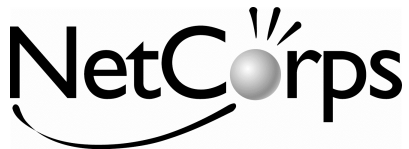


**Final Report of**

**PROJECT CONNECT**

A collaborative project by NetCorps and the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation to increase the organizational capacity of twenty-four progressive grassroots nonprofit organizations throughout Oregon

submitted by



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The following pages contain the summary of Project Connect, a one-year effort to increase the capacity of twenty-four progressive grassroots nonprofit organizations throughout the state of Oregon. Funded by the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation and conducted by NetCorps, Project Connect assessed the needs of these organizations and offered a variety of appropriate technology solutions to help these groups better meet their goals and missions.

The McKenzie River Gathering Foundation was and is keenly interested in finding innovative ways to increase the organizational capacity and effectiveness of their grantees. NetCorps, based in Eugene, Oregon, was and is equally motivated to provide direct technology assistance to our nonprofit neighbors in the state. NetCorps was also extraordinarily excited at the opportunity to test out our Internship Program—designed to give college students training in technology support and nonprofit management—in a large scale, real world setting.

The result of these collective interests became Project Connect, a remarkable collaboration between a community foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on technology planning and assistance, and a collection of twenty-four groups looking to expand their effectiveness in addressing a range of progressive social change and environmental issues.

Many individuals deserve thanks for their participation in making Project Connect a success. Susan Remmers and Kathleen Pequeño at the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation for their support and partnering, the staff of the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory for collecting the data and making sense of it all, Carnet Williams for his original vision and direction, Nancy Arbogast for getting the project underway, Stephanie Carnahan for guiding and managing the project to an excellent conclusion, Spencer Smith for his dedicated and professional support and technical wizardry, and our student interns who were the heart and soul of the project—Khaiersta Flowers, Carlo McKee, Drina Guzman and Leonor Alfonso.

Special thanks also goes to the twenty four groups that participated in Project Connect and provided the ongoing evaluation that improved the project as we worked and shaped the final results that we can now share. We at NetCorps are excited by the outcome of Project Connect and are pleased to offer this report—what we learned and what we accomplished—to the larger nonprofit, technology assistance and funding communities.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Matthew Latterell  
President, NetCorps Board of Directors

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## **Summary of Project Connect**

Project Connect was born in the summer of 1998 out of the desire of the McKenzie River Gathering (MRG) Foundation to help their grantees build capacity and to optimize the opportunities offered by communications technology. Most of MRG's grantees are small social change organizations in rural, technologically under-served communities across Oregon.

The goal of Project Connect was to dramatically increase the communications and information management capacity of small, progressive change organizations currently in MRG's grantee pool. MRG funded a Needs Assessment for 24 of its grantees and then awarded continued funding for technological assistance to 16 of these groups based on the Needs Assessment outcome. NetCorps coordinated each on-the-ground phase of the project, including staffing, logistics, training, and technical support. Project Connect was designed in four phases:

Phase 1: Needs Assessment

Phase 2: Implementation of Training and Technology Awards

Phase 3: Follow Up Technical Support

Phase 4: NetCorps Membership

## **Project Timeline/Specifics**

### ***Program Design***

NetCorps staff worked extensively on program design in the months preceding the selection of grantees for Project Connect. Staff developed timelines, reviewed materials, participated in outreach to prospective groups, selected staff and interns for the project, developed the training curriculum for interns, and designed the initial Needs Assessment process and many of the Needs Assessment tools. This also included performing a "mock" Needs Assessment of MRG's Portland office.

### ***Grantee Selection for the Needs assessment***

NetCorps participated in the grant application review and selection process, which was very useful in providing a broader and deeper understanding of the grantee organizations. The selection of 24 groups was done from a pool of 35 applicants. Criteria were jointly developed between MRG and NetCorps. Some of these criteria included geographical location, target community served, issue, identity, readiness, and technology needs. Although MRG was responsible for monitoring the applicants' ability to meet many of the criteria, NetCorps staff was responsible for evaluating "readiness" -- the capacity of applicant groups to fully participate in Project Connect. Staff reviewed all of the applications submitted, and participated in the initial selection meeting.

