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Proposal
for a
Craft Business Enterprise
for
Low Income Citizens of the San Luis Valley

Submitted by
The Virginia Neal Blue Resource Centers for Colorado Women
a Project of the
Colorado Commission on the Status of Women

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Proposal

As a result of a feasibility study completed in August, 1974, the State Headquarters of the Virginia Neal Blue Resource Centers for Colorado Women proposes that a craft business enterprise be undertaken immediately for the purposes of:

- 1) reviving and reintroducing skills necessary to produce selected traditional Hispanic handicrafts among rural low income citizens of the San Luis Valley.
- 2) bringing to the Hispanic peoples of the Valley a renewed pride and pleasure in their cultural heritage.
- 3) using the craft business enterprise as a means of eventually improving the overall economic status of the people of the San Luis Valley.

Introduction

Funded by the Four Corners Regional Commission the feasibility study was initiated and administered by the Virginia Neal Blue State Headquarters and an Advisory Board. The proposal had received encouragement from representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and various foundation representatives.

Based on the study's results the proposed program is designed to take place in three phases.

Phase I (June 1, 1975-June 30, 1976-Total cost without field trips:\$93,472; Total cost with field trips \$99,392) provides for the following:

- 1) initial organizational activities including hiring and orientation of staff.
- 2) the establishment of craft groups in San Luis, Capulin, and Center, Colorado. The goal for the number of people recruited will be 75.
- 3) the offering of instruction in six crafts at each location.
- 4) the formation of an Advisory Board broadly representative of the communities of the San Luis Valley. It will include representatives of the craft groups.
- 5) a crafts fair, at the end of Phase I.
- 6) a comprehensive objective evaluation of the project at the end of Phase I to determine whether the project should enter Phase II, expand and actual market production be undertaken.

Phase II (July 1, 1976-June 30, 1978-Total cost without field trips:\$184,992; Total cost with field trips:\$190,912) provides for:

- 1) expansion of craft groups, both in number of persons offered training and in locations
- 2) development of production schedules and the beginning of actual marketing.
- 3) Expansion of instructional techniques.

Phase III (July 1, 1978-June 30, 1980-Total Cost without field trips:\$79,695; Total Cost with field trips \$85,616) provides for:

- 1) expanded recruitment of potential craftworkers, continued instruction.
- 2) shifting of organizational structure from craft groups to formalized marketing association.
- 3) increased marketing of craft products.
- 4) partial funding of the project by profits of the marketing association.

Sponsoring organization: The Virginia Neal Blue Resource Centers a project of the Colorado Commission on the Status of Women, are a non-profit, tax exempt organization. Their total income for projects and operational expenses comes from contributions of businesses, organizations, public and private foundations and individuals. The Centers comprise a network throughout the State. The Centers aim to improve the opportunities and abilities of women and are concerned with women in the areas of employment, counseling, education, training, the home and the family.

At the hub is a State headquarters, opened in 1972, at Colorado Women's College. Its functions are:

- 1) to set priorities
- 2) to provide direction, supervision and technical assistance
- 3) to develop and test pilot projects
- 4) to develop and implement state-wide programs

The VNB State Headquarters will serve as fiscal agent for the project and will provide the following administrative services: recruitment, hiring and supervision of staff, coordination of VNB State Headquarters, Crafts Enterprise Advisory Board and the local VNB Branch, bookkeeping, payroll preparation, public relations, dissemination of information, liason with funding agencies, reports preparation.

Program Design

Phase I (June 1, 1975 - June 30, 1976)

This phase would consist of organizational and instructional activities and would last from the date of funding to June of 1976. Activities to be undertaken are:

1) preparation of a slide-tape show, which would include photos of traditional objects from museum collections as well as examples of modern work, together with their role in Hispano life and techniques of manufacture. An explanation of the project would also be included. The script would be in Spanish and English. This slide-tape show would be used for recruitment of potential crafts workers and could also be used for public relations work.

2) hiring of the staff consisting of: a coordinator--who would oversee and manage the initial establishment of crafts groups in San Luis, Capulin and Center, make arrangements for teachers, secure raw materials, later develop potential market outlets, set up and oversee a production schedule and arrange for the craft items to get to market.

