-Plus for quick relief in a crisis — for example, when they need job leads, child care, emergency food, or the financial incentives safety net following a job loss. Thus, staff cannot assume that people will always use Jobs-Plus services in predictable, regular sequences.

Similarly, staff cannot assume that job search assistance to a participant will be unnecessary once that person enters the workforce. Many residents experience repeated job

losses. To cite just one reason why: Juggling child care responsibilities can make it hard for some parents to keep jobs for more than a few months. Moreover, some residents are accustomed to working only for the limited time needed to pay off particular bills or purchase a certain item.

Of course, helping a resident through a crisis can be an introduction to Jobs-Plus that leads to more regular use of the program after the emergency has ended. Still, to help contain patterns of sporadic contact, Jobs-Plus should try hard to follow up with working participants as regularly as possible. Friendly follow-up can help residents pinpoint and head off possible crises before they erupt, and in combination with the program's financial incentives, this follow-up can encourage working participants to stay employed. For example, Jobs-Plus staff from most demonstration sites called newly employed residents for at least the first five weeks on the job — sometimes making three or more contacts during the first week. After this initial adjustment period, it is a good idea to try to call the employees at two-week or one-month intervals.

However, regular monitoring can be far from easy. For instance, staff from sites in the demonstration had a hard time contacting working residents during the day and/or having them return phone calls. Thus, as discussed next, staff should actively seek ways besides scheduled phone calls to check in with participants about their work situations and about related matters that affect their working lives.

### Accommodating the Participants

**Although purely emergency use of services is problematic, Jobs-Plus is more than a “by appointment” program. Be prepared to meet residents where they are.** Some demonstration sites did set up group training courses on site when there was sufficient demand for them — for instance, preparation to become a certified nurse assistant — and some tried group job clubs, which are work sessions for small groups of job seekers that provide instruction in skills needed to obtain employment, such as résumé writing, job hunting, completing a job application, and being interviewed. As a rule, however, programs offered participants individualized job preparation and job search activities as needed and in ways that fit the residents' schedules — with staff sometimes making themselves available to residents on nights and weekends.

More broadly, staff found that being on site, in a place-based program, allowed them to leave their offices and get to know residents and their concerns by spending time with them in the courtyards, corners, and shops where they congregated. As one staff member put it, “We can't get from here to there without someone [approaching us], and you have to deal. ... We have some clients that will not come into the office.”

Some staff made home visits either during or after regular program hours. The visits often helped staff break down cultural barriers with foreign-born residents and encouraged family members who suffered from serious family or mental health problems to consider referrals for professional help.

### Support Services

**Participants should have ready access to child care, transportation help, and other services that support employment.** Besides being important in their own right, support services offered through Jobs-Plus give staff one important natural opening to learn more about the employment side of participants' lives and about the problems that can prevent them from finding and keeping good jobs.

The most common support services provided by the demonstration sites included:

- **Child care.** Naturally, guiding working parents to safe, affordable, high-quality child care is one of the important responsibilities of the job coaches when they focus on support services. Besides helping parents locate good caregiving in the development or elsewhere, a program, depending on its level of resources and expertise, could conceivably consider taking the ambitious step of establishing its own child care center — for instance and most feasibly, an after-school program that might be open to children of Jobs-Plus participants as well as other youngsters in the development.

It is sometimes forgotten that families not only need permanent high-quality child care, but a “Plan B” for when arrangements temporarily break down or for when a parent must find a few odd hours of care to go to, for instance, a job interview or a citizenship class. Job coaches should be knowledgeable about local sources of good contingency care — and in the course of their counseling, they should routinely gather and keep information about whether parents have relatives or neighbors who can provide it. The St. Paul site developed a creative plan to systematize neighbor-to-neighbor contingency care: A former VISTA worker organized parents in the development to help each other with this responsibility. TANF funds were used to cover the full cost of care for some parents, while others were asked to pay a nominal fee of \$5 per day.

- **Transportation.** Often, public housing developments are located far from commercial areas, in places where public transportation, particularly after dark or on weekends, is limited or unsafe. Jobs-Plus programs can work with public transit authorities and other relevant organizations such as transit advocacy groups to try to expand services or add to safety features on the routes. More immediately, programs can look into establishing their own van pools (which

have the added benefit of allowing some residents to be hired as drivers). Using a variant of this idea, the Dayton Jobs-Plus program organized working residents into travel groups to take public transportation together, thus reducing safety concerns. Some demonstration sites provided driver education to residents, and helped eligible residents take advantage of TANF or other public grants for emergency car repairs.

- **Help with navigating bureaucracies and negotiating with employers.** Trying to navigate the intricacies of the welfare, health, or criminal justice systems or other bureaucracies can be a major source of confusion and frustration to people who seek help from these agencies but who often find themselves confronting rigid eligibility requirements and complex application procedures. Several demonstration sites took active steps to help residents solve these problems: Jobs-Plus staff worked with their counterparts at other agencies to cut through red tape, and in a number of instances, they also accompanied residents to appointments at medical clinics or family courts, sometimes outside of regular business hours.

Staff members of at least one demonstration site — Seattle — intervened in another way to help working participants, especially new workers, solve a seemingly simple problem that nevertheless can have serious implications for keeping a job. Typically, these workers need time away from the job for important reasons, such as a doctor's appointment or a class, but they hesitate to approach their supervisors to negotiate the time off. When these situations intimidated participants, Jobs-Plus staff themselves sometimes made telephone calls to try to change a participant's appointment time or to persuade an employer to accommodate the person's need for time off. (When staff made such a call, they tried to have residents standing by so that their conversations would model how to handle similar situations in the future.)

- **Domestic abuse services.** The traumatic experiences of domestic abuse victims can all too easily sidetrack them from finding and keeping jobs. And in some instances, if a woman's partner thinks that, as a result of her employment, the relationship will change in ways to which he strenuously objects, her decision to seek work can actually precipitate abuse. For Jobs-Plus, this means establishing good referral networks between the program and organizations that can provide appropriate domestic-abuse counseling and support services, and training staff to be alert to someone's need for this help.
- **Home management.** The Dayton program learned that some newly employed residents were finding it hard to manage household chores when they



had to get themselves to work and their children to care on time. In response, the program arranged for a home management specialist to counsel these parents. Staff thought the intervention was an especially good idea, because substandard housekeeping can jeopardize the leases of public housing residents, who must pass annual housekeeping inspections before leases are renewed.

## Barriers to Employment

**Some residents face very tough barriers to employment. But because those who are hard to employ are least likely to find and keep jobs without the help of a program like Jobs-Plus, writing these residents off as potential participants means giving up an important way to make a difference.** The public housing residents who remain without jobs in the wake of years of greatly expanded work mandates for welfare recipients are apt to be among the least employable participants whom Jobs-Plus can recruit. While it is tempting to concentrate on more prepared residents, recognize that focusing primarily or exclusively on the most qualified (a practice sometimes called “creaming”) can create situations in which the people who almost certainly needed assistance to enter and stay in the workforce were ignored, while some or even many of the participants who were served could have succeeded with little or no help.

The following section describes some of the most challenging barriers to employment that your program is likely to encounter and highlights some approaches that demonstration sites used to address the problems.

- **Substance abuse.** Substance abusers are probably among the hardest residents to engage in Jobs-Plus, and those who do come forward to seek jobs may fail employers’ drug screening tests. Staff should attempt to identify such residents early in the assessment process and make referrals for treatment either before or concurrently with their participation in other job preparation activities. In the Dayton program, a group of recovering addicts attended a mutual support group that was sponsored by Sankofa, the PHA’s nonprofit arm, and that met at the Jobs-Plus development.
- **Health.** Some residents have physical or mental health conditions that limit the type of work they can do. (In a Jobs-Plus demonstration survey of residents at all sites taken at the outset of the demonstration, almost one-third — 30 percent — of respondents said they were restricted in this way by a health condition.)<sup>10</sup> Some of the demonstration sites referred these kinds of residents

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<sup>10</sup>Bloom, Riccio, and Verma (2005).



to community organizations like Goodwill Industries and STRIVE (“Support and Training Result in Valuable Employees”) — an intensive employment program — which are geared to helping people who face multiple barriers to stable employment.

- **Criminal records.** Ex-felons may find jobs temporarily but typically are fired after 90 days, when their criminal background checks are completed. In the world of work, felony convictions weigh as heavily on women as on men, if not more so, because the entry-level jobs for which these women generally qualify and for which TANF training funds are available typically consist of positions like home health care, child care, and security, which bar applicants with felony convictions. To help ex-felons get jobs, the Jobs-Plus program in Dayton turned to temporary employment agencies, which do not require criminal background checks and which often offer decent pay. But these residents could not apply for permanent jobs in the firms where they were outsourced — positions that, unlike temporary ones, are more apt to include benefits — because at that point they would have been subject to criminal background checks. The program did inform ex-felons about the legal process for expunging felony records, but most residents could not meet its rigorous requirements or support its expense. The Dayton program worked closely with Mercy Manor, an organization that specializes in assisting ex-felons. In a dual case-management arrangement, the Jobs-Plus job coaches and Mercy Manor case managers shared responsibility for ex-felons referred to Mercy Manor.