### ***Needs Assessment***

The Needs Assessment Team consisted of the Lead Technology Consultant and one student intern per group. The Needs Assessment process included detailed questionnaires, interviews, inventories, and discussion of both current means of communicating and managing data and anticipated future needs. The intern, with help from the Lead Technology Consultant, Project Coordinator, and other NetCorps staff, produced a Needs Assessment Report documenting the process and making recommendations for next steps. The interns and Lead Tech Consultant were highly motivated to learn about the missions and activities of each group. They appreciated the opportunity to learn first hand about the social change issues the groups pursue.

While they were on-site, the Needs Assessment Team also made several "quick fixes" such as virus clean up, Y2K preparation, assistance with databases, and various pieces of software. These "leave behind items" totaled approximately \$1,200.

Several "bugs" had to be worked out during the first cycle, in terms of collecting enough data before the visit, standardizing the visit phases and documentation, and staying on top of the follow up work (data entry, report drafts, etc.). The timeline also created some difficulties due to intern exam schedules and the relatively short

turn around time between the Needs Assessment visit and the time the report was due. Several improvements were made in the Needs Assessment process, including a standard telephone interview, a “site visit debrief” meeting, and a standard “snapshot report” left at the site after the visit and scheduling was done to ensure that each step in the process was completed on time and to standard. This included calendaring each step to coincide with intern academic deadlines. Additionally, a comprehensive database was created to capture and manage this information. This database is further detailed in this report related to NetCorps infrastructure improvements.

## ***Grantee Selection for Training and Technology Awards***

NetCorps participated in the selection of Training and Technology Award groups. Similar to the first applicant screening, their role was to assess the ability of groups to participate in the project. As the individuals with the most first-hand knowledge of the applicants and their technological infrastructure, NetCorps staff were a key part of making the difficult selection of groups to receive awards. While not attempting to place the needs of one group over another, staff tried to offer a more complete picture of the projects that groups were proposing.

## ***Implementation (hardware, software, training)***

The Implementation Phase was completed in two stages. Sixteen groups were awarded continued Training and Technology funding. Nine of these groups were slated for cycle one and the remaining seven took place during cycle two. In each case, the appropriate type and amount of technology brought to the group, as well as training to support this technology, was clearly defined as an outcome of the Needs Assessment Phase.

The implementation awards were quite varied in terms of hardware, software, and training. The scope of hardware ranged from upgrading existing machines to installing and networking nine computers. Two groups received staff training only, and two others were awarded website creation/revamping. The computers that were purchased were from the Dell refurbished department, which enabled us to provide high-quality equipment at a relatively low cost. We were also able to take advantage of CompuMentor’s software redistribution program to provide some of the software at a markedly reduced rate. Attachment # 1 is a synopsis of the implementation awards for each group including a brief description of each group’s award.

Just as the hardware and software needs of the grantees were widely varied, so were their training needs. We developed training curricula for the MS Office software suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook, Explorer, and Publisher), PageMaker and desktop publishing, Dream Weaver and web development skills, and general operating systems (Windows and MAC). Additionally, a number of the training sessions were prepared and presented in both English and Spanish. The training component proved to be somewhat challenging both in terms of the groups’ expectations and our ability to anticipate their needs. Because of the wide range of skills, it was difficult to train large groups of staff and volunteers. We found we were most successful with one-on-one training. In an effort to improve our training component, we designed an evaluation form that was mailed out to each group.

## ***Tech Support***

For three months after the completion of the Implementation Phase, NetCorps interns made proactive support calls to grant recipients for questions, trouble-shooting, informal training, and other issues related to the equipment or systems installed when they were on-site. During these calls, interns checked in to be sure that the systems were still functioning properly and that the staff was utilizing the new technology to the fullest extent possible. While all groups had access to staff and interns for technical support, a few groups either elected not to participate or were otherwise unable to participate in the proactive method of support. For those groups who did participate, this proactive approach proved to be quite valuable.

## **Membership**

As a benefit of participating in Project Connect, all 24 groups received a complementary one-year membership to NetCorps. This membership was in two tiers: implementation groups and non-implementation groups. All groups received the following membership benefits:

1. Access to the Project Connect listserv – Project Connect was originally conceived as a way to *connect* progressive grassroots organizations together (hence the name!) and build infrastructure not only for the individual groups, but for the movement as well. It quickly evolved into a technology assistance project for individual groups, but we do not want to lose sight of our original ideas. To that end, all Project Connect groups who so desired became a part of an online community vis-à-vis an un-moderated listserv. This listserv is a tool for communication, coalition building, action alerts, resource sharing, and online technical support for non-emergency technology issues as well as emerging trends in technology application for nonprofits. NetCorps consultants and student interns will also be a part of this list to provide tips and tricks and participate as members of this online community.
2. Reduced rate consulting – All Project Connect implementation award grantees groups will automatically qualify for the low end of our sliding scale for any new projects such as databases, websites, etc. This scale is currently \$55 - \$75 per hour.