The hiring of the consultant would be done at the outset of the project. She would assist with and supervise the preparation of the slide tape show, consult with the State Headquarters on the hiring of the Coordinator, do general consultation and recommendation relative to the securing of teachers and all involved in the organizational procedures.

The consultant would play a continuing role, visiting each craft group, advise on the quality of the developing crafts, attend Advisory Board meetings, acting as consultant to this group also and at the end of Phase I present a complete evaluation report on the project.

Three half-time assistant coordinators will be employed, one to work with each group. They should be members of the community in which the groups are located. Their primary role would be one of encouragement and as they themselves progressed in their craft skills they could offer technical expertise between visits by the teachers. They would also assist the coordinator in setting up meetings, arranging for the teachers' visits, the teachers' lodging and any other necessary details.

The teachers would be employed to make one weeklong visit each month to the Valley to work with the groups. All of the teachers would be available to do this except the gold and silver filagree jewelry teachers. We propose that two artisans with these skills be brought from Ecuador and remain for two months. The teachers could be housed in the Valley with local families. Teachers as well as persons interested in crafts' production will be available at this time although not available over the summer months due to seasonal employment. The teachers, many of whom are already recommended, are employed in their own crafts businesses during the tourist season and the local people are most likely to have full time employment during the summer. If they are not employed they are usually busy cultivating gardens.

3) The craft groups to meet weekly, or perhaps more often, could be organized in September and the teachers' initial visits should begin. The four crafts discussed in the feasibility study should be offered. They are colcha embroidery, tin work, straw mosaic and gold and silver filagree jewelry. In addition simple carpentry and weaving should be offered. The carpentry would consist of making items for the straw mosaic as well as making floor looms for weaving. Those interested in weaving would begin to learn spinning and dyeing of wool. Shortly after the groups are established field trips for the craft workers should be arranged. There should be trips to Santa Fe, Taos, Colorado Springs and Denver. The purpose of these trips would be for encouragement, viewing of authentic Hispano crafts in museums and for developing further knowledge of the history of the traditional crafts of the Valley.

4) At the end of Phase I, in June of 1976, a crafts fair would be held, perhaps at old Ft. Garland. This would be an artistic celebration for the whole Valley. The emphasis should be on the displaying of the traditional crafts, not on selling them. If any purchasing of crafts takes place it should be incidental to the artistic focus. At the end of Phase I a thorough evaluation would be prepared by the consultant. If that evaluation indicated there was indeed the interest level and desire on the part of persons in the Valley to produce traditional Hispanic crafts then Phase II could begin.

5) During Phase I many community contacts will need to be made or renewed, organization of the Advisory Board must take place, locating and securing of meeting places and recruitment meetings will begin. The recruitment meetings should be held in numerous communities in the Valley, not just in the three communities where the groups are proposed. The meetings should be geared to reach as many of the population as possible.

It is crucial that the purposes and philosophy of this project be constantly focused on local initiative, local interest and increasing local control. The very fact of the State Headquarters of the VNB Centers initiating and proposing to administer the project injects the element of outside influence into the program, but the program is designed to create as many safeguards as possible. For example: An Advisory Board, broadly representative of the San Luis Valley, would be formed and their role must be encouragement, guidance and advice relative to policy decisions and each of the craft groups should always have at least one representative on the Advisory Board.

Phase II (July 1, 1976 - June 30, 1978)

Presuming Phase I was highly successful Phase II would provide a period of expansion of craft groups and shift of focus from a vocational interest to actual production schedules. The coordinator would begin to search for market outlets and later in Phase II, which would last from 12 to 24 months, actual marketing would begin. Staffing for Phase II would require 3 additional assistant coordinators. The teachers would make six visits a year, one every two months but perhaps staying longer than one week each visit if more groups were established. It would be assumed that by this time in the project some of the local artisans could also instruct others.

The crafts of carpentry and weaving could expand naturally at this time if the interest developed. The carpenters could shift to furniture building with the necessity of bringing in a teacher to instruct the building and carving of traditional Hispanic furniture. Actual weaving instruction could begin as the looms would have been built in Phase I. At the end of Phase II it would be expected that the weaving and carpentry skills would be at the level of the other craft skills at the end of Phase I. It would be hoped that eventually the weavers would produce the woolen cloth for the colcha embroidery.

