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The
Public Work
Reserve

An Introduction

A tremendous volume of public work must be done in years ahead, merely to catch up with existing needs. Rehousing of badly housed masses of people, reconstruction of blighted urban areas, constructive solution of traffic and transportation problems, of highway and parking difficulties—these alone are of such magnitude that many people may be employed for years before the needs are met. Provision of recreational and educational facilities, proper sanitation, reclamation of soil and rivers, and provision for new or expanded public services, all represent a large volume of work needed right now. The problem is to decide which needs must be met first and how to plan so that each project fits reasonably into the pattern of local and national development. This is the challenge which faces our public officials and planners today.

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY
PUBLIC WORK RESERVE

Washington, D. C.






The Public Work Reserve

It has long been recognized that public enterprise shall provide a wide range of public services and capital improvements.

It is now recognized that great good is accomplished if useful public work provides employment in times of economic stress.

This is a matter of mutual interest to all levels of government—Federal, State, and local.



THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE has been established to further this concept and to develop the practical elements which can make it a reality.

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE operates within the Federal Works Agency under the cosponsorship of the National Resources Planning Board, with Work Projects Administration funds.

Aims and Objective

of the

Public Work Reserve

1. To encourage and assist in listing the needs of each State and municipal government in the fields of public service and capital improvement.
2. To promote the policy of long-range planning of useful public services and of needed capital improvements on State, county and local levels, so that programs of worthwhile work will be available when needed.
3. To aid and encourage the governmental bodies in wisely programming for a period of years their services and improvements, on a priority basis of relative need and expediency.
4. To encourage and possibly assist in expediting the advance preparation of designs, plans and specifications of such public improvements in order that they may be ready for accomplishment at the opportune time.
5. By so doing to establish on a national scope a known reserve of useful public work which can be used to stabilize employment during periods of economic stress such as may be expected at the close of the present defense activity.

Organization and Method of Operation

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE is administered nationally from headquarters in Washington, D. C., and through four regional offices.

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE operates through State directors, supplemented by a corps of trained engineers, public services supervisors, and analysts located in key cities within their territory.

Contacts with the various levels of government are made personally by the State director and his staff—initially with the chief executive of the governmental agency and subsequently with the departments or individuals designated to undertake the listing of needed public services and improvements, and the analysis and programming of these requirements.

Prospectuses for each necessary proposal are (1) prepared by local authorities in developing the program, and (2) used by the PUBLIC WORK RESERVE in establishing the national reserve of public services and capital improvements available as needed for employment stabilization.

Long-Range Programming

The preparation by a State or local government of a long-range program of public work involves four major steps, of which the first two may be accomplished concurrently.

1. Listing of Needed Services and Improvements.

Each department of the governmental unit involved submits to an individual or body designated by the chief executive essential data on all proposals for consideration. These include a descrip-

tion of the work, statements in justification, preliminary plans and estimates of construction or acquisition costs, and estimates of operation and maintenance expense.

Each department arranges its proposals in tentative order of priority.

2. The Financial Analysis.

The appropriate financial officer or department of the local government conducts a thorough analysis to determine the local government's approximate ability, present and future, to finance construction and operation of the proposals which may be included in the operation. This is based on past experience, present conditions, and probable trends in local finance.

It amounts in reality to comprehensive financial planning by the local government.

3. Preparation of the Program.

The program results from a reconciliation of data assembled in the two preceding steps. It is developed by a comprehensive agency of the local government under authorization of the chief executive.

The development of the program is premised on a balanced relation of needs and probable ability to finance, on established policies, on basic plans and studies, and on the public attitude. All of these guide the selection of services and improvements to be scheduled, and of their order of priority.

4. Legislative Consideration of the Program and the resulting Capital Budget Recommendations.

Following preparation of the program, a one-year Capital Budget is submitted by the local programming agency to the local governing body for consideration and action.

Public Relations

- Little can be expected from long-range programming unless it has public approval within the community.

Consequently, it is important that the citizens be acquainted with the idea at an early stage of the programming operations, and then be kept informed of progress in order to forestall possible defeat resulting from confused or inadequate understanding of the issues.

Period of the Program

Programming should neither be for too short a period to develop its benefits nor for such a long period that it becomes vague and uncertain.

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE suggests a 6-year period for States and municipalities because it is both convenient and practicable. Congress has provided in the Employment Stabilization Act of 1931 that Federal construction shall be programmed on a 6-year basis. Programs for less than 4 or more than 10 years either do not provide the advantage of the long-range view or become unrealistic in attempting to provide details too far ahead.

Programming a Continuing Process

The Capital Budget is the first year of a long-term program. Beyond this it is essential to retain a flexibility which permits annual review and possible recasting of the program.

At the end of each year a new year's needs are projected and the schedule is revised in the light of the past year's developments.

Thus, there exists continuously a well-considered program extending 6 years into the future with but 1 year definitely budgeted for purposes of administration.

Through the process, there is developed a continuing program for prosecution of public work in normal times which can be telescoped to meet extraordinary employment needs in time of national emergency.

*The Public Work Reserve's
Participation in Local Programming*

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE's staff and consultants furnish such assistance as may be desired by the community. Limited financial aid may be made available for technical and clerical services which are acceptable in analysis of proposals, in programming and in assisting to secure definite plans for such proposals.

THE PUBLIC WORK RESERVE shares the interest of all other planning agencies. This interest lies in the development and acceptance of the principles of programming and long-range planning, in establishing the nation-wide reserve of public work to stabilize the curve of employment, and in making possible effective cooperation with Federal grant-in-aid programs.

To this end the Public Work Reserve offers its services to all governmental units below the national level, to aid in the nation-wide organization of long-range programming and capital budgeting.

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