IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL & TRAINING PROGRAM

10.30.1998—9.30.2008

A LEGACY OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

NORTHROP GRUMMAN TECHNICAL SERVICES

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS EUR/UBI

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THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM:

A U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS, 1998–2008

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CONTENTS

ACRONYM LIST

ACT	Alliance for Conflict Transformation
BOS	Boston
CO	Colorado Springs
CR	Conflict Resolution
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
DOS	U.S. Department of State
EIIC	Emerald Isle Immigration Center
FAS	Foras Áiseanna Soathair
FY	Fiscal Year
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
GMU	George Mason University
ICAR	Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
IIC	Irish Immigration Center
IIP	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
INS	Immigration Naturalization Service
IPPCTPA	Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998
IPPCTP	Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IT	Information Technology
MDA	Metropolitan Development Association
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGC	Northrop Grumman Corporation
NI	Northern Ireland
NISRA	NI Labour Force Survey Religion Report
PA	Program Administrator
PDT	Pre-Departure Training
ROI	Republic of Ireland
PGH	Pittsburgh
POPP	Peace Operations Policy Program
POC	Point of Contact
PPD	Personal and Professional Development
SOW	Statement of Work
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
SYR	Syracuse
T+EA	Training and Employment Agency
WVP	Walsh Visa Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program (IPPCTP) was a groundbreaking initiative introduced by Representative James T. Walsh (R-NY) and signed into law in October 1998. The IPPCTP is also known as the Walsh Visa Program (WVP). The goal of the Program was to foster cross-cultural understanding and provide training opportunities for young unemployed workers from economically disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland and the six designated border counties of the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The concept was based on the premise that unemployed young people from all sides of the sectarian divide could benefit from the experience of peaceful coexistence through living and working in a multicultural society. With this experience, the participants could return home better able to contribute to their economy and the overall Peace Process. The legislation authorizing the Program was passed shortly after the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and served as a tangible U.S. contribution to the Irish Peace Process.

Between 2000 and 2008, 1,309 young people from Northern Ireland (NI) and the six ROI border counties (Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal) participated in the Program. Participants were recruited and enrolled in the Program by the government training and employment authorities in their home countries, Foras Áiseanna Soathair (FAS) in ROI and The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in NI.

There were two categories of participants. Category 1 participants were fairly evenly divided, half from the North and half from the South, and traveled to assigned hub cities in training groups. Category 2 participants were nominated by their NI/ROI employers to experience temporary "upskilling" opportunities with U.S. employers. Program participants ranged in ages from 18 to 35. Among them were university graduates as well as those with limited skills and work histories. DEL data showed an approximate 27% / 73% split between Catholics and Protestants.

Design and implementation of this unique endeavor involved three governments: the U.S., Ireland, and the U.K., as well as organizations on both sides of the Atlantic, corporate America, and a U.S. university. Through the planning and design phases, the turbulent and self-described chaotic first year, the transition to ever-increasing stability of the later stages, the Program culminated in what most people familiar with the Program would recognize as a practical and credible enterprise. For these reasons, this legacy document may serve similar programs as a road map and the Program itself may serve as a model.

Over the course of three distinct phases, the Program responded to and mostly overcame challenges. Phase 1 included Groups 1–5c arriving between March and September of 2000; Phase 2 included Groups 6–16 arriving between 2001 and 2003; and Phase 3 Groups 17–20 arrived between 2005 and 2006.

One of the primary challenges over the course of the Program was defining the Program's target population. Who was the Walsh Visa Program intended to serve? Was it disadvantaged, unemployed young people lacking in skills or training or young people from disadvantaged areas impacted by structural unemployment? This dilemma was resolved somewhat by amended legislation that more clearly defined the population as those without university degrees and those who were considerably longer-term unemployed, essentially those furthest from the labor market. But throughout the majority of the Program, ambiguities about the target population persisted.

Stakeholders on the Island also faced challenges with recruitment during a period of declining unemployment and a buoyant labor market. Causing the greatest complications during the first year was lack of screening of the candidates. If an individual met the Program-specified eligibility criteria (Between 18–35, three months unemployed, three months residency in NI or ROI border counties), no mechanism existed to assess suitability. Return rates were highest during the first year. The level of support participants required was also grossly underestimated. Lack of screening, pressure to get the Program off the ground, and working toward an unrealistic number of visas—4,000 per year as stated in the legislation—had dismal consequences. This untested Program needed the benefit of a slower more measured approach from the start.

In response to these first-year challenges, the stakeholders embarked upon a complete overhaul and restructuring of the Program. Smaller group sizes with increased spacing between arrivals, improved screening and selection, increased participant support, a more rigorous pre-departure preparation and a comprehensive soft-landing orientation helped to prepare participants and ease their transition into the American workplace and independent living.

The addition of organizations experienced with this population and knowledgeable about their culture and the conflict was a welcome change. The importance of attention to cultural matters leads to the suggestion that, in programs like this, using specialists with local knowledge and expertise (both in conflict generally and in *that* conflict particularly) is recommended.

Conflict Resolution training and a Repatriation Program to assist participants as they transition back home were included in the follow-on phases. Much later in the Program, the Program Administrator (PA) initiated post-Program alumni tracking as a way to determine some indication of the Program's impact on participants once they returned home. One indicator of success was determined by participants' status six months after they returned home. Based on data collected by the PA, more than 75% of participants who returned home voluntarily since 2005 were employed or in school and 95% of all participants asked believed the WVP contributed to their careers. Other soft outcomes more difficult to measure, such as cross-border/cross-community relationships, broadened perspectives, changed attitudes, increased work experience and improved skills, were anecdotally evidenced over the course of the Program. Emphasizing that Program success was not easily measurable, the PA often said in public forums "that it may be 20 years before we know the measure of success of the Program and it will only come when participants reflect back on their time in the WVP as a defining moment in their lives."