Phase III (July 1, 1978 - June 30, 1980)

In this Phase of 12 to 24 months the groups could be further expanded if interest and production continued to succeed. Markets would further expand as would production volume. At this point it would be appropriate for the craft groups to shift from individual informal groups to some sort of guild, marketing association or cooperative organization.

During this Phase the control would shift even more and eventually completely from the State Headquarters of the VNB Centers to the local marketing association assuming the association could be self sustaining. The staff requirements would be the same for this Phase. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has offered to assist in organization of appropriate forms of marketing associations. Teacher time would depend on the number of persons involved in initial learning phases but would probably be approximately that of Phase II -- one visit every 2 months. Again, as in Phase II, local people who had become skilled might also instruct.

Variables

There are several variables in this project.

One of the variables is the number of persons who will be initially involved in the craft groups. Tentative projections indicate that 75 persons is a realistic goal. We plan to recruit any and all who are interested. This will differ from many former projects in that the number of persons participating will depend on local initiative and interest rather than on a "quota" system. This is another safeguard which will be built into the program. We anticipate an approximate participation, (based on the estimates determined by the artist-designer consultant in the feasibility study), of 25 persons in each group. She also indicates that 10 crafts workers in each group, successfully completing Phase I would be considered a "success".

As the project progresses it must be understood that each club must take its own initiative in self determination. All the crafts will initially be offered in each community. However, we foresee the possibility that eventually

there may evolve groups engaged in a single craft -- a "Colcha group", a "tin work club" etc. We do not know what vocational form they will take-- and propose that this be left open, again, to local initiative and spontaneous evolution. If there is indication of a trend towards one craft preference the staff and consultants, as well as VNB administration should be open to this and make arrangements to encourage others, not interested perhaps in the trend, to move to other groups, or form their own, thus participating in the expansion we foresee at certain points (Phase II for instance).

Another variable is the initial budget for raw materials. This budget must, of necessity, be an estimate. We have obtained actual figures, based on current prices, of raw materials. The number of persons engaged in each craft being a variable, the time and interest necessary to produce a certain volume of the finished product being also unknown we will only be able to estimate appropriate budget figures.

When the crafts business enterprise reaches the point of actual production schedules, the raw materials estimate will be adjusted to reflect actual production potential. Initially it must be understood that the figure is very rough.

The third variable is the schedule. Through Phase I is seen as a test period. If the project is organized properly and the teaching goes according to plan we can anticipate accurate and definitive evaluation after Phase I. After that period we will be able to adjust timeline and budgets for the other phases. At this point, however, we have no way of knowing what the volume of production will be. Again, with sensitivity, geared toward success, we feel the project must develop at its' own speed, with support systems always ready to be of assistance.

The role of all the support systems must be viewed as enabling the actual goal to be achieved. The roles of VNB Headquarters, the staff, the consultant as well as the Advisory Board must always focus on this. This is one important lesson learned from the failure of previous attempts to "help" people. We strongly propose this enabling role as assisting people to help themselves. If that element is overlooked the project is doomed to failure. This is the reason for budget of the support systems at the beginning, with the budget of these support systems diminishing as the Project progresses through the Phases. It is intentional, as we do not wish to create another bureaucratic superstructure. If the initial purposes are carefully followed -- achievement of self pride and eventually economic return--the craft enterprise will flourish. The candid evaluation at the end of Phase I will be designed to tell us this.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this project will be done continually. We plan for periodic reports from the Coordinator as well as the part time coordinators as to the progress.

Formal and more comprehensive evaluation, incorporating information from the coordinators' reports, will be done by the consultant at specific prescribed periods.

The most significant evaluation report will be at the end of Phase I. This will indicate whether or not it is even feasible to proceed with future Phases. This evaluation will incorporate proposals for adjustments and more accurate

estimates of timelines, budgets and numbers of persons to be involved in craft production.

The VNB Headquarters will be responsible for these periodic evaluations being available on a scheduled basis.

Economic Impact of the Project

As was stated in the feasibility report we do not see the project as being economically impacting on the Valley initially. The primary results will be those of self pride and enthusiasm for renewing of a lost cultural tradition. However, if the project progresses as we anticipate, with proper support systems, continual sensitive planning and proper management and evaluation, the ultimate results should bear significant economic results and bring new life and enthusiasm to the low income residents of the San Luis Valley.