In addition to these benefits, groups that received a Training and Technology award also have the opportunity to participate in Quick support. Through this system NetCorps staff and interns will provide limited assistance for short answer trouble-shooting whenever possible. Complicated questions or issues that cannot be handled in ten minutes or less are handled as consulting time and charged at the rate of \$45 an hour. Quick calls are limited to four per month.

## **Evaluation**

The Oregon Survey Research Laboratory conducted a thorough evaluation of Project Connect by conducting telephone interviews with project grantees on three separate occasions. All 24 groups were surveyed regarding the Needs Assessment process, the 16 groups who received Training and Technology awards were surveyed regarding their particular award and this process, and once again all 24 groups were surveyed regarding the overall impact of Project Connect on their capacity and overall function. The results of this evaluation can be found in Attachment #2

## **Project Budget**

The total cost of the project was approximately \$116,600 not including the individual Training and Technology Awards.

The following is a break down of how the money was spent on each element of the project:

<b>Program element</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Cost per group</b>
Program development - 24 groups	\$21,000	\$875
Needs assessment - 24 groups	\$36,700	\$1,529
Training and technology implementations - 16 groups	\$27,800	\$1,738
Tech support - 16 groups	\$21,800	\$1,363
Evaluation and wrap up - 24 groups	\$9,300	\$388
	\$116,600	

## **NetCorps Infrastructure**

In addition to providing technical assistance to progressive nonprofit groups in Oregon, Project Connect was seen as an opportunity to increase/improve the internal capacity of NetCorps to provide this service. The following are some of the areas where we have experienced growth.

### ***Interns***

One of the key parts of the NetCorps mission is to train college students to become the next wave of technically savvy nonprofit leaders. Four interns had the opportunity to work on Project Connect and not only strengthen their technical skills but also broaden their understanding of and appreciation for social change organizations. Over the course of the 14-month project, interns spent approximately 1500 hours on the project. Much of this was in direct service and contact with the 24 participating organizations.

Among the skills learned by the interns are specific hardware and software proficiency, client interaction, project management, training techniques, and appreciation for the diverse interests and constituencies represented by the grantees. The following are excerpts from what the interns have had to say about working on Project Connect:

- Working at NetCorps has affected me a great deal, as a person and as a professional. I learned a lot about how groups of people can do so much with so little technological resources and knowledge and how much more could they do if they had access to better equipment and training. I was most impressed with the diverse range of groups that we worked with.
- I had a great experience working as part of a team, not only with Project Connect but also in all the work I've done at NetCorps.
- I had the chance of being part of projects with a variety of clients that were completely in the other side of the spectrum, compared to my previous job. It helped me work on my interpersonal skills with a different type of users than what I was used to.

### ***Needs Assessment Process***

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions to the NetCorps infrastructure is the refinement of our Needs Assessment process. We started with the forms that we had used for the projects completed up to that point and enhanced that model through written as well as oral surveys. We also developed a comprehensive relational database to track and manage the data. This database was the backbone of a more extensive NetCorps database that houses all sorts of information related to our projects including contact management, project tracking, tech support, and internal resources. In addition to the improved internal tracking resulting from this database, we have also made the structure available to other nonprofit organizations for them to “tweak” and manipulate for their own use.

### ***Staffing***

At the start of Project Connect, we employed a Project Coordinator and a Lead Tech Consultant. During the life of the project, both of these individuals left the organization. We attempted to reduce the impact of this staff turnover by providing some overlapping time with the outgoing staff people and their replacements as well as good documentation to ensure that the new staff had a good understanding of the project and related processes. Unfortunately, we were unable to hire a Lead Tech Consultant to the staff and instead relied upon an independent contractor. While the skills of this consultant were as strong or stronger than the former Lead Tech, we faced some communication difficulties because he was not an in-house resource. As a result, we have created a Lead Tech Consultant position as a part of our staff. The other staffing change is that the Project Coordinator has the expanded role of coordinating the entire internship program including projects like Project Connect as well as placements with nonprofit organizations throughout the area.