Nevertheless, the scope, uniqueness, and ambition of the Program coupled with the inexperience of *all* of the stakeholders in mounting and managing anything quite like it, have made its legacy and accomplishments noteworthy and called strongly for "the telling of the story." Other, more specific lessons from the Program may be drawn:

If a Program component is regarded as key, such as conflict resolution, consider making it mandatory for participants.

- Consider the timing of such programs in terms of their full benefit or impact. Even when the WVP began, the economy in the South was growing and the North's was starting to come to life. One FAS official maintained the Program came "too late" for full benefit to the overall Peace Process. Positive change was already occurring.
- Think through basic elements—numbers, eligibility, screening, and training regimes—carefully and proactively, rather than in constant reaction to challenge and crisis.
- Think about assessment matters—objectives, targets, goals and *metrics*—in the planning and design phase, not after the program has substantially begun.

The final area considered is the Program's wider applicability in other regions such as the Balkans, Middle East, or trouble spots in Africa. Some noted barriers such as language as an impediment. Returning home to a weak economy, limited job opportunities, or an active conflict could also impede success in applying a WVP model. There is of course a final requirement: political will and the willingness to commit resources.

The authors and many stakeholders are hopeful that rather than the Program remaining a unique, one-time experiment in peace building, this successful initiative may serve as the basis and model for other future programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to document the origins and evolution of the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program (IPPCTP)—it tells the story of the Program from its conceptual beginnings, inspired by the Belfast/Good Friday Peace Agreement, through the planning and design phases, the turbulent and self-described chaotic first year, and the transition to ever-increasing stability of the later stages, culminating in what most people familiar with the Program agree is the ultimate recognition of the Program as a practical and credible enterprise. We are telling this story in the hope that future similar programs might use this document as a road map and the Program itself as a model—hopefully to spare them from relearning lessons or repeating mistakes. But, we are also telling the story because the Program delivers a message of hope and opportunity. It is a message that should not be lost.

1.2 SCOPE

This project is comprehensive; it documents the development of the Walsh Visa Program (WVP) historically through the major phases of its existence and includes the perspectives and contributions of all major stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, including the participants and employers. The document relates the Program's origins in the Irish Peace Process and the details and intent of the original authorizing legislation. It identifies key stakeholder organizations, including their roles, responsibilities, and relationship to the program. It also identifies the main functional areas of the Program such as recruitment, screening, pre-departure training, U.S. orientation, conflict resolution, participant support mechanisms, etc. Most importantly, the paper traces the phase–structured chronological development and evolutionary progress of the Program, recording changes that occurred (administrative, demographic, procedural) and critically reviews various adaptive responses to changes.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This document relies on two primary sources of information: in-depth interviews and archival data. Interviews were carried out between January and June 2008 in the U.S., NI and the ROI. Sixty-one individuals with past, present, and ongoing involvement in the Program were interviewed. A full list of these individuals and their affiliations can be found in Appendix 2. The majority of the interviews were face-to-face; 18 took place by phone. The interview structure used a protocol specifying general questions and questions tailored to the role and function of the individual in relation to the Program. Interviewees were encouraged to range beyond the questions, and many did so. We were impressed by the willingness of the vast majority of people to talk with us, by their enthusiasm, and, in many cases, their pride in their involvement with the Program. As necessary, we followed-up with phone or email contacts.

Documentary research relied heavily on records and data captured and maintained by Northrop Grumman Corporation (NGC), the WVP's Program Administrator. Documents included minutes of intergovernmental meetings, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs); correspondence, and internal NGC Program assessments prepared for U.S. Department of State (DOS) covering various aspects of the Program. Print and media coverage of the Program, from the U.S., NI, and ROI, were referenced to illustrate perceptions. Two comprehensive Program assessment reports carried out by consultants commissioned by Irish and Northern Ireland stakeholders (September 2002 and April 2008) provided valuable sources of information. We also analyzed volumes of data collected from surveys and the Program website. We found only one academic article, by Andrew Wilson, relating specifically to the WVP.[1] This article recounts the legislation's background and some of the problems encountered in its first year. We found no discrepancies between Wilson's narrative (based on interviews carried out in 2000–2001) and the accounts of the various intervie-

[1] Andrew J. Wilson, "The Irish Peace Process and Cultural Training Program Act of 1998 (Walsh Visa Program): A Case Study in U.S. Economic Support for the Good Friday Agreement." Irish Political Studies 16:245-256, 2001.

wees from the Program's earliest days (based on their interviews seven or eight years later).

We synthesized the data and organized this paper in such a way that the reader can easily follow the principal Program elements as they stood up and evolved over time. The Program itself was nominally divided into phases generally agreed to by the principal Program designers. The paper is organized chronologically or historically along an axis of major Program phases. Within each phase, the main functional areas of the Program are addressed and assessed. The emphasis is on challenges and responses to challenges throughout the phases. This challenge-response orientation constitutes the main dynamic behind the report's narrative.

1.4 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The IPPCTP is rooted in the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998, which paved the way towards a more prosperous and peaceful society. The framers of the WVP imagined a Program of hope and opportunity for young Irish people, both northern and southern, nationalist and unionist, Catholic and Protestant. They envisioned a program that looked beyond the fragile peace process and into the future, a future where sectarian strife was relegated to words in history books.

