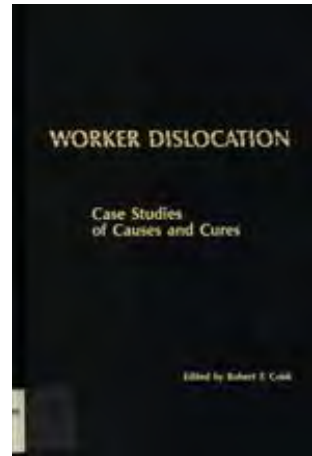

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The Houston Community College-Texas Employment commission Dislocated Worker Project

Susan A. MacManus
Rice University



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The Houston Community College-Texas Employment Commission Dislocated Worker Project

Introduction

The Houston Dislocated Worker Project is operated by the Houston Community College (HCC) and the Texas Employment Commission (TEC). The project, funded out of transition year 1984 Title III funds, provides services to dislocated workers in Harris County and the City of Houston. Job search, classroom training and on-the-job training were planned for 650 workers laid off from the steel, shipbuilding, oil field machinery and equipment, and industrial chemical industries.

The Origin of the Project

Despite the perception of Texas, and Houston in particular, as prototypical of the sunbelt, the unemployment rate in the Houston Metropolitan Area in September 1983 was 10 percent (61st out of the nation's 244 SMSAs); and for the City of Houston itself, 11 percent. At the same time the State of Texas posted the 18th highest unemployment rate among the states (8.6 percent). The relatively poor economies of Texas and Houston were largely attributable to problems in energy-related industries both at home and abroad, e.g., Mexico.

A survey conducted by the Texas Employment Commission in mid-1983 showed that except for banking, real estate, services, and

government, all other industries in the Houston area had experienced a sizable decline in total employment over the past year. The industries most severely affected were those manufacturing oil field machinery and equipment, supplying those manufacturers, or engaged in oil and gas drilling and extraction. This, in turn, carried over into the construction industry, which was also characterized by substantial layoffs. An analysis of insured unemployed workers in the Houston area showed that 60 percent were from the mining, construction, and manufacturing industries.

Indicative of the employment trends in petrochemical-related industries in the Houston area in 1983 were the closing of an Armco steel mill complex, which put about 2,500 workers out of jobs, and layoffs at Gulf, Superior, and Exxon Oil Company headquarters, Cameron Iron and Brown & Root. Other major nonpetrochemical-related layoffs were of employees of Continental Airlines and Weingarten's, a large grocery store chain which was closed and sold.

In summary, in spite of the fact that the Houston economy had been described as fairly diversified, the employment problems which emerged in 1982 and 1983 revealed the true extent to which its labor market is dependent upon the development, production, refining, and transportation of oil and petrochemical products, and the manufacture of machinery and equipment related to the oil industry.

A local labor market demand study, conducted by the University of Houston Center for Public Policy in spring 1984, identified the major long-term growth occupations, ranked from highest to lowest, as secretaries/typists; clerks; tellers; nursing staff; truck drivers; plumbers and plumber apprentices; data entry; air conditioning repair and installation; printers; electricians; auto mechanics; concrete workers; heavy equipment operators; automobile parts sales; medical lab technicians; dental assistants; carpenters; security guards; and exterminators.

Another survey, done in May 1984 by the Texas Employment Commission, reported the major occupational shortages in the Houston area at that time were for electronic technicians, mechanical engineers,

cashiers, clerks, housekeepers, cooks, food service workers, security guards, waiters and waitresses, auto mechanics, air conditioning mechanics, carpenters, carpet layers, plumbers, apartment maintenance workers, auto body repairers, neon tube benders, forklift operators, material handlers, service station attendants, sign painters, stationary engineers, and truck drivers (see table 8-1).

State Organization of Title III

The Texas JTPA Program is directly administered by the Training and Employment Development Division of the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA). TDCA has a unique, direct relationship to the governor's office since it is the only major state agency that does not have a board or commission functioning in a policy development and program oversight role. As a consequence, TDCA is viewed as "the governor's agency."

