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MIXED AGENDAS AND MISCOMMUNICATION

AN EVALUATION OF THE 1992 JOB LINKS PROGRAM
AT THE REFUGEE ASSISTANCE CORPORATION, MISSOULA

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1991, Missoula's Refugee Assistance Corporation embarked on a new project aimed at decreasing public assistance dependency levels among its newest client group, Pentecostal Christian refugees from the Soviet Union. The project, entitled Job Links '92 (JL92), was designed to combat dependency by encouraging refugees to enter the workforce as soon as possible after arriving in the Missoula area. Numerous case management, counselling, and job placement services—including an on-the-job training program—were offered to refugees as part of the project. Despite these services and the commitment of significant human and monetary resources to the project, welfare dependency levels among Russian refugees remained discouragingly high. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the Job Links 92 project. Specifically, it uses a systems theory approach to examine "environmental factors" that inhibited successful realization of the Job Links project goals.

Ultimately, this paper shows how two key environmental factors, poor intercultural communication within the agency and poor interagency communication in the Missoula social service community, acted together to increase confusion in the Russian refugee community. In the end, this confusion discredited the Job Links project in the eyes of those refugees it was intended to help. The paper begins with a descriptive chapter which introduces the Refugee Assistance Corporation (RAC), its history, clients, and organizational goals and restrictions. A brief description of the refugee resettlement process and the federal, state, and local agencies involved is also included. The purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for the evaluation that follows by giving an idea of the atmosphere in which the JL92 project was conceived and implemented and the parameters...
within which the project was made to work.

The second chapter of the paper examines the JL92 project itself, focusing on the shortcomings in intercultural and interagency communication that adversely affected the operation of the project. As mentioned above, the first of these factors, poor intercultural communication, resulted from the lack of attention paid by RAC staff to the cultural differences of their Russian refugee clients. This problem continued to hinder the project even after a Russian case manager was hired to assist in job counselling and job placement. This paper makes the assertion that greater sensitivity to the backgrounds of the refugees by non-Russian staff could have prevented some misunderstandings about the aims of JL92 which would later inhibit its success.

The second environmental factor that negatively impacted the JL92 project involves the lack of cooperation and communication between RAC staff and other social service providers in the Missoula area. When designing the JL92 project, the Job Links administrator made a conscious departure from RAC strategies of the past. Prior to the JL92 project, RAC had concentrated on providing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, specialized job training classes, and counselling with the goal of making refugees "job ready". Refugees were referred to placement agencies such as the Missoula Job Service or the Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD) center, but active job development and job placement was not done through the RAC office. The decision to shift emphasis to active job development and job placement was made following a reduction in federal cash assistance grants to refugees and was based on a personal belief that providing ESL and training was not enough to move refugees into the
workforce. However, this shift in focus at RAC was not well enough communicated to other local service providers, causing conflict between agencies and confusion in the Russian refugee community.

In chapter three, recommendations are offered on how the Job Links project can be improved in the future. Most of the recommendations are meant to be applied broadly to suggest how social service delivery for Missoula's refugee population can be improved in general.

A primary obstacle to completing this paper was maintaining objectivity. As it was myself, the author of the evaluation, who also designed, secured funding for, and helped manage the JL92 project, I was not able to write this as a detached observer. However, I have conducted numerous interviews with other members of the RAC staff, with other area service providers, and with Russian refugees themselves. Hopefully, I have been able to distill the observations of these various participants to arrive at something approximating a "true" picture of what happened during the implementation of JL92. Other sources for the paper include several articles on cross-cultural counselling and job training, Program Planning and Evaluation for the Public Manager by Ronald Sylvia et al., and articles and papers on job training programs for refugees put out by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and various non-governmental agencies involved in refugee resettlement. The paper also uses statistics on refugee dependency from RAC files and the Montana Department of Family Services, and, finally, state and federal

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regulations regarding refugee cash assistance, regulations governing refugee social service and job training programs, and the 1980 Refugee Resettlement Act itself.
CHAPTER I

A Small Program in a Complex Environment

A systems theory approach to analyzing and evaluating the Job Links 92 project requires careful attention to the environment in which the project was conceived, designed, and implemented. This chapter, therefore, is dedicated to setting the stage for the JL92 evaluation in Chapter II. It describes the organizational structure of Refugee Assistance Corporation, the refugee communities it serves, and the larger social service environment in which its programs operate.

Refugee Assistance Corporation was originally founded in Missoula in 1980, under the name Lao Family Community, as a resettlement center for the Laotian Hmong. Later, as different ethnic groups of refugees moved into the area, the name was changed from Lao Family to the more encompassing Refugee Assistance Corporation (RAC). Today RAC's client population remains primarily Hmong with a growing secondary population of Pentecostal Christian refugees from the former Soviet Union.

Refugee Assistance Corporation is a private, non-profit organization which receives approximately 98 percent of its funding in grants from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services. ORR monies come to the state of Montana and are subcontracted out to local service providers in the form of social service grants which fund training, counselling, case management, English classes, and various other refugee-specific social programs aimed at assisting
refugees in gaining early employment\(^2\). Since its inception, RAC has been the sole recipient of ORR funds in Missoula. In fiscal 1992 the agency was awarded three contracts for general social services, case management, and job training.

Aside from the ORR grants, the federal government assists local governments in refugee resettlement by providing refugees with cash and medical assistance grants. These grants, collectively referred to as CMA (Cash and Medical Assistance), are usually administered by state and local welfare and medicaid offices. In 1980, when the Refugee Resettlement Act first went into effect, the federal government provided refugees with three years of CMA. Today, refugees receive CMA only for their first eight months in the country\(^3\).

To be eligible to receive ORR's social service grants, RAC must maintain its status as a refugee Mutual Assistance Association (MAA), which means that a majority of its staff and governing board members must be refugees themselves. Moreover, the money is provided only for services to persons meeting the government's definition of refugee: those persons who, having demonstrated a "well founded fear of persecution" in their native countries, were allowed to enter the United States on refugee visas granted by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services.

RAC's stated organizational mission is to provide transitional services needed to help refugees attain cultural adjustment and economic self-sufficiency in their new


\(^3\)Ibid. P.3.
community. Standard services are case management, counselling, referral, and translation/interpretation. RAC case managers make sure each newly arrived refugee family has adequate housing, food, and basic furnishings. They also help enroll children in school and adults in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and they take new families to the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services to sign up for the federal CMA. Once basic needs are taken care of, case managers do a more thorough assessment of the refugee family's needs, preparing family histories which note education and training levels, special skills or handicaps, English language competency, and so forth. Based on these interviews, refugees are referred to appropriate service agencies such as the Job Service, Social Security, Opportunity Industries for further assistance. The remainder of the case manager's time is spent doing follow-up on resettled families and providing continued counselling and interpretation services.

It is important to note that while RAC assists in all facets of resettlement for refugees already in the country, it is not engaged in actually bringing refugees into the United States or into the Missoula area. This task is handled by organizations known as Voluntary Agencies or VOLAGs, private humanitarian agencies which receive money from private sources and/or church affiliation. The U.S. Department of State also pays initial resettlement costs such as transportation, food, shelter, and medical care for a refugee's first 30 days in the country. Most of the Hmong in Missoula were resettled by the Seattle office of the International Rescue Committee. To date, all Russian refugees in the area have been resettled by the evangelical group, World Relief, which maintains a Missoula office.
From the time they began arriving in Missoula in mid-1989, the Russian refugees posed serious problems for the staff at Refugee Assistance Corporation. As stated earlier, RAC was set up as a service agency for Laotian Hmong refugees. Hmong had been living in the Missoula area since 1975 when the first war refugees began resettling following the communist takeover of Laos. By 1989, RAC's director and case manager were both Hmong refugees. Its board was composed of five Hmong refugees and four local Missoulians who had been dealing with Hmong in some capacity for years. The Missoula County Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services and the public health department both had Southeast Asian "specialists" on staff and the local school district employed two Hmong bilingual aides who rotated throughout the district's elementary and middle schools. The arrival of a refugee group from a different culture required serious adjustments in nearly all the social service agencies in Missoula.