Congressman James T. Walsh (R-NY) was the principal U.S. architect and sponsor of the legislation that established the Program. With the support of several U.S. Irish organizations and the cooperation of the ROI and U.K. governments, Walsh introduced legislation (H.R. 4293) in the U.S. House of Representatives in mid-1998. H.R. 4293 passed both houses of Congress with strong bipartisan support and, with President Clinton's signature in October 1998, became Public Law 105-319, the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998. In recognition of Congressman Walsh's unyielding and persistent support, the Program became popularly known and referred to as the Walsh Visa Program (WVP). Throughout the remainder of this paper, we will refer to the Program as the WVP or merely the Program.

The purpose of the Program, as stated in the legislation, was:

> *…to allow young people from disadvantaged areas of designated counties suffering from sectarian violence and high structural unemployment to enter the U.S. for the purpose of developing job skills and conflict resolution abilities in a diverse, cooperative, peaceful, and prosperous environment…* (Public Law 105-319, Sec. 2. (a)(1)

In Rep. Walsh's words:

> *The purpose of the legislation was twofold; on an economic level, the Program aimed to nurture prosperity which leads to tolerance. On a societal level, it was an opportunity to share our multi-cultural experience and the lessons we've learned.*

The Act created a unique opportunity for young people from NI and the ROI to work and live in the United States without sectarian distractions while at the same time offering exposure to conflict resolution alternatives. The Act was noteworthy because it required a large measure of intergovernmental, interagency, and extra governmental cooperation and coordination. Three national governments (the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland) shared responsibility for the design and execution of the Program, which relied heavily on support from corporate America, small businesses, non-profit organizations, a university, and NI and ROI training organizations. Much of this document will delve into the cooperation, coordination, negotiation, and compromise among these different entities that shaped and managed the Program through its development.

The WVP initiative was welcomed by government leaders from all three countries and generally hailed as an expression of the United States' commitment to help bring about positive and lasting change in NI. The Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Andrews, described the Program as a "further demonstration of the U.S. commitment to underpin the Peace Process with innovative and practical support for economic regeneration in Northern Ireland and the border counties." In his view, the Program "[would] have a significant confidence building impact on the young people in the region, particularly those in disadvantaged areas." Northern Ireland's Secretary of State, Dr. Marjorie Mowlam, described the Program as "another example of practical economic help for the people of Northern Ireland from the United

States" and expressed gratitude to the United States for its "continuing efforts to help build a stable and prosperous future for Northern Ireland and for providing the opportunity for some of the most disadvantaged to acquire skills and find jobs in areas where they are most needed in Northern Ireland."

From its inception, the Program had its share of detractors. A senior Northern Irish official described the Program as an "unwelcome gift," that Northern Ireland never asked for. Others questioned the Program's timing in light of an Irish economy on the upswing, falling unemployment rates, and a buoyant labor market. But pockets of high unemployment persisted, particularly in parts of Northern Ireland and in the border counties, and the political situation remained tenuous. Overall, most recognized the value in bringing young people from different cultural and religious backgrounds together to live in a new environment to gain new perspectives and confidence in them and in their respective country's future.

The legislation directed the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) (specifically the Immigration Naturalization Service [INS]) to create a special visa for the Program. It would become the Q-2 visa. The Q-2[2] visa was unique because it was designed for and applied only to the WVP. In order to be eligible to apply for a Q-2 visa, a young person had to be 35 years of age or younger and a resident of Northern Ireland or one of several ROI counties where sectarian violence and structural unemployment were problematic (Lough, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal). The visa was valid for 36 months. Rules and regulations published by DOS and (DOJ) subsequent to the legislation and future legislation amendments would attach other restrictions and qualifications to the Q-2 visa.

The original legislation allowed issuance of 4,000 Q-2 visas a year for three years, (from 2000 to 2003) for a total of 12,000 visas. The law contained a "sunset" clause that repealed the Program effective October 1, 2005. Program designers soon learned that the visa allocation numbers were untenable. The reader will discover how subsequent programmatic decisions dramatically scaled back the number of visas actually issued. By the Program's completion 1,309 participants had entered the U.S. Twice, once in 2002 and again in 2004, the legislation was amended and extended with a new sunset date of October 1, 2008.

Despite what Congressman Walsh called the "noble intentions" of the Program, its success was not guaranteed. Looking back on the troublesome first year, and some of the vexing problems after that, one senior Northern Ireland official described the Program as resembling a "bumblebee: it flew, but no one quite knew how." Given its ambitious goals; the complexity of its design; the considerable diversity of "cultures" of various principals, stakeholders, and sub-contractors; and the courage of the young participants, the WVP has earned the privilege of having its story told.

Much of the Program's procedural and programmatic success can be attributed to the substantial contributions of the major Program stakeholders (see Figure 1-1). These are the organizations and individuals whose dedication, effort, and tenacity made the Program work. You have already been introduced to Congressman Walsh whose vision was the Program's inspiration. Four government agencies, one each from NI and ROI and two from the U.S., took that vision and transformed it into the WVP. The U.S. DOS, the U.S. DOJ/INS, and The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) from NI and its counterpart in the ROI—Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS)—collaborated, coordinated, compromised, and launched the WVP. The Program Administrator (PA); Logicon, which later became a part of NGC; hub management organizations; and George Mason University (GMU) were all stakeholders who responded to the government's direction and managed the day-to-day Program responsibilities. Employers were the silent but critical stakeholders in the Program. Without their cooperation and enthusiasm, there would have been no WVP. Finally, the participants were perhaps the stakeholders with the most at stake. Their courage and resoluteness, often in the presence of uncertainty and Program chaos, was a privilege to witness. Each of the stakeholders had central roles in the Program. These roles, which evolved over time, will be described later in greater detail.

[2]There were two categories of participants under the Q-2 visa (the difference between them will be discussed, below). The great majority-1,036-were admitted under Category 1. They were the major focus and concern of the Program and consequently this work.