Within the governor's office, there is also a small employment and training section in the Office of Planning, which works with the JTPA staff in the Training and Employment Development Division of TDCA. It primarily offers input on policy decisions and serves in a coordinating, or liaison role with the private sector members of the State Job Training Coordinating Council and local Private Industry Councils (PICs) across the state.

All Title III projects are competitive demonstration projects to service delivery areas (SDAs). The aim of the Title III program in Texas is to provide relief to targeted areas of the state with serious worker dislocation problems. The bulk of the funded Title III projects have provided various types of job search assistance to aid workers in targeted industries in these areas. A politically important element of the Title III program, particularly from the governor's perspective, is a portion of funds set aside for emergencies (unforeseen layoffs and/or plant closures). This emergency fund has given the governor the flexibility to respond quickly to major economic crises which have hit key industries in areas without a diversified economic base, e.g., the petrochemical industry in the Beaumont-Port Arthur area in program year 1984.

Table 8-1
Heavy Demand Occupations (Houston Area)

Ranking of specific occupations with long-term potential (April 1984) ¹	Categories of specific occupations in demand (May 1984) ²
Secretaries-typists	Professional, technical & managerial
Clerks	Electronic technician Mechanical engineer
Tellers	Clerical and sales Cashier Clerk, general
Nursing staff	Insurance sales Retail sales
Truck drivers	Secretary Word processor
Plumbers and plumber apprentices	Service Cleaner, housekeeping
Data entry	Cook Food service workers
Air conditioning repair and installation	Guard Waiter/waitress
Printers	Machine trades Air conditioning mechanic Auto mechanic
Bookkeepers	Structural work
Electricians	Apartment maintenance workers Auto body repairer
Auto mechanics	Carpenter Carpet layer
Concrete workers	Neon tube bender Plumber
Heavy equipment operators	Miscellaneous Forklift operator
Automobile parts salespersons	Material handlers Service station attendant
Medical lab technicians	Sign painter Stationary engineer
Dental assistants	Truck driver
Carpenters	
Security personnel	
Pest exterminators	

1. University of Houston Center for Public Policy.

2. Texas Employment Commission.

TDCA allocated Title III funds for transition year 1984 and program year 1984 through an RFP process to targeted geographical areas of the state with serious structural worker dislocation problems, as opposed to areas merely suffering from cyclical downturns. The criteria used by the state in making funding decisions included: quality of the proposed project; commitment and coordination of the public and private sectors; experience and expertise of the staff; past track record of the proposed service provider; the extent to which both target industries (dislocation) and growth industries (hosts) were identified; provision for local matching funds; and evidence of community support and participation.

The state did not establish statewide Title III eligibility criteria, leaving such decisions to the discretion of program operators. The state did target specific geographical areas, namely those with high unemployment, layoffs and plant closures (Gulf Coast, East Texas, Border). In most cases, this targeting was on industries, but industry-specific requirements were never made part of any statewide eligibility criteria.

The state influenced the mix of services for its Title III programs through its structuring of the Requests for Proposals (RFPs). From the start, it appears the state basically, although informally, acknowledged that the most pressing need of the majority of dislocated workers was job search assistance. For transition year 1984 funds, the state issued one RFP (\$2.1 million) which called for providers to deliver both job search and training, retraining, and relocation services. Another RFP (\$225,000) was issued to select service providers to deliver only job search, counseling, and referral. In program year 1984, all projects were based on this two-tier model.

There were no specific service requirements for Title III operators in the Governor's Special Services Plan for the Transition Year. As stated, the "projects will provide job search assistance, training, retraining, and relocation assistance to workers dislocated by structural changes in the economy." The program year 1984 and program year 1985 Governor's Special Services Plan specifies only that "new demonstration projects will continue to use the project design employed by transition

year projects which entails: (1) serving the structurally unemployed with limited opportunities for reemployment in high unemployment areas; and (2) utilizing the two-tier (job search assistance coupled with intensive classroom training/retraining) design with 'host' firms."