Ironically, World Relief, the VOLAG responsible for resettling Russians in Missoula, was in large part responsible for the lack of preparation made by the social service community for the arrival of a new group of refugees. Although World Relief director Candy Thompson declined to be interviewed for this paper, RAC's Russian case manager, Stepan Chinikailo, confirms that World Relief at first attempted to keep refugees isolated from the social service sector. Mr Chinikailo, who arrived from Russia with his family in the summer of 1989, said that World Relief volunteers did not want Russians to receive any type of public assistance, preferring to put them immediately into jobs. According to Chinikailo, World Relief placed seven men, all of whom were supporting families, in minimum wage jobs with no employee benefits between January and
September 1989. The result was disastrous. Refugees unable to pay rent or feed their families had to repeatedly go back to WR volunteers for handouts and assistance. No one could afford medical care and they did not know where to go to receive free county services for childhood immunizations and infant and maternal care.

Approximately six months after the first Russians arrived in Missoula, former World Relief volunteer David Hirning contacted RAC for help. Six months later, Mr Hirning was hired on by RAC as a part-time case manager. Hirning strongly disapproved of the World Relief policy of keeping refugees ignorant about public assistance and promptly took all the Russian families to the Social and Rehabilitative Services office to sign them up for their refugee Cash and Medical Assistance grants. Each new family to arrive in Missoula quickly learned that the case managers at RAC could get them signed up for the assistance World Relief volunteers told them they did not need. Ultimately, David Hirning came to see himself as the advocate of Russians denied services by World Relief. The antagonisms between RAC and World Relief became so great that RAC's Russian case manager and World Relief's director, the two people most directly involved in resettling Russian refugees, would not speak to each other, much less share information that could have facilitated resettlement.

In April 1991, RAC replaced Hirning with Stepan Chinikailo, a 32-year old refugee with impressive English skills and an easy-going manner. Although relations between RAC and WR subsequently improved, Chinikailo did not significantly alter the

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*Stepan Chinikailo, telephone interview with the author on September 21, 1992.*
advocatory role of the office. The practice of encouraging refugees to come to RAC for benefits, despite the wishes of WR volunteers, continued.
CHAPTER II

Project Failure: An Evaluation

One of the primary goals of the Refugee Assistance Corporation is to assist refugees in becoming economically self-sufficient. The problem with this goal is that for the average refugee family resettling in Missoula, total self-sufficiency is an ideal that will take many years to achieve. Realizing that most refugees will need several years of assistance, RAC staff members had to determine what steps could be taken to assure that refugee families gained social and economic self-sufficiency in the shortest time possible. The Job Links 92 project was designed to shift the emphasis from making refugees job ready to actually placing refugees in employment—even in low-paying jobs—as soon as possible after they entered the country. In the end, the JL92 project failed to achieve its stated objectives by failing to employ the numbers of refugees it set out to employ. This failure was due to the lack of attention paid to the way in which Russian refugees had come to perceive their rights and obligations as refugees, and because RAC staff members did not adequately explain and justify the project change to other Missoula service providers.

The Job Links Project

The Refugee Resettlement Act states that the goal of resettlement is the durable
economic self-sufficiency of refugees\textsuperscript{5} and that ORR money should be used by states to help realize that goal. In practice, the best way to accomplish that goal is not so easily determined. Refugees often enter the country with a number of disadvantages that may preclude them from gainful employment for years.

The Russian refugees resettling in Missoula, for instance, came from rural areas where they worked on state-run collective farms. As members of a persecuted religious group, they were denied access to higher education, and most adults did not continue in school beyond the eighth grade. Most come with no English language background and no marketable job skills. Moreover, Missoula's Russian refugee families had on average six children—a difficult number to support on the low-wage jobs most could expect to land in their new home in Missoula.

In fiscal 1991, RAC decided to deal with the Russian situation by taking advantage of the new federal "Job Links" funds available to refugee agencies that came up with creative solutions to combating high welfare dependency rates. RAC's Job Links 91 program emphasized making refugees more "job ready" through specialized training courses and Vocational ESL (VESL). To supplement ESL classes at the Adult Education center, RAC hired two teachers to give classes stressing "work-place vocabulary". Refugees also participated in workshops during which they practiced resume and application writing, interviewing, and follow-up. Classes were also given to teach basic typing and computer skills, telephone etiquette and elementary bookkeeping. The Job

Links director also coordinated activities with the Missoula Job Service, the YWCA's Options program, the Business Incubator, and the Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD) center so that refugees would be able to take full advantage of all employment training and placement services in the area.

Despite time and effort devoted to the program, midway through the grant year, it was clear that Job Links 91 was not bringing refugees closer to being job-ready. Class participation was low and those who attended did so with flagging enthusiasm. But perhaps most discouraging to the Russians was the fact that, despite RAC's efforts, refugees remained ineligible to take part in most of the city's job placement programs due to low job skills and English language competency. According to Missoula Job Service director Ron Ostrander, of the 15 refugee men signed up at his agency, none could hope to be placed on an On-the-Job (OJT) contract due to lack of English language ability. The solution, Ostrander said, was simply more English classes. Unemployment remained high in the Russian community. By April 1991, the Public assistance dependency rate among Russian families was over sixty per cent.

Meanwhile, changes in regulations regarding refugee cash assistance made finding some type of employment for new refugees all the more pressing. In March 1990, the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS) announced that all recipients of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) who had been in the United States for six months were required to participate in a formal job search program run through the

\[^6\text{Refugee Assistance Corporation, FY91 second quarter report to the Montana Department of Family Services. April 3, 1991.}\]
subcontractors of state ORR resettlement grants (in this case, RAC of Missoula). The SRS directive further stated that any non-exempt RCA recipient employed less than 30 hours per week must participate in a part-time employment search program or risk having RCA benefits terminated. For refugees who had moved off of RCA and on to the county's Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, the responsibility for conducting job search and benefits sanctioning was given to an agency known as Job Quest. Exempt from participating in the program were minors, refugees receiving full-time remedial education, refugees over the age of 65, and any refugee who was the primary care giver for one or more child under six years of age.

The combination of low participation in Job Links 91 programs and the new job search requirements led the Job Links director to make significant changes, including more intensive job development and job placement efforts for the coming years' project. The Job Links 92 project discontinued VESL and job training classes, replacing them with on-the-job training and a formal job search program in which participation was mandatory for all adult refugees receiving public assistance.

In its JL92 proposal, RAC asked for funding to place 17 adult refugees in an on-the-job-training program to be fully administered through the RAC office. The program would place refugees on a job during which the employer agreed to provide all necessary training and RAC would reimburse the employer for half the refugee's salary for as long as it took to complete training. According to the proposal, the OJT was to focus on getting

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7From a memo to RAC from the state Refugee Program Manager at the Department of Family Services. March 5, 1990.
refugees employed in manufacturing and service jobs, and was to emphasize teaching transferrable skills. "Our intention is to get people used to the idea of employment and to place them in steady jobs with the potential for advancement".