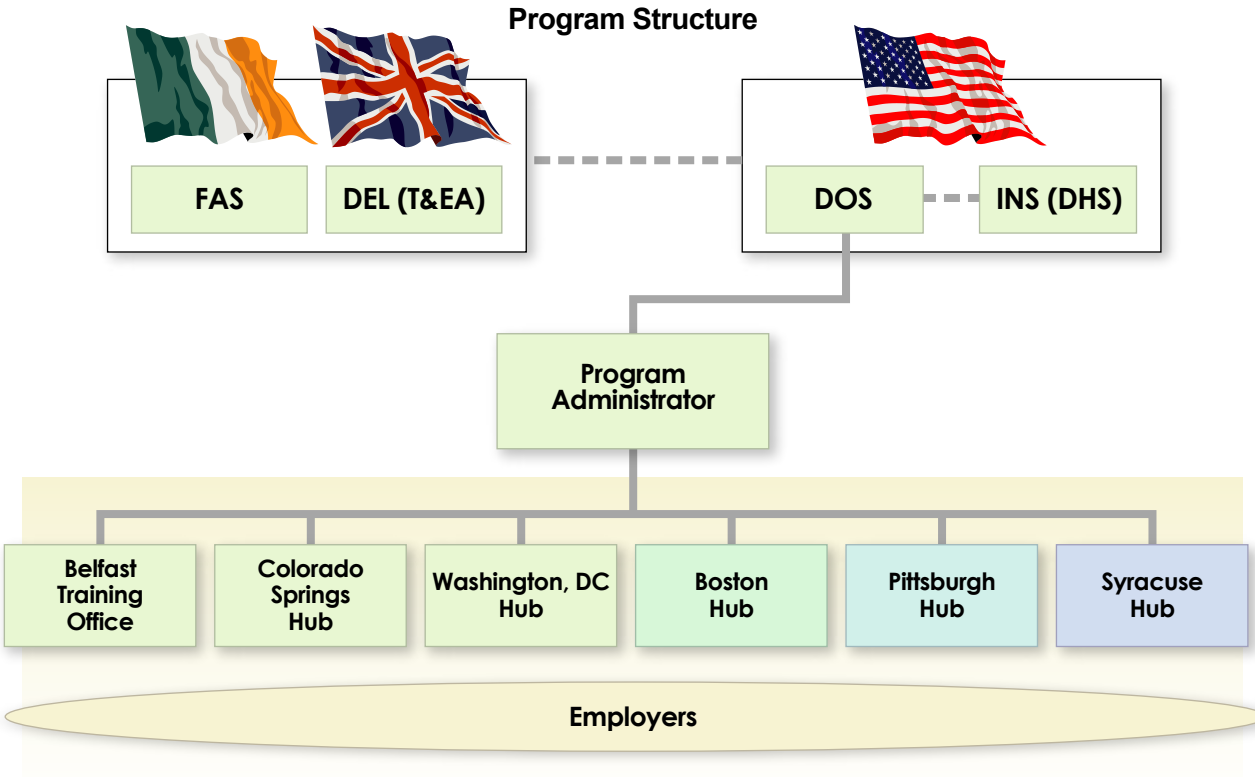

Figure 1-1. WVP Program Organization

Stakeholders generally agree that there were three discrete operational phases in which express participant activity was occurring, as opposed to solely developmental activities. Table 1-1 presents a WVP timeline, from the signing of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement in 1998 to September 2008. This timeline marks the different phases and other significant development activities in the Program.

Between 1998 and 1999, the Program experienced its historical genesis as well as significant strategic, procedural, and policy development. The initial year of operations (operations meaning actual participant arrival and stay in the U.S.) was understood to be the Pilot Phase, a phase that would be used to assess procedures and processes and fix "bugs." The Pilot Phase turned out to be the most turbulent year for the Program, more chaotic than anyone had imagined and marked by challenges that needed to be addressed—demanding in effect a critical review by all the stakeholders if the Program were to continue. The Pilot Phase, also identified as Phase 1, is generally agreed to be March–September 2000 and encompasses Groups 1–5c. Phase 2, (October 2000 – September 2003) included Groups 6–16. Although many concerns remained, Phase 2 involved extensive and continuous redesign, reorganization, and rebuilding. Phase 2 witnessed many changes to the Program's structure and relations among its stakeholders. During this period, the WVP increasingly stabilized as all the stakeholders negotiated and implemented systems and procedures to better meet Program objectives. During Phase 2, in 2002, the original legislation was amended to continue the Program for an additional year and the Program's sunset was extended to October 2006. A self-assessment and re-visioning period followed Phase 2. During this period, which lasted approximately from October 2003 to October 2005, participants continued to depart as scheduled but no new participants were admitted. The period was marked by uncertainty because new legislation was pending that would extend the Program for a second time. The legislation was passed in 2004, and the WVP sunset was extended to September 30, 2008. Phase 3 then began in October 2005 and ended September 30, 2008.

