

**1997 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY
FOR THE
RESOURCE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS**

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT: To evaluate whether the program objectives have been achieved and to what extent, and for objectives not achieved what corrective actions are needed.

PRIMARY GOALS OF THE RESOURCE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS: Provide a hands-on work experience in a natural resource management agency; and provide an awareness of the resource management career opportunities.

LONG-RANGE GOAL: Assist/Place students who are interested in exploring natural resource careers through RAPS (second year) and/or through a student employment program to help students develop additional knowledge and work skills in a specific career field.

Planned Program:

Some 22 RAPS positions were made available for eligible students in 11 local communities by five Federal agencies throughout Wyoming for the summer of 1997. Funding was distributed through the Private Industry Council (PIC), to the local Employment Resource Centers (ERC), and Service Providers. Recruitment was carried out locally by the ERCs, advertised in the local papers, and through mailing of program brochures to the Employment Resources Centers in the local communities. Applicants were screened in accordance with the JTPA Title IIB program criteria administered by the Wyoming Department of Employment. Each applicant was tested for competencies in math and reading. Those selected students who did not test at the required level of competency in math and reading, were required to attend remediation classes during the employment period (Monday or Friday each week). At the end of the summer, students in remediation were retested for improvement to the required level of competency. During the employment period (8-10 weeks), students were evaluated monthly by their mentors or supervisors for performance and work maturity. At the end of the summer, a student could receive a positive program termination by improving math and/or reading proficiencies one and one-half grade levels, obtaining work maturity through evaluation of performance and returning to school, or obtaining unsubsidized employment.

In addition, all students were required to complete a Student Educational Handbook (replaced the requirement for life skills training away from the work site) during the course of the employment period. This handbook was designed to provide educational enrichment by providing practical exercises (reading, math, definitions, careers descriptions, etc.) which related to the actual job experience, or work done by other employees at the

work site.

General Accomplishments:

Additional work sites became available in late spring of 1997 which permitted a greater number of RAPS participants than planned. In total some 26 students participated in RAPS in ten different Wyoming communities during the summer of 1997. Seven, or 27 percent, of the selected students had special problems or needs (academically disadvantaged, youth offenders, teen parents, foster care, etc.). The selected students participated in RAPS for four to 11 weeks between May and August of 1997. Selected students were placed with five different Federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Resources Conservation Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs) in a variety of positions including forestry aid, mineral material aid, computer clerk, solid minerals technician, biological aide, range technician, geological aid, surveying aide, and conservation and wildlife aides. Most of the students were placed in a position with a mentor that matched the student's particular work interest. Every effort was made to place other students in available positions as close to their specific interest as possible. All total there were 32 mentors with some mentors volunteering to take two students while others shared the mentoring of one student.

One RAPS participant working as Recreation Technician (Information and Interpretation) this past summer was converted to a Student Career Experience Program appointment at the end of the summer. She is pursuing an Associate of Arts degree at North West Community College and will continue her education in the Recreation Resource Management degree program at the University of Montana. Another RAPS student who is attending Central Wyoming College is being considered for a STEP position during the winter/spring semester of 1998.

OBJECTIVE 1:

INCREASE TO 90 PERCENT THE PROPORTION OF RAPS PARTICIPANTS LEARNING THE REQUIRED APPRENTICESHIP WORK SKILLS and COMPLETING THE 8 TO 10 WEEK SUMMER PROGRAM.

Specific Accomplishments:

Of the 26 students participating in RAPS, 21, or 81 percent, received a positive termination and reached work maturity as indicated by the Work Maturity Evaluations (Table 2). The Student Educational Handbook was attempted by all students. Nineteen, or 73 percent, of all the students completed all handbook units, seven, or 27 percent, of the students did not complete all (9) handbook units. The results of a questionnaire included in the Student Educational Handbook Unit #9 indicated that 17, or 66 percent, of all the students responding considered an interest in jobs and careers in the natural resource management field more than once within the past six months

(Attachments). Interviews conducted in August with RAPS participants indicated that only 11, or 43 percent, of all the students indicated an actual interest in pursuing a professional career in natural resource management or other biological and supporting fields.

TABLE 2 1997 - WORK MATURITY EVALUATION SUMMARY & RESULTS *1					
RAPS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	Positive Termination Y/N	Work Maturity Y/N	Return to School Full time Y/N	Handbooks Completed No./Tot. Hdbks	Career Interest No./Tot. Students
Increase to 90% the proportion of RAPS participants completing the 8 to 10 week summer program, and learning the required apprenticeship work skills	21/5	21/5	25/1	19/26	11/26
Percent Accomplishment	81%/19%	81%/19%	96%/4%	73%/27%	43%/100%
*1 Compiled from all RAPS evaluation and interview data collected during 1997.					