## **Conclusions/Suggestions for the Future**

Aside from minor revisions in timeline and process, this project is a very portable and transferable one. The basic model of Needs Assessment, Training and Technology implementation, and follow up support is one that we will continue to use in our delivery of services to nonprofit organizations. We have learned a great deal about our delivery methods as well as how to appropriately dedicate financial as well as personnel resources to projects like this one.

Additionally, the collaborative relationship that was forged between MRG and NetCorps is a exciting model that we will actively pursue for future work. The benefits of this type of partnership are numerous: we have excellent access to grassroots organizations who can benefit tremendously from our services, costs to the organizations are greatly reduced by the base of support provided by the foundation, and there is great potential for combined efforts for further fundraising.

## Attachments

### ***Training and Technology Implementation Award Summary***

We are pleased to report that as intended, Project Connect was able to help recipients with technological solutions to increase organizational effectiveness. Often, this was accomplished in ways recipients could not have anticipated without the use of the Needs Assessments so important to the success of the Project Connect model. The Needs Assessments have also proved invaluable in leveraging additional funding sources for grantee technology development. The following is a synopsis of awards to each grantee. The name of each group and the actual hardware and services each received is in **bold**, followed by a brief description of how the award will affect their program. Dollar amounts are for the direct grant award to the recipient, followed by the additional amounts *paid for by the MRG grant to NetCorps in italics*.

**Causa (Statewide/Salem) received two new computers, networking of existing and new machines, a network modem, and software training.** These improvements will make the daily information exchange between Causa and its member groups faster and more reliable as they continue their record of effectiveness in mobilizing and protecting immigrant communities throughout Oregon. (\$3,359) (*\$730*)

**Chicano Culture Club (Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem) received training for their members in computer operation and software.** Their increased ability to use computers will help inform and mobilize inmates and allies involved in their campaign challenging the use of culturally-biased psychiatric evaluations on prisoners, as well as help them in their other programs. (*\$1,090*)

**Community Alliance of Lane County-Youth for Justice (Eugene) received a computer, laser printer, scanner and fax software, along with basic software training.** YFJ previously shared a single computer with two different organizational programs. They plan to use these improvements to create and maintain more contact with other social change organizations, as well as train youth activists without access to computers. (\$2,068) (*\$360*)

**Community Alliance of Tenants (Portland) received upgrades for several of their existing computers, and installation of a computer network to facilitate file and resource sharing.** These improvements come at a key time in CAT's rapid growth and expansion—their comprehensive program is directed at improving tenant rights and the affordability of housing for Portland renters. (\$2,065) (*\$465*)

**Eaglecap AIDS Support Team (LaGrande) received a new web site with a chat room feature, along with training in web site maintenance.** The site is part of a strategy to educate and inform a greater number of individuals in the huge geographic region they cover (Baker, Union and Wallowa counties) about HIV/AIDS; technology allows people isolated by homophobia and AIDS-phobia to receive information that saves lives. (\$2,527) (*\$80*)

**Fair Share Research and Education Fund, Rogue Valley (Medford) received a computer and laser printer, a scanner and fax software, and basic software training.** These tools will help them to build a base of support in the Rogue Valley for their Living Wage Campaign by improving their communication with members, activists and volunteers via email and their newsletter. (\$2,106) (*\$500*)

**Lakota Oyate-Ki (Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem) received training for their members in computer operation and software.** Their increased use of computers will help them to create and distribute their monthly newsletter to inside and outside members who support Native American prisoners and work to maintain access for Native American prisoners to their spiritual practices. (*\$1,090*)

**Lambda Community Center Association (Ashland) redesigned their web site, and received a new computer, along with training in web site maintenance.** This will create a “virtual hub” for members in their area, and increase the visibility and accessibility of their many programs serving this largely rural lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. (\$2,660) (\$255)

**Portland Central America Solidarity Committee (Portland) received a computer, a scanner and fax software, and equipment and funding for a second phone line, along with basic software training.** PCASC’s access to the Internet is key so that they can receive fast, accurate information about their issue from other US and international organizations doing this work. This is especially important for the local work of the Cross-Border Labor Organizing Committee, who mobilizes activists locally using e-mail and fax alerts. (\$2,325) (\$450)