For the job search component of the program, RAC hired a part-time job developer to do job counselling and job placement. Each refugee meeting the criteria for state-mandated job search participation was to be given a personal interview in order to determine skills, employment goals, and training needs. The job developer was then to contact area employers in order to find suitable matches from her refugee file. If a refugee turned down an offer of employment which related to his or her employment goals, he or she was to be referred to SRS to have RCA or other welfare benefits sanctioned in accordance with the state job search requirements. In other words, the SRS had the authority to terminate benefits to any refugee reported to be non-compliant with the terms of the state job-search requirement.

Also in accordance with job search requirements, non-exempt unemployed refugees were to participate in some type of job preparation activity for at least 20 hours a week. Job preparation could mean going on interviews, filling out applications, attending ESL classes, or doing volunteer community service work. Welfare benefits were to be sanctioned for unemployed refugees, who had been in the United States for six months or longer and who were receiving public assistance if they did not participate in job preparation activities.

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The idea of having to sanction refugee welfare benefits was unpleasant to all employees at RAC. However, there was great optimism that the JL92 program would provide employment or job search activities to refugees so that actual sanctioning would never have to occur. Before implementing the program, the RAC Job Links director had talked with a number of area employers who pledged to support the program. The RAC staff was enthusiastic about the program, and most importantly, the refugees seemed anxious to participate. According to a telephone survey conducted by RAC in May 1991, eleven of the fifteen unemployed Russians not exempt from the job search program\(^9\) stated they would like to participate in an on-the-job training program run by RAC\(^10\).

And yet despite its auspicious beginning, the JL92 project failed to meet its objectives. By June 1992, welfare dependency rates among Russian families continued to be high. Russians continued to go directly from RCA to state AFDC, and not one had found employment through RAC's OJT program. What happened from May 1991 to June 1992 to inhibit the success of JL92 is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

**Intercultural Job Development**

\(^9\)Throughout this paper, "unemployed Russians", will mean only those who are not exempt from participating in the state job search program. Though the terms of job search apply equally to male and female refugees, all the Russian women in Missoula during the course of the JL92 project were exempt from job search requirements in some way.

\(^10\)Results of the refugee survey are included in the 1992 Job Links proposal on page 11.
From the perspective of those in the intercultural counselling field, RAC's traditionalist approach to the Job Links program may have been a major impediment to its success. Articles on intercultural counselling, for instance, stress the need to design services that are specific to the world views and social norms of the clients they serve. Yet JL92 was modelled largely on the job placement program at the Missoula Job Service and made little accommodation for the different backgrounds and perspectives of Russian refugees. Frustrated by an employment process they did not understand, many Russians ended up falling back on public assistance, which at least had been made comprehensible to them.

Much has been written in the field of intercultural counselling about the need for agencies to develop "culturally relevant" job training and placement strategies. Donald Wing Sue, for instance, writes that before designing a job placement program, service providers must increase cultural sensitivity, obtain greater knowledge and understanding of the ethnic background of each client group, then develop counselling strategies specifically for each of the different client groups. "Blind application of a single standard may be unfair," Sue writes, "whereas differential treatment that recognizes differences is not necessarily preferential."11

Edwin Herr, who concurs with this view, speaks of the need for job developers to consider that their clients may already have had experience with job counselling in their country of origin, and this experience may differ greatly with the treatment they receive


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through American employment service agencies.

If a society is prescriptive about individual talents being used on behalf of the state, the career counselling and guidance mechanisms available are likely to be considerably different from those in a society in which assumptions about the need for social central and freedom of individual choice are different\(^\text{12}\).

Herr continues that employment counsellors in the United States tend to stress human development much more than counsellors in most countries. The theory in the U.S., according to Herr is that a client is provided with many opportunities so that he or she can choose a career path in accordance with his or her aptitudes, values, and interests. Once opportunities are provided, "the individual is expected to control his own destiny."\(^\text{13}\)

Donald Seeper points out that the philosophy of self-actualization is a uniquely American one, and yet "the strength of this tradition is such that it is easy for Americans to assume the same motivations exist, in about the same degree, in every other culture."\(^\text{14}\) In fact, as RAC job developers found out, motivations and expectations in Russian refugees varied a great deal from the American standard.

The JL92 project, modelled on the job placement and OJT program at the Missoula Job Service, did indeed assume Russians would be motivated to join the workforce once provided with opportunities to do so. Like placement counsellors at the Job Service, the RAC job developer planned to interview each unemployed or

\(^{13}\)Ibid. P.7
\(^{14}\)Donald Seeper, "Career Counselling Across Cultures." From The Handbook of Cross-Cultural Counselling and Therapy. P.15.
underemployed Russian to determine his or her interests and employment goals, and then work with the client to get him or her on the path to achieving personal goals. Refugees would be encouraged to take low paying jobs only if they had opportunities for advancement. On-the-Job training funds would be used to encourage employers to hire and train refugees for positions that, even if they did not pay well, would give refugees specific skills and experience that could be marketed later on. Meanwhile, classes such as ESL, General Education Degree (GED) preparation, and other basic skills training classes continued to be offered at the Adult Education center in the evenings so that refugees would not have to choose between going to work and going to school.

Donna Emery, RAC's job developer and now director of the Job Links project, admits, "I think our approach to the Job Links grant would have worked great if we had been working with Americans, or even some other ethnic group.... But our attempts to tell Russians we could help them by pointing them toward the right jobs was not well received." Emery believes that part of the problem was the fact that Russians had never been exposed to a competitive job market and were intimidated and frustrated by the need to "sell themselves" to employers.

Russian case manager Stepan Chinikailo concurs with Emery's assessment.

"Russians do not believe in selling themselves," he says.

Your application process, filling out forms for maybe ten, twenty jobs at one time seems like playing games to most people. ...In Russia, it is not difficult to get a job because everybody has the guaranteed right to work. Teenagers who graduate from high school usually get jobs right away. In the first place, there is much more

\[15\] Donna Emery, telephone interview with the author, September 18, 1992.
[vocational] training done in the schools. When you graduate, if you do not go on to higher education, at least you have a license to do something, drive a tractor or something. In our village [where most Missoula's refugees come from] most people went to work on collective farms right away. Some boys they had to go into army. But in two years came back and went to work on collective farms.16

Of course a major problem in Russia was that although everybody had a right to work, most jobs on the collective farms did not pay enough to support a family, and most people had to find ways to supplement their income, often in violation of government regulations. Stepan's family kept a greenhouse, for instance, to grow cash crops for selling on the black market. "But the authorities they don't like this," says Stepan, "they broke my greenhouse three times."17 All farming efforts were to be directed toward the collective farm, not toward individual profit. Yet despite the animosities that grew between collective farmers and government authorities, Stepan says there were certain things about the system that made it easier for people to survive on small incomes. Housing was provided at very low cost, and health care was free to everybody, whether they worked or not.

Foreign observers are often quick to notice the level of individual dependency on the state fostered by socialist governments. Hedrick Smith, author of The New Russians notes that where opportunities for the individual are limited, allegiance to the government is nurtured by subsidies for all the essentials of living: housing, food, health care, education. According to Smith, "The habit of dependence on the state exists at all levels of the Soviet system. ... In the countryside, villages are dominated by the local state or


17 Ibid.
collective farm. The individual fits into the local hierarchy which both supports him and checks his initiative." It is quite possible that Missoula's Russian refugees, finding the job situation frustrating in the U.S., felt they should be able to rely on the government to provide basic services as they had been able to do in the Soviet Union.

As mentioned earlier, Russian refugees started coming to RAC because the agency was able to get them set up with basic services. Soon Russians were tapped into all sorts of public programs, from housing vouchers to food stamps. When the eight-month federal Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance grants ran out, Russian families signed their families up for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Unemployed Parents program and Medicaid. Many came to the conclusion that getting full use of the welfare system paid better than going to work. Russian refugees became "savvy to what was available in terms of public assistance," says Emery.