Besides the strategies just discussed, which are tailored to residents with particular kinds of problems, participants who are hard to employ can be placed in the subsidized work experience or supported work positions that were mentioned earlier. The positions can be based either in the Jobs-Plus program itself or elsewhere in the community.

### Monitoring the Quality of Outside Agencies

**Once participants are referred to service providers outside the program, systems should be in place to monitor the quality of help they receive.** Project directors should be constantly seeking to learn about the caliber of services provided at the many and diverse outside agencies to which participants are referred. Job coaches and job developers should try to establish regular means of both following up with participants about their experiences with outside agencies and of keeping the project director informed about what they learn. The project director, in turn, can bring any serious concerns to the attention of the PHA or other lead agency and/or the Collaborative.

Performance-based contracts, which make payments contingent on meeting specified outcomes, offer Jobs-Plus one useful mechanism for monitoring the performance of vendors. But even if there is no contract — for instance, because a vendor uses a funding source other than Jobs-Plus to assist participants — managers should not hesitate to stop referrals if service quality is low.

### Self-Employment

**The prospect of self-employment is appealing, but be cautious about how much effort your program expends on helping residents start their own businesses.** Perhaps the most common goal for residents interested in self-employment is a home child care business, which, from the program’s perspective, can serve the dual purpose of job creation and expansion of the development’s caregiving options. But while some participants are genuinely enthusiastic about home caregiving, others, who may be having workplace problems, tell themselves, “If everything else fails, I can do home child care.”

In response to this kind of thinking, staff in the demonstration sites tended to stress that self-employment of any kind is challenging,<sup>11</sup> and that the particularly demanding responsibilities involved in operating a home child care business are not to be undertaken lightly. In addition to becoming certified, child care providers must ensure that their homes comply with safety regulations and liability and licensing requirements, build a client base, manage business accounts, and keep the children in their care well occupied and safe for the entire day.

Given the considerable challenges of starting a business, it is preferable to encourage participants to find jobs and pursue training before considering self-employment. Try to reserve the self-employment option for residents who appear to have strong entrepreneurial interests and skills.

## Financial Incentives to Work

As discussed, the Jobs-Plus programs in MDRC’s demonstration were able to offer working residents special rent-based and related incentives to work, with each site design-

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<sup>11</sup>For example, an MDRC study of a group of programs specifically focused on promoting self-employment for welfare recipients found that the number of businesses opened as a result of the programs, which were demanding to implement, was well below initial expectations. Seventy percent of participants had not completed a business plan by the end of the 13 to 20 months of operations allotted for the program. See Guy, Doolittle, and Fink (1991).

ing its own plan for how to structure them.<sup>12</sup> The savings that working residents could realize from these plans were considerable, as illustrated later.<sup>13</sup>

This section first gives guidelines on how best to manage the kind of special financial incentives that were available in the Jobs-Plus demonstration. The section then examines a second related strategy to help make work pay — connecting residents to existing sources of financial help.

### **Making Work Pay: Using Financial Incentives Designed for Jobs-Plus**

Although current funding conditions will likely make it very difficult to replicate the kind of special incentives used in the demonstration, this discussion of how to design and implement special incentives is included for three overlapping reasons: First, funding environments for different strategies to improve economic self-sufficiency change all the time, and the one for special incentives could change for the better. Second, even if the climate remains generally unpromising, resourceful planners of new Jobs-Plus programs may be able to find governmental or private institutions willing to invest in special incentives. Third, in making the case for funding special incentives, their proponents can stress that the approach has already been tested, with promising results. As discussed in Chapter 1, the MDRC evaluation showed that, in combination with employment-related services and community support for work, rent-based and related financial incentives have significant potential to boost the earnings of public housing residents even after these residents leave a housing development where a Jobs-Plus program is operating. (See Box 3.1 for a summary of financial incentive approaches used in the Jobs-Plus demonstration.)

However, it should be recognized that, besides the challenge of finding resources for special incentives, programs must be ready to make a serious investment in planning and operating them once they are funded. The following recommendations reflect some of that hard work.

- **Not all Jobs-Plus activities will necessarily start as soon as the program does. But at a minimum, any special financial incentives component should be fully up and running when the program begins.**

As discussed later, not all residents will show strong interest in financial incentives when they first hear about them; it often takes marketing and education to give people a clear picture of how incentives work and what they offer. Nevertheless, as word spreads

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<sup>12</sup>Consult Gardenhire-Crooks (2004) for a detailed description of how the different financial incentive plans used in the MDRC research demonstration were designed and implemented.

<sup>13</sup>Miller and Riccio (2002), p. 36.

### Box 3.1

#### **Brief Definitions of Financial Incentive Approaches Used in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration**

While the following strategies were tried in the demonstration, no site used all of them. Instead, each site designed its own mix of incentives.

- **Rent freeze.** Rent remained fixed at its current level for a specified period of time as long as the resident was working. Among other advantages, a freeze can benefit families who find that the transition to employment means absorbing new work-related expenses, such as clothing and transportation.
- **Flat rents.** As is the norm in the private unsubsidized rental housing market, rent is fixed at a specified level for a period of time and does not change as the resident's income changes.
- **Income-based rents calculated using a lower percentage of adjusted income.** As under traditional public housing rent rules, rent is calculated as a percentage of adjusted income. Demonstration sites, however, set this percentage lower than the standard 30 percent set by HUD.
- **Lower ceiling rents.** A complement to income-based rents, ceiling rents place a cap on how high a family's rent can go. Jobs-Plus sites set them at levels lower than the housing authorities use for their other developments.
- **Safety-net measures.** These measures were essentially strategies to support residents who lost jobs. Probably the most important of these measures was to allow residents paying a Jobs-Plus flat rent to revert to an income-based rent if the flat rent was causing financial hardship.
- **Incentives beyond basic rent rules.** Some Jobs-Plus sites placed a portion of residents' rent payments into *escrow accounts* to promote asset accumulation and/or provided *rent credits* to reward sustained employment.

about the possibility of lowered rent, residents are increasingly likely to view the incentives as a reason to connect with Jobs-Plus. Thus, planners will certainly want to avoid having months elapse between the time when incentives are announced and when they are ready to use. If that kind of delay occurs, the program runs the risk of making a poor early impression, as residents conclude that Jobs-Plus does not deliver on its promises. But be aware, as suggested by the discussion that follows, that getting financial incentives ready to go when Jobs-Plus opens its doors means allowing for the time it takes to work through complex and sometimes tough issues.

- **Jobs-Plus financial incentives should help make work pay beyond income boosts available through existing HUD work incentives.**

As noted, HUD rules generally call for residents to pay 30 percent of their income in rent. At the same time, certain provisions of the federal Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act already help make low-wage work pay for certain types of tenants for limited time periods by reducing the extent to which earnings gains are offset by rent increases. You should be certain that your Jobs-Plus plan helps make work pay for a broad cross-section of residents, not just those who meet the narrower conditions stipulated under HUD rules.

Plans implemented by the sites in the MDRC demonstration generated considerable savings to residents. For example, during the early stages of the demonstration, a single parent who had two children and who worked full time at \$6 per hour could often save between \$100 and \$200 per month in rent relative to what that family would have paid while working under HUD's "30 percent" rule. Other households (depending on the size and amount of earnings) could save even more.<sup>14</sup>

- **Try to make certain that the incentives plan does not penalize participants for increasing the number of hours they work or advancing to higher-paying positions.**

Two guiding principles for planners of the MDRC demonstration were that:

- ✓ *Working full time should leave residents financially better off than working part time. An increase in earnings resulting from additional hours of work will yield little extra income if work-related expenses, higher rent, and the loss of other benefits outweigh the increase in earnings.*

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<sup>14</sup>Miller and Riccio (2002).

- ✓ *Higher-wage jobs should leave residents financially better off than jobs with lower wages.* A higher-paying job should not leave the resident with less income because the increase is not large enough to offset the loss of other benefits that it triggers.

Recognize that flat-rent plans, those in which rent is *not* linked to income, are, in general, less likely to create disincentives to additional work or to higher-wage work than plans that are based on income. Other considerations about flat-rate versus income-based rents are discussed next.

- **Decide whether you prefer a flat-rate or income-based rent incentive. Both approaches are workable, but flat rents are easier to administer.**

Most Jobs-Plus sites adopted a flat-rate rent plan that charged residents a set amount for rent (based on the number of bedrooms in their apartments). Rent did not rise with income. Two sites used income-based plans, with rents set lower than the standard HUD rate of 30 percent of income.