Table 1-1. WVP Timeline 1998–2008

Walsh Visa Program Timeline, 1998–2008		
1998	Apr	Good Friday/Belfast Agreement signed
	Oct	Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Act becomes law (Public Law 105-319)
Pre Phase 1 Initial Development		
1999	Sept	Logicon awarded contract to administer WVP
	Nov	Memorandum of Understanding developed between NI/ROI and USG Official Walsh Visa Program roll-out at DOS
Phase 1 Initial Implementation (Pilot Phase)		
2000	Mar–Sept	Groups 1–5c arrive
	Mar	DOS and INS Federal Regulations published in Federal Register Group 1 arrives in the U.S.
	Jun	Phase 1 Program Review
	Sept	Group 5c arrives, Phase 1 concludes Logicon awarded Cooperative Agreement for WVP Follow-on Phase
Phase 2 Program Restructuring (Follow-on Phase)		
2001	May–Sept	Groups 6–8 arrive, new hubs, GMU and PPD/CR training introduced
	May	Group 6 arrives in new hubs (BOS, PGH); First Cat. 2s enter Program
	Oct	New DOS Federal Regulations published, October 16, 2001
2002	Mar–Sept	Groups 9–12 arrive
	July	SYR receives first participants; DC reinstated as hub
	Oct	Congress extends Program one year (to sunset in '06) (Public Law 107-234)
2003	Mar–Sept	Groups 13–16 arrive; Colorado Springs hub closed
	Oct	Legislation introduced to extend and amend Program
2004	Dec	Legislation to extend and amend Program signed into law, to sunset in 2008 (Public Law 108-449)
Phase 3 Revision		
2005	Oct	Program pipeline resumes - Group 17 arrives in BOS and PGH Cat. 2 Program discontinued
2006	Apr–Sept	Groups 18–20 arrive in BOS and PGH
2008	Sept	Legislation authorizing WVP expires
		Group 20 participants depart the U.S.

Phase 3 comprised Groups 17–20. The legislative revisions of 2004 created a different "demographic" for these last four groups, one that demanded yet further adjustment by Program stakeholders.

As participants were recruited, screened, and selected by their home country agencies, (FAS and DEL), they were organized into groups and retained that group identity. There were 20 groups in all; they were assigned to U.S. cities, known as hubs, and although individuals from the same group were assigned to different hubs, they maintained their group identity. Hubs were managed by various organizations whose responsibility it was to orient, assist, and provide general support to participants. Pre-departure training (PDT), hubs, and all other major Program elements are dealt with in great detail throughout this document. Tables 1-2 and 1-3 summarize the demographics of participants by phase, group number, size, arrival, and hub and from where they came.

Table 1-2 WVP Total Participant Population

	Phase 1							Phase 2											Phase 3				Total
Program Year	**2000**							**2001**			**2002**				**2003**				**2006**				
HUB	1 Mar	2 Apr	3 May	4 Jun	5 Jun	5b Jul	5c Sep	6 May	7 Jul	8 Sep	9 Mar	10 May	11 Jul	12 Sep	13 Mar	14 May	15 Jul	16 Sep	17 Oct	18 Apr	19 Jun	20 Sep	
Boston								25	28	29	28	23	8	32	23	17	11	14	11	6	12	13	**280**
CO Springs		48	33	53	13																		**147**
Pittsburgh								26	28	25	28	26	13	28	21	19	21	21	5	8	9	13	**291**
Syracuse													16			18		23					**57**
DC	77	20	34	35	1	31	7					2	7	13	16		18						**261**
Total	**77**	**68**	**67**	**88**	**14**	**31**	**7**	**51**	**56**	**54**	**56**	**51**	**44**	**73**	**60**	**54**	**50**	**58**	**16**	**14**	**21**	**26**	**1036**
Total Cat. 2								**8**			**111**				**154**								**273**
Total WVP Population, including Cat. 1 and Cat. 2																							**1309**

Table 1-3 WVP Participant Population by Hub

Total Participants at Each Hub

Hub/Agency		Total Number
Boston	DEL	140
	FAS	140
	Total	**280**
CO Springs	DEL	116
	FAS	31
	Total	**147**
Pittsburgh	DEL	156
	FAS	135
	Total	**291**
Syracuse	DEL	29
	FAS	28
	Total	**57**
DC	DEL	169
	FAS	92
	Total	**261**
	Cat. 1 Totals	**1036**

2.1 "THE TROUBLES" AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Like many longstanding and seemingly intractable conflicts between communal and identity groups, the Irish conflict goes back centuries. In the early 17th century, the "plantation" of Protestant English and Scottish settlers displaced many Catholic Irish from the north of Ireland (Ulster), and created a colonial society wherein newcomers asserted increasing control over the economy and governance of the society as a whole. Under Oliver Cromwell, Catholics suffered harshly for their faith. But even setting aside the religious dimension of the conflict, the Irish were generally treated as a subject population. Social segregation was marked. Irish nationalism grew as a force in the 19th century and intensified with the Easter Rebellion of 1916. Violence in the next five years led Britain to agree to Irish Home Rule in the South, and the Island was effectively partitioned to protect the majority Protestant population of Ulster. From about 1920 on, the Catholics of Northern Ireland suffered from active political and economic discrimination. Unemployment was especially high in Catholic areas.

By the late 1960s, taking their cue from the American Civil Rights movement, nationalists (mostly Catholics) began to agitate in Northern Ireland for social change, mainly for an end to discrimination. This is generally considered the start of "The Troubles." What began as a peaceful movement of civil rights groups advocating for equal rights and cultural recognition was met with a heavy-handed response by the Northern Ireland authorities and violence from Protestant paramilitary groups. Nationalists responded with a rejuvenated Irish Republican Army (IRA) and violence of their own. The conflict escalated as paramilitary groups on both sides engaged in tit-for-tat campaigns against the other and the population as a whole. The British Army was called in to restore order, initially welcomed by the Catholics as protectors. But the Army was soon drawn into the conflict and became embroiled in the violence; many nationalists viewed the Army's presence as simply a continuation of the British military occupation begun four centuries earlier.[3]

As Fitzduff and O'Hagan have pointed out, during The Troubles, 3,600 people lost their lives and 30,000 were injured. With a Northern Ireland population of only 1.5 million, it is estimated that about half the population had a close association with someone either killed or injured. Fitzduff and O'Hagan wrote: "There was a huge price to pay for the inability of the people of Northern Ireland to resolve their differences peacefully."[4] Not surprisingly, as a result of years of violent conflict, the economy suffered, unemployment soared, and young unemployed men in particular were vulnerable to recruitment into paramilitary organizations. A level of distrust and insecurity persisted due in part to a turbulent history and because the two communities lived so separately, attending separate schools, churches, and working in different industries.