Their goal was to plug themselves into all they were eligible for. Our attempts to tell them we could help them [through Job Links] fell on deaf ears....A common response I got was why should we take jobs that pay five dollars an hour, when we can get more money from welfare plus medicaid? They all memorized the matrix handed out at SRS that shows how much assistance a family is eligible for at different income levels. They all shared information about the various types of assistance and it got so that Russians stepping off the plane for the first time knew more about welfare programs than I did.19

An important point to remember is that RAC began serving Russians in 1989 as an alternative to the World Relief (WR) program which stressed early employment and no


welfare dependency. Ironically, RAC was now adopting the same WR philosophy they had once "protected" the refugees against.

By April 1992, sixteen of twenty six households depended on public assistance as their sole source of income. Of these, only three were receiving Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance. The rest were on the county AFDC Unemployed Parent program and Medicaid. None of the dependent families were participating in a job search program through either RAC or the state Job Quest program, and not one family had ever been sanctioned by either agency.

The Russian dependence on public assistance became entrenched and was difficult to break. RAC attempts to call refugees in to participate in job search programs or to get placed in an OJT program went largely ignored. Perhaps if RAC and the other social service agencies had done a better job of coordinating programs to send a consistent message to the Russians about welfare requirements and regulations, the Russian opposition to participation in the Job Links program might not have grown so strong.

Disconnected Social Services

While theoretically each social service agency involved with refugees had a specific and clearly defined role in the resettlement process, the reality was that services were scattered and inconsistent. Disorganization among Missoula's social service agencies allowed refugees to set their own resettlement agendas and allowed myths about life in America to take hold in refugee communities. The resulting confusion affected not only

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20Refugee Assistance Corporation report to the State for the third quarter of FY1992.
the Job Links project, but also the overall quality of services provided to refugees in the community.

In theory, the Russian resettlement program was handled by an interconnected group of service providers, among whom there were clearly defined roles and set methods for information sharing and collaboration. World Relief was to take care of initial resettlement needs, which meant setting Russians up with sponsor families who provided food, housing and other essentials for the refugees' first thirty days. World Relief volunteers would also try to discourage refugees from ever receiving welfare by lining up a job for all employable family members before the family even arrived in the country. After thirty days, the refugee family was referred to RAC, whose case managers were to get those families still needing assistance signed up for Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance (CMA) at the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS). RAC case managers were also to ensure that refugees got their initial health screening and were enrolled in the appropriate school or ESL class. Six months after arriving in the country, all refugees still receiving CMA were to report to RAC to begin participation in a job search program. If, after an additional two months the refugee family still needed assistance, it was transferred over to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program at SRS. Refugees on AFDC-UP were required to immediately sign up for the more stringent job search program run by JobQuest.

Unfortunately, the glitches in the system were so numerous that dissatisfied Russians learned to adapt by using each service to their maximum advantage and by largely disregarding program regulations half-heartedly enforced at each step of the
process. To begin with, Russians generally did not want to take the low-skill, low-paying jobs provided by their World Relief sponsors. World Relief did not allow enough time for Russians to "learn about the American community," says Russian case manager, Stepan Chinikailo. "We saw that people who went to school for only six months got better jobs and had better opportunity to choose their jobs."21 Recently arrived refugees learned from members of the existing Russian community that instead of sticking to the thirty-day resettlement program at World Relief, they could go immediately to RAC and get signed up for CMA and ESL classes.

Russian refugees also discovered that there was no penalty for refusing to participate in the RAC job search program. Although most politely showed up for their mandatory interviews with the job developer, only one or two ever accepted the jobs found for them. They were only required to participate in RAC's job search for two months after all, then they could switch over to AFDC-UP.

Although the RAC job developer warned refugees about the requirement that AFDC-UP recipients participate in the much stricter job-search program at JobQuest, refugees paid the threat little mind. They knew the refugee caseworker at SRS would put them on AFDC with no questions asked. In fact, the SRS caseworker "told us we can stay on welfare until Jesus comes," says Stepan, laughing.22

Meanwhile, Stepan was reluctant to enforce RAC job search requirements.

21Stepan Chinikailo, telephone interview with the author, September 18, 1992.

22Ibid
Coming himself from the refugee community, the RAC Russian case manager did not want individuals to do something which most believed to be contrary to the best interests of themselves and their families. He explains, "I think it is best for people to go to work. But Russian people they have big families. Nobody wants to take a $4.00 an hour job with no insurance. How can I tell them this is the best thing to do?" Without even cooperation from the Russian case manager, the job developer was hard-pressed to convince refugees of the merits of participating in the Job Links project. Discouraged, she and the Job Links director felt perhaps Russians might become more enthusiastic about Job Links once a few had experienced having benefits sanctioned by JobQuest. But here was the final weak link in the refugee job placement chain.

Half way into the JL92 fiscal year, it became apparent that Russians were not "learning a lesson" by having their cases turned over to JobQuest, as that agency had yet to call in one Russian for an interview, much less sanction any refugee's benefits. As it turns out, a glitch in the new computer system at SRS caused a tremendous backlog so that not one Russian case had been reported to JobQuest. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that although RAC employees knew the names of all Russian families receiving AFDC, the JobQuest program manager could not accept this information from any source other than SRS. Due to the back-log of cases, some Russian families ended up receiving AFDC for over a year before ever being called into the JobQuest office. Once again, Russians had learned that there was no need to participate in the job search programs required by social service agencies, and most continued to remain on public assistance.

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23 Ibid
In early September 1992, for the purpose of completing this paper, I sent a questionnaire to a number of Missoula social service agencies asking for an evaluation of RAC's JL92 program. Respondents to this survey agreed that the lack of communication between area agencies impacted negatively on the services received by Missoula's Russian refugees. In particular, those questioned stated that even when they agreed with RAC's JL92 project goal of finding early employment for refugees, they felt the failure to make these goals clear affected the way their agencies handled refugee cases. The questionnaires also reflect the sense that there has been a general lack of cooperation and communication between area agencies which has impacted negatively on the quality of services given to refugees. Responses from five of the six questionnaires sent are summarized below.24

Though some expressed some reservations about project goals, none of the agency representatives questioned said they disagreed with the basic Job Links philosophy that getting refugees immediately into the work force was more beneficial than stressing job-readiness. However, only three said they initially understood early employment to be the primary goal of the JL92 project. Finally, while all agency representatives said they had a favorable impression of RAC operations, most agreed that communication between RAC and their agency could be improved to produce higher quality services.

Interestingly, respondents from SRS and JobQuest voiced strong support for JL92 project goals and yet felt these goals were not adequately communicated to their staffs.

24The survey sent to World Relief was never returned. The World Relief director has been unreachable by phone. A copy of the survey is included in the appendix of this paper.
Says Laura Rose, program manager at Job Quest, "somehow I didn't get a clear message that 92 Job Links included a job search requirement." Carol Graham, director of the Missoula County SRS, said the information her staff received on the JL92 project was only "circumstantial." 

Meanwhile, respondents from the Adult Education center and the County Health Department all expressed reservations about moving all refugees into the workforce immediately, even though they understood the state and federal regulations requiring early employment for refugees. According to ESL instructor Janell Farago, "just recently a refugee told me that he had heard that English acquisition stopped when some of his friends got jobs, and I believe this is true." Though Ms. Farago agreed early employment is best for some individuals, "I feel there are others who are able and motivated to pursue higher level, higher-paying jobs that require education and they should not be denied that opportunity." Says Pat Dontigney, refugee program coordinator at the county health department, 

Over the years refugees that have done the best were those who had continuous acculturation and ESL for two years....But considering the limited resources today, I would like to see the refugee stay home for the first two months and have the health needs attended to, then place him on a job.

