

THE COMMUNITY IN ACTION:

THE AREA BOARD

A MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

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INTRODUCTION

The COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, as conceived by the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity, and now being assembled by Newark's United Community Corporation, offers potential for an infinite variety of imaginative programs to meet the most critical needs of the poor.

Ideally it will involve the many diverse elements in the city establishing a concrete dialogue between the impoverished or unorganized community and the middle class or established institutions and provide the base for the development of a truly democratic process at all levels.

The success of the anti-poverty program and its effect on instituting substantive, lasting change rests with the Community Action phase of the War on Poverty.

The essence and foundation, therefore, of the City of Newark's anti-poverty drive will be in the Area Boards, a unique outgrowth of the community action concept.

WHY THE AREA BOARD?...

The organizing of the poor will increase their chance for participation in responsible social action leading to a qualitative and quantitative change in their community, and hasten movement away from mere dependence on traditional social services.

Social Action, as a process, is the awakening and activation of concern among residents of an area who share common problems, created by long-standing injustices, that can be resolved only when those most effected participate fully in the democratic process.

Responsible social action requires the careful development of tools, techniques and methodology that stem from the philosophy of change. The impoverished are then in a better position to understand the causal factors effecting their condition and with collective power bring about positive solutions. This approach is, and must be in action, antithetical to the traditional dependency producing social service process as induced and generally administered in the past.

Specific service programs will evolve in board areas to reflect the needs peculiar to the residents. However, such programs while valid in themselves are subsidiary and ancillary to the basic thrust of the anti-poverty program--stimulation of initiative essential to the development of the necessary knowledge to pursue meaningful social action, and insure maximum citizen participation in the democratic life of the community.

AREA BOARD STYLE...

The Area Boards are the vehicles for this order of social change with the responsibility of identifying those in need of service with the aid of Community Action Researchers; recommending and selecting programs; referring individuals and families to appropriate programs; and its members participating,

as individuals, in various capacities as administrators, supervisors, sub-professionals and workers-in-training in the various service programs.

In order to fulfill these responsibilities, it is necessary for the Area Boards to take the initiative in seeing that the components and total cluster of programs that are induced maintain a high standard of performance and a close relationship to the greatest need. This requires not only a sense of responsibility for one's fellow man, but the development of a confidence and a competence wherein individuals, and the Area Boards, collectively, are able to assert their right to appraise the existing programs, to identify ineffectiveness, conflict, incompetence and stagnation. Finally, the members of the Boards will have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to resolve problems through a continuous process of program refinement and responsible social action.

THE COMMUNITY GETS A HELPING HAND. . .

In the communities to be served there are actual and potential leaders among the adults and youth. It is the responsibility of the Area Board Community Action Organizer to identify and involve these individuals in the formation of the Area Boards. Youth will have opportunities for constructive personal involvement in seeking solutions to the problems which they and their neighbors face. They will be organized by the Community Action Worker, and will be represented on the Area Boards. In addition, there will be many community "influentials" some of whom will be without formal education and lack the usual style and polish of individuals who are traditionally involved in community processes. These individuals will be encouraged to participate in the programs and to develop the competence required to carry out the mandates of an increasingly sophisticated Area Board.

• • .AND HELPS ITSELF

Those who participate on the Area Boards and the various committees, and design, motivate, initiate and sustain the activities, will, as the cycle returns, be the beneficiaries of these activities.

The strength of the boards will be enhanced because of the requirement that all members become members of the United Community Corporation as well.

It is the membership of the Corporation that elect the Board of Trustees of the Corporation and participate on the task forces that will be responsible for evaluating various program proposals.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION OF AREA BOARDS

The City of Newark is divided into nine board areas. Three of the Area Boards will be organized immediately. They are located in the central part of the City and represent communities that have the greatest density of impoverished families. The remaining board areas have pockets of families that are poor but not the density. At a later date these areas will also be organized because in any war, there is a role for everyone. Individuals and families outside of the three prime areas will also be eligible for services.

The boundaries of the first three Area Boards are as follows:

- AREA 1 - North: Orange St., Clifton Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, *Brooklyn?*
Clay Street
East: Ogden Street
South: West Market St., 12th Avenue
West: City Line
- AREA 2 - North: West Market St., 12th Avenue
East: McCarter Highway
South: Avon Avenue, Clinton Avenue, South Street
West: City Line - VAILSBURG
- AREA 3 - North: Avon Avenue, Clinton Avenue, South Street
East: East Peddie St., Poinier St., Elizabeth Avenue, McCarter Highway
South: Renner Avenue, Bragaw Avenue
West: City Line

A SIX-STEP PROCESS

As a guide, the following are the basic steps necessary for the development of the Area Boards:

(1) The Community Action Task Force of the United Community Corporation composed of trustees and members determine the final geographical design of the Area Boards.

(2) A series of organizing meetings are convened by the co-chairmen of the Task Force in the designated areas, inviting all in the community to attend. Members of the Task Force residing in the various board areas participate in recruiting individuals, particularly those below the threshold of traditional leadership, for the meetings in their area.

(3) Participants in the area meetings will recommend individuals for the organizing staff of the Area Boards. The staff consists of a Community Action Organizer, Community Action Worker, Community Action Researcher and Clerk-Typist.

(4) Participants in the area meetings will establish temporary committees, making certain to include youth representation, to facilitate the organizing process. These committees will include a Constitution and By-Law Committee, Office Space Committee, Membership Criteria Committee, Youth Committee and a committee to recommend a name for the Area Board. A temporary chairman will be elected until a formal structure evolves.

(5) When the participants in the organizing process accept a constitution and by-laws, and the criteria for membership on the Area Boards, a temporary Nominating Committee will be established to implement the procedures for determining the composition of the Area Boards.

(6) General elections, to be supervised by the Program Committee of the United Community Corporation, will be held for all committees and offices mandated by the by-laws.

PROGRAM

The Area Boards will be encouraged to develop Community Action programs in the following areas:

- (a) Housing
- (b) Education
- (c) Legal Services
- (d) Health
- (e) Information and Referral Services
- (f) Community Research
- (g) Credit Union
- (h) Youth Organization

The Board will not limit itself to this list of program committees. They will develop action programs in any area for which the community indicates a need.

TRAINING

All members of the Area Boards will be required to take courses related to their responsibility as Board members at the Community Action Institute. This on-going orientation and training program will provide another basis for developing the internal cohesiveness of the Area Boards. At the same time the seminars and workshops help to increase the community understanding of the problems and various systems they will encounter, and sharpen their effectiveness in arriving at solutions to the problems.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Each Area Board will be housed in a renovated store or loft. During the day it will serve as a community service center dispensing the various services which comprise the area's community action program. In the evening the space will be available for meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, informal discussion groups and such activities as the Board determines are relevant to the needs of local residents.

The United Community Corporation of Newark is a private, non-profit agency, established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, to coordinate community resources dealing with the problems of the impoverished.

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