**Oregon Health Access Project (Statewide/Salem) received two computers, networking of their new and existing computers, a laser printer and basic software training.** This will help them to be more effective in sharing critical information with and mobilizing their extensive base of members as they work to facilitate community involvement in health policy decisions. (\$2,910) (\$1,145)

**Peace House (Ashland) received two networked computers, a scanner and fax software, and basic software training.** This will enhance their role as a resource and networking center for activism in their area by increasing their communication capacity and ability to organize support for peace, human rights and economic justice issues. (\$3,396) (\$1,195)

**Rural Organizing Project (Statewide/Scappoose) received three networked computers, and software training.** The widely dispersed nature of their 75 rural group membership requires them to use communication technology well to advance the human rights strategies appropriate to each community. ROP will continue to use the Internet to connect and mobilize activists across the state. (\$3,800) (\$720)

**Sisters In Action for Power (Portland) received a laser printer, zip drive, network modem, desktop publishing software and training, and basic software training.** They will train members on desktop publishing so that they can assume leadership in producing the organization’s newsletter. Sisters’ membership is primarily low-income women, and women and girls of color. (\$2,379) (\$745)

**Umpqua Watersheds (Roseburg) received two computers, networking of these and their existing computers, a laser printer, a digital camera and basic software training.** This will enable them to further develop their existing web site ([www.umpqua-watersheds.org](http://www.umpqua-watersheds.org)), which they use to mobilize community members across the state to take action to protect roadless areas. (\$3,787) (\$960)

**Unete Al Movimiento de Conciencia Popular (Medford) received two new networked computers, fax software and a scanner, and bilingual training in Windows 98 and basic office software.** Their members and supporters have been so enthusiastic about their participation in Project Connect that they raised \$500 towards a second phone line to facilitate Internet access, and Unete members enthusiastically participated in the on-site training. (\$3,468) (\$875)

**Willamette Valley Law Project (Woodburn) received hardware as part of a larger project to completely update their antiquated computer network, and staff training.** This transition happened in time to benefit their upcoming student mobilization, during which they will bring students from all over the country to work in solidarity with Oregon’s farm workers. (\$5,150) (\$1,610)

**16 Total Projects for \$54,270**

# ***NetCorps Project Connect Survey***

## ***Survey Results***

by Stephen M. Johnson Ph.D.

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### ***Introduction***

NetCorps recently completed a new type of special initiative grant program, Project Connect, with funding from the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation (MRG). This program was novel both in the size of the grant and in the cooperation it required between NetCorps, the Project Connect recipients, and MRG. As part of the effort to understand the effect of this grant, NetCorps contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct research on the attitudes of the staff of organizations involved with Project Connect. Working closely with representatives of NetCorps, OSRL planned and implemented three telephone surveys of organizations that either received a Needs Assessment or a Needs Assessment and a Grant from MRG. This report summarizes the results of those surveys.

### **Survey Methodology**

#### ***Survey Instrument***

The survey instruments were developed through an interactive process between NetCorps staff and OSRL staff. Each instrument was also tested for comprehension, length and flow. Approval from NetCorps was obtained before each instrument was fielded.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

NetCorps provided organization phone numbers and contact names before each round of surveying. OSRL made up to 35 attempts to interview each contact over a period of two to four weeks for each round of surveying. For those respondents for whom the contact information was correct, OSRL completed all but two interviews. The first round of interviewing took place after the groups had received a Needs Assessment, the second round after technology projects were implemented, and the third after the entire technology process was completed. Altogether, the three surveys were administered over a period of about 10 months.

### ***Survey Results***

The presentation of the survey results is organized around the subject areas as asked during the survey. Readers of this report may refer to the additional survey instruments (available for download from [www.netcorps.org](http://www.netcorps.org))

with the frequency responses to each question for more detail. Narrative responses to open-ended questions are also available, grouped by question.

### **Round One – Needs Assessment**

In the first round of interviewing 24 organizations were interviewed about their experiences with the technology needs assessment conducted by NetCorps. Respondents were first asked about whether or not they had sought assistance from MRG when they applied for the Project Connect Grant. A majority of respondents (67%) had sought assistance, and all found it easy to get such assistance. In addition, most organizations (63%) found the assistance “very helpful”, and the remainder found the assistance at least “somewhat helpful.”

Respondents were next asked if they had attended a workshop on the Needs Assessment Grants, and if so if the workshop had been useful. Most organizations had not attended the workshop, but for the six that did attend, half found the workshop “very helpful” and half found it “somewhat helpful.”