Both Ms. Farago and Ms. Dontigney felt that the current refugee program places too much emphasis on early employment without regard for the specific needs of individual 

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refugee families.

All of the respondents said they had a favorable impression of RAC and felt the services provided by the agency were important. However, while some said communication had recently improved, the overall consensus was that service to refugees in the Missoula area has been too fragmented. "The needs of each agency were not being communicated," says JobQuest's Laura Rose of the Russian resettlement program. "All funding grants are different and requirements are different. If we can't figure out all the various programs, how can we explain them to the Russians?" Carol Graham of SRS said RAC could best improve services to refugees by "keeping [SRS] informed as to program changes so that refugees receive a consistent message with less confusion." Finally, Pat Dontigney at the Health Department expressed the need for "monthly meetings involving all RAC members and agencies...in order for agencies to work together on problems and prevent an overlapping of services." She continues, "all agencies are overworked and understaffed...and refugees arrive with so many needs....To me, communication is the most important factor in being able to solve problems efficiently and effectively."

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CHAPTER III

Improving Missoula's Refugee Social Service Delivery:
A Series of Recommendations

Poor intercultural and interagency communication hampered the success of the JL92 project. This chapter offers recommendations regarding how refugee social service delivery could be improved in Missoula based on the foregoing analysis of the JL92 Project.

Greater Sensitivity to Disparate Cultural Groups

As cited earlier in this paper, experts on intercultural communication advocate designing social services to be specific to the world views and social norms of the clients they serve. Where the RAC staff erred in program design was in making too small an attempt to understand their Russian clientele until it was too late.

When the Russian community first approached RAC seeking assistance, RAC staff should have endeavored to research the Russian situation and to forge close ties with that community. Upon reflection, neither was adequately done. One of the many unfortunate ironies in the Russian resettlement picture was that World Relief was probably one of the best resources available to the RAC staff in terms of learning about Russian refugee culture and circumstance. World Relief's parent organization in New York has been active in resettling foreign refugees for decades and produces cultural handbooks on each of the refugee groups it works with. Access to that refugee-specific information would have
assisted RAC staff and caseworkers as they struggled to accommodate the needs of this newest refugee population.

**Recommendation:** VOLAGs which resettle refugees are usually well-established organizations with experience working with a variety of cultural groups. RAC staff members should look to the VOLAGs for information and advice. Viewing VOLAGs in such a light may lay the foundation for better relations even as conflicts over resettlement philosophy arise.

The intercultural communication problem between RAC and the Russian refugees was compounded by the failure to establish working ties with the Russian community itself. Although RAC maintained a line of communication with the community by including Russians on its board of directors and later on its staff, no attempt was made to establish direct contact with the Russians, on their own soil.

Initially, the Russians who resettled in Missoula were a tightly-knit group. Once a week, virtually the entire community met together to discuss community matters and to worship. RAC staff members never made an attempt to attend these meetings. While the hiring of a Russian case-worker improved RAC-Russian community relations somewhat, the RAC staff still should have made an attempt to reach out directly to the Russian community. In fact, the staff probably over-relied on the Russian case-worker to serve as mouth-piece for the community. RAC staff members and representatives from the RAC board of directors regularly made appearances at Hmong community meetings. That no such contact was made with the Russians may have been interpreted as lack of interest or respect.

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Recommendation: There is no substitute for direct communication. With the Russians as well as with any cultural group who may subsequently settle in the area, RAC staff members should not shy from establishing methods for communicating directly with the cultural community and should not rely solely on a single individual to serve as community mouthpiece.

Improving Interagency Relations

In addition to working for better intercultural communication, RAC would have dramatically improved the chances for success of the JL92 program had it established better working relationships in the interagency arena. Again, the recommendations below, while specific to improving the Job Links program, apply to the way in which refugee resettlement in general is handled in Missoula.

The interagency communication problems faced by RAC are hardly unique in the world of refugee resettlement, as papers put out by refugee-related agencies attest. Like other agencies, RAC is striving to make improvements in the way services are provided, and it has made admirable strides to overcoming the problems that plagued the JL92 project. However, greater steps toward improving overall services can and should be taken, not just by RAC, but by all Missoula agencies that play a role in refugee resettlement.

In the Fall of 1991, the National Forum for Immigration and Refugee Affairs in Washington, D.C. held a meeting with representatives from over 150 national, state, and local refugee agencies to address problems and concerns faced in resettlement efforts across the country. According to the paper produced from that meeting, there was a
consensus among participants on the need for greater cooperation between agencies engaged in various aspects of refugee resettlement.

A common criticism in many areas is that the local service delivery system is fragmented. For example, it is not uncommon for newly arrived refugees to have to contend with a different agency for every service needed - the sponsoring voluntary agency for reception and placement assistance, the public health clinic for initial health screening, the public assistance office for reception and placement assistance, the community education institution for English class, the job agency for employment assistance, and other community organizations for social adjustment services. The recommendation is to designate a specific service provider with the responsibility for helping each newly arrived refugee family negotiate the service system in a way that achieves the desired outcome of durable social and economic self-sufficiency.32

The recommendation that a single service provider be designated to handle all refugee social services received significant attention on the national level for awhile and legislation was even introduced in Congress to shift all social service responsibility—including distribution of refugee CMA grants—to resettlement VOLAGs. The initiative was defeated. That the problem drew so much attention within the refugee resettlement community nation-wide, however, shows that Missoula is not alone in trying to piece together a comprehensive and comprehensible refugee social service package.

As things stand, much of the agency roles in refugee resettlement remains dictated by state and federal law. Within the confines of these regulations, however, a number of steps could have been taken to reduce tensions and confusion in the Missoula inter-agency environment. In the first place, RAC staff should have been more careful to prevent lines of communication from breaking down with other service providers.

Perhaps the most counterproductive relationship that existed in the interagency arena was that between RAC and World Relief. Poor communication early on created a competitive, antagonistic relationship between the two agencies. Thus the JL92 project was developed and implemented in an environment in which the two major refugee service agencies involved were not sharing insights or information that could have been useful to working out problems before they became entrenched.

**Recommendation:** Again, rather than seeing World Relief as an adversary, RAC staff members should work with the agency and find some common ground. More broadly, RAC staff members would be well advised to remember that no matter how difficult or disagreeable it may seem to establish working relationships with agencies viewed as "difficult," the consequence of breaking off communications may be harmful to the refugees and detrimental to new programs RAC is trying to establish.

Finally, interagency communication could have been improved, to the benefit of the JL92 project and refugee programs in general, by establishing a forum for regular interagency dialogue. RAC got off to a bad start by not adequately communicating to the interagency community the change in direction it was undertaking with JL92. Confusion in the interagency was compounded because there was no method for representatives from the agencies involved to come together and work out problems as they arose in the management of the new program.

**Recommendation:** As suggested by Pat Dontigny of the Missoula County Health Department, RAC needs to establish a standing interagency working group where
representatives of the various social service agencies can meet to work out problems, avoid duplication of services, and generally bring together the scattered pieces of the social service delivery system into some type of comprehensive whole.

Delivery of refugee social services is complicated by the varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the clientele population and by the convoluted delivery system involving a number of social service agencies. Serving refugees resettling in Missoula—or in any community—will likely always be a trying endeavor. However, steps can be taken to understand the populations at hand and to establish and maintain good lines of communication with the refugee community and with the interagency community involved in refugee service delivery.