A RAPS Mentor/Supervisor Workshop was held April 1997 at the Holiday Inn in Casper, Wyoming. Since this workshop was attended by mentors, supervisors, and program coordinators from different agencies, attendees had an opportunity to share experiences with new and experienced participants. This enhanced the discussion and understanding of the program and its operation, as well as diminished the administrative problems which would ordinarily arise during the summer work period.

A RAPS Mentor/Supervisor/Coordinator Workshop was held October 7 and 8, 1997, to identify, discuss, and prioritize concerns, and develop actions which can be implemented to resolve these concerns. Sixteen of the 48 participants (Federal agencies, Wyoming Department of Employment, Olsten Staffing Services) in the 1997 RAPS program attended the workshop.

Workshop attendees were divided into three work groups made up of Federal employees from three of the participating Federal agencies and the Wyoming Department of Employment. Each group developed a prioritized list of concerns, and developed at least three recommended actions to resolve their concerns by responding to five basic questions as follows:

1. WHAT the problem or issue is.
2. WHY the problem should be resolved.
3. WHO can resolve it.
4. WHEN the problem or issue should be resolved.
5. HOW the problem or issue can be resolved, or the recommended action.

The results of this workshop along with the summary of evaluation

materials (Attachment) collected throughout the employment period were used to develop this program assessment.

Identification of the Problem/Issue:

Recruitment: The recruitment and selection processes were carried out by the Wyoming Department of Employment, Employment Resources Centers, in accordance with the JTPA Title IIB program criteria. Income, age, physical and mental disabilities, teen parenthood, criminal youth offenses, previous participation in JTPA Title IIB program, etc., were used to determine which applicants had the most need. Depending upon the amount of funding and number of work site requests, these applicants were referred first to the available work sites for consideration. As a result, work sites had little control over the outcome of this process due to very few applicants referred by the ERC to the selecting official for the available RAPS positions (two or less per position). Screening based upon the most need provided only the unskilled and immature students for some work sites to consider.

The majority of recruitment was done in the month of May just prior to the end of the spring semester. RAPS information brochures were mailed in early March to Employment Resources Centers and Federal partners who were encouraged to recruit early to avoid a last minute rush. However, there was still an inadequate number of applicants for most of the work sites. This was partially due to prospective applicants not returning their completed paperwork to the local ERC. The ERC cannot refer applicants until the application is complete. As the ERC's refer applicants to the Federal work sites for interviews, the timeframe to consider applicants for the available positions is shortened/squeezed together, thereby, reducing the available time for the interview and hiring processes to work properly. Even when the participating Federal agencies and the Wyoming Department of Employment concentrated recruitment at the high schools and the scheduled career/job fairs, many students or JTPA applicants never heard of RAPS.

Knowledge about RAPS is also limited within the participating Federal agencies, as well as the very groups from which students are recruited. This is indicated by the limited visible support for RAPS by managers and the low numbers of prospective enthusiastic mentors. Recruitment of willing mentors is very difficult. They are particularly needed to help with RAPS participants when the regular mentor/supervisor is gone.

Action: Numbers of applicants could be improved through collaborative recruitment efforts carried out at the local high schools and colleges by representatives of both the ERC and the participating Federal agencies in early spring (March and April). The ERCs have requested us to work more closely with them to find eligible students through job fairs and contacts with school counselors and teachers. By starting recruitment of applicants

early, the work sites and ERCs will not feel the pressure of everyday work and may have more time to help a student gain a great opportunity in RAPS.

Applicants may be recruited through increased education about the RAPS program carried out through every available tool including:

local newspapers, Wyoming Horizons (BLM publication), program, radio and TV spots, testimonials from previous RAPS students T-Shirts, job fairs, clubs/organizations, libraries (school and local), displays, and group homes. RAPS recruitment materials should be improved by development of a localized video for Wyoming RAPS, updating the present brochures, development of posters to use at job/career fairs (high schools, colleges), and using previous RAPsters at job fairs.

Management should visibly support the existing RAPS mentors/coordinators and the program, encourage other employees to take the plunge with a RAPS student, and wear the RAPS T-shirt when appropriate. Managers should encourage the use of the RAPS program on proposed field projects by using one or more RAPS students to help accomplish them. This is imperative given tight budgets and lack of personnel to accomplish the work. Job sharing should be considered to overcome the concern of prospective mentors with a lot of work and little time to do it.