Adjusting rents under either kind of plan takes some time and effort, but neither plan should be particularly difficult for PHA staff, who are familiar with calculating rent adjustments. Naturally, though, income-based plans, which must be readjusted whenever residents report income changes, require more administrative effort. The simpler flat-rate rent option not only minimizes staff work, but it reduces chances that mistakes will be made and it does not obligate residents to report income changes.

- **Incorporating gradual rent increases, or steps, into either flat-rate or income-based plans has pros and cons.**

Even though flat-rate plans sever the link between rent and earnings, the demonstration sites that used them did not hold rent constant throughout the entire period of the demonstration; instead, the rent was lower at the beginning and rose to one or more higher levels, or *steps*, in subsequent years. (One program designed its steps to eventually take the amount of rent reduction to zero.) Similarly, the income-based plans called for *steps of gradually increasing percentages of income* at which rents were set — for example, from 10 percent to 20 percent of income.

The intention behind using steps was twofold — to hold public subsidies of rents to a manageable level and to encourage working residents to gradually acclimate themselves to market-rate rents, primarily by advancing in the labor market so that they could afford the higher rates.

Rent steps, however, have drawbacks. Like the income-based plans, they add to the number of rent recalculations that PHA staff must make. Also, some residents are likely to forget that they will be subject to steps and then are confused by them or object to them when they are imposed. Finally, it cannot be assumed that residents will see their incomes rise enough to comfortably keep pace with the steps. Especially for these last two reasons, Jobs-Plus programs that do wish to use steps should be ready with a strong educational and outreach plan that explains — or re-explains — the steps and reminds residents that the change is coming.

- **The program can enhance the incentives plan with bonus savings accounts and/or rent credits. But try to keep the level of effort expended on administering these special features commensurate with their scale.**

Some sites offered working residents bonus accounts — also called “escrow accounts” — through which a portion of the person’s monthly rent was deposited in a savings account and paid out to the resident periodically. Another enhancement was rent credits, which accrued for each month the participant stayed in the workforce. The average size of these benefits was relatively modest and only a small number of residents ultimately received them. However, the programs that used these strategies viewed them as useful pieces of their overall plans to encourage work.

The sites offering bonus savings accounts and rent credits chose to monitor the work-status eligibility of recipients on a monthly basis, but this task often turned out to be burdensome. If the program wishes to include one or both approaches in its financial incentives plan, it should consider, instead, quarterly or less frequent tracking.

- **To protect working residents from drops in income or loss of employment, include safety nets in the financial incentives plan.**

One advantage of income-based over flat-rate plans is that they offer an immediate safety net to residents who lose their jobs: As soon as residents verify a drop in income to the PHA, their rents can be lowered if they are income-based. In contrast, flat rents provide no such automatic adjustment. To alleviate that problem, sites with flat-rate rent plans allowed residents to shift to income-based plans if they become unemployed.

Some programs did impose restrictions on this option, with the main reason being to encourage unemployed residents to find another job quickly. Residents in the St. Paul program, for example, after opting to switch from an income-based rent to the Jobs-Plus flat rent, could not make that change until their annual lease was up for renewal or recertification. And in the Seattle program, residents who wanted to shift to the income-based rules had to appear before a rent review board to seek approval for the change.

In another safety-net approach, two sites with flat rents allowed residents who lost their jobs to pay the minimum rent for as long as three months. Participants in the Seattle program who lost earnings could turn to job developers on site, who helped them take advantage of public funding sources like unemployment insurance. Moreover, Seattle participants who lost earnings could draw from an emergency reserve of up to \$1,000 from their escrow funds. In a safety-net measure that could encompass both job loss and other emergencies, the Dayton program provided one-time assistance for utility bills and rent, especially if the household was facing eviction. The program also offered a one-time emergency loan for car payments and repairs, and for health expenses.

- **Do not make receiving incentives conditional on more than the basic work requirements.**

As a condition of receiving rent incentives, most demonstration sites required participants to attend financial literacy courses, which covered topics like managing checking accounts and budgeting. Although most residents who did complete the courses found them useful, many complained forcefully about the requirement. Most Jobs-Plus participants are busy people with multiple demands on their time. Thus, it is recommended that programs offer vigorously marketed but *voluntary* financial literacy courses.

- **Besides allowing enough time for designing the financial incentives plan, build in time for staff training, developing educational and marketing strategies, securing official approvals for the plan, and ensuring that the local welfare agency is aware of the impending changes.**

Financial incentives are complex, so before the plans go into effect, be sure that relevant Jobs-Plus and PHA staff are well trained on their contents and procedures. Also, even though the incentives have intrinsic appeal, they must be actively introduced and explained to residents. For this reason, the program should have a good financial incentives marketing and education plan ready to go. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of marketing and education techniques.) Finally, remember to budget time for any necessary approvals of the plan from the PHA field office and/or HUD headquarters, and to review the plan with TANF managers.

### **Making Work Pay: Encouraging the Use of Existing Benefits and Initiatives**

With the exception of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which most demonstration sites did publicize, Jobs-Plus staff were often too busy making certain that working residents understood and used the program's own rent-based incentives to focus much attention on other ways to make work pay. Still, it is important to recognize that many low-



income workers do not take full advantage of public benefits and tax measures that are available to them. Thus, in a new Jobs-Plus program, especially one that is unable to fund special rent incentives and thus does not spend time managing them, counseling and advising residents on available income-boosting initiatives and how to sign up for them should be a front-and-center activity. (See Box 3.2.)

- **Through training and their own independent efforts, Jobs-Plus job coaches should become as conversant as possible with the details of measures and programs designed to make work pay.**

There is no question that eligibility requirements for programs like TANF, the Food Stamp Program, and other similar governmental initiatives are very complicated. Knowing one's way around one or more of these systems should be one of the criteria used for hiring job coaches. More important, especially if there are no TANF staff co-located at Jobs-Plus, job coaches should be given training and time to master systems that are unfamiliar to them.

- **Helping eligible residents claim the Earned Income Tax Credit should be a top priority in operating the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus.**

The EITC can make a considerable difference in the economic outlooks of working-poor families, often raising their incomes more than the Jobs-Plus financial incentives can themselves. For example, for tax year 2008, a low-income working family with two or more children and annual income of up to \$12,060 can earn up to \$4,824 by filing for the EITC.<sup>15</sup>

A variety of groups with agendas to help working-poor families have sought to make workers aware of the EITC, and in fact, many residents interviewed for the Jobs-Plus study reported that they had learned about and taken advantage of the credit before they became involved with the program.<sup>16</sup> Still, the need to publicize the EITC remains high. According to the National EITC Outreach Partnership, “millions of dollars of EITC owed to eligible workers go unclaimed each year,” with 15 percent to 25 percent of eligible families leaving their EITC unclaimed. This is mainly because either these workers have filed taxes but are unaware of the credit, or have not filed, sometimes because they are afraid to do so, but sometimes because they do not owe income taxes and do not know that the EITC is refundable for nonfilers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>National Center for Children in Poverty (2008).

<sup>16</sup>Gardenhire-Crooks (2004).

<sup>17</sup>Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (n.d.).

### Box 3.2

#### **To Make Work Pay: Major Public Benefits and Measures That Can Help**

- Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and, where available, its state and local versions
- Child Care and Dependent Care tax credit
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) incentives for working
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) disregard measures
- Food Stamp Program
- Medicaid, including special State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) provisions for covering children

In the MDRC demonstration, one creative approach to giving advice on the EITC and helping residents file for it came from the Seattle program. Here these activities were part of the program's popular "Paperwork Nights" — a time when Jobs-Plus staff were available to help participants with a wide range of documents, including tax returns.

- **Jobs-Plus staff can proactively help residents take advantage of rules and provisions of the welfare system that are designed to help make work pay.**

Jobs-Plus participants who receive TANF funding are generally assigned to TANF's welfare caseworkers, who manage benefit levels and overall cases both before and after welfare recipients begin working. When Jobs-Plus demonstration participants needed help understanding TANF work incentives — notably, the disregard of some income in calculating benefits or the one-year extension of TANF child care and Medicaid benefits for welfare recipients who go to work — Jobs-Plus job coaches often referred them to these caseworkers.

But such referrals may not always be enough. Sometimes it is preferable for a job coach to intervene with the welfare caseworker directly to discuss a resident's problem with TANF incentives. (This is, of course, most convenient if participants' welfare caseworkers and Jobs-Plus staff share space.) One reason to intervene is that some welfare caseworkers may themselves be inconsistent in informing residents of the complex work-related benefits available through TANF (and they will not necessarily know that Jobs-Plus participation can count for TANF-mandated activities). Naturally, when Jobs-Plus staff discuss benefits-

related rules of the welfare system with the caseworkers who work in that system, tact and a collegial approach are essential.