Initially, the state on recommendation of the governor, had planned to spread Title III money around the state in each successive year of funding by changing the targeted geographical areas. However, this strategy was abandoned when it came time to issue RFPs for program year 1984 because it was apparent that some of the initially targeted areas, e.g., Houston, still had high numbers of dislocated workers even as the rest of the state began to recover from the recession. The JTPA staff recommended, and the State Job Training Coordinating Council approved, refunding for transition year 1984 Title III projects, including the project covered in this study.

The Nature of the Project

The Houston Community College-Texas Employment Commission (HCC-TEC) transition year 1984 project was originally designed to serve 650 workers laid off from the oil field machinery and equipment, ship-building, steel, and industrial chemical industries by offering job search and placement assistance as well as classroom and on-the-job training to eligible participants. The project fit in well with the needs of the local labor market since these were the industries hit hardest by changes in the petrochemical market and its technology.

By June 1984, the end of the transition year, the unemployment rate in the Houston area remained at the 10 percent level, still higher than the statewide rate of 8.5 percent. The same industries were still experiencing problems so that the program year 1984 HCC-TEC Title III project targeted dislocated workers from these industries as well as construction and the oil and gas extraction industries.

Once the state identified the geographical areas to be targeted for Title III demonstration projects in transition year 1984, and when TDCA had issued an RFP, training officials from Houston Community Col-

lege approached administrators in local offices of the Texas Employment Commission who handle special services to talk about the possibility of submitting a joint proposal. The two agencies have a long history of participation in federal employment and training programs as joint ventures. The eventual proposal called for HCC to provide the classroom training portion of the project; TEC would handle job search assistance and on-the-job training, as well as intake, eligibility determination, and placement. The HCC-TEC proposal was one of four submitted to TDCA from the Houston/Harris County SDAs, one of the five geographical areas targeted for Title III assistance. It was ultimately selected using the criteria described earlier.

The recipient of the Title III grant is actually Houston Community College, which in turn subcontracts with the Texas Employment Commission, which in turn subcontracts with a number of other agencies for program operations such as Career Circles, Inc., which provides skills assessment, motivational training, career counseling and planning, and Neighborhood Centers, Inc., which provides day care services for participants.

The following firms are OJT subcontractors of TEC:

Transition year 1984	Program year 1984
Tanco, Inc.	Comet Rice
G & H Tool and Die Company	Airco/McMorrhough, Inc.
Goins Engine Machine Shop	Container Maintenance
Espey, Huston & Assoc., Inc.	Services, Inc.
Cooper Valve Co.	Kent Process Control, Inc.
Metropolitan Transit Authority	Northern Engineering
	International Company
	Espey, Huston & Assoc., Inc.

Both HCC and TEC have long histories of participation in special employment and training programs, as do the individuals administering the Title III project from both agencies. This includes experience with programs for adults. For example, when HCC was created in the early 1970s, it absorbed the adult training portion of Houston Indepen-

dent School District. TEC, being part of the state Employment Services system, naturally has always dealt with experienced and older workers.

As noted above, this project is an integral part of the employment and training system in the Houston area, since it is jointly administered by two of the key actors in the system, i.e., the community college and the Employment Service. The other linkages (with SDAs, unions and employers) are more indirect. For example, the TEC JTPA project manager attends meetings of the Private Industry Councils of both SDAs serviced by this project (Houston, balance of Harris County) and sends monthly reports to administrators of each SDA. In addition, TEC and HCC representatives sit on both local PICs. In terms of union linkages, the TEC and HCC JTPA staffs include individuals who were formerly activists in local unions. They maintain close contact with the unions and have been instrumental in encouraging participants of relevant unionized groups, as in the closing of Weingarten's Grocery chain. HCC regularly solicits input from the local union community and has union representatives on its curriculum committees. Both TEC and HCC also have staff whose formal job responsibility is to involve the private sector in their programs, including JTPA.

