



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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HUMAN RESOURCES  
DIVISION

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HR9-5  
B-163922

APRIL 5, 1979

RELEASED

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The Honorable William Proxmire  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Proxmire:

In response to your request of September 28, 1978, we  
inquired into complaints you had received from a constituent  
concerning administrative practices at Service Employment  
Redevelopment (SER)-Jobs for Progress, Inc., Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin. The complaints related primarily to program  
mismanagement and the misuse of Federal funds.

DLB-01396

The SER program is authorized under the Comprehensive  
Employment and Training Act of 1973 (CETA) (29 U.S.C. 801,  
as amended). SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc., received \$605,000  
through a grant agreement with the Milwaukee County Office  
for Economic Resource Development (CETA prime sponsor) to  
administer its program during fiscal year 1978.

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DLB-01446

SER serves Milwaukee's Spanish community and provides  
classroom training in adult basic education, job preparation,  
and English as a second language. According to SER's grant  
agreement, referrals to vocational education courses are made  
following the completion of these courses, and the staff also  
provides job placement, testing, and counseling services.

Our work was done in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at the offices  
of the CETA prime sponsor, the Milwaukee County Office for  
Economic Resource Development, and at SER-Jobs for Progress,  
Inc. We interviewed program officials and reviewed selected  
personnel files, job descriptions, financial transactions  
(including payroll disbursements), and other records at SER.

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Our findings on the complaints are discussed as follows.

### STAFFING

A charge was made that, although funds are available, three important jobs necessary to run an education department were not being done.

The executive director of SER has authority to determine operational and support requirements and to organize the staff and resources to carry out program plans. The executive director told us that SER has not been financially able to hire all the qualified personnel that are needed. The positions mentioned specifically by your constituent were educational coordinator, curriculum developer, and English as a second language instructor. These positions are discussed below.

#### Educational coordinator

The executive director told us that he has attempted to hire an educational coordinator for over 2 years; however, a qualified person could not be found to fill the position. In lieu of filling the position with an unqualified person, the executive director said that he and staff members with expertise in the area have performed the duties of educational coordinator. On January 12, 1979, the position was offered to an applicant, but it had not been filled at the time of our visit to SER.

In conjunction with this position, your constituent also charged that someone in an administrative capacity had assumed two job titles and had received the corresponding salaries for these positions. Our review of personnel and payroll records showed that the individual accused of assuming the title of temporary educational coordinator had never been employed in this capacity, and had never been paid a salary for more than one position. This individual received a pay increase in 1978, but it was due to a promotion to a position of greater responsibility.

#### Curriculum developer

The executive director told us that he had never tried to fill a position of curriculum developer. Furthermore, we noted that this position was not listed on the project's 1978 grant proposal.

Your constituent charged that, because the position of curriculum developer had never been filled, each project instructor had to develop a curriculum for a 20-week course in English but that instructors were not given credit for their contributions. The executive director stated that he has overall responsibility for curriculum development and that the curriculum still has not been developed to his full satisfaction. He added that he did not consider it appropriate to identify each individual employee's input; however, he plans to recognize employee contributions through the project's annual awards dinner, after the curriculum has been fully developed.

#### English as a second language instructor

Your constituent charged that SER eliminated an English as a second language instructor position, thereby creating overcrowded classrooms. Your constituent also charged that no classroom preparation time was available for instructors.

The size of classes is stipulated in SER's grant proposal and related contracts with the CETA prime sponsor. The contract for fiscal year 1978 stated that class size would not exceed 15 participants. According to the executive director, the usual class size ranges from 10 to 12 participants. Because an instructor has two shifts per day, there is a possible maximum of 30 participants a day for each instructor. The executive director believes that a class size of 15 or less should provide maximum educational benefits for participants and allow adequate time for instructors' preparation and other paperwork. We reviewed planned participant enrollments as stipulated in the 1978 grant proposal and concluded that the above position would not be justified for SER's English as a second language component.

During a January 19, 1979, tour of SER classrooms and other facilities, we noted that the number of participants in the classes observed ranged from one to three participants. Our review of SER's program activity records showed that during the 12-month period from October 1977 through September 1978, the number of participants enrolled in the English as a second language component ranged from 7 to 40. These enrollment levels were in compliance with SER's plans as stipulated in its 1978 grant agreement.

The executive director told us that when SER's funding is reduced, the number of participants and the number of instructors necessary to operate the program is also reduced.

The executive director added that it is impossible for an instructor to have 100 students at any given time, as your constituent charged.

#### BOOKS/EQUIPMENT

Your constituent charged that no one was ordering books for the teachers or taking care of audiovisual equipment which needed to be repaired or replaced.

The executive director told us that adequate funds have always been available for purchasing books and other teaching materials. Requests for such items are normally made through an instructor's supervisor. Our review of office supply requisitions (approved and disapproved) for fiscal year 1978 showed that the requisitions submitted by your constituent had not included requests for books. All requests submitted by your constituent were approved.

Regarding the malfunctioning audiovisual equipment, the executive director stated that it is the instructor's responsibility to notify the appropriate supervisor of any problems. Since your constituent asked not to be identified, we were unable to determine what audiovisual equipment under your constituent's control had not been repaired. The executive director believes that the complaining individual has not followed existing procedures if defective equipment has not been repaired.

#### SALARY

Your constituent stated that a raise was not received even though work evaluations had been good.

Project records showed that a 2-year freeze on salaries was imposed during the period from October 1976 to October 1978, and that only salary increases which resulted from promotions were exempted. The executive director told us that the freeze was initiated to cover the cost of an increase in the minimum wage which resulted in increased stipends for participants. The freeze was announced through an interoffice memorandum, and personnel records showed that raises were granted after the freeze was lifted.

#### FACILITIES


Your constituent charged that a building was used all summer without air-conditioning and sometimes the temperature in classrooms was around 100 degrees.

The executive director told us that, before November 1978, classroom training facilities were located in a building which had ventilation problems. When the space was leased in February 1978, the landlord promised to provide air-conditioning. When the landlord did not repair the air-conditioning system, SER canceled the lease agreement. Classroom training facilities were moved to the same building that houses the SER administrative staff in November 1978.

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~~Our~~ review disclosed that SER has a formal grievance procedure for resolving problems at the level at which they occur. The executive director told us that these procedures are explained to new employees during staff orientation sessions and each employee is responsible for employing the grievance procedures whenever problems arise. According to the executive director, no grievances had been filed in connection with any of the allegations addressed during our inquiry.

We trust that the information in this letter will serve your needs. Since our brief inquiry did not identify problems with the administrative practices at SER, we do not believe that there is sufficient basis to pursue further the issues addressed in this letter. As arranged with your office, in 5 days we will make copies of this report available to other interested parties.

Sincerely yours,

  
Gregory J. Ahart  
Director