- **It is important to check whether a resident is eligible for existing HUD work incentives.**

Certain public housing residents can take advantage of HUD rules that are meant to reduce the disincentive to work that can occur when rent is raised as soon as someone takes a job. Notably, for eligible residents, the rules freeze rent for a year and raise it only half as much as usual in the year that follows. The rules also require that the PHA offer eligible residents a flat-rate rent option that allows them to choose whether to pay a fixed rent or one based on HUD's traditional "30 percent of income" formula. Also, under HUD law, individual PHAs have the discretion to enact other incentive policies such as capping income-based rents.

It is often the case that these kinds of rules are not well understood by public housing residents or well publicized by the PHA. Thus, Jobs-Plus job coaches may well be able to step in to ensure that more eligible residents get the benefit of them.

- **Besides advising residents on how to take advantage of individual benefits and tax measures, job coaches can help them understand how different benefits can interact to affect their take-home incomes.**

Any single public benefit or any earnings boost does not exist in a vacuum — and there is both good news and bad about how benefits can interact with one another and with earnings. To start with the problem: Taking a job or getting a raise can, in fact, mean that a family either becomes ineligible for a benefit — food stamps, for example — or qualifies for only a lower dollar amount of the help. The result can be a net loss of disposable income. From one perspective, this is the problem that Jobs-Plus special rent incentives are designed to address: Working residents are given a rent break to offset some of the drop in their public housing rent subsidy that can occur as their incomes rise; in other words, some of the sting is taken out of the negative interaction between an income boost and a rent subsidy.

The good news about interactions is that, most often, when several benefits are claimed, the result is a disposable income and support package for workers that is higher than many residents expect. For example, in many cases, a family that receives not only rent incentives of the kind included in the MDRC demonstration, but also a child care subsidy and the EITC, may end up in a considerably more favorable position than one that receives only rent incentives.

Naturally, it is often very difficult for residents to grasp how their incomes would be affected by the mix of different benefits for which they qualify when they change their situations. In particular, many of them fear they will lose benefits when they go to work.

Through informed counseling, job coaches can help residents understand the possible interactions between benefits and earnings and can help them make choices about how best to manage those interactions. For example, a job coach can point out to a resident who is deciding whether to go to work that she will be able to add to her earnings by claiming the EITC, for which she would not qualify if she stayed out of the labor market. Or the coach can warn someone that earning a certain amount will push her over an eligibility cliff for food stamps, causing her family to lose that benefit.

## **Community Support for Work**

The decision to include a component focused on community support for work in Jobs-Plus was based on two key assumptions: First, people living in high-poverty neighborhoods are apt to be isolated from the kinds of informal networks through which others learn about and get access to job openings, and second, many high-poverty environments do not actively encourage or facilitate work. In response, activities promoting community support for work were expected to deliver a strong message encouraging work and to aggressively publicize Jobs-Plus opportunities, thus helping to create a social environment where the theme of work was more pervasive than it had been. Like employment-related services, this component was also meant to capitalize on the place-based nature of Jobs-Plus.

The rest of this section describes how the demonstration sites defined the concept of community support for work and offers recommendations about how to make the component a useful part of the program. This component did not play a starring role in the sites at first: As discussed next, its activities initially tended to be somewhat difficult to define and shape, and reflecting that difficulty, this section of the chapter is not as extensive as the ones that cover the other two Jobs-Plus components. But with good planning, community support for work can be a very strong force, not a bit player, in a Jobs-Plus program — and, indeed, as time went on, it became a key aspect of Jobs-Plus in most of the demonstration sites.

### **Community Coaches**

Among the different approaches the program can take to translate the concept of community support for work into operations, using a small group of residents as community coaches in charge of resident-to-resident outreach is the practice most likely to have staying power.

Planners' original conceptions of community support for work encompassed a wide range of ideas — for example, establishing cooperative child care arrangements, seeking out working professionals outside public housing who could become participants' mentors and sources of job leads, arranging for residents to barter services, and seeking additional support for Jobs-Plus from local churches and other community institutions.

Although many of these activities were tried during the demonstration, most did not take root. What did take root — and grew — was the idea of using a small cadre of residents as, in essence, *extension agents* of Jobs-Plus, whose main responsibility was to inform residents about the program and employment opportunities. In fact, this concept became the centerpiece of the demonstration sites' implementation of community support for work.

Different sites gave different titles to residents who played this role — for example, community outreach worker, court captain, or community coach. (For the sake of simplicity, this guide uses “community coach.”) Regardless of the title used, the approach was similar. Working with Jobs-Plus staff, the community coaches disseminated information about Jobs-Plus and about work opportunities, and they tried to convey a sense of the value of work and career advancement to their neighbors. Many went door to door, sometimes with flyers, to tell residents about specific job openings and about aspects of Jobs-Plus — and then, taking care not to breach confidentiality, they informed other Jobs-Plus staff of significant concerns about the program that residents had expressed in their conversations.

To make sure that different topics of interest to Jobs-Plus were getting enough exposure, community coaches typically took on a different outreach campaign each month — with campaigns centering, for example, on financial incentives, upcoming recruitment of job applicants on site by certain employers, or information about the EITC and other benefits. The coaches also helped to plan and operate events such as job fairs, health fairs, and holiday and back-to-school celebrations that demonstration sites used to publicize Jobs-Plus and build a sense of community.<sup>18</sup>

At its best, community support for work became something more powerful and subtle than the mechanics of knocking on doors, handing out flyers, and organizing events. Good community coaches learned to look for teachable moments — ways to interject ideas, opinions, and information about Jobs-Plus and about the value of work into informal conversations without making their remarks seem forced or didactic. One example of a creative approach to community support for work that was often cited as a model during the demonstration came from the Dayton program, which sponsored a very popular summer basketball

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<sup>18</sup>See Chapter 4 for a description of another, different activity — setting up a class to serve immigrants — that was carried out by community coaches in the Los Angeles program.

league. Along with Jobs-Plus staff, the community coaches circulated among families who came to watch the games and to picnic, engaging some residents in conversations about topics of interest to Jobs-Plus — for example, how a resident’s new job or a search for child care was working out.

It turned out that community coaches in the demonstration sites were almost always on the front lines of Jobs-Plus marketing efforts — and observers of Jobs-Plus typically concluded that coaches’ roles were critical in earning the trust of the community and attracting participants to the program.

### Making the Best Use of Community Coaches

Following are some pointers on operating community support for work as described above.

- **Do not assume that the program can leave it entirely to community coaches to structure and manage the activities.**

Especially during busy start-up periods, some sites expected the community coaches to define and initiate component activities on their own, with little or no input from professional staff. While coaches should certainly become closely involved with planning the component as soon as they are hired, they should collaborate with staff, who, among other contributions they can make, are probably in the strongest position to gauge whether suggested activities fit the overall purposes of Jobs-Plus.

- **Community coaches must be carefully selected, trained, and supervised.**

Besides having the requisite time for their duties, candidates for the coach positions must have good communications skills, should know the housing development, and should be respected by their neighbors. (Conversely, candidates who could discredit Jobs-Plus — for instance, through illicit activities or noncompliance with lease provisions — should be carefully screened out of the selection process.)

Candidates should also personify the program’s employment message, ideally by being employed or by participating in training or studies, either full or part time, or by having some work experience, even if they are now retired or disabled. Programs in multiethnic communities should try to recruit a mix of coaches who collectively are as familiar as possible with major resident languages and cultural backgrounds.

Training of coaches is most effective when it is concrete and hands-on — for instance, where new coaches shadow seasoned ones, or when trainees practice door-to-door communication skills; when coaches learn how to produce posters, flyers, and newsletters;

when they are updated on Jobs-Plus services; or when they learn how to function as a team. More generic training on topics such as community organizing and economic development, which several demonstration sites initially offered, was not found to be very helpful.

Managers in the Jobs-Plus program must invest time not only in training coaches but in managing the overall component by overseeing community coach activities and supporting the coaches. Regular check-in meetings are important for explaining and following up on assignments. And it is critical that managers actively extend support to coaches to help them address any problems that arise with either residents or their fellow coaches.

- **Community coaches should not be a conduit to the PHA for personal information that other residents share with them.**

Some residents who talk to the coaches may be concerned that personal information in the conversations will be relayed to housing managers. As needed, coaches should assure residents that they will not share what they hear with the PHA. To help avoid this perception of possibly compromised confidentiality, coaches should be directly accountable to the Jobs-Plus program — even if the program’s funding for the coach positions ultimately comes from the PHA.