**Conclusion**

The environment in which the JL92 project was conceived and implemented was a complex one involving a new and unfamiliar cultural group and a convoluted and disjointed interagency environment. Ultimately, the project failed to overcome the challenges posed by the environment and was not able to deliver on its stated objective of reducing public assistance dependency levels among Russian refugees. Had the RAC staff endeavored early on to try and gain control of the environment - by improving intercultural and interagency communications - confusion about the goals and objectives of the program would have been reduced both for the other social service agencies involved and for the Russian refugees themselves. A clearer understanding of the JL92 project by all parties involved surely would have produced a more beneficial outcome.
Publications


Government Documents

Montana Department of Family Services. Memo on Social Service Contract Amendment, March 5, 1990.


Personal Interviews

Chinkailo, Stephan; Refugee Assistance Corporation Russian Refugee Case Worker.
Emery, Donna; Refugee Assistance Corporation Job Developer.

Dontigney, Pat; Refugee Program Coordinator, Missoula Department of Public Health

Graham, Carol; Director, Missoula Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services.

Farago, Janell; ESL Instructor, Missoula Adult and Continuing Education Center.

Ostrander, Ron; Director, Missoula Job Service

Rose, Laura; JOBS Program Manager, Missoula JobQuest
APPENDIX A

PROPOSAL FOR THE 1991-92 JOB LINKS GRANT
PROPOSAL FOR THE 1991-92 JOBS LINKS GRANT

SUBMITTED BY

REFUGEE ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
Nyiajkou Lee, Director
1280 South Third West
Missoula, MT 50981
(406) 721-5052

June 4, 1991

CONTACT PERSON: EMILY BARTON
(406) 721-5052
I. STATEMENT OF NEED
   A. Composition and Needs of Local Refugee Community
   B. A Refugee Survey
   C. Nature of the Missoula Economy
   D. Lessons from the 1990-91 Job Links Program

II. PROPOSED SOLUTION: The 1991-92 Job Links Proposal
   A. On the Job Training
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STATEMENT OF NEED

The Missoula area refugee population is an expanding and increasingly diversified group. It is composed primarily of Southeast Asians and Russian Pentecostal Christian peoples, of relatively established families and of new arrivals. While the needs and histories of these refugees are different, unemployment and underemployment continue to persist as problems for the majority. The Refugee Assistance Corporation (RAC) has put together in this proposal a program which is felt best able to meet the needs of the greatest number of area refugees. We ask for continued funding for our improved Job Links proposal, contained in this document.

Composition and Needs of Local Refugee Community

Missoula's refugee community is made up of approximately 610 Hmong, 30 Vietnamese, and 170 Russian individuals. These numbers can be expected to increase over the next year, as established families petition for family members in the Soviet Union and Thailand. Judging from sponsorship forms made through our office, we anticipate the arrival of 25 additional Southeast Asians within the year. And according to World Relief, a local resettlement agency, an 50 more Russians are due to arrive to the Missoula area by September of 1992.

Missoula's Southeast Asian population is diverse in itself. Several families have now been in the area since the late 1970s or early 1980s. Of these, some are very well established and employed in steady, well-paying jobs. Others are more recent arrivals, with few job or language skills. They require more intensive services from Refugee Assistance.

Russian refugees began arriving in Missoula in the summer of 1989. Suffering religious persecution for their Pentecostal faith, these refugees are sponsored by the World Relief Refugee Services organization, which maintains a local office in Missoula. Russian refugees tend to be better educated and have more advanced skills than their Southeast Asian counterparts. However, most lack any background in the English language, and many are frustrated to find their skills are outdated or otherwise impractical in the United States.

A Refugee Survey

In late April and early May of this year, RAC conducted an extensive telephone survey of refugee families in Missoula. A total of 76 Russian and Southeast Asian families were contacted and asked questions relating to employment status and to what services they felt RAC could offer to help them improve their
employment prospectives.

A total of 61 Southeast Asian families, 57 of which are Hmong, were contacted for the survey. In twenty five households, or 41 percent of those responding, at least one family member is employed in a full time job. In five households, both the husband and wife in the family are employed. In four others, unemployed spouses of employed household heads are looking for employment. The average wage for employed Southeast Asian households is $7.70 per hour. Nine jobs, or 39 percent of the total, pay medical insurance benefits.

Thirty Five of the Southeast Asian families responding to the survey contain no employed members. Of those, 18 receive SSI benefits for health problems that hamper gainful employment. Eleven others are headed by individuals who are full time students. Of the unemployed households, 11 receive AFDC benefits, one receives Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), one General Assistance (GA), and 17 families receive food stamps.

In the unemployed households, eight household heads described themselves as looking for employment. Five said their spouses are looking for work. When asked which services could be offered to help them find employment, thirteen respondents mentioned on the job training, eight asked for free day care, and three said they could use transportation services. No respondents felt there is a need for more English as a Second Language (ESL) training. Half of all those looking for work described their English language ability as "good".

Eight of the 15 Russian families questioned in the survey contain at least one family member employed full time. In two households, both the husband and wife are employed. The average wage for employed Russians is $4.54 per hour.

Seven of the Russian families contacted contained no employed household members. Of these, all household heads described themselves as looking for work. All unemployed households rely on some form of assistance in addition to foodstamps.

Although all but one of the unemployed Russians described their English language level as "poor", only two expressed a desire for more ESL classes. Five said they would like on the job training, two said they could use day care, and one said transportation services are needed.

The results of the refugee survey indicate that Missoula area refugees are anxious for employment and would like the opportunity to gain first-hand experience through training. In all, a total of 35 refugees express a desire for on the job training, while only two feel there is a need for more ESL classes.
Experience has shown that most training programs offered through the local Job Service and Vocational Center are at levels too advanced for the average refugee. For instance, in September, 1990, RAC case managers took 17 refugees to register with the Job Service's On the Job Training program. To date, none of those refugees have been placed.

Nature of the Missoula Economy

Over the past few years, the Missoula-area economy has been undergoing significant changes. Replacing the once dominant wood-products industry are smaller industries, particularly textile manufacturers, and service and health care industries. For RAC this change means that, while job opportunities still exist, the potential for placing significant numbers of refugees in any one area is no longer feasible. Job development requires efforts to prepare smaller numbers of refugees for employment in a diversified number of fields.

Lessons from the 1990-91 Job Links Program

The 1990-91 Job Links program focused on providing Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) classes as well as some skills training in areas such as computer word processing. Classes are most effective when tailored to specific needs of employers, therefore the Job Links job developer works closely with employers when setting up classes. Drawbacks to arranging classes in this manner include:

Class size. Tailoring classes to the specific needs of area employers means classes can accommodate only a small number of students at any one time.

Inability to meet demands of all refugees. The levels of English language ability for refugees are varied, as are their employment aspirations. Trying to accommodate all refugee desires and abilities within small, specifically tailored English classes may not be the most effective means of increasing refugee employment.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The 1991-92 Job Links Proposal

In preparing the Job Links proposal for 1991-92, RAC staff members considered the results of the refugee survey, as well as feedback from employers, ESL instructors, and the RAC case managers. In the coming year, RAC intends to rely less on ESL and VESL instruction and more on job development and on the job training to meet the objectives of the Job Links program. We
believe this proposal is best suited to the demands of the refugee population and of local economic conditions.

The 1991-92 Job Links program will consist of three main components: on the job training, job development, and specialized monthly workshops focusing on developing and maintaining economic self-sufficiency.

On the Job Training

RAC proposes to place 15 refugees through an on the job training (OJT) program financed by the Job Links grant. Training will focus on getting refugees employed in manufacturing and service jobs. The program will emphasize teaching transferable skills, however, training will not be as specialized as that offered through the Missoula Job Service. The idea is to get people used to the idea of employment and to place them in steady jobs with potential for advancement. Participants in the OJT program will be selected based on the following criteria:

**Financial need.** Since the number of refugees desiring on the job training is great, RAC will emphasize placement of those with the greatest financial need. Refugees from families receiving forms of government assistance will be top priority. Participants receiving AFDC benefits will be encouraged to take advantage of support services offered through the Missoula Job Opportunities and Benefits (JOBS) program.