To date, private sector involvement has not been as extensive as the program administrators would like. Its involvement has been through traditional mechanisms at both HCC and TEC. For example, at HCC, private sector representatives sit on the college's various training program curriculum committees and are constantly involved in updating training requirements in light of local labor market conditions. At TEC, the private sector's primary involvement has been through its use of regular TEC services which produces labor market occupational demand data helpful to JTPA administrators and trainers.

The JTPA project manager at TEC did note that she carefully monitors the business community for proposed mergers or sales and directly contacts company officials to determine if layoffs are anticipated. If so, she informs them of the JTPA Title III program and offers to come to the business to recruit participants.

Union involvement has largely been solicited by TEC JTPA staff and, in general, the unions have cooperated. For example, when the heavily-unionized Weingarten's Grocery chain was closed, a TEC JTPA staff member contacted union officials who agreed to set up a seminar for HCC-TEC to describe the Title III program and recruit participants. Likewise, when Continental Airlines was dissolved, its union was contacted and sent 25 to 30 members to the HCC-TEC program

The only negative reaction of unions to the JTPA transition year 1984 Title III program came from the Metropolitan Transit Authority union. It held up TEC's proposed OJT contract with MTA to train entry level diesel mechanics because it wanted the money to be used to upgrade jobs of employees already on board.

The Target Population. As noted earlier, an analysis of the local economic conditions determined that the targeted industries would be oil field machinery and equipment manufacturing, shipbuilding and repair, steel, petroleum refining and industrial chemical processing and construction, and the oil and gas extraction industries. The initial plan projected the following:

- 84 percent of the participants completing the program should be male;
- 77 percent 22-44 years of age;
- 26 percent college graduates; and
- 54 percent nonwhite.

The actual figures were:

- 81 percent male;
- 78 percent 22-44 years of age;
- 25 percent college graduates; and
- 63 percent nonwhites.

Initially, the majority of the participants were white-collar workers from Houston's petrochemical corporate headquarters, e.g., Exxon, Superior. These corporations adopted layoff strategies which focused on middle management positions. However, midway through the funding period,

the sale and closure of Weingarten's Grocery store chain produced a number of blue-collar dislocated workers.

Eligibility Criteria. To be eligible for participation, all workers from the targeted industries had to be unemployed and eligible for, receiving, or having exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. Additionally, eligible workers had to meet one or more criteria: their job or function was permanently eliminated; they were unlikely to return to their previous industry or occupation; they faced limited reemployment opportunities in the Houston SMSA labor market; they possessed obsolete skills due to technological change; or their age served as a barrier to reemployment.

TEC was responsible for recruiting and determining eligible participants. Potential participants were pulled from the TEC computer or walk-in applications by claim status and occupational code. A local TEC official then called the individual to ask if he/she was interested in participating in the program. If the individual replied positively, he/she was asked to go to the central project service center to determine eligibility and the type of assistance and skills needed to secure employment in stable, productive jobs offering a minimum long-term wage loss.

Types of Assistance Offered. All participants took part in a job search workshop which, on the average, lasted three weeks. These workshops were for groups of 12 to 15 participants and were conducted by either the Texas Employment Commission or Career Circles, Inc. Job search activities included skills assessment tests and motivational courses as well as job search skills and strategies such as resume writing, interviewing, job inquiry, identification of the hidden, or unadvertised, job market, etc.

If job search activities were unsuccessful, the participant was then sent through either classroom training, conducted by Houston Community College, or on-the-job training, arranged for the individual by TEC. During the nine-month period, 24 percent of the participants received classroom training; 7 percent were placed in OJT.

If the participant entered classroom training, he or she normally attended classes six hours a day for 6 to 16 weeks, depending on the skill covered by the course. The average time spent in classroom training was 12 weeks. Occupational training programs at the college level were identified as high demand by JTPA personnel at HCC with input from business executive advisory groups. Occupational training programs viewed as having the most potential for dislocated workers in the Houston area were air conditioning and refrigeration, computer maintenance, computer command automotive electronic technology, diesel mechanics, secretarial and clerical (especially word processing), and computer-aided drafting. In some cases, participants were put into the regular courses offered by HCC. In other cases, courses were designed just for JTPA Title III participants. For example, a course was created for cashiers laid off from Weingarten's Grocery chain to help them find bank teller jobs. The course offerings and scheduling were very flexible and tailored to the individual participant as carefully as possible.