The movement towards peace was long and drawn out, moving forward in small steps that required large changes in the positions of the various parties. It culminated in the historic Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (GFA) on April 10, 1998. On a political level, with the support of Britain and Ireland (and the U.S.) the two sides chose negotiation over violence—"the ballot over the bullet"—to begin reconciling their differences and laying the foundation for a society free from sectarian violence, inequality, and division. Specifically, the GFA established the Northern Ireland Assembly and a system of power sharing between Nationalist and Unionist political parties. Long divided about whether Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom or become a united Ireland, the Agreement ended the Republic of Ireland's territorial claim to Northern Ireland. The GFA also called for the early release of paramilitary prisoners, the disarming of paramilitaries, reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary police force scaling back the presence of the British army, and devolution of

[3]Although Catholic and Protestant are much-used labels by both sides to mark identity, many more see the conflict in terms of a nationalist struggle or even an anti-colonial one (Catholic Nationalists), or a struggle to maintain (a British) identity (alongside historic privileges, perhaps) by a minority afraid of being swallowed or overwhelmed by a hostile majority (Protestant, Unionists) should Northern Ireland and the South be united.

[4]See: http://cain.ulst.ac.U.K./othelem/incorepaper.htm

power from Westminster.

In a May 22, 1998, referendum, the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voted overwhelmingly to ratify the Good Friday Agreement. Nevertheless, life in Northern Ireland was still characterized by segregation between its Protestant and Catholic communities. For the young people who participated in the Walsh Visa Program, many met and interacted significantly with participants from across the border or from the "other" community for the first time in their lives. For others, physically crossing the border to the North or to the South was a first.

The Good Friday Agreement provided a framework to end violence as well as modest hope for peace and reconciliation. And yet peace, much less reconciliation, cannot depend solely on agreements signed by political elites or even institutional reforms. Tensions remained high after the GFA was signed. Two years after the GFA, Mari Fitzduff wrote: "Significant advances have been made in housing, employment, and other areas but a problem of long-term unemployment, particularly among Catholics, and in ensuring Catholic equality at the most senior levels of the civil service remains. Advances for the Catholic community can be perceived as deficits for the Protestant community in a 'zero-sum' game, which does little to foster co-operation."[5] Without opportunity for contact between the two main groups, segregation would remain a barrier to a more integrated and prosperous society.

2.2. THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE PROCESS

2.2.1 Clinton/Mitchell Contribution

Supporting the Peace Process in Northern Ireland had been a longstanding interest of the American people and the United States Government (USG). Many credit the Clinton administration's commitment as pivotal towards reaching the historic Good Friday Agreement in 1998. A senior Irish administrator of the Walsh Visa Program credited U.S. involvement generally as "the only reason the peace agreement worked." Recalling the intensity of the mistrust and hatred especially between loyalists and Catholics in Northern Ireland, he described Clinton as "one of the necessary external forces who took a neutral position and listened equally to Loyalists, Unionists, and Nationalists." President Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland in 1995 was the first by a sitting American President in the country's history. The visit inspired great hope in the Peace Process for the people of Northern Ireland and Ireland. In a speech at Londonderry/Derry's Guildhall Square, President Clinton told Catholics and Protestants to "have the patience to work for a just and lasting peace—reach for it and the U.S. will reach with you." To assist with the Peace Process, President Clinton, as early as 1995, asked former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell to organize a White House Summit on Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland. Later, as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, Mitchell played a critical mediating role in the talks leading up to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. His contribution was almost universally believed to be indispensible to the signing of the Agreement.

Leaders from the U.K., Ireland, and the U.S. recognized that building a diverse society founded on tolerance, equal rights, and a commitment to nonviolent political means would require not only a negotiated peace settlement and a ceasefire but also efforts to promote economic development and cross-community cooperation and reconciliation at the community and grassroots level. A number of projects aimed at economically disadvantaged areas and communities suffering from high unemployment were initiated; the Walsh Visa Program was among them.[6]

2.2.2 Congressional Initiatives and Contributions

The Administration was not the only source of American support for the Peace Process. Congress played a role too. The Walsh Visa Program was one of several confidence-building measures that grew out of the Good Friday Agreement. A senior Irish official remarked, "The Walsh Visa Program represented another expression of America's support of the Peace Process." An official from

[5]See previous URL

[6]The broad range of U.S. economic support for the Peace Process is detailed by Andrew J. Wilson, in "Doing Business: Aspects of the Clinton Administration's Economic Support for the Northern Ireland Peace Process, 1994-2000." The Journal of Conflict Studies, Spring 2003:155-176.

Northern Ireland concurred: "The Program helped people on an individual level but also contributed to greater good." A Northern Ireland official described the Program as "part of a plethora of initiatives that were part of a whole range of initiatives and part of the whole package."

