



U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration

"Building Stronger Communities by Building Better Careers"

O*NET in Action: District of Columbia

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Community Preservation and Development Corporation, Washington, DC

Summary

At Edgewood Terrace in northeast Washington, DC, the Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) is helping unemployed and underemployed adults build career plans, develop job skills, and find employment. In one component of the CPDC career and skills enhancement program, staff use O*NET OnLine, among other resources, to help participants identify potential career goals. Participants leave the class with a long-term career plan fashioned as a résumé-builder. Some go on to specialized training programs in information technology. Others seek employment or further education in other fields. But all have an action plan, with next steps toward a better future. The career enhancement program is a vital part of a much broader and long-term effort "to revitalize an inner city neighborhood plagued with economic and physical deterioration and crime."

How is O*NET being used?

Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) is a non-profit organization committed to creating affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents. It builds partnerships with residents to address important economic, education, health, and social needs through a range of community services. Among its properties is Edgewood Terrace, a 16-acre housing complex with 835 units. The CPDC program there involves private and public sector partners, including corporations like Microsoft and Verizon and several universities and foundations. Together they provide support for a wide range of services. Among these is a set of career and skill enhancement programs designed for residents.

Today the Edgewood Terrace career and skill enhancement programs reach beyond residents of the housing complex to serve people living in the surrounding neighborhood. Doors to a new Career and College Resource Center for teens, complete with a CyberCafe, will open soon. Evening activities offer working adults access to facilities and assistance in improving job and career skills. Daytime programs provide unemployed youth and adults with assessment and career development, GED and External Diploma preparation, basic computer skills, and advanced training for jobs in information technology. Participants have access to personal email accounts, the Web, and EdaeNet, an intranet designed to turn EdaeWood Terrace into an

electronic village. Other programs focus on helping seniors, students, adults with disabilities, and young adults leaving foster care.

The career and skill enhancement programs begin with a 4-hour basic career assessment and vocational evaluation process. It helps applicants assess their academic skills, interests, values, temperaments, and learning styles. This is followed by a group interview to ascertain the applicant's commitment to the program. During the assessment, evaluators sometimes identify hitherto undiagnosed disabilities in an applicant. Depending on their nature, staff may turn to O*NET OnLine for information on job accommodations or assistive technology to adjust for a disability in a work situation.

Applicants selected for the program participate in a 16-week career development class. During the course, participants explore their own interests and abilities in relation to long-range career opportunities. The class is based on the NOICC (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee) career development model. It includes three stages in the career development process: self-assessment and self-awareness, educational and occupational exploration, and decision-making and career planning.

During the second stage of the process, participants use O*NET OnLine to do research on occupational characteristics and requirements and to compare their skills with those required in a particular field. As they learn more about the career possibilities on their lists, they begin to eliminate some and to focus their investigation on two or three top choices. Information from O*NET, as well as job-specific information from local employers, helps them in their analysis and decision-making.

By the end of the course, participants have developed a long-range career plan in the form of a [résumé-builder](#). It specifies individual and incremental steps they must take to reach the goal, with various options for short- and long-range action and specific contacts. Before graduation, participants present their plan to the class for an often rigorous peer review. During follow-up with participants after they leave the program, evaluators can find out whether they have taken any of the steps and how far along they have come in their career development.

Who is your target population?

Initially, residents of Edgewood Terrace were the target population. Now CPDC programs for adults serve residents in the surrounding neighborhoods as well. Specific programs are targeted at students; young adults (ages 18-24); employed, underemployed, and unemployed adults; persons with disabilities; persons leaving foster care; and seniors.

What kind of results is O*NET helping you to achieve?

The emphasis in the CPDC career development class is on developing a long-range action plan.

O*NET is one of many resources that help participants learn about career possibilities and the skills and abilities they require. This is an essential step in the planning process. By the end of the program, some participants are prepared to find new jobs or to seek advancement in their current employment. Others have serious interim steps (such as further education or training) to take in pursuing their long-range goal. Each step they undertake is a measure of success in turning their lives toward positive, long-range employment and educational goals. Participation in the program gives many individuals greater control over their lives and connections they can use to move ahead.

What are the related program initiatives?

.The career and skill enhancement program is one component of a much larger community-building effort. The initial career development class is supported with other offerings, such as basic computer applications, information technology training, GED preparation, and referrals to rehabilitation services or outside training and education. A key factor is access to technology for professional and community use. Follow-up with successful participants is enhanced by providing them with access to email. Many of the services available to Edgewood Terrace residents provide essential support (access to child care, medical and health services, computer technology). These are supplied by a large set of partners, including private corporations, foundations, government agencies, universities, and resident associations.

Is your product, program or service available for others to use?

.The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) envisions the CPDC program at Edgewood Terrace as a model for similar services in other areas. CPDC has initiated a career enhancement program in Alexandria, VA, and others are planned at seven locations in the Metro DC area. To view materials from the CPDC Career Development Class on the Internet, register as a visitor at: <http://www.doleta.gov/leave-doleta.asp?blackboard-com-courses-CPDC>

What other strategies make your product, program or service successful?

.A key ingredient is making sure participants leave with a long-range but attainable goal, with a concrete plan and specific steps toward achieving it. The plan must include specific resources, for example, who to call for information or assistance. It must have realistic timelines for interim steps that help a client move ahead. Participants also have access to email and the EdgeNet for six months after leaving a program to help them keep in touch with classmates and instructors. Staff follow-up focuses on steps taken and next steps needed. This is not just a get-a-job approach; it's establishing a long-term goal and an action plan.

.Another prime factor is that the program is couched in a much larger community development effort with many partners. Residents are actively engaged in both policy- and decision-making. For example, software on the EdgeNet LAN is selected by a Resident Technology Advisory Board. not the CPDC staff.

.Edgewood Terrace was HUD's first eVillage. Eventually every apartment will have a computer terminal with a thin client server and a T-1 line. The LAN permits electronic trouble-shooting and problem-solving without requiring technicians on-site except when a hardware problem arises. The LAN also provides community bulletin boards and a network for sharing information among residents. Students can link up with classmates and tutors to form study groups. In a collaboration with Catholic University's biotechnology program, residents will be able to have conversations with a nurse and to have their blood pressure and blood sugar levels monitored via the Internet.

Do you have other pertinent information?

.Career enhancement program staff are now exploring ways to use O*NET information in "discrepancy analysis." This would allow participants to compare their skills, interests, and abilities with similar criteria in occupations they are considering. Where discrepancies arise, participants can decide whether they can adjust to requirements of the occupation or should look at other possibilities more suited to their preferences and needs.

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