- **Professional program staff may be helpful in supplementing coaches’ neighbor-to-neighbor interactions.**

Some Jobs-Plus staff members observed that foreign-born residents were more likely to use services in response to the visits of community coaches who shared their ethnic backgrounds if U.S.-born staff members added their presence and authority to the overtures. According to one informant, the residents tended to view the coaches “more like family,” which helped to build trust in the program. However, when these residents told a Jobs-Plus staff member — as opposed to a community coach — that they would participate, they felt they were making a formal commitment and were more likely to follow through.





## Chapter 4

# Once the Program Is Running: Additional Implementation Issues

This chapter zooms out from the three components of Jobs-Plus and in a sense takes up the story begun in Chapter 2, “First Steps.” Looking at administrative issues that mostly apply to all three components of the program, the chapter discusses how to publicize and market Jobs-Plus and its financial incentives, how to handle issues associated with the role of partner groups in the program, how to best serve a culturally diverse group of residents, and how to address the challenges and opportunities of operating a place-based program.

## Marketing the Program and Educating Residents About Financial Incentives

Leaving flyers under the door is not the only way to market Jobs-Plus. To make sure residents know what the program has to offer, program staff should invest energy and creativity in a variety of outreach strategies. Similarly, programs should plan for continuous, not one-shot, marketing.

The following outreach pointers are based on the marketing experiences of the demonstration sites.

- **Use different allies, venues, and approaches to make Jobs-Plus a visible presence in the housing development.**
  - ✓ Work with the development’s Resident Advisory Council. Jobs-Plus staff can attend Council meetings to introduce the program to members and get their input on what services are needed and would appeal to residents. Council members should be invited to visit the Jobs-Plus office and otherwise be kept up-to-date on program offerings.
  - ✓ Partner with the public housing authority (PHA). Some of the ways in which the PHA can support Jobs-Plus marketing involve establishing routines — for example, displaying Jobs-Plus posters and flyers at the PHA office, adding Jobs-Plus information to any PHA welcome baskets and to PHA monthly rent statements, and expecting PHA staff to regularly inform prospective tenants and new residents about the program. The PHA can also make it a practice to offer on-the-spot Jobs-Plus enrollment during leasing interviews and can refer residents to Jobs-Plus when residents’ annual PHA

reviews show that they have not yet taken advantage of the program. But just as important as any of these routines, and probably more so, is encouraging the PHA to take the same entrepreneurial approach to marketing Jobs-Plus that is expected to permeate the program itself and its component of community support for work. For example, in one scenario from the demonstration that captures this approach, a PHA staff member who interviewed an unemployed resident, who was about to be evicted, did more than mention Jobs-Plus to that person: Instead, she walked the resident over to the Jobs-Plus office and introduced her to the job coach.

- ✓ Community events are another promising marketing strategy, as suggested by the earlier discussion of the role of community coaches in helping to plan and run such events. Make it a priority to sponsor events with a focus on employment — for example, job fairs or celebrations that mark the opening of Jobs-Plus offices and resource centers, or that recognize important resident work-related achievements. You can also sponsor events that focus on non-employment issues — for example, holiday and back-to-school celebrations, health fairs, and presentations by motivational speakers. Jobs-Plus need not sponsor all — or any — events by itself; events can be co-hosted with organizations like Resident Advisory Councils.
  - ✓ Send residents regular print and/or electronic newsletters that publicize new services and participants' achievements.
  - ✓ Plan for community coaches or other staff to make home outreach visits to new residents.
  - ✓ Ask popular local businesses to put Jobs-Plus ads on bags, boxes, and other items.
  - ✓ Even after Jobs-Plus has become a familiar presence, follow up with program enrollees to encourage them to make more or better use of services, and try to engage long-time residents who have not yet enrolled.
- **Expect that marketing and explaining financial incentives to many residents will be an incremental process.**

Residents may not respond to initial outreach on financial incentives because they are unable to completely take in the sometimes complex information on incentive plans — or they may simply feel that they have other priorities. To fully explain the incentives, some demonstration sites held orientation and educational sessions repeatedly — “on days, nights, and weekends,” as one staff member put it. Residents could thus hear the informa-

tion at different times. In addition, information was sometimes spread over multiple sessions to cut down on the chances of overwhelming residents with information overload. Sites also made ample use of the outreach role of community coaches. Rather than just dropping off any flyers about incentives, coaches were encouraged to hand the material to residents and engage them in discussions and questions — with repeat visits if they found no one at home. In the Baltimore program, a consultant who was hired to develop an information packet on incentives also gave initial training to community coaches about how to market those incentives.

- **Avoid marketing incentives primarily or exclusively to residents who are already working full time.**

While financial incentives can encourage residents to find work, they similarly can be used as a stimulus for employed residents to stay in the labor market. In fact, as suggested in Chapter 3, it is *easier* in many instances to market incentives to these working residents, who are very likely to immediately qualify for the benefits. But do not shy away from the sometimes more demanding process of educating unemployed residents about how the incentives can make it more advantageous for them to go to work.

- **Consider marketing Jobs-Plus employment services by giving parents who use them priority for enrolling their children in after-school, youth, and other enrichment programs operated by Jobs-Plus partners on site.**

Working parents are usually concerned when their children are left unsupervised during after-school hours, and they value the educational, career-related, and recreational activities offered by organized after-school and youth programs. Some Jobs-Plus programs gave parents priority for these programs if one parent was enrolled in Jobs-Plus.

## **A Place at the Table: Handling Issues Connected to Operating a Partnership**

A number of challenges are associated with managing a program like Jobs-Plus that relies on a successful partnership with multiple groups and/or agencies to accomplish its goals. Some of those challenges, and suggestions for how to handle them, are addressed in this section.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

**Do not expect that Jobs-Plus and partner agency interests will necessarily coincide.** The Collaborative should be aware of the potential conflicts of interest that partner agencies can face when they are vendors or potential vendors of services. If vendor agen-

cies are represented on the Collaborative or on other Jobs-Plus bodies that have authority over services, those representatives might be required to recuse themselves from discussions and/or decisions about the agencies' service-provider roles in the program.

Performance-based contracts, with their quantifiable outcomes, may be able to help defuse sensitive situations for service vendors that are also program partners. But sometimes these situations cannot be avoided. For example, one demonstration site did not renew its contract with a vendor that was also a Collaborative partner because it was felt that the agency's services were not a good fit with a housing development where many immigrants and refugees lived. Because this partner agency's senior staff had been among the most committed and active of the program's founders and because the agency was an influential member of the local workforce development community, the nonrenewal was very awkward. While there are no magic solutions to such problems, it is probably helpful for Collaborative leaders to explicitly acknowledge up front that conflicts of interest between some agencies' roles as both program partners and service vendors are an almost inevitable part of the Jobs-Plus experience.

### **Resident Involvement**

**Rather than assuming that resident leaders will automatically become influential Jobs-Plus partners, the project director and Collaborative members should actively champion residents who take on this role.** The Jobs-Plus demonstration placed a high premium on resident involvement because it was felt that residents' perspectives on what would work in their own communities must be given great weight.

But as your program tries to engage residents in planning and leadership, bear in mind that in many initiatives that call for residents of disadvantaged communities to join public and private agencies at the planning table, residents have frequently found themselves with only a token role in decision-making. For a number of reasons, professionals often dominate discussions. Thus, Collaboratives should proactively develop strategies for giving residents a voice in the program.

At a minimum, Collaboratives should make it convenient for residents with jobs outside the development to fill their resident leader positions. Meetings can be scheduled after normal business hours, with dinner served. And the Collaborative might help some residents negotiate with their employers for leave time to attend meetings. The Collaborative could even offer to reimburse employers for the wages of residents when they miss work for these purposes, or it might pay the residents directly, if they stand to lose pay.

Of course, it is not enough for residents to attend meetings; they must play active roles when they get there. To help ensure that that happens, Collaboratives can establish

formal mechanisms to include resident representatives in the processes of selecting and evaluating service vendors. Or the project director and other Collaborative leaders, including resident representatives, can conduct surveys of residents to learn about their service needs and assess their satisfaction with the program.

### **Employment Services: The Central Mission**

**Notwithstanding the importance of residential engagement, remember that the central employment-services mission of Jobs-Plus should take precedence over even resident empowerment goals.** The program should view resident engagement in its decision-making and activities *primarily* as a means of securing the information, advice, buy-in, and help from residents that Jobs-Plus needs to realize its core goals of helping participants find and keep jobs and climb career ladders. A broader systematic effort to empower residents — and, in the process, to build the leadership skills of people with limited experience in community work — is unquestionably another important undertaking.