OJT subcontracts were developed by TEC to aid participants for whom no appropriate classroom training programs existed. The bulk of the OJT contracts were for entry level wages around \$6.00 per hour. Those paying considerably higher were usually highly specialized sales jobs, i.e., \$13.47 per hour for a chemical equipment sales engineer. In fact, one of the most successful strategies used by TEC personnel was to encourage white-collar participants to go into sales in fields related to their area of expertise.

With the exception of the Metropolitan Transit Authority which sub-contracted to train 10 bus drivers and 21 diesel mechanics, most OJT contracts were for training 1 or 2 participants. Individuals who were not employed following their classroom training or OJT were sent back to TEC for an additional intensive placement effort, lasting up to two weeks.

Supportive Services. All participants were offered and accepted a transportation subsidy. Participants were paid \$5 per day by TEC while involved in job search activities. Those involved in classroom training were paid \$10 per week to defray transportation costs. Child care ser-

vices were available from Neighborhood Centers, Inc. under contract with TEC, and from HCC. Six percent of the participants took advantage of child care support services.

The service sequence for participants was somewhat fixed (job search followed by classroom training or OJT, then intensive placement activities). However, the time spent within each activity varied for individual participants.

All participants receive job search assistance which, on the average, lasts three weeks but may last up to five weeks if an individual's counselor feels he/she is close to getting a job. It should be noted that one objective of the HCC-TEC program is early reemployment. The plan was for nearly 70 percent of the participants to be employed within eight weeks of entry. The assumption was that most of the participants had been good, faithful employees, some on the job for 10 years or more, who were simply victims of a changing economy. It was anticipated that most had not been on the job market for years and simply did not know how to go about looking for a job or how to repackage their skills to make them saleable in the Houston labor market.

Program designers expected most participants would be psychologically devastated and in need of motivational counseling to restore their self-confidence as quickly as possible. Consequently, during the first week, participants were put through a series of confidence-building activities, including skills and aptitude tests, skills assessment, and the *What Color is Your Parachute?* exercise. Counselors worked with each individual and developed an employability plan. Individuals with similar needs were then assigned to group job search workshops, usually composed of 12 to 15 participants. Trainers (either TEC or Career Circles, Inc., in transition year 1984; TEC only in program year 1984) worked on polishing the participants' job search skills; resume writing, interviewing, phone and in-person inquiries, dress, and monitoring the local, regional, and national job markets, including the hidden market. Individuals had access to a Resource Center where want ads from local, regional, and national publications, professional and occupational guides, the TEC job bank, and a job leads board were available for their daily

perusal. Participants were required to make at least five contacts per day. They attended two classes a day, totaling three hours, and had the rest of the day to look for jobs.

Another attractive feature of the Resource Center was that it served as a temporary office for these individuals, complete with a secretary to type their resumes and letters and several typewriters and phones, a phone message board, a copy machine, and office supplies for their use.

Participants praised the job search assistance portion of the program. They were particularly impressed with the group job search approach. One former participant reported it was extremely helpful to “see other people at the same professional level in the same boat and to know that you’re not the only one having trouble finding a job.” He was also appreciative of the quality of the training personnel and the Resource Center.

The original projection was that 38 percent of the participants would need only job search assistance to get a job. Most of those still unemployed after four weeks of job search assistance were referred to either classroom or OJT training. During the transition year, 24 percent went through classroom training. HCC, in designing the training programs for Title III participants, first determined the occupational demands in the area (see table 8-1) and then determined whether a training program was already available or could be designed to fall within the 12-week training time frame. The training programs selected are reported in table 8-2. Occasionally, students were counseled to take regular college credit HCC course offerings. The more common practice was to place participants in existing training programs characterized as “open entry-open exit” with monthly enrollment cycles. Another common strategy was to create classes specifically for the participants when demand warranted it; at HCC 12 persons are sufficient to create a class. The latter strategy was followed in creating programs in computer maintenance, computer-aided drafting, computer skills upgrading, and bank tellering. The overall goal was to put together a group of classes that made a *full-time* training package, minimum of 6 hours per day; 30 hours per week, for 6 to 16 weeks. The original proposal also call-

ed for the participant to spend the remainder of his/her training period at an actual work site, 40 hours per week, while only spending 4 hours per week in the classroom. This idea was abandoned because of the Houston job market. Employers did not feel they had to participate in a training program to get good people.