Job Description: There is a lack of understanding about the purpose of the RAPS position on the part of the ERC personnel, Federal agency mentor/supervisor, and the RAPS participant. The job description does not fully explain the job duties, special skills or interests required, or other job/work site characteristics which may assist the applicant with matching his/her interests to the job, or the ERC with placement of the student.

Action: Complete job descriptions early in the fiscal year so the RAPS coordinators, Federal work sites, and school counselors or teachers can begin to direct students to ERCs to make application. This would help the ERCs direct the best qualified students to the Federal work sites instead of only the most in need, or everyone that comes along - qualified or not.

To avoid the placement of a student in an undesirable situation or a position which does not match his/her job interests, close collaboration between the case manager and the Federal work site mentor/supervisor is necessary prior to selection and throughout the employment period. This may help screen out students that do not meet income guidelines or job skills/career goals criteria. Job descriptions have been brief and somewhat vague or general in the description of duties or tasks. Special requirements have been mostly lacking in the job descriptions. To get a better job match with the student's interest, job descriptions for RAPS positions should specifically address major duties or tasks, work environment, special physical requirements or work skills or interests needed, and any specific expectations for the position.

However, job descriptions should be flexible enough to accommodate necessary adjustments in work assignments.

Special problems: Some of the students with special problems (i.e., teen parent, youth offender, foster care, remediation) seemed to have greater difficulty adjusting to the work site environment. The work supervisors and mentors became aware of these special problems after the student had started work.

In the case of three students (two youth offenders and one teen parent), two received five weeks of extensive training and mentoring, while another received repeated opportunities to improve her job site attendance. All three students displayed insufficient maturity and interest in working, so they were released within 3 to 5 weeks.

Two other students seemed very satisfied with the working situation and were doing well. When the primary supervisor for one student increased travel commitments and assigned his student to another supervisor, the student's attitude and performance declined drastically. In the case of another student who started the summer well, she lost interest in the job when her personal life created other choices. Both students completed the summer, but did not receive a positive termination.

Action: When the special problems or needs are known, special arrangements can be made ahead of time, or problems can be resolved early-on. Collaboration with the ERC case manager, more open discussions with the student, and/or increased awareness or personal assistance by the Federal work site can help the student adjust to the expectations of the work site or changes in work site requirements or supervisors. Unfortunately, when the best efforts of the supervisors and mentors cease to have any influence with the student(s), then the best decision may be to release the student from the work agreement.

Training: There is a general lack of understanding and knowledge about the program among managers, as well as the rank and file employee. As a result, recruitment of mentors and supervisors for RAPS participants has been very difficult, and program administration can be complex, the responsibilities and commitments of the mentors/supervisors are misunderstood. In addition, the attendance of ERC personnel at the scheduled RAPS workshops has been severely limited and has created communication and coordination problems with the Federal work sites.

Action: To increase awareness and reduce the general misunderstandings about the program, a mentor/supervisor workshop should be held in March or April to provide RAPS mentors and supervisors a better understanding about their roles and responsibilities, and the administrative program requirements and procedures. The workshop would also focus on understanding employment barriers for youth "at risk," helping these students, using good communication skills, completing evaluations correctly, scheduling work and supervision, and recognizing the need for collaboration. There would also be an end-of-the-year

workshop held in October. This workshop would provide the opportunity for Federal work site mentors, supervisors, and personnel from the local ERCs to share experiences, identify and resolve problems, and make recommendations for program improvement. Participants in both the training session and the workshop will be better informed about the program requirements, equipped to mentor and supervise youth "at risk" involved in the annual program assessment, and involved in program planning for the following year. If the end-of-year workshops could be scheduled at the same time and location as the State Department of Employment annual meeting, the ERC case managers could participate in the RAPS workshop which would help alleviate the existing coordination problems.

The workshop results (actions) along with the program evaluation data collected from all RAPS participants (includes student, mentors, supervisors, coordinators) in 1997 were summarized into the RAPS Assessment Summary. The assessment provides RAPS Federal partners and granting entities with information about program accomplishments, as well as the program improvements that are needed to achieve the program objectives. This assessment will be included with grant proposals requesting private or non-profit foundations to help fund the student costs of RAPS.