But in this instance, as in others that are likely to arise in a program as flexible as Jobs-Plus, *avoid the temptation to dilute the program by taking on too many initiatives that are not central to its mission.* Thus, take care that efforts to empower residents are well thought out and practical — and that they do not risk undercutting the program’s timely implementation or the quality of its services. For example, as already noted, it is not a good idea to give residents complete control over certain parts of the program, such as community support for work; as is true for the other two components of the program, the Jobs-Plus project director and staff should be held accountable for activities related to community support for work. Nor is it wise to completely, or almost completely, favor inexperienced residents over professionals in decision-making about who should be hired for Jobs-Plus staff positions. When community-building initiatives are proposed, try to gauge how well they fit Jobs-Plus goals. Some community-building ideas may be close to the path Jobs-Plus wants to take; others may be less so. If the proposal does seem to be tangential to Jobs-Plus goals, be willing to make tough decisions about how much staff time can be allotted to this work.

### **Relying on a Broad Cross-Section of Residents**

**Over time, try to cultivate input from a broader cross-section of residents than just those people who are most accustomed to taking on leadership roles in the development.** The leaders of the Resident Advisory Council, who are most likely to be (or to appoint) the resident representatives to the Collaborative’s governing board, are often long-standing leaders in their housing developments. Most have a strong commitment to improving their communities and should be actively engaged. However, it is important to recog-

nize the possibility that some resident representatives in some housing developments will serve the narrow interests of a small group, or in the worst cases, opportunistically exploit their access to the program's opportunities and resources to enhance their power through patronage. Moreover, traditional resident representatives may not always represent the diversity of cultural groups in the housing development. Thus, in addition to working with traditional resident representatives, it is important for the Collaborative partners and project director to cultivate opportunities for more residents to have input into Jobs-Plus.

Consider forming a new resident leadership team that focuses on Jobs-Plus — though perhaps has overlapping membership with the Resident Advisory Council and resident representatives to the Collaborative. Think about using periodic Jobs-Plus town meetings to report on the program's progress, solicit feedback, and present new ideas.

Special meetings might also be held with the informal leaders of various groups in multiethnic developments. In Seattle, for example, specifically inviting residents from the various Asian and East African immigrant groups to be part of Jobs-Plus planning retreats involved them more fully in the planning process than would have been the case if a more general call had gone out for resident representatives. In both Seattle and St. Paul, translation services at Collaborative and other meetings also helped achieve more participation from non-English-speaking attendees.

It is also worthwhile to try to include residents other than traditional leaders among the cadre of Jobs-Plus community coaches. Interestingly, allowing the project director and nonresidential members of the Collaborative — not traditional resident representatives alone — to make hiring decisions for the community coach positions may be one good way to assemble a varied team of residents to serve as community coaches.

## **Cultural Richness, Cultural Challenges: Jobs-Plus in Multiethnic Settings**

In many cities in the United States, immigrants who reside in public housing developments rely on fellow residents for guidance in navigating public assistance programs. This was reflected in the demonstration sites, particularly in the programs based in St. Paul, Seattle, and Los Angeles. In Seattle's Rainier Vista development, for example, 20 different languages are spoken among residents.

Immigrants in the demonstration sites included urban professionals needing certification to practice in the United States, rural villagers who were barely literate in their native languages, and an overlapping group of people suffering from physical ailments and psychological traumas arising from war, torture, and famine. As refugees and people seeking

asylum, some were relatively more fortunate than other immigrants because they were not restricted from applying for benefits like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

All in all, the difficulties that are familiar to U.S.-born families who try to escape poverty were often compounded for Jobs-Plus immigrants. This section describes some of the special issues and problems that are likely to confront immigrants in your program and again, drawing on the experiences of the demonstration sites, suggests some ways to address these problems.

- **Insofar as is possible, English instruction should be calibrated to immigrants' diverse needs.**

Program participants who need to learn or improve their English will likely come to you with a very wide range of proficiency levels. At one end of the spectrum are people with little or no formal education — sometimes illiterate in their native languages — who will benefit from the most basic of literacy courses. At the other end, some residents are ready for the more advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) classes that are typically offered at community colleges and that often teach the vocabulary of the workplace.

As illustrated by an experience of the Seattle site, responding well to the full range of proficiencies may require careful fine-tuning. Initially, the program referred the more proficient participants to community college classes, and established, under the auspices of a local refugee assistance organization, basic literacy classes on site for the least prepared. Despite the scope of this help, the program later discovered that it had a service gap. In the middle of the proficiency spectrum, a group of immigrants was not yet ready for the community college classes but found the basic classes given on site to be too elementary, with not enough coverage of workplace vocabulary. To solve the problem, the refugee assistance organization brought in a new ESL staff member, who consulted with the job developer about workplace vocabulary and developed intermediate, workplace-oriented instruction for this middle group.

- **Expect to face major challenges in trying to help immigrants pass General Educational Development (GED) tests.**

Preparing for the GED examination can take years for people who lack English proficiency, and immigrant residents who enroll in GED preparation classes often become discouraged and drop out. Failure to earn a GED diploma is a serious problem since many employers require one in lieu of a high school diploma.

Two demonstration sites took special steps to try to keep immigrants engaged in GED preparation. The St. Paul program used PLATO computer software, which offers in-



struction in adult basic education for learners whose primary language is not English. In addition, community coaches at the William Mead development in Los Angeles organized a GED class on site for Spanish speakers. The coaches recruited door-to-door for the class, ensured that its space was set up properly, and organized child care for students on site.

- **Devote energy to translating information into residents' languages.**

Ideally, all Jobs-Plus oral and written communications should be translated into all the major languages spoken at the development, and likewise, immigrant participants should be able to find someone on staff who speaks their language. While this is a tall order, demonstration sites with high concentrations of immigrants made very active efforts to overcome language differences. One example of what was tried comes from the St. Paul and Seattle sites: When those programs held town meetings with residents to learn how to best meet their needs, translators of many languages were on hand for the sessions. Another example, also from the Seattle program, concerns its staffing for the job developer function (which was called “job coach” in this program). The program asked a local refugee assistance organization to bring on four part-time coaches. Each spoke English and one or more of five languages — Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Vietnamese, and Cambodian.

In general, where can a Jobs-Plus program find translation help? Three good starting points are (1) hiring staff members who share the languages of some residents (as in Seattle); (2) working with local refugee aid organizations and other ethnic service organizations (as discussed shortly, such organizations can also be invaluable partners in meeting the social service needs of immigrants); and (3) engaging professional local language services.

Recognize, too, that for residents who are illiterate, producing flyers and other program documents in their languages will not help. Documents must be explained orally and expeditiously, especially if deadlines are being announced — for instance, in a call for job applicants or a mandate to comply with some aspect of the lease. Be prepared for the program to invest considerable time and resources in this process of explaining materials to residents in their own languages.

- **Consider helping undocumented immigrants become legal residents and thus be eligible to work in the United States.**

Some immigrant residents have an undocumented immigration status that prevents them from working legally in this country. Some participants in the demonstration site at William Mead Homes in Los Angeles fell into this category. To help them, the program



formed referral partnerships with agencies that focus on legalizing residency and securing permission to work in the United States.

- **Recognize that some foreign-born residents will be uncomfortable when women work outside the home and when children are cared for outside their circles of friends and family.**

Employment programs can clash with cultural norms. For example, foreign-born women who go to work may come home to tensions that stem from their moving away from traditional gender roles by becoming employed (even though that is often in compliance with welfare regulations). In Seattle, for example, management staff observed that cultural values could be a real barrier to work among East African women: As one staff member put it, “Men feel very threatened by women going to work.”

Also, some immigrant communities have customs that obligate women to take care of relatives and friends who are not part of the immediate household. However, the welfare system’s work exemptions often do not encompass caring for such people.

Some foreign-born residents may be reluctant to use professional child care provided to working parents even when it is conveniently based in the development. “In my culture, they believe that the only way kids get proper care is when the parents are around,” said a Somali Muslim parent in St. Paul. “And they don’t like it if [the people who tend their children] don’t share their culture, like they’re afraid the kids will eat things not compatible with their culture.”

Extended family members, however, are not always nearby to help with child care. Another solution to the problem of wanting to use only familiar caregivers is that in households with two working parents, mother and father can work different shifts and share the care responsibilities. But this sometimes means that neither parent is free — nor has any energy left — to take ESL or GED classes and get the training needed for better-paying jobs.

Notwithstanding the observation made earlier that home-based child care businesses are not always the best employment solution for program participants, Jobs-Plus addressed the cultural concern about care from strangers (or from people of ethnic backgrounds that differed from the family’s ethnicity) by helping a number of immigrant residents from diverse ethnic backgrounds undergo training to become home child care providers. While helpful, this step was not a perfect solution, in part because not all home providers accept children of all ages, and some immigrant families did not want to split up their children among different providers.