Respondents were then asked about the application process. All but one respondent said they had enough time to decide to apply. All respondents thought the instructions provided enough information to apply for the grant, and only two respondents found the application difficult to understand.

The rest of the survey was concerned with the assessment itself. Respondents were asked about the quality of job the assessment did in evaluating their organizations needs for training and technology. The majority of organizations (67%) thought the assessment had done an “excellent” job of evaluating their needs, while another 25% thought the assessment had done a “good” job. Two organizations thought the assessment had done only a “fair” job, but no organization thought the assessment had done a “poor” job of evaluation. In addition, 96% of organizations felt that they had been an “active participant” in the Needs Assessment Process.

Ninety six percent of the organizations interviewed also felt that the people conducting the assessment had the skills necessary for the job and that their Needs Assessment report was both accurate and understandable. However, a moderate number of organizations (25%) felt that the assessment was too short, while only one organization thought it was too long.

Organizations claimed a variety of uses for the assessments, although the majority of organizations (56%) claimed they would use it to seek funding from potential donors. Other uses included self-funded technology upgrading, communication within the organization about technology, and organizational planning.

At the same time, almost all organizations claimed that the Needs Assessment process increased, or reinforced, their awareness of the need for improved technology and the importance of staying technologically capable.

At the end of the survey, organizations were asked to offer suggestions on how the assessment process might be improved. Not all organizations had suggestions, but the most common suggestion was that the forms or surveys that NetCorps used were too detailed and complicated to easily fill out and that the time requirements for the forms were too difficult. In the same vein it was suggested that there was not enough flexibility in the assessment questions. Finally, some organizations suggested that instead of one technology option being offered in the assessment, it would be better if a set of options were offered.

### **Round Two – Project Implementation**

In the second round of surveying, 16 organizations were interviewed shortly after the implementation of new technology. Thirteen of these organizations received both hardware and software through Project Connect, one organization received hardware only, and two organizations received software only. All 16 organizations were asked about their experiences with the implementation process, the benefits of the technology and any problems that had occurred. To begin they were asked how closely the project results matched their expectations. While only three organizations, or 19%, thought it was a “perfect match”, another eight organizations thought the

result was a “close match”, three thought the results “somewhat matched”, and only one organization thought the results were “not at all close.”

Next, organizations were asked about the Project Connect timeline. All organizations thought the timeline had been either “very clear” (75%) or “somewhat clear” (25%), and for all but two organizations the project was completed in the timeframe they had expected. One of the two organizations that did not have its project completed in time felt that this had caused a “large problem.”

Organizations were asked about the time they had to spend with Project Connect to implement the technology, and, in particular how much time the person trained as their “staff expert” or “super-user” had been required to put into the project. The results on this question varied enormously from organization to organization, from a low of five hours to a high of over 100 hours. For half the organizations their “super-user” had been required to spend 40 hours or less, and for the other half more than 40 hours. Independent of how much time “super-users” spent working with Project Connect, the majority (75%) felt that the time spent was in line with their expectations.

Organizations were next questioned about the benefits of Project Connect. In the first question respondents were asked to try and think of what three benefits they had hoped to gain in terms of effects on their organization and not to think of hardware or software specifically. Foremost among the many benefits mentioned were the pure effects of having modern technology to more easily manage databases, operate networks, and produce products. In addition, many organizations mentioned improved communications, both internally and externally, and improved access to the Internet. In the second question organizations were asked if they had received any of the aforementioned benefits. Sixty nine percent of organizations replied that they had received all of the benefits and the remaining 31% said they had received some of the benefits.

At this point respondents were asked specifically about both hardware and software received through Project Connect. Of the 14 organizations that received hardware, 11 (79%) felt that the quality of the hardware they received was “excellent.” The remaining three organizations thought the hardware quality was “good.” For 13 of the 14 organizations (93%) the hardware was either a “perfect match”, or a “close match” to what they felt to be the needs of their group. Of the 15 organizations that received software, 13 (87%) felt that the quality was either “good” or “excellent.” Most of the organizations (73%) also felt that the software was either a “perfect match”, or a “close match” with their needs. However, while no organization felt the software to be inappropriate to their needs, four organizations did feel that the software only “somewhat matched.”