Paperwork: A general feeling exists about the paperwork requirement for RAPS, and that is there is too much of it. The paperwork presently required by the Department of Employment (funding agency), the Bureau of Land Management, and Olsten Staffing Services (employer) is repetitive and time consuming. The paperwork includes the Work Experience Agreement (Wyoming Form 4410), Time Sheet, the Federal Withholding Form (W-4), Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9), and Agent Agreement Form, Participant Work Maturity Evaluation Form, and Volunteer Agreement Form (Federal form), Verification and Reference Check Form, End-of-Year Evaluation Data Form, and the Employment Application Form with Worker's Compensation Letter. All of the above forms are required for employment and participation in RAPS, and the proper administration of the program. Many of these forms have been amended/consolidated to reduce the number of forms to be completed by the participants. All other forms listed above not specifically discussed below will continue to be used as is. All of the forms, any changes that are made, and the paperwork process will be discussed at the Mentor and Supervisor Workshop in the spring.

Participant work maturity evaluations are required under JTPA Title IIb and the Summer Youth Program (RAPS for Wyoming Federal Partners) at the end of each month by the program guidelines. These tend to be redundant when supervisors are continually evaluating the RAPS participants who have usually started the program near the end of a month, or completed the program at the beginning of a month. When evaluations are required for partial months, but are weighed equally with full month evaluations, they

appear unnecessary.

Action: Student evaluations should only be necessary at the beginning and end of the work period. However, the Wyoming Department of Employment will have to consider this recommendation.

Completion of weekly time sheets at the end of each week is more time consuming than completing them every two weeks as for Federal employees. The employer, Olsten Staffing Services, use the weekly time sheets for all employees on their payroll including RAPS participants.

Action: A two-week cycle for time sheets/payroll instead of every week will be requested. However, if the contract for payroll services will increase above the cost of 1997 as a result, the weekly time sheet/payroll will be maintained. This recommendation will be discussed with the payroll contractor.

The Employment Application Form (Olsten Staffing Services) is repetitious of the information requested in State application form. Since the State application form includes all information required by Olsten, Federal field offices wanted to explore the idea of asking Olsten to use the State Application form instead. This would eliminate one form.

Action: Substitution of the State Employment Application form for the RAPS employer's application form will be discussed with the payroll/employer contractor.

There has been duplication of effort with ERC personnel and Federal work site mentors who work with the various forms required to hire a RAPS participant. To reduce this problem and eliminate duplication of effort, the paperwork process will be set up to place the employer in direct contact with the Wyoming Department of Employment (local ERC case managers). This will reduce the paperwork for the Federal work sites. Some of the ERCs may be willing to complete the required employment forms for students selected by Federal work sites, but others may not. In the case of the latter, the Federal work sites will be responsible for the employment paperwork.

Action: The direct contact between the ERC case managers and the RAPS employer will be discussed at the local RAPS orientation workshops with the Federal work site mentors/supervisors and the local ERC case managers.

Student Educational Handbook: The following changes to the Student Educational Handbook were recommended by mentors, supervisors, and RAPS participants through required evaluations and participation at the end-of-year workshop. Many RAPS participants made positive comments about the handbook and recommended not to change it. Several other participants were

concerned about Unit 3 Terms/Definitions which were not consistent with actual terms used on the job.

Action: Unit 3 can be used as is or changed to be more consistent with the terms applied on the job. An explanation for the use of the terms should be supplied by the mentor/supervisor. The unit is flexible and presently allows any changes (deletions and additions) in terms so that the definitions/terms will be consistent with the students job(s).

Other participants and mentors were concerned that there was insufficient time to complete the handbook within the average number of weeks spent by students in RAPS. The average work period is seven weeks.

Action: Reduce the number of Student Educational Handbook Units to seven to conform to the average length of the summer work period. Some units will be combined with others to reduce the overall number of units.

OBJECTIVE 2:

INCREASE TO 90 PERCENT THE PROPORTION OF RAPS PARTICIPANTS RETURNING TO AND/OR COMPLETING A FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM.

Specific Accomplishments:

Of the 26 students placed at the beginning of the summer, seven (7) or 27 percent, of the students tested below the appropriate grade level in math and/or reading and were required to complete remedial assistance during the employment period (Table 3). At the end of the summer these seven students were tested again. Four, or 57 percent, of these students successfully completed remediation while three, or 43 percent, did not improve to the one and one-half grade levels required above the initial test score. Of the five students who completed six or less units of the Student Educational Handbook, three students completed two units or less; two of these students had a positive remediation; one student did not require remediation.

TABLE 3 1997 RAPS REMEDIATION & SCHOOL RETURN *1		
RAPS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	Remediation Required / Improved	Return to School Full time No. / Tot
Increase to 90% the proportion of RAPS participants returning to an/or completing a formal education program (high school, GED, vocational or technical school, or college)	7 / 4	25 / 1
Percent Accomplishment	27% / 57%	96% / 4%

*1 Compiled from all RAPS evaluation and interview data collected during 1997.