**Ineligibility for other training programs.** RAC will continue to try to place refugees in job training programs through the Job Service, Vocational-Technical Center, and through the University of Montana. Refugees with advanced English language skills in particular will be encouraged to seek training through these alternatives.

Job Development

The second component of the 91-92 Job Links program will be intensive job development. A part time job developer will place 27 refugees with area employers in some type of training program, and work with an additional 20 doing job counselling. The job developer's first priority will be to match refugees with suitable employers for on the job training. The job developer will track refugee progress in the training program and keep in close contact with participating employers to assure no problems or misunderstandings arise between employer and refugee.

Work will also be done to place refugees not participating in OJT...
and to direct refugees to appropriate agencies and institutions for more advanced skills training. The job developer will work with all refugees, sometimes with the assistance of RAC case managers, to compile realistic employment plans, and will suggest additional training or education where appropriate.

**Self Sufficiency Workshops**

The final component of the coming Job Links program involves monthly workshops focused on teaching the skills for achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency in today's world. Workshops will be given to 6-12 refugees each month and will cover a variety of topics based on perceived and/or expressed needs of the refugee community. RAC will provide daycare for workshop attenders. Some proposed topics are:

- **Job Application and Interviewing Techniques:** At least twelve refugees will learn the ins and outs of job applications and interviews, and about what the typical employer looks for in a successful applicant. Using a video camera and monitor, refugees will be able to tape themselves in mock interviews and then review the results with the workshop instructor.

- **Assessing Your Job Skills:** Refugees seeking to upgrade employment will find this workshop useful. Instruction will be given on how to read and prepare for trends in the employment market, and on where to get the training needed to take advantage of such trends. Actual job interviews will be required of students participating in the workshop, with critiques on the interview being given later by the workshop instructor.

- **Managing Your Own Micro-Enterprise:** Significant interest in micro-enterprise exists in the local refugee community. Consultants from Missoula's Women's Economic Development Group (WEDGo) will lead this workshop, instructing interested participants on management, bookkeeping, and expanding the market for their goods. Some suggested micro-business ventures for refugees are day care operator and certified organic farmer.

**OUTLINE OF PROPOSED OPERATIONAL DESIGN**

**Summary of Personnel**

**Project Administrator:** The Job Links program will be overseen by a part-time project administrator, whose duties will include overall project management, coordination of program sites, arrangement of monthly workshops, budgeting and purchasing of supplies. The project administrator will also serve as the
contact person for the State Refugee Coordinator and will be in charge of monthly reports and project evaluation.

**Job Developer:** The Job Links job developer will also work part-time. Duties will include working with individual refugees and employers, developing job plans, and performing job counselling, referral, and placement follow-up.

**Workshop Instructors:** Workshop instructors will be selected from the local community to conduct one 5-hour workshop per month. They will be paid $10 per hour for workshop time only.

**Bi-lingual Aides:** Each workshop instructor will be provided with two bi-lingual aides (one Russian and one Hmong). Aides will be paid $6 per hour for translation assistance at workshops. In addition, RAC case managers will assist the administrator and job developer in working with employers.

**Number and Location of Sites Involved**

On the Job Training will be conducted at the site of the employer involved. The project administrator and job developer will be based in the RAC office. Unless otherwise arranged, monthly workshops will be held at the RAC office.

**Duration of Project**

The job links project will begin October 1, 1991. The administrator and job developer will begin work at that time to cement agreements with prospective employers and to make arrangements for monthly workshops. OJT will begin November 1, 1991. Training sessions will last for three months each and will run consecutively, as refugees can be placed.

**Project Objectives**

The objectives of the 1991-92 Job Links program are to place as many refugees as possible in sustainable employment. Specifically, 15 refugees will gain training and employment through participation in the OJT program. Twenty refugees will improve job search and interview skills by attending the job search workshop. An additional 10 refugees will learn how to upgrade employment skills by participating in the job skills workshop. RAC further anticipates that 10 refugees will gain part-time employment through some type of micro-enterprise. Three proposals for micro-enterprise businesses have already been received by RAC from refugee women. Ten qualified refugees will be encouraged to sign up for OJT through the Job Service or to expand their education and skills by enrolling in the Vo-Tech or University.
Project Evaluation

At the close of the 1991-92 program, a second refugee survey will be conducted by RAC staff. The success of the Job Links program will be judged according to a decrease in the number of unemployed refugee households, a decrease in the number of households receiving assistance, on percentage of project objectives achieved, and on comments received by refugees participating in the program. Project evaluation will also include quarterly reports submitted by Job Links staff and workshop instructors to the State refugee coordinator in Helena.

Experience of Refugee Assistance Corporation

The Refugee Assistance Corporation has been actively serving the Missoula refugee community for more than a decade now. Through the years, the organization has adapted to the changing makeup of the local refugee population. Today, RAC staff includes both a Hmong and a Russian case manager, fluent in those languages, and familiar with the respective populations. RAC case managers keep up-to-date files on every refugee family in Missoula. They have been an invaluable resource in the development of Job Links proposals, and will continue to work in close cooperation with the Job Links staff to ensure success of the program.

In addition to case management, RAC also works in close cooperation with local ESL instructors. RAC oversees one ESL program, funded through the Office of Public Instruction, and assists and advises instructors for two ESL programs funded through a Carl Perkins Vocational Education grant.

Qualifications of the Job Links Staff

Project Administrator: Emily Barton will be the 1991-92 Job Links administrator. Ms. Barton received a BA in History from Whitman College in Washington, and is currently completing her Masters degree in Public Administration at the University of Montana. She spent two years working with Southeast Asian refugees with the Joint Voluntary Agency in Thailand, and has been employed by Refugee Assistance in Missoula since August, 1990. She is currently project administrator for the 1990-91 Job Links program, as well as the Program Developer for RAC.

Job Developer: The Job Links job developer for 1991-92 will be Karyn Sandstrom, currently VESL instructor for the 1990-91 Job Links program. Ms. Sandstrom received her BA in Communications from the University of Oregon and has completed her MS in Environmental Writing from the University of Montana. She also earned ESL certification from the University of Montana in 1990. She has worked as an English instructor and tutor for the University since 1988, and has been working with refugees at RAC since November, 1990.
JOB LINKS 1991-92
OPERATIONAL BUDGET

PROJECT DIRECTOR
FTE. @ 11.24/HR X 16 WKS. $7,194.00
.5 FTE. @ 11.24/HR X 40 WKS. 8,992.00

JOB DEVELOPER
FTE. @ 8.50/HR X 24 WKS. 8,160.00
.5 FTE. @ 8.50/HR X 32 WKS. 5,440.00

FRINGE BENEFITS
15.9% FOR FICA, UNEMPLOYMENT, WORKERS COMP 4,736.00

HEALTH BENEFITS
8% PER EMPLOYEE 2,383.00

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR
5 HRS/MO. @ 10.00/HR X 12 MOS. 600.00

BI-LINGUAL AIDES
2 @ 5 HRS/MO. @ 6.00/HR X 12 MOS. 720.00

TOTAL PERSONNEL $38,225.00

ON THE JOB TRAINING FOR 16 ADULTS
4 HRS/DAY @ 4.50/HR X 22 DAYS/MO X 3 MOS. 19,008.00

OFFICE SPACE
$300.00/MO X 13 MOS. 3,600.00

POSTAGE AND MISC. SUPPLIES 3,185.00

MILAGE FOR JOB DEVELOPER 500.00

DAY CARE FOR WORKSHOP ATTENDERS 500.00

GRAND TOTAL $65,018.00
REFUGEE ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
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Ms. Nancy Grasseschi
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Mr. Tou Yang
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Pat Dontigney  
Msla Co Health Dept  
301 West Alder  
Missoula, MT 59802

Todd Brandoff  
322 Cumberland  
Lolo, MT 59847

Tyen Pham  
1530 Van Buren  
Missoula, MT 59802

Todd Brandoff  
Upward Bound  
UM 002 Brantly Hall  
Missoula, MT 59812

Yias Vang  
1906 South 3rd West #50  
Missoula, MT 59801

Yvonne Bradford  
Missoula County  
Health Department  
301 W Alder  
Missoula MT 59801

### Employment Services Desired by Missoula-Area Refugee Community - 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refugee Group</th>
<th>Number of Households Surveyed</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Desired</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OJT</td>
<td>Daycare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHEAST ASIAN</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Employed*</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Unemployed+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSSIAN</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Employed*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Unemployed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Households with one or more family member employed full-time.

