

to OEO for direct operation, including the two that were most complex, innovative, far-reaching, and costly—the Job Corps and the Community Action Program. The third was Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

While most of the Economic Opportunity Act dealt with the authorization of the nine new programs, four sections were included to provide a statutory basis for OEO's role as Government-wide coordinator of anti-poverty efforts—sections 604, 611, 612, and 613. These sections specifically charge the OEO Director with "coordination of anti-poverty efforts by all segments of the Federal Government" (604); create a Cabinet-level Economic Opportunity Council, of which he is chairman, to assist him (604); empower him to obtain data and reports from other agencies regarding their anti-poverty programs, and direct them to cooperate with him (611); authorize the Director to establish an information center on all Federal anti-poverty programs and make information available to states and communities (613); and direct all agencies, within limits of feasibility and legal authority, to give preference to projects which are elements of approved community action programs (612).

At the community level, the community action agency was designed as a mechanism with a coordinating role analogous to that of OEO. The community action program would, in the language of the Act (sec. 202(a)(1)), "mobilize" and "utilize" public and private resources in the attack on poverty as well as provide services itself.

The dual character of OEO

The central organizational issue of the war on poverty arises from the dual character of OEO—as an operating agency with heavy and complex administrative responsibilities, on the one hand, and as a staff agency for the President, on the other.

It is the "Gresham's law" of administration that operations tends to drive out staff work. Once OEO was assigned the formidable task of organizing new programs of unusual difficulty and sensitivity—recruiting personnel, developing regulations and guidelines, working out interagency agreements, publicizing programs, processing applications, mediating local power struggles, handling protests and complaints—it was inevitable that its operating responsibilities would absorb virtually all of the energies of its leadership and that its Government-wide "Chief of Staff" functions would suffer. As the consequence, a full-fledged headquarters for the war on poverty as a whole has not developed. Insofar as that war has had central leadership and direction they have been provided, for the most part, by the same Executive Office of the President agencies which coordinate all of the other activities and functions of the government.

Achievements in coordination

Given its preoccupation with its own programs—and, to a lesser degree, with its responsibilities for the delegated programs—OEO adopted a conscious strategy of dealing with coordination of other anti-poverty programs only as that became necessary to the implementation of the programs for which it was responsible. Nevertheless, OEO does list a number of accomplishments in its capacity as coordinator. Some of them may be cited:

1. It has developed a national anti-poverty plan projecting for five years recommended funding levels for anti-poverty programs throughout the Government and proposing new programs and program modifications.
2. It has stimulated discussions of basic questions of policy, such as income maintenance proposals, and taken a leading part of them.
3. Through grants to State Technical Assistance Agencies, it has provided each state with a coordinating body, usually located in the Governor's office, with concern for a wide range of state and Federal-state functions.
4. Similarly, in its grants to community action agencies, it has encouraged the formation of broadly-based agencies which will be competent to contribute to the coordination of Federal assistance programs at the receiving end. It has negotiated "checkpoint" procedures with Labor, HUD, and elements of HEW to assure that applications for aid under their programs are submitted for comment to community action agencies.
5. It has encouraged and funded projects, such as neighborhood centers, which have a special potential for mobilizing and coordinating community resources.
6. It has combined its funds with assistance from other agencies, such as the Federal Housing Administration, to undertake joint projects.