The next issue investigated had to do with staff training on the Project Connect supplied hardware and software. For 88% of the organizations, either “all” or “most” of their staff received training through Project Connect, and 78% of organizations felt the training to be generally useful. An even higher percentage, 82%, felt that the written materials and training exercises were useful, while 69% felt the materials were wither a “perfect match”, or a “close match” with the needs of their group.

Organizations were then asked if they had had any reason to raise concerns with either NetCorps or MRG during the implementation process. Only five organizations had raised any concern and all five found the respective organizations to be either “very responsive” or “somewhat responsive” to the concerns they raised. In addition, all five also claimed to be “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the actual response received. At this point organizations were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the services of Project Connect. Sixty three percent of organizations were “very satisfied” and the remaining 37% were “somewhat satisfied”. Importantly, no organizations were unsatisfied. The organizations were also asked to specify what their favorite thing was about working with NetCorps. The responses cover several issues, but most revolve around descriptions of the openness, willingness, responsiveness, and competence of NetCorps and its staff. The same question was also asked about MRG, and equally positive answers were obtained, this time dealing with the supportive nature of MRG, the ease of working with MRG, and the quality of MRG staff.

Most of the organizations interviewed (63%) had not received all of the technology funding they had requested. Consequently, they were asked about the result of receiving only partial funding. Most of the organizations that had received partial funding were eventually able to secure funding for the remaining technology, or to find a way to work around the missing technology.

Finally, at the end of the survey the organizations were asked for their opinions on improvements to the implementation process. By far, the most common suggestions had to do with improvements in the training process that would make the training either more specific to the organizations involved, or make the training more detailed and longer.

### **Round Three – Follow Up**

In the final round of interviewing, 23 of the original 24 organizations contacted in Round One were interviewed again. The attempt during this round of surveying was to ask for an overall evaluation of Project Connect. It is important to remember that while all 23 organizations received an initial Needs Assessment, only 15 of the organizations interviewed received actual technology improvements and training.

The questioning started by asking each organization to rate the overall usefulness of Project Connect. Ninety six percent of the organizations rated Project Connect as either “very useful” (16 organizations – 12 who received technology and four who did not) or “somewhat useful.” Eighty seven percent of the organizations also said their group had experienced positive changes as a result of Project Connect. All the organizations who received technology described positive changes generally related to what the new technology was able to do, such as e-mail, access to the internet, database capability, and improved communication. However, even five organizations that did not receive technology noted changes, such as a better understanding of their technology needs and better organization around technology. In addition, 96% of the organizations said that their groups overall communication abilities were either “much improved” or “somewhat improved” as a result of Project Connect.

Respondents were next asked if they felt that Project Connect had addressed their actual needs, and all but five groups (78%) said “yes.” For the five organizations who said “no”, two did get a technology award and still felt that their needs had not been addressed. One of these two organizations felt that the software they received did not actually solve their database problems.

The next questions had to do with the organizations’ long-term goals related to participating in Project Connect. The goals listed were very similar to the goals listed in previous rounds of interviewing and primarily include the common technology related goals of communication, database capabilities, increased productivity, and increased technical skills. Eleven of the 23 organizations (48%) felt that being part of Project Connect had given them “a lot” of assistance toward these goals. Another 11 organizations, including five that received technology and six that had not, felt that participation in Project Connect had helped “somewhat.”

Respondents were then asked about the effect of Project Connect on the internal function of each organization. Ninety six percent of the organizations felt that their group effectiveness was either “much better” or “somewhat better” as a result of Project Connect. Most of these improvements in effectiveness were credited to increased productivity, better communication, and better staff skills.

Respondents were also questioned about the internal effects on their organizations of just the Needs Assessment portion of Project Connect. All 23 groups (100%) felt the Needs Assessment had been helpful. The main forms of help seen from the Needs Assessment were almost completely credited to either giving the organization a better understanding of their technology needs, or in helping them to give a higher priority to improving their technology.

A fairly large number of the organizations (43%) reported using the Needs Assessment to approach other funding sources or donors for technology assistance. This includes both groups that received technology awards

from Project Connect, and those that did not. In addition, some of these groups reported success in these technology-funding appeals. For those groups that had not approached other funding sources, the main reasons why not included a diminished need for technology after Project Connect funding, inability to find other potential donors, organizational dysfunction of various types, or other technology solutions that did not require outside funding.