Congressional support long predated the Walsh Visa legislation and, in fact, made its passage possible. As Chairman of the bipartisan Congressional Friends of Ireland Committee, established in 1981, to promote peace and reconciliation, and as Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Ireland, Rep. Walsh had taken a particular interest in the Irish Peace Process and sought to make a tangible contribution. In his capacity as Chairman, he led several delegations to Ireland in support of the Peace Process. In May of 1998, less than one month after the GFA was signed, Speaker of the Irish Dáil, Seamus Pattison, led a delegation to Washington, DC, for meetings with the newly established U.S.-Ireland Interparliamentary Group. During those meetings, the Irish representatives raised the idea of a "transitional visa program" designed to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement. After a few weeks of research, consultation, and negotiation, Walsh and his colleagues came to share the enthusiasm and introduced legislation to establish the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program, H.R. 4293. Rep. Walsh credits the original concept to the Emerald Isle Immigration Center (EIIC) of Queens, New York. The EIIC formed part of the Irish Immigrant Reform Movement that lobbied successfully for thousands of visas for Irish immigrants, such as the Morrison and Donnelly visas. The EIIC had also lobbied to "regularize" the status of Irish living in the U.S. without proper legal documentation. In fact, EIIC had advocated for the inclusion of such a provision as part of the Walsh Visa Program legislation. Such a provision, however, was not supported on Capitol Hill or by Rep. Walsh himself. In particular, it was opposed by House Immigration Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX), who had been the driving force behind the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform Bill and traditionally opposed expanding visa programs. Therefore, the new legislation would have to focus strictly on young people from Northern Ireland or the border counties of Ireland who would come to the U.S. on temporary work visas and return home upon expiration of their visas.

Chairman Smith lent his support to the bill after provisions for undocumented Irish living in the U.S. were removed, and provided that the number of new visas would be offset against existing H-2B non-immigrant quotas. In the final version of the bill, the number of visas was reduced from 50,000 to 12,000 and the length of the visa from five years to three. (There will be more on these numbers later. No one interviewed could recall where the number 12,000—much less 50,000—came from. Even the smaller number quickly turned out to be unrealistic upon Program implementation.) Strong support from then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA), who had joined Rep. Walsh on a trip to Ireland, helped to garner support for the bill and facilitated its quick passage through the House. With the backing of the Speaker of the House and 53 bi-partisan cosponsors and with help from Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), sponsor of the companion bill in the Senate, legislation authorizing the Program passed through both houses of Congress and awaited the President's signature. According to Andrew Wilson, "Susan Brophy, White House Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs, and Kitty Higgins, Undersecretary of Labor, used their influence to block potential opposition from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), always wary of temporary visas, and assuage fears of unions that the Walsh Visa would take away American jobs" (Wilson 2001:248). In some other ways, as we shall see with respect to initial funding of the Program, the White House seemed less than fully enthusiastic about the bill. A former Walsh aide noted that the lukewarm support from the White House stemmed from a concern that other countries in similar situations (for example, Haiti) might engage Congressional supporters to push for their own visa programs.

On October 27, 1998, The Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 was signed into law by President Bill Clinton and became Public Law 105-319[7]. In Rep. Walsh's words, "The visa represented an American commitment to provide support for the Peace Process and all that it promises for the people of Ireland." Having

[7]The full text of the original Act (P.L 105-319), the 2002 Act extension (P.L. 107-234) and the 2004 Act (P.L. 108-449) can be found in Appendix 3a-c.

served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal and describing himself as an idealist, Rep. Walsh believed strongly in the benefits of cross-cultural exchanges and the cross-pollination of ideas that they foster. With these strong convictions, Rep. Walsh chose to make a concrete contribution by helping young people who were somehow imprisoned in the conflict gain a view or have a vision of what the world could be like without the worry of being identified as a Catholic or Protestant. During his interview, he made it clear that he also valued what these young people might bring to America by sharing their culture and values with Americans. In this sense, Rep. Walsh himself very much looked on the WVP as a true "cultural exchange" program. In his view, Americans can be very insular and it is through exchanges and sharing experiences and cultures where cross-pollination of ideas and new understanding takes place.

Former NI Bureau Chief, Tim Losty; WVP participants Sam Jamison and Sarah Docherty, and Rep. Walsh

2.3 THE WVP LEGISLATION

The legislation itself specified the Program's broad goals and objectives and the U.S. government agencies tasked to implement the Program. The IPPCTPA amended the Immigration and Nationality Act by expanding the existing Q non-immigrant visa category to include the Q-2 and Q-3 visas for the purpose of the IPPCTP. When asked why an existing J-visa wasn't used, a consular official explained that while there are many "J categories" the sort of J changes necessitated by the IPPCTPA would have required new legislation. She added, "The Q-1 already existed as a cultural exchange visa, and it was easier to create the Walsh Visa under Q as a cultural exchange."

The actual language in the bill established that "individuals 35 years or younger from disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland and six designated border counties of the Republic of Ireland (Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal) suffering from sectarian violence and high structural unemployment may be admitted along with spouses or dependents to the U.S. for up to 36 months for the purpose of receiving practical training, employment, and the experience of coexistence and conflict resolution in a diverse society in order to return to support the economy and peace process." The legislation also established that the Program "shall promote cross-community and cross-border initiatives to build grassroots support for long-term peaceful coexistence." It called upon "the Secretary of State and Attorney General to cooperate with nongovernmental organizations to assist those admitted to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life of the United States."

Many have noted that this Program called into existence a new type of visa that could, in fact, only be issued by the U.S. Embassy in Dublin and the U.S. Consulate in Belfast. To be eligible for the Q-2 temporary non-immigrant visa, individuals

could have "no intention of abandoning their residence" in the designated counties therefore, the participants had to overcome the presumption that they were intending immigrants. Given the explicit temporary nature of the visa, this means they would return home. As recalled by several consular officials, overcoming the presumption that they were intending immigrants was a particularly challenging aspect of issuing the Q-2 visas. A former consul in Belfast explained, "One problem about the Q-2 was the applicant pool. This was a pool that consular officers are instructed not to issue visas to, because they are low skilled and unemployed and can be seen as economic migrants. So even though we are trained for years to identify these people and not issue them visas, with this Program those are exactly the types applying for the Q-2." Another consular official remarked how unique the Q-2 visa was: "No other visa would have met the requirements and qualified for a work visa. Normally U.S. employers have to prove that they cannot find any American to do the job, but that requirement was waived for the Q-2."