- **Programs serving high proportions of immigrants should try to form partnerships with ethnic service agencies, to hire qualified staff who share the backgrounds of major ethnic groups in the development, and to explore ways of involving the immigrants themselves in acculturation efforts.**

For example, during the demonstration, the St. Paul program sponsored a Hmong Women's Support Group and hired many multilingual staff members. The Los Angeles site established referral relationships with local organizations, such as the Little Tokyo Service Center, the United Vietnamese Community Council, and the Chinatown Service Center. Foreign-born participants in the Seattle site worked with program staff to develop a series of interactive PowerPoint employment and training modules — for example, modules that showed how to interview for a job or ask for a raise — featuring languages common among residents.

- **Use community events to signal that Jobs-Plus celebrates ethnic diversity and is committed to helping residents of all ethnicities.**

In demonstration sites based in ethnically diverse developments, Jobs-Plus sponsorship or cosponsorship of events such as cultural appreciation celebrations, back-to-school fairs, picnics, and many others was seen as a way to try to bridge ethnic divides. These events helped to deliver a message that residents of all backgrounds were welcome to become part of Jobs-Plus.

- **Escorting immigrants to appointments, job interviews, and government offices, and otherwise helping them cope with unfamiliar systems, can be key to helping them address employment issues.**

While all kinds of residents can benefit from the staff escorting them to and intervening with agencies, employers, and prospective employers, as discussed in Chapter 3, immigrants are apt to find these services especially helpful. For instance, in combination with their limited English, immigrants' lack of familiarity with and even fear of the American legal system can keep them from securing essential rights, including compensation that employers owe them or restraining orders against abusive partners. Immigrants may find it very hard to maneuver the systems of their new country — for instance, to get a telephone installed or apply for a driver's license — in ways that can ultimately matter for finding and keeping jobs.

## **It Comes with the Territory: Issues Associated with a Place-Based Program**

As this guide has emphasized, Jobs-Plus happens where participants live, offering staff — especially if they are willing to venture outside their offices and 9-to-5 schedules — special opportunities to interact with current and potential participants. At the same time, operating a program that is based in a public housing development and that is designed to serve its residents raises questions about the program’s scope that must be decided by its planner and managers. Those questions and decision points are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

- **Think through how much to try to help a man who is eligible for Jobs-Plus and lives with a woman but who is not on the woman’s lease, and how much to serve participants’ relatives who live nearby but not in the development.**

As with serving residents who move away from the development, one potential problem with investing resources and time to help nonresidents or unofficial residents improve their employment outlook is that the investments can compete with resources to serve official residents. One relatively uncomplicated answer to this concern is simply to refer all nonresidents and unofficial residents to the local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop Career Center.

But some Jobs-Plus planners contended that the program should intervene more directly and intensively with at least some unofficial residents and some nonresidents. Those planners argued, for example, that serving men who were not on the lease might help the men better support their families emotionally and financially. Proponents of this view also contended that men who were ignored could, as a result, oppose their partners’ involvement in Jobs-Plus and that, indeed, the willingness of male partners to support Jobs-Plus could be one important factor in determining the program’s success.

Finally, two arguments for working with outsiders encompass both men who are not on the lease and relatives living outside the development. First, helping family members become more employable, even if they are not residents or official residents — for example, assisting a sick mother of a Jobs-Plus participant who lives near her daughter’s development — can have positive effects on the very Jobs-Plus-eligible residents the program is designed to reach. Second, broad outreach helps to build communitywide respect for Jobs-Plus.

Sites did in fact use a number of strategies to reach out to men who weren’t on the lease. For example, the Baltimore program built referral relationships with local organiza-

tions that could offer these men food aid, substance abuse treatment, employment services, and other relevant kinds of help. Jobs-Plus staff members also worked with these agencies to address domestic abuse problems that surfaced in the course of serving those men.

The Dayton program was authorized by the local PHA to offer substance abuse and employment services to the fathers of children living in the development, including men with felony convictions. Jobs-Plus sponsored informal outreach activities for male companions of women on the leases — for example, the very popular summer basketball league that was discussed earlier in this guide and that led some young men to join a support group. Members of the group, who were assigned to male mentors living outside the development, met monthly in peer support sessions.

Because the Seattle program's financial incentives plan eliminated any financial penalties for added household income, the program worked with the public housing management office to use the plan as an inducement for including participants' partners on the lease (and thus usually making them eligible for Jobs-Plus). Proponents of this approach pointed out that it was a way to strengthen both male commitments to the family and provide households with the stability of two-earner incomes.

While adding these men to leases may seem like a relatively simple step to take, it was not: Some women feared forfeiting a degree of control over their lives if men became leaseholders. At the same time, some men did not want to incur the obligations of being on the lease. Still others had criminal records, which precluded them from legal residence in public housing. Nevertheless, the approach is one that seems worthy of further exploration.

Early on, the Los Angeles program decided to open its doors to family members and neighbors of participants who were living outside the developments. The service populations of this program never included more than a small proportion of nonresidents, but these people were offered help with job searches and/or referrals to outside organizations.

- **In a program with more than one site, weigh the pros and cons of dividing the time of the project director and some staff among different locations.**

A PHA may wish to implement Jobs-Plus at multiple sites, or even throughout the PHA's jurisdiction. Among the likely advantages of a larger program are the efficiency and probable lower cost per participant that would result from administrative economies of scale.

However, a multisite program might need to share specialized Jobs-Plus staff if the program lacks funds to fully staff each site. This situation might undercut one of the advantages of a place-based program: having consistent staff on site to develop familiarity and a

trusting relationship with residents. Also, the program might run the risk of stretching the staff too thin.

The only experience of running Jobs-Plus with more than one site comes from the demonstration, where, as described earlier in Chapter 1 (note 1), the Los Angeles PHA operated the program in two housing developments that were based in different neighborhoods. While limited, this experience may be instructive because the program seems to have succeeded in combining administrative efficiency with place-based services.

The two sites were jointly overseen by a project director who had primary responsibility for fundraising, hiring and evaluating staff, and coordinating with other PHA departments such as Housing Services (for the financial incentives program) and the Application Center (for enrollment of new residents in Jobs-Plus). The director worked out of the PHA downtown office but spent considerable time at each site. Two on-site coordinators, who reported to the director, oversaw daily operations and managed staffing. The Los Angeles sites shared many programmatic features and had several common Collaborative members. But each program developed its own network of service providers within its community.

## **Conclusion**

The MDRC Jobs-Plus demonstration has shown that, when implemented properly, the three components of the Jobs-Plus program — employment-related services, rent-based financial incentives to work, and community support for work — can make a substantial difference in the employment outlooks of low-income workers and job-seekers. Moreover, the large positive earnings effects that were generated in the demonstration occurred across diverse racial and ethnic groups and in very different cities, and the gains were sustained in both good and bad economic times — suggesting that Jobs-Plus is a program that travels well. Given the program’s adaptive potential, this guide was prepared to assist practitioners who wish to replicate the features of the Jobs-Plus program in other cities and communities.

Part of the program’s success is rooted in its emphasis on partnerships among public housing authorities, welfare and workforce agencies, and representatives from the participating resident communities. Addressing specific organizational issues up front — by, for example, conducting a local needs assessment, identifying existing services, creating a strong institutional framework and governing body, developing a staffing plan, evaluating program costs and funding sources, securing space for the program’s office, and determining how to monitor progress — also bolstered the program’s effectiveness. Finally, thoughtful programming enabled the Jobs-Plus staff to translate each of the three components into operations and implement them in multicultural settings. Once Jobs-Plus was up and running, staff could turn their attention to marketing the program and publicizing its financial incentives, handling issues associated with

the role of partner groups, serving a culturally diverse group of residents as effectively as possible, and operating a place-based program efficiently. Overarching all these efforts, of course, and crucial to the program's success, was the energy and commitment of the Jobs-Plus staff.

It is hoped that this guide, in offering information and recommendations on the various planning, programming, and organizational aspects of implementing a Jobs-Plus program, will assist interested practitioners in adapting the Jobs-Plus program model to new settings and situations, and achieving similar results.