Organizations were also asked if they had used the Resource Guide provided by Project Connect to help locate potential funding sources for technology. Only 30% had used the Resource Guide, and only one organization reported funding success as a result of this use of the Guide. However, four organizations did report that Project Connect helped them obtain other technology funding. Of these four organizations, three were recipients of technology awards from Project Connect. For the majority of organizations that did not use the Guide, no consistent reason for this non-use was given.

In all, 18 organizations report upgrading their technology because of Project Connect. This includes 13 that received technology grants from Project Connect and five that did not. Most of these organizations felt the technology upgrades resulted in changes very close to what they had expected. In addition, to the Project Connect upgrades, 13 organizations added other technological improvements, many of which supplemented the Project Connect technology.

At this point the organizations were asked to rate the importance of the three stages of Project Connect. Forty seven percent of the organizations rated the first phase, Needs Assessment, as “very important”, and another 35% rated it as “somewhat important”. The second phase, Training and Technology Awards, was rated as “very important” by 67% of the organizations that received grants and “somewhat important by 27% of the organizations that received grants. The final stage, Follow-up Tech Support, was only rated as “very important” by 25% of the organizations that received awards, but was rated as “somewhat important” by an additional 58% of these organizations.

Two final questions were asked to end the survey. First, respondents were asked what they felt to be the single biggest challenge to participating in Project Connect. A wide variety of challenges were listed, but the most common challenge was the difficulty of finding the staff time for all the types of participation required, such as filling out forms, attending training, and being involved in the technology installation.

The final question asked for an overall opinion of MRG within the framework of Project Connect. Almost to a person, the respondents thought MRG had done a wonderful job both in funding Project Connect and in interfacing with the organizations during the process. One of two organizations that did not receive funding felt they did not know enough for a complete opinion, but even those organizations were positive about MRG.

### ***Conclusions***

The results show that by almost any measure Project Connect was a large success. For the groups that received technology, their organizational lives were significantly changed in very positive ways. For all groups involved, the Needs Assessment provided benefits, in some case very powerful benefits. In addition, Project Connect appears to have changed how most of the organizations involved view computer technology and the value of staying current. Organizations, whether or not they received Project Connect funds, have continued to search for technology funds, and have used their own organization funds to improve their technology. Finally, although the Project Connect process may have been somewhat difficult for some organizations, all the organizations involved found positive aspects in the process and felt that both NetCorps and MRG performed in an exemplary manner in this project.

## ***Selected answers to survey questions***

### **Specifically, what positive changes have occurred as a result of working with Project Connect?**

- We've upgraded our communication ability through the computer, and the training has really helped bringing new members into our work, so we've got more people connected through the internet and more people in training, and the quality of our work and the communication is better.
- Our accessibility to the public is greatly increased; it's easier for the public to access information through the website.
- We've been able to have better access to technology as far as computers and Internet access
- We have increased the accessibility of internet and other computer services to the farm worker community in Southern Oregon, we've been able to communicate with other organizations through e-mail, we're also able to communicate with other organizations because we can print newsletters and we have a database to improve our own record keeping.

### **What changes in effectiveness have occurred?**

- Our ability to respond quickly when we need to get an action together with other organizers, be able to receive their information quickly so we can act on that as well.
- Our people seem more motivated because the mystery has been taken out of using the program, the technology, people aren't as afraid of the computers as they were at one point, more people are willing to get on and learn, we have more people that are willing to teach.

### **How has it helped your group?**

- I think for the most part what it really did was tie in our own minds the use of technology to our effectiveness at organizing, we began to look more deeply at the use of computers in our campaign, rather than looking at it as an internal capacity question, we looked at it as a part of organizing.
- They just nailed it, it was so just right on that it allowed us to see what our long term strategic needs were, how we were perceived as an organization, what direction we were headed, what we needed to increase growth, it was tremendous.

### **What were the two main (programmatic) effects of this upgrade?**

- An increase in participation in a living wage campaign by adding, we have a very effective living wage listserv that is going on. And then I think the other one would be the development of more leaders through their willingness to focus on their own computer capacity development.
- Interface with other existing organizations more appropriate, or more effective.
- Better communication with our members and allies.

- We get more work out, we spend less time messing with it which is in direct conflict with protecting habitat, every hour we spend messing with computers is an hour we're not protecting habitat, efficiency actually means more habitat protection.
- We've been able to do research online at different stations, workstations in a timely way.

**What has been the effect of these technological changes?**

- We feel like that we're more in the mainstream of organizations now and less marginalized by our poor technology.