CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND
SAN FRANCISCO
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

#91-0023
**Union/Community College VESL Program**

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**PROJECT DIRECTOR**

Shiree Teng, Labor Studies Department

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

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**PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION**

This project is directed toward providing Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) classes for workers in the building services and garment industries in San Francisco. The project, developed in cooperation with the applicable unions, provides classes at union facilities and pairs students with union member peer counselors who serve as classroom aides and links between the learners and their instructors.
San Francisco Community College District

Union/Community College VESL

The Union/Community College ESL Program will provide Vocational English as a Second Language classes for workers in the building services (custodial) and garment industries in San Francisco. Its aim is to harness the resources of the cooperating unions to improve recruitment and retention of working adults in these occupations.

In classes held at union facilities, the project will serve 100-120 workers over two 15-week periods per semester. Utilizing a revised VESL curriculum, participants will learn terminology and usage of English in the respective vocations and gain knowledge of basic workers' rights and responsibilities. Instructors will come from City College of San Francisco, and will be chosen on the basis of their prior experience with the relevant occupational categories.

A key innovation will be the use of specially trained peer counselors from among the union membership to serve as classroom aides. These "learning stewards", as they will be called, will be a link between learners and their instructors, helping to solve problems, maintain attendance, and conduct evaluations and follow-up interviews.

Unions cooperating in the project include locals of the Northern California Joint Council of Service Employees (SEIU) No. 2 and the Pacific Northwest District Council of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Both represent significant numbers of new immigrants, who make up a growing proportion of the San Francisco workforce. This population faces serious basic skill and vocational training needs. For example, the SEIU Joint Council represents about 5,500 custodians working in the City itself. The jurisdiction of the ILGWU District Council encompasses the over 25,000 workers currently employed in the San Francisco Bay Area garment industry. Through their newly-opened Garment Workers' Service Center, the union is reaching out to the significant proportion of these workers who reside in the Chinatown area.

Both unions have identified the need for ESL and vocational training for the populations they service. Both unions have experience in providing educational programs to their members. Both, however, seek to expand their relationship with City College to take advantage of the instructional services offered by this institution. To support this project, they will commit resources to recruiting students, providing classroom facilities, and helping to refine the VESL curricula to better reflect the needs of the workers and the industries. Both unions will also assist in efforts to encourage learners to continue their education through existing community
college vocational, basic skills, or academic programs. The evaluation report of the project will be disseminated to vocational and ESL program at colleges in the Bay Area, as well as to unions whose jurisdictions encompass similar occupations.
Union/Community College VESL

1. Specific Educational Program Being Addressed

Educational Program

The proposal outlined herein specifically addresses an improvement in the traditional offering of Vocational English as a Second Language courses to garment workers and custodians. It provides a mechanism by which unions, VESL instructors, and Labor Studies staff can work together to update and refine existing curricula to reflect the changing realities of the job market, and improve recruitment and retention of students.

Unions cooperating in the project include locals of the Northern California Joint Council of Service Employees (SEIU) No. 2 and the Pacific Northwest District Council of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Within the college, Labor Studies staff will work together with the VESL/ABE Resource Instructor and VESL teachers, as well as counselors familiar with other training opportunities and matriculation procedures.

A main focus of the project is to improve recruitment of underrepresented blue-collar workers. SEIU and ILGWU will take responsibility for recruitment of students for Fall and Spring semester classes. Union staff and shop stewards will carry out recruitment activities at union meetings, at hiring halls, and at the workplace. Outreach to unorganized workers will be the joint responsibility of unions and project staff.