Twenty five (25) or 96 percent, of the students returned to school at the end of the employment period, while one student, or 4 percent, obtained other employment. Three, or 12 percent, of the students have no plans to obtain a higher education beyond high school.

The Wyoming Department of Employment and the Private Industry Council (PIC) reconsidered policies which would: 1/ limit participation in the JTPA Title IIB Summer Youth Program and the JTPA Title IIC Youth Programs to one season, and 2/ would allow rolling over the funds available for the JTPA Title IIB Summer Youth with funds available for Title IIC Youth programs. The latter would allow students participating in RAPS (summer) to be considered for the Premiere RAPS program during the school year and possibly the following summer depending on:

1. Interest in pursuing a natural resource management or supporting career.
2. Academic accomplishment (includes meeting the improvement requirement for remediation in math and/or reading).

Although these policies were discussed at the PIC meeting in July 1997, there are no plans by PIC or the State to change either policy. During the Mentor/Supervisor Workshop in October 1996 and 1997, these were identified as major barriers to development of technical skills by participants (RAPS and JTPA Youth programs) in career or training positions.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Collaboration: Collaboration with the ERC case manager, open discussions with the student, or personal assistance by the Federal work site mentors and supervisors can help the student achieve increased skills in reading and math. Three students who were required to take remediation training in math and/or reading did not achieve the required increase of one and one-half grade levels in both math and/or reading. Each of these students require more personal assistance with:

1. Completing the Student Educational Handbook.
2. Improving math and reading skills through job assignments.

Policies of the Wyoming Department of Employment and the Private Industry Council: Students who wanted to participate in RAPS for a second or third year were severely limited under present PIC policy. Students have not been employed in the JTPA funded youth programs (includes RAPS) for more than one season unless extenuating circumstances existed. One of the long-term goals of RAPS has been to identify students who performed very well as a RAPS participant and were very interested in obtaining a post-high school education and a career in natural resources.

The limitation on participation in JTPA funded youth programs

like RAPS has been a major barrier to accomplishing a long-range goal for RAPS. For the foreseeable future, there will be no change in State policies for returning students or for rolling funds from JTPA Title IIb into JTPA Title IIc. However, the Federal work sites can utilize the existing hiring authorities under 5 CFR PART 213.3202 (STEP and SCEP appointments) to convert outstanding RAPS participants into other positions which meet their work force needs. Once converted to one of these STEP or SCEP positions, they become Federal employees and their wages/benefits are paid by the hiring Federal agency.

Program Expenditures

Total expenditures (Table 1) for the program in 1997 included the student salaries, wages paid to program administrator (BLM), mentor and supervisory costs (contributed time of five participating Federal partners), contract services, and travel, awards, training, and equipment costs. Quantum Health Resources, Olsten Staffing Services, served as the employer and administered the payroll for all the RAPS students.

TABLE 1 END-OF-YEAR EVALUATION DATA - 1997							
AGENCY/OFFICE MENTOR	MENTOR HOURS	MENTOR COST	AWARDS	EQUIPMENT	PURCHASE AGREEMENTS	TRAVEL	TOTAL COST
USFS-Routt/Medicine Bow N.F.	44	\$1,205	\$80			\$185	\$1,470
USFS- Bighorn N.F.	183	\$1,665					\$1,665
NRCS-Cheyenne Field Office	30	\$647					\$647
BIA-Wind River Agency	104	\$1,502	\$38				\$1,540
USFWS-Cheyenne Field Office	97	\$1,939				\$150	\$2,089
Wyoming Dept. of Employment							\$64,399
BLM- Wyoming State Office	134	\$1,714	\$6,279	\$907	\$11,860 *1	\$1,112	\$20,760
BLM- Gillette Project Office	8	\$163					\$163
BLM-Worland District, Cody R.A.	73	\$1,451	\$52	\$45			\$1,548
BLM-Rawlins District Office	33	\$501	\$6			\$630	\$1,137
BLM-Great Divide R.A.	29	\$556					\$556
BLM-Lander R.A.	24	\$428					\$428
BLM-Rock Springs District	101	\$1,107	\$50	\$16			\$1,173
BLM-Casper District Office	152	\$3,549	\$50	\$200			\$3,799
BLM-Platte River R. A.	45	\$998		\$89			\$1,087
BLM-Buffalo R.A.	40	\$480					\$480
TOTALS	1097	\$17,905	\$6,555	\$1,257	\$11,860 *1	\$2,077	\$102,941

*1 Mentor Workshop Speaker and Travel Costs (\$1,007); Olsten Staffing Services Contract plus travel (\$8956); Grant Materials (\$1,897).