**Appendix A**

**Jobs-Plus Operational Highlights, by Site**





## The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

### Table A.1

#### Highlights of the Sites' Experiences in Operating Jobs-Plus

Site	Operational Highlights
<b>Baltimore</b> <i>Gilmor Homes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made a promising start with a full complement of staff and good relationships with an extensive network of local service agencies. Distinctive in its early and close coordination with a special health office located on site.</li> <li>• Jobs-Plus had peaked by the end of 2000. Reductions in funding following expiration of key grants starting in 2001 resulted in steady loss of staff, including case managers, co-located welfare caseworker, and job developer. Retrenchment of workforce services in local Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood eroded capacity of referral network to offer employment services to Jobs-Plus participants. On-site health office closed in 2002.</li> <li>• Rent-based work incentives available in November 2000 but poorly administered by housing authority.</li> </ul>
<b>Chattanooga</b> <i>Harriet Tubman Homes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Until 2000, Jobs-Plus foundered. Program was partially staffed by residents unprepared for their roles and given inadequate oversight by senior housing officials. Rent-based work incentives were implemented in November 2000.</li> <li>• Program was reconstituted between June 2000 and June 2002 with improved staffing, employment counseling, service referrals, and management. Overall, however, progress in strengthening program quality remained limited. "Community support for work" component was never fully implemented.</li> <li>• Housing authority remained enthusiastic and cooperative in implementing the rent incentives.</li> <li>• Overall, housing authority gave low priority to Jobs-Plus after a change in housing authority leadership. Its focus on privatizing its property management and resident services operations made it unlikely that the agency could oversee Jobs-Plus adequately. In the summer of 2002, the housing authority and national demonstration partners agreed to continue a scaled-down version of the program that only offered financial incentives (although some services provided on site continued informally).</li> </ul>
<b>Dayton</b> <i>DeSoto Bass Courts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sankofa (a nonprofit agency that was formerly the housing authority's Resident Services division) administered Jobs-Plus and provided stable and capable leadership and staff.</li> <li>• Enduring, high-level support in securing funding and program services of the housing authority and other Collaborative partners, including Montgomery County's multiservice One-Stop Career Center (established as part of the Workforce Investment Act).</li> <li>• Program offered extensive outreach, short-term job training, job readiness and search skills training, intensive case management, co-located welfare caseworker, and online access to the local One-Stop's employment database. First site to recruit residents for the "community support for work" component of Jobs-Plus (building captains).</li> <li>• Rent incentives were implemented in May 2000 and actively marketed by the housing management office as well as Jobs-Plus.</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table A.1 (continued)**

Site	Operational Highlights
<p><b>Los Angeles</b> <i>William Mead Homes</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs-Plus was reconstituted in 2001 after a slow build-up resulting from housing authority-related staffing gaps, leadership turnover, and equipment needs. Became strong program that provided job searches on site, GED classes for Spanish speakers, and training, with intensive outreach and case management as well as welfare-to-work caseworker and job developer on site from other public agencies.</li> <li>• Rent-based work incentives were implemented in June 2000 with strong support from and active promotion by housing management staff.</li> <li>• Program had strong “community support for work” component. Beginning in November 2000, residents were hired and trained as community coaches to help Jobs-Plus publicize activities and job opportunities, and to recruit participants; played leading role in bringing basic education classes on site.</li> </ul>
<p><b>St. Paul</b> <i>Mt. Airy Homes</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program had to address special language- and immigrant-related barriers to outreach, service delivery, and employment.</li> <li>• Offered job counseling on site, job clubs, case management, some customized short-term training classes, U.S. citizenship classes, and ESL and GED instruction. Hmong Women’s Support Group assisted with mental health and cultural issues. Head Start and after-school and summer programs were available for children and youth. Education and training were offered through referrals to local schools and agencies. Had consistent, professional staffing and co-location of staff from partner agencies.</li> <li>• First site to implement rent-based work incentives, beginning in November 1998, using housing authority funds. Strong management office support in recruiting, orienting, and enrolling households for Jobs-Plus as well as administering rent-based work incentives.</li> <li>• Residents volunteering as community outreach workers who spoke languages of ethnic groups at Mt. Airy provided important assistance in publicizing Jobs-Plus activities and job opportunities.</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table A.1 (continued)**

Site	Operational Highlights
<p><b>Seattle</b> <i>Rainier Vista Garden Community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program had strong and stable staff; built solid relationships with the development’s highly ethnically diverse population, who collectively spoke 22 languages. Provided job counseling, case management, ESL classes, and financial management classes on site, in partnership with Refugee Women’s Alliance. Referrals were made for education, training, and support services off site.</li> <li>• Housing authority received HOPE VI grant to tear down and rebuild the Jobs-Plus development, in stages. Unique context of HOPE VI led to site’s formal withdrawal from national demonstration at the end of 1999. However, Jobs-Plus continued to operate with a broader target group and expanded mission that included helping residents deal with issues related to relocation.</li> <li>• Resident relocation process was under way from 2000 to mid-2002 as part of the first stage of re-development.</li> <li>• Rent-based work incentives were implemented in September 1999 with strong housing authority support. However, enrollment in this component closed in April 2001 with phasing in of HOPE VI.</li> <li>• With declining numbers of residents at Rainier Vista, intensity of services on site declined as staff were assigned additional responsibilities to provide services to residents of other developments. Few services were provided to residents once they relocated out of public housing.</li> <li>• Residents who spoke languages of ethnic groups at Rainier Vista were hired and trained as resident outreach and orientation specialists to publicize Jobs-Plus services and job opportunities and to recruit participants.</li> </ul>

SOURCES: MDRC field research and program documents.

NOTES: “GED” refers to General Educational Development; “ESL” refers to English as a Second Language.



**Appendix B**

**MDRC Reports on the Jobs-Plus Demonstration**



## EARLIER MDRC PUBLICATIONS ON JOBS-PLUS

*Promoting Work in Public Housing*

*The Effectiveness of Jobs-Plus: Final Report*

2005. Howard S. Bloom, James A. Riccio, Nandita Verma, with Johanna Walter

*Resident Participation in Seattle's Jobs-Plus Program*

2004. Edward Liebow, Carolina Katz Reid, Gabrielle O'Malley, Scott Marsh, Susan Blank

*Implementing Financial Work Incentives in Public Housing*

*Lessons from the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*

2004. Alissa Gardenhire-Crooks

*Mobilizing Resident Networks in Public Housing*

*Implementing the Community Support for Work Component of Jobs-Plus*

2004. Linda Yuriko Kato

*Participating in a Place-Based Employment Initiative*

*Lessons from the Jobs-Plus Demonstration in Public Housing*

2003. Linda Yuriko Kato

*Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site*

*Key Features of Mature Employment Programs in Seven Public Housing Communities*

2003. Linda Yuriko Kato

*Staying or Leaving*

*Lessons from Jobs-Plus About the Mobility of Public Housing Residents and Their Implications for Place-Based Initiatives*

2003. Nandita Verma

*Making Work Pay for Public Housing Residents*

*Financial-Incentive Designs at Six Jobs-Plus Demonstration Sites*

2002. Cynthia Miller, James Riccio

*The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities*

*The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments*

2002. Linda Yuriko Kato

*The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents*

*Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey*

2002. John Martinez

*Children in Public Housing Developments*

*An Examination of the Children at the Beginning of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*

2002. Pamela Morris, Stephanie Jones

*Building New Partnerships for Employment  
Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*  
2001. Linda Yuriko Kato, James Riccio

*Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site  
An Early Look at Program Implementation*  
2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom

*Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work  
Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*  
1999. James Riccio

*Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program  
Using Non-Experimental Methods  
Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*  
1999. Howard Bloom

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NOTE: A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)), from which copies of reports can also be downloaded.



**Appendix C**

**Sources of Additional Information**



**Table C.1**

**Selected Sources of Information on Urban Poverty, Joblessness, and Initiatives to Help Solve These Problems**

<b>Source of Information</b>	<b>Web Site</b>
<b>Key Governmental Sources</b>	
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	www.hud.gov
HUD Office of Policy Development and Research	www.huduser.org
U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)	www.dol.gov
DOL Employment and Training Administration	www.doleta.gov
DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics	www.bls.gov
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	www.hhs.gov
<b>Think Tanks and Advocacy Organizations Working on Poverty and Employment</b>	
Brookings Institution	www.brook.edu
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	www.cbpp.org
Children's Defense Fund	www.childrensdefense.org
The Heritage Foundation	www.heritage.org
Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin	www.irp.wisc.edu
Manhattan Institute	www.manhattan-institute.org
National Center for Children in Poverty	www.nccp.org
National Poverty Center, University of Michigan	www.npc.umich.edu
The Urban Institute	www.urban.org
<b>Housing Advocacy Groups</b>	
Council of Large Public Housing Authorities	www.clpha.org
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials	www.nahro.org
Public Housing Authority Directors Association	www.phada.org
<b>Foundations</b>	
Annie E. Casey Foundation <sup>a</sup>	www.aecf.org
KIDS COUNT <sup>b</sup>	www.kidscount.org
Enterprise Community Partners <sup>c</sup>	www.enterprisecommunity.org
Fannie Mae Foundation <sup>d</sup>	www.fanniemaefoundation.com
Pew Charitable Trusts <sup>e</sup>	www.pewtrusts.com

<sup>a</sup>One of the funders of the Jobs-Plus demonstration.

<sup>b</sup>An initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that tracks the national and state-by-state status of U.S. children.

<sup>c</sup>Concerned with affordable housing for low-income Americans.

<sup>d</sup>Conducts research on housing issues.

<sup>e</sup>As of this writing, Pew is carrying out research on several aspects of family financial security.



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## About MDRC

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-offenders and people with disabilities, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Child Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.