Finally, the project aims to strengthen student retention by providing a variety of support services:

a) Peer counseling conducted by trained "learning stewards." These individuals will be recruited from among current union shop stewards, and will be trained by the Center for Working Life, a nationally recognized workplace counseling organization.

b) Educational counseling by Project Director and counseling staff from City College of San Francisco, to assist workers with matriculation into other vocational course offerings, GED testing, and other opportunities at the College.
c) Counseling provided by union staff to provide links between course work, job opportunities and job mobility.

d) On-site child care during class times.
2. Specific Problems Being Addressed

Problems

Changing economic and demographic patterns in the Bay Area, and specifically in the City of San Francisco are creating a greater need for Vocational ESL. Employers and unions report that currently employed workers are experiencing difficulties in their jobs due to basic skill limitations. A high proportion of the targeted workforce have limited English-speaking skills.

A survey conducted by SEIU determined that almost 75% of their members in custodial trades need additional English language skills to be successful on their jobs. In custodial work, the inability to understand and speak English not only limits a worker's mobility, but can also endanger the worker's safety. Many of the substances and machinery used in this industry is potentially hazardous. Workers are often exposed to toxic chemicals and asbestos. The inability to read or understand safety warnings can, in some cases, be life-threatening.

The ILGWU has ascertained that over 70% of the garment workers in San Francisco are recent Chinese immigrants and many more speak only Spanish. In the garment industry, most workers are employed in unorganized sweatshops paying at or under the minimum wage of $4.25 per hour. Safety and health conditions in this industry are also a significant problem, as in custodial occupations. Opportunities to take higher-paid, more skilled jobs in the industry are limited, as well, by the workers’ inability to read and speak English.

Immigrant workers are often vulnerable to abuse of their workplace rights. The inability to understand a paycheck or read an Industrial Welfare Commission poster of legally mandated working conditions, can prevent the exercise of these rights.

While ESL and Vocational ESL programs currently exist, workers in the two targeted industries are often not aware of the programs. Many are recent immigrants whose unfamiliarity with the educational system is a major barrier to enrollment.

In the specific case of VESL classes for custodians, the course described in the City College catalog, ESLV 3822-Practical English on the Job/Janitorial, is not offered due to inability to fill the class. There is currently no VESL class geared specifically to garment workers, although garment workers take regular ESL classes in high numbers. ESL instructors have, however, reported a desire for such a specifically vocational class among their garment worker students, who are searching for job upgrade opportunities.
3. Population To Be Served

Target Population

The target population for this project is custodians and garment workers in public and private sector jobs in the City of San Francisco. There are approximately 5,500 SEIU-represented custodians in San Francisco, all of whom are members of local unions affiliated with the Northern California Joint Council of Service Employees (SEIU) No. 2, a co-sponsor of the grant proposal. There are possibly another 5,000 unrepresented or unemployed custodians. The majority of these (up to 75%) are recent immigrants, with limited English-speaking skills. Of the 25,000 garment workers in the City, again a large majority (over 75% are recent immigrants with limited English-speaking skills. Those who work in organized workplaces are represented by the Pacific Northwest District Council of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), the second co-sponsoring union. While the majority of custodians are male, over 90% of the garment workers are female. Most of the targeted garment workers and many of the non-represented custodians live in poverty.
4. Objectives

Proposal Objectives

The objectives of the proposal are as follows:

- To update and refine the existing Vocational ESL curriculum for custodians, and to revise the general VESL curriculum to make it applicable to the garment industry. In addition, to include in both curricula information on workplace legal rights. This will be done with the assistance of Kathy Wong, VESL/ABE Resource Instructor for the college, as well as cooperating unions.

- To develop instructional materials to support the above classes.

- To create a pool of peer counselors, called "learning stewards", who will attend classes and provide on-site, on-going counseling to students. In addition, these learning stewards will assist with efforts to maintain attendance, follow up with students who drop out of the classes, and assist with evaluation.

- To schedule classes at sites and times convenient to the students. During the Fall Semester, two 15-week long classes will be offered, one at the janitor's union (SEIU Local 87) during the operating hours of their hiring hall (1:00-3:00 pm), and one at the Garment Workers' Service Center (ILGWU) on the weekend, when garment workers are most likely to be free. During the Spring Semester, the two classes will continue for an additional 15 weeks, with modifications as seem indicated by the Fall Semester's experience.