Table 8-2
Classroom Training Options for JTPA Title III Participants
Houston Community College

Category/type	Category/type
Office occupations	Computer/electronics
Secretary	Computer maintenance technology
Clerk	Electronics technician
Accounting clerk	Computer programming
Word processor	Radio/TV repair
Typist	CAD
Tourist/travel trades	
Bank teller	Food services
Office manager	Catering
Receptionist	Food service
Data entry	Cook
Data processing	Bartender
Press operator	Restaurant manager
	Waiter/waitress
Auto services	Hotel/motel occupations
Auto mechanic	Floral occupations
Diesel mechanic	
Auto body repairs	Miscellaneous ¹
Heavy vehicle maintenance	Sales
	Transportation
Building services	Delivery
Air conditioning mechanic	Real estate appraisal
Apartment maintenance	Cosmetology
Apartment management	
Security	
Electrical wiring technology	
Appliance repair	

1. Used only in unusual situations since many of these involve longer periods of training than are available under the Title III program.

The HCC-TEC project had no eligibility requirements for entry into the classroom training program. When the participant was referred to HCC, he/she came with a resume in hand, and his or her Birkman Test scores. One of five counselors was assigned to the individual to discuss training options.

HCC took all referrals from TEC. However, they did send back about 10 percent, those individuals for whom no meaningful training program could be designed. According to the HCC JTPA director, the vast majority of those sent to HCC were college-educated, mid-level draftsmen, designers, or engineers. They were usually in their 40s. There were also a significant number of foreigners, particularly Middle Easterners, most laid off from petrochemical companies.

The most difficult to deal with were the engineers who had unrealistic views of the status of their profession and refused to look at their layoff as anything but a temporary phenomenon. According to the counselors, they were extremely difficult to counsel because they had no desire to change careers or refocus their skills in more employable occupations. As the figures in table 8-3 show, the majority of those sent to HCC in the transition year went through the office occupation, data processing, computer technology and maintenance, air conditioning and refrigeration, engineering technology, vehicle maintenance and repair, or real estate training programs. The proportion of HCC trainees placed was 70 percent. Another 5 percent of the trainees enrolled in school following their classroom training.

As noted earlier, most OJT subcontracts were developed by TEC to aid participants for whom no appropriate classroom training program could be designed by HCC. The bulk of the OJT contracts were for entry-level wages around \$6.00 per hour. Employers who participated were reimbursed for 50 percent of the wages paid to a trainee for up to 20 weeks. The understanding was that trainees were to be hired immediately and receive all benefits provided other employees. Most OJT contracts were arranged with small companies willing to train machinists and equipment operators. The largest single OJT contract was with the Metropolitan Transit Authority which agreed to train bus drivers and

diesel mechanics. TEC personnel responsible for arranging OJT contracts reported they had the most success with small companies, particularly if they could personally meet with the company owner. They reported little luck in dealing with personnel offices or large companies.

Table 8-3
Enrollment in HCC Classroom Training Courses
Transition Year

Training course	Number of participants with all/part of training in course
Air conditioning and refrigeration	16
Mechanical engineering technology	21
Electronic engineering technology	13
Industrial electricity	7
Aviation maintenance technology	1
Stationary engineer	1
Heavy vehicle maintenance	8
Auto mechanics	6
Diesel mechanics	1
Welding	1
*Computer maintenance	7
*Computer aided drafting	22
*Computer skills seminar	11
Data processing	17
Word processing	1
Office occupations	44
Business occupations	2
GED/typing	2
Business technology	1
Travel and tourism	3
Accounting	2
Technical communications	1
*Financial management (bank teller)	13
Human resources management	9
Industrial & retail sales and marketing	1
Commercial art	1
Interior design	1
Upholstery	1
Real estate	11
Real estate tax appraisal	5
Cosmetology	3
Cook/chef	5

*Courses designed specifically for Title III participants.

