

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Title : Educational Counseling Office
 Project No. : 517-0210
 Funding Period : FY 84 - FY 89
 AID IOP Funding : \$250,000 Grant
 Amount Obligated : \$250,000
 Grantee : Instituto Cultural Dominicano-Americano (ICDA)
 FACD : June 30, 1989
 Project Manager : Paul A. Struharia

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I. BACKGROUND:

The Educational Counseling Office Project Grant (517-0210) was signed in 1984. The project was grant-funded with a counterpart contribution made by the grantee. Total funding was \$ 334,100; \$250,000 from the AID grant and \$84,100 in-kind contribution from the ICDA. The original FACD of June 30, 1987 was extended once to June 30, 1989, in order to utilize the remaining dollar funds in continuing to provide academic information services on U.S. institutions to Dominicans. The project budget was reprogrammed at that point.

The purpose of the project was to increase the number of U.S. trained Dominican citizens by: 1) providing resource information about U.S. academic institutions; 2) identifying special universities with programs suited to applicants' needs; and 3) facilitating the application process for Dominican students applying to U.S. institutions.

The specific objectives of the grant were to: 1) establish an Educational Counseling Office in Santo Domingo, which would provide counseling services to persons interested in studying in U.S. educational institutions; 2) provide reimbursement for the construction of an extension to the ICDA building, as well as commodity support for equipping the extension; and 3) design and implement an extension of the counseling service to major localities outside the capital through an outreach program.

II. PROJECT STATUS:

To answer the objectives, a library-like office was constructed on the grounds of the bi-national center in Santo Domingo, the Instituto Cultural Dominicano-Americano (ICDA). The following table demonstrates how specific objectives of the implementation plan of the grant agreement were met during the life of the project.

TABLE II

A. PROJECT STATUS AT COMPLETION

<u>IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
1. Hire a qualified counselor and administrative counselor for the three-year life of the project.	1. EOO staff consisted of an office director/chief counselor, one or two assistant counselors, a bilingual secretary and a messenger.
2. Provide financial support for architectural design, construction, and supervision services.	2. Office was built by expanding and remodeling the former ICDA bookstore. Total completed office area approximated 1050 sq. ft. A later addition of a reception area expanded the office by 200 sq ft. (10 ft x 20 ft).
3. Provide commodity support for equipment, counseling, and training materials and supplies for the office.	3. During the five year life of the project, the office was equipped with: tables and chairs; desks; bookshelves; college reference texts and university catalogs; two P.C.'s and software including FSIC program to assist in university selection; two microfiche viewing units and a collection of over 3000 university catalogs on microfiche slides; two typewriters; file cabinets; a library-like circulation desk; and expendable materials and supplies.
4. Supply support for the training, per diem and travel of project personnel as well as per diem and travel for persons providing technical assistance.	4. Two Office Directors/Chief Counselors and one Assistant Counselor had attended National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) Conferences in the U.S. as part of their training. One technical assistant installed FSIC computer program for university selection.

5. Provide other miscellaneous support for local travel, outreach, publicity, utilities and communications.

5. The office supported an active outreach program whereby counselors visited American or English Language Schools, English Teaching Institutes, and other community centers in Santo Domingo and other major cities in the Dominican Republic. A satellite office was developed within the bi-national center in Santiago. Counselors made monthly visits to the Santiago outpost. All outreach trips, visits by U.S. university recruiters and other special activities were publicized in local newspapers. Toward the end of the project a modem was purchased to connect ECO computers with data banks providing academic orientation information in the U.S.

B. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The total number of students who visited, called or contacted ECO during the project life approximates 34,000. Individual counseling services ranged from assistance for selection and application to U.S. institutions, advising on how to solicit scholarships, and career counseling, to distribution of university entrance exam registration bulletins, test score interpretation and cultural orientation.

ECO also provided career and academic counseling and assisted in the organization of pre-departure orientations for groups of AID participant trainees while they attended in-country English language training at the ICDA.

III. FINANCIAL STATUS

The financial status of the ECO project as of 12/31/89 is summarized in the following table:

TABLE II

FINANCIAL STATUS AT COMPLETION

<u>Element Number</u>	<u>Element Description</u>	<u>Obligations</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Pipeline</u>
01	Personnel and Benefits	80,000	55,188	24,812
02	Technical Assistance	46,000	37,710	8,290
03	Travel/Per Diem	20,500	13,599	6,901
04	Commodities	46,600	49,796	-3,196
05	Construction/Remodeling	19,119	20,971	-1,852
06	Outreach/Publicity	14,000	14,604	-604
07	Utilities/Communications	7,400	3,607	3,793
08	Evaluation	7,000	7,322	-322
09	Contingencies	9,381	4,846	4,535
		<u>250,000</u>	<u>207,643</u>	<u>42,357</u>

IV. EVALUATION

The project underwent a midterm evaluation in June, 1986. The evaluation gave recommendations regarding position descriptions of office personnel, outreach activities, publicity, and contacts to establish. Most of the suggestions were implemented. Other comments were that the office space was adequate and functional, the library and resources were complete, that overall, the office was well conceived and creatively designed. The report suggested that AID, USIS and the ICDA start planning for the future funding of the project after the original June, 1987 PACD.

A final project evaluation was completed one month prior to the extended PACD date. According to the evaluation, ECO has achieved the goals set out in the project proposal. The evaluator states that ECO's informational services are diverse, complete and unique in that no other institution in the country offers them. Improvements were suggested in only a few areas. The evaluator assessed that, overall, the student users rated the services of ECO very highly.

The evaluators principal recommendations were for the future funding of ECO after the AID project end date. The grantee, the ICDA, would have the primary responsibility for locating funds for ECO. It was suggested that future funding come from multiple sources such as U.S. government agencies using ECO's services and private sector institutional users. The report suggested several potential funding sources. According to the evaluator, "all reasonable attempts should be made to keep ECO operating".

V. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The ECO project was very successful in terms of answering its objectives. It provided a valuable information service to Dominicans as well as U.S. citizens and third country nationals. The services were in high demand and otherwise not offered anywhere else in the country. The office projected a positive image of the United States and of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

On the critical side, planning for the ongoing funding of ECO should have been done much earlier in the project's life. By June 30, 1989, the grantee organization was reluctant to take over funding at the current level. ECO has remained operational but with a reduced staffing level. It has received funding from USIS and limited funding from A.I.D. for services provided to AID participants.

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