+ Does not include households where adult members receive SSI, are full-time students, or are otherwise unable to work.
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March 5, 1990

TO: RAC and MARS Social Service Contract Amendment

FROM: Boyce Fowler
       Refugee Program Manager

RE: Job Search for RCA Recipients Program

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) recipients who have been in the United States for six months are required to participate in a job search program. In order to continue to receive refugee cash assistance a recipient refugee who is not classified exempt and is employed less than 30 hours per week must accept part-time employability services as appropriate to not interfere with the recipient's job. Eligible RCA recipients will be referred to RAC or MARS by the local public assistance office for the job search program. Persons who will be considered exempt from the job search requirements are persons that:

1. are working 30 hours or more a week in unsubsidized employment expected to last 30 days or more.
2. pregnant women who have been medically determined, with the child expected to be born within the next 3 months.
3. a parent or other caretaker relative of a child under the age of 6 who personally provides full-time care of the child with only very brief and infrequent absences from the child.
4. under age 16.
5. under age 18 and full-time student in secondary school or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training expected to be completed before reaching age 19.
6. ill when determined by the state agency on the basis of medical evidence that the illness or injury is expected to temporarily prevent entry into employment or training.
7. incapacitated which is determined by a physician or licensed/certified psychologist and which prevents the individual from engaging in employment or training.

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8. 65 years old or older.

9. caring for another member of the household who has a physical or mental impairment which requires as determined by a physician or certified psychologist care in the home on a substantially continuous basis and no other family member of the household is available.

All other recipients must register with the appropriate MAA in their area, MARS in Billings, RAC in Missoula for job search.

The MAA will develop an individual employability plan on each RCA recipient not exempt as listed above. The employment plan must:

1. be designed to lead to the earliest possible employment and not structured in such a way as to discourage or delay employment or job seeking.

2. contain definite employment goal attainable in the shortest time period consistent with the employability of the refugee in relation to job openings in the area.

3. enable the individual to meet the job search requirements.

The job search requirements are that it begins:

1. no later than 6 months after the refugee enters the United States.

2. if the refugee has completed 6 months in the United States then the job search begins at the time the refugee is determined eligible for RCA.

3. job_search_shall_continue for 8 consecutive weeks with a minimum of 8 hours per week devoted to employer contacts. A minimum of three employer contacts verified with documentation will be required per week. The MAA will keep case records which contain the employability plan and the documentation of each individual's job search contacts. The case record shall contain the progress toward employment with verification of employment by name of employer, start date, wages, start of employment and 30, 60, and 90 day followup visits of the recipient employment. They will notify the public assistance office when the refugee recipient obtains employment.

The refugee recipient must:

1. register with the appropriate MAA;

2. complete the employment plan;

3. carry out the job search requirements;
4. go to job interviews as arranged;
5. accept at any time from any source an offer of appropriate employment; and
6. the recipient may not, without good cause, voluntarily quit employment or fail or refuse to meet any of the job search requirements.

Should the refugee recipient not comply with the job search requirements, refuse employment or quit employment without good cause, then the MAA will notify the local SRS public assistance office of the failure who in turn will carry out the proper sanction procedure and penalty.

This memo of instructions will become a part of MARS and RAC social service contracts to implement the refugee job search requirements.

cc: DFS Contract Unit
    SRS/Family Assistance
    Policy Bureau
Ron Ostrander
Msla Job Service
539 South Third West
Missoula, MT  59801

Dear Ron,

When designing the job training and job development program for Refugee Assistance Corporation (RAC) for fiscal year 1992 (October 1, 1991 - September 30, 1992), I decided to change its emphasis from employment preparation to actual employment for refugees. In previous years, RAC had concentrated on providing specialized English as a second language (ESL) training and job skills classes. The 92 Job Links program focused instead on immediate job placement for refugees who had been in the country for six months or more. ESL classes continued to be offered through the Adult Education Center at Willard School, but no additional classes were provided by RAC.

The 92 Job Links program change was made for several reasons. First, federal cash and medical assistance to refugees was being steadily scaled back. Once provided for 36 months, cash and medical benefits were cut to eight months for new refugees in 1992, (and may be reduced to just five weeks in 1993), thus the luxury of a long adjustment period for refugees no longer existed. Second, a survey conducted in May of 1991 showed refugees desired an on-the-job training program at RAC. Once funding for this program was secured, I was anxious that it be put to use. Finally, I had personally reached the conclusion that refugees could not be made job ready merely through participation in ESL and job training classes. I felt that real work-a-day experience would be the best way to help refugees make the healthy transition to life in the U.S.

I left the RAC job in May of this year and am now living in Washington D.C., where, for the completion of my Master's in Public Administration I am doing an evaluation of the Job Links program. It will be difficult, given my past connection with the program, to do an objective evaluation. That is why I am asking for your help. As a service provider who works directly with Missoula's refugees, you are in a position to give informed input on how you felt the program did. I ask you to please take a few minutes and fill out the attached survey. As I need to know your job title when analyzing the survey results, I cannot guarantee anonymity. However, my desire is to get an objective evaluation of the program, so please be candid in your answers. Though my final report will be available to anyone interested, individual survey sheets will be seen by my eyes alone. If you prefer I not use your name in my report, please indicate this on your survey response. Thank you so much for your time and effort - I will be calling...
in a few weeks to see if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Emily Barton
1720 Queens Ln #172
Arlington VA 22201
(703) 841-4390
REFUGEE ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
1992 JOB LINKS PROGRAM

EVALUATION SURVEY

1. Do you basically agree with the philosophy of the 92 Job Links program that getting refugees into the workforce will benefit refugees more than encouraging them to become job-ready through ESL and job training programs? (Circle one)
   (agree) (disagree) (don't know/ no opinion)

Comments______________________________

(continue on back if necessary)

2. Do you feel the RAC point of view described above was adequately communicated to you and/or members of your staff?
   (yes) (no) (don't know/ no opinion)

Comments______________________________

3. To what extent does the job-training and job placement aspect of RAC operations affect the work you do with refugees?

   (directly affects) (affects somewhat)
   (minimally affects) (does not affect)

Comments______________________________
4. How receptive to the aims of your program have members of the RAC staff been in the past?
   (receptive) (somewhat receptive) (not receptive) (don't know)
   Comments______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

5. Do you think communication between RAC and your organization needs to be improved?
   (yes) (no) (don't know/ no opinion)
   Comments______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

6. What is your overall impression of RAC and the services it provides in the Missoula community?
   (favorable) (mostly favorable) (mostly unfavorable) (unfavorable)
   Comments______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

7. How could RAC, in your opinion, best improve services to refugees?
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________