Finally, individuals who still had not found a job following their classroom training or OJT, were then afforded additional, intensive placement services for one to four weeks. TEC officials were assigned to help each participant find a job. Usually they were given priority for TEC job bank listings. Thirty-nine percent of the participants, much higher than the 24 percent initially projected, went through the intensive placement exercise.

As already noted, counseling for both job search skills and wage expectations is a very important component of this project. It is an integral, almost daily, activity in job search assistance. Participants are also counseled as they enter classroom training and develop their training plan. They are assigned to a counselor who specializes in the broad training area which includes the specific training program(s) in which they are interested. Likewise, they interact with a TEC counselor/monitor if they are being sent through OJT. Finally, they receive intensive daily counseling if they ultimately must go through the final program activity, intensive placement. At each step, participants are served by counselors assigned to help them. In other words, counseling assignments are *not* random or on a first come, first served basis. The goal is high quality personal interaction between a counselor who knows the participant's interests, skills, goals, and needs and the participant. Most of the participants felt that counselors were quite good, and *honest* about the job market and their potential for employment in various capacities at certain wage levels.

Program Participants

Most of the participants during the transition year were midcareer types laid off from the oil field machinery and equipment manufacturing, shipbuilding and repair, steel, petroleum refining and industrial chemical processing and construction, and the oil and gas extraction industries, the targeted industries, as well as some food-related industries, (Weingarten's Grocery store chain, and Bama Foods). Most were male (81 percent), in their late thirties or forties (78 percent). Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) were nonwhites. One-fourth (25 percent) were col-

lege graduates. Most of the college graduates had held middle management or professional positions in petrochemical related corporate headquarters.

All eligible participants from the targeted industries were enrolled. Recall that the process for recruiting participants was for TEC to contact individuals who appeared eligible, namely, in the correct industry codes, and ask them if they were interested in participating. The recruitment process stopped when the class was full. The HCC-TEC project actually was able to serve 855 participants on funding which had originally been planned to serve 650.

Program Outcomes

Interviews with participants in the TEC job search program revealed they were very pleased with the level and quality of service they received. Several ranked it higher than private sector employment agencies. They attributed the program's success to a highly dedicated and professional staff, the job club approach which they felt restored their self-confidence, and the Resource Center. The positive appraisal given by participants was also forthcoming from program administrators. One TEC trainer called it "the most successful jobs program I have been involved with in 18 years with TEC."

Overall, 628 of the 855 participants were placed in employment (see table 8-4) for an overall placement rate of 73.5 percent. This performance is fairly impressive given the general condition of the labor market. The cost per placement, calculated by dividing the total project allocation by the number of participants placed in unsubsidized jobs, is \$1,735.

The average wage at entry for 815 participants for whom information was available was \$12.78 per hour. The average wage of those placed was \$9.05 per hour, for a wage replacement rate of 71 percent.

Table 8-4
Enrollment and Participation Characteristics
from October 1983 to October 1984

Selected characteristics	Transition year terminations	Percent
Total participants	855	100.0
Total terminations		
Entered employment	628	73.5
Sex		
Male	690	80.7
Female	165	19.3
Age		
14-15	0	0
16-19	0	0
20-21	4	0.5
22-44	667	78.0
45-54	112	13.1
55 and over	72	8.4
Education		
School dropout	39	4.6
Student (H.S. or less)	0	0
High school graduate or more	598	69.9
College graduate	218	25.5
Race		
White	316	37.0
Black	343	40.1
Hispanic	104	12.0
Native American	0	0
Asian	93	10.9
Employment barriers		
Limited English	2	0.2
Handicapped	12	1.4
Offender	0	0
Other	0	0
Benefit reciprocity		
U.I. claimant	602	70.4
U.I. exhaustee	253	29.6
Public assistance (GA)	NA	NA
AFDC	NA	NA
Youth AFDC	NA	NA
Labor force status (prior 26 weeks)		
Unemployed 1-14 weeks	254	29.7
Unemployed 15 or more weeks	601	70.3
Not in labor force	0	0