- To recruit 25-30 students per class, using the resources available the staff of the co-sponsoring unions (union meetings, hiring hall, worksite visits, etc.) and seeking out workers at unorganized sites.

- To improve retention by providing support and counseling to students during the weeks of the course meetings. Such support will include child care; visits by City College counselors to discuss transfer to other training classes offered by the college; and special talks given by union staff on job placement through union hiring halls (directly) or through orientation to union/employers' job opportunities and hiring practices (indirectly).

- To evaluate the project using in-depth interviews with instructors, students who complete the program, and students who drop out of the program before completion. In addition, union staff and other involved in the project, including learning stewards, will be asked to contribute their impressions to the evaluation process.
• To disseminate the results of the project to vocational and ESL programs at community colleges in the Bay Area and at regional ESL and vocational conferences.
5. Workplan Narrative

[NO “WORKPLAN” ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]
6. Expected Outcomes

Expected Outcomes

a. In terms of project objectives, we hope that by the completion of the project we will have:
   - Designed and tested in the classroom a workable Vocational ESL curricula and instructional materials for the custodial and garment trades.
   - Enrolled at least 100 workers from the two occupational areas in VESL classes.
   - Succeeded in encouraging the completion of the classes by a significant proportion of students who originally enter the program in the Fall.
   - Increased the opportunity for workers to meet their broader education and training goals.
   - Increased opportunity for successful job experiences.
   - Through the training of learning stewards within cooperating unions, establish an ongoing system of peer support among union members to encourage participation in adult education.
   - Provided a model Vocational ESL program that can be emulated by other community colleges in cooperation with unions in their local area.

b. Impact
The direct impact of the program will be on the work lives of those students who complete the courses. It is the intent that they will have developed greater English speaking skills and that they will have a better understanding of their job rights, placement opportunities, and educational opportunities open to them.

The unions themselves will be affected, insofar as they are able to use programs like this to upgrade the skills and resources of their own members and of unorganized workers in their industries. The college will have a model of successful implementation of VESL classes for two occupations, which might be extended to others in the future.

c. Institutional Commitment
The college administration is committed to improving access to courses for underrepresented adults, new immigrants, and adult workers. If this project has the success we anticipate, the administration has indicated its willingness to seek continued funding for the classes, both within the system and through additional grant support in cooperation with area unions.

d. Transferability
The model is potentially adaptable to other institutions. The target population and cooperating unions exist in other cities in the Bay Area as well as in urban areas outside the immediate region. The techniques used in this project are readily transferred to other colleges, as well as to other occupational groups.
7. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan will have two purposes: to obtain information to help with ongoing program management and to review how well the program achieves its stated objectives. The evaluation will include:

- **Initial analysis of the goals of the learners.**
  This analysis will be conducted by learning stewards, who will be trained in interview techniques by the Center for Working Life and will use an instrument developed by the Center. They will be supervised in this activity by the Project Director. Because of the key role of unions in the project, union expectations will also be assessed by the Project Director.

- **Outcome measures.**
  Evaluations of learning outcomes of students will be conducted by instructors, using standard measurement tools.

- **In-program and post-program interviews.**
  From these interviews, conducted by learning stewards, the Project Director and Supervisor will assess what value the program has been to participating workers. Learning stewards will also attempt to contact workers who begin but drop out of the program mid-way, to provide data on attrition and its causes.

- **Preparation of evaluation report.**
  The Project Director and Supervisor will brief project staff and involved unions on an on-going basis, including at the end of the first semester's classes. At the end of the project, a final written evaluation report will be prepared and distributed.
8. Dissemination Plan

Dissemination Plan

The written report on the project will be distributed to relevant vocational and ESL programs within City College of San Francisco, at community colleges elsewhere in the region, and to involved unions. In addition, the Project Director and/or the Project Supervisor will attend regional vocational conferences and the Fall 1992 regional ESL conference in order to present the findings of the project.
9. Budget Narrative

[NO "BUDGET NARRATIVE" ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]