SOURCE: JTPA Monthly Participant Status Report (completed 12/10/84)

Some of the reasons why this project had a high placement rate in spite of the fact that it was slow getting started, due to procedural problems at both the state and local level, were:

- (1) the combination of HCC and TEC—agencies with long histories of working together on federal and state funded employment and training programs. Many of the high-level administrators, project managers, and training personnel at both institutions have known each other for a long time. In addition, the agencies' previous experience with externally funded programs actually enabled the project to start up faster than other Title III projects in the state because TEC was willing to proceed on the basis of a notification letter on the good faith that the funds would arrive. TEC "front-ended" the costs for three months;
- (2) good "readings" of the industries to be targeted, the occupations in demand, and the characteristics of the likely participants. This was the result of fairly extensive market analyses at both the state and local level;
- (3) the uniqueness of the Title III project in the Houston employment and training market; as the participant characteristics showed, a significant proportion of them were in their early forties and there was really no one particularly interested in providing the level of job search assistance and retraining that they needed to reenter employment without suffering a tremendous drop in income;
- (4) a highly professional job search program mixing motivational and skill building activities on both an individual and group basis. The participant's initial contact with program personnel was in "classy" surroundings. Both the Career Circles, Inc., and TEC Job Search Assistance programs were conducted in professional office settings which was certainly different from what most of the participants expected from a "federal program." The quality of the training personnel was also outstanding in comparison with other federal programs observed. The Resource

Center was another positive factor, particularly since it gave participants a temporary office to work from in their job search efforts. Realistic counseling was another positive factor;

- (5) another factor was the flexibility provided within a somewhat fixed service sequence; participants were given flexibility in terms of time spent in various activities (specifically job search, classroom training and OJT). There was also flexibility in the training packages put together; they were tailored to each individual's skills, interests, and needs.

Some problems surfaced during the transition year. Some were externally imposed; others were not. The major problems were:

- (1) the delay in state approval of the contract; while the TEC portion of the project (job search assistance) could begin without money in hand, the HCC portion could not. The delay was one of the reasons the initial plan to combine classroom training with a job with a private employer had to be abandoned. (The other reason was the employer's market described earlier;)
- (2) the initial quasi-formal plan for serving nearly equal numbers of white-collar workers, while met, was largely a result of luck. Until the unexpected closing of the Weingarten's Grocery chain and Bama Foods, few blue-collar workers were entering the program;
- (3) getting professional and managerial white-collar workers to go through classroom training with a serious, positive attitude. A related problem was that some of these participants felt the HCC programs were too drawn out and aimed at "less intelligent" individuals. Obviously, it was originally expected that the bulk of the white-collar workers would find employment following job search assistance, while a large proportion of the blue-collar workers would need more extensive training or retraining. The most successful strategy used with white-collar professionals was to convince them to go into sales in fields related to their previous occupation;

- (4) finding OJT contractors; the nature of the local market meant that employers did not need to rely upon TEC to find workers;
- (5) for the same reason there were some difficulties experienced in generating involvement of the private sector.

Overall Assessment

Overall, this project would have to be judged a fairly successful one for the reasons cited throughout the report:

- (1) accurate and appropriate targeting of problem industries;
- (2) good gauging of characteristics of potential participants;
- (3) the design of the job search assistance portion of the project;
- (4) individualized counseling and intensive placement efforts;
- (5) high placement rates; and
- (6) low per placement costs.

In a sense, the effective overall thrust of the project was to teach participants how to repackage their skills in a format more saleable to other sectors of the local job market. There was little substantive new training, retraining, or relocation.