The legislation called for INS "to maintain records of the non-immigrant status and place of residence of each alien admitted under the Program and to compile and submit to Congress a report on the number of aliens admitted with non-immigrant status who had overstayed their visas."

2.3.1 Some Ambiguities

As written, the authorizing legislation, passed in October 1998, was arguably ambiguous regarding prospective applicants. In the bill's heading it described the Act as one "to establish a cultural training program for disadvantaged individuals to assist the Irish peace process." Subsequently it characterized the Act's purpose "to establish a program to allow young people from disadvantaged areas of designated counties…" Must the applicant therefore be demonstrably him or herself disadvantaged or merely from an area or county classified as disadvantaged? In fact, as the George Mason University assessment team learned in a visit to the Island in August 2001, this ambiguity was confusing to the NI and ROI officials tasked with recruitment and screening. Who was the ideal Walsh Visa candidate? Should middle-class university graduates who lived in Belfast be considered disadvantaged by virtue of their residence? Some thought not. However, university graduates were among those admitted until the legislation was amended in 2004, at which point graduates were explicitly excluded. Assumptions about who should be targeted by the Program became one of the primary challenges during implementation. Rep. Walsh had voiced the feeling that future "entrepreneurs" might also benefit from the Program. This perhaps explains the inclusion of Category 2 participants. They could not easily be called "disadvantaged." Category 2 participants were those currently employed in NI or ROI and nominated by their employer. At a later stage, this category also included students (interns) who have an internship requirement for degree completion and who are nominated by institutions of higher learning. Category 2 participants nominated by employers must have been employed in Northern Ireland or one of the six border counties in the Republic for at least 90 days. All Category 2 nominees must meet the same residency requirements as Category 1 applicants and can only be certified to work for a DOS-approved employer in the U.S. In total, there were 273 Category 2 participants admitted to the Program.

3. PRE-PHASE 1:
EARLY STAKEHOLDERS AND DEVELOPING, ORGANIZING, AND STRUCTURING THE PROGRAM

3.1 DOS AND INS

Once the IPPCTPA became law, design and implementation of the Program became the responsibility of DOS and DOJ. Officials from the Bureau of European Affairs at DOS and INS (from DOJ) oversaw the Program, with DOS's Ireland and Northern Ireland desk officer serving as the Program Officer.

The two government agencies began work on the Program design by defining requirements that would eliminate the ambiguities in the legislation. Two key points required definition and clarification: who were the intended recipients and who would be allowed to apply for the Program? In defining the target population, one proposal suggested two types of participants: one group would consist of skilled but underemployed individuals and the second group would consist of individuals "with little prospect of employment in the absence of training and meaningful work experience" (DOS 1998 discussion paper). In the opinion of DOS, the members of the first group did not fit the target population suggested in the legislation as much as those in the second group. As we have seen, Rep. Walsh himself believed the Program could serve a broad spectrum by not only focusing on the disadvantaged, but also on young entrepreneurs. Many companies would want to invest in NI and ROI so Walsh saw the value in serving "both ends of the spectrum." In a July 1999, press release announcing the Program, Rep. Walsh stated that the Program would be aimed at three groups: the structurally unemployed, young graduates, and those who had worked in the security infrastructure (police and prison guards put out of work due to diminished security needs). Prior to the final phase of the Program where the legislation more clearly defined the target population, the wide spectrum of participants in the Program would be a source of complications in the Program design and delivery.

Throughout 1999, discussion between DOS and INS continued and the Program began to take shape. The USG and the Irish and Northern Irish stakeholders agreed that the unemployed be placed in growing employment "sectors" or where skill shortages existed. "Therefore, a concerted effort would be made, through the Program Administrator, to put… participants into entry level jobs in growth sectors such as tourism and information technology." Furthermore, "It was strongly recommended that participants have a guaranteed job before they receive a visa based on problems that had arisen from J-1 work study programs."

Questions arose as to whether an underemployed youth could apply (for example, a youth from Donegal [an included border county] currently living in Galway [not a specified border county] or a youth from Galway living in Donegal). In accordance with the legislation, INS required that participants' residencies be verified to ensure they came from one of the border counties or Northern Ireland. It was unclear at this point whether par-

DOS/INS Key Functions

DOS, Bureau of European Affairs

Design of IPPCTP mandated by IPPCTA

- Formulation of policies and procedures
- Selection and oversight of PA and establishment of specific PA responsibilities
- Coordination with other USG agencies and representatives of NI/ROI governments
- Approval process for U.S. employers

Consulate/Embassy

- Publicize Program, issue Q-2 visas

DOJ/INS

- Track Q-2 non-immigrant visa holders; maintain records of non-immigrant status and residence
- Report Q-2 overstays to Congress (Annual Congressional Overstay Report)
- Approve employer changes
- Pre-flight inspection at Shannon or Dublin airport

ticipants could enter the Program just by going to the U.S. Embassy in Dublin or to the U.S. Consulate in Belfast to apply for the visas. These ambiguities needed to be clarified.

There was also discussion about how to fulfill the training obligation as stated in the legislation. Rep. Walsh's vision of the Program was that the visa was not just about jobs, but also included an element of training in conflict resolution. Therefore, it was proposed that "participants would have to sign a contract that they will participate fully in the training and conflict resolution aspects of the Program and that the only way the conflict resolution and career enhancement training would work is if participants were concentrated in geographic locations instead of scattered to the four winds on their own." (Nothing was decided at the time. Later, in 2000, this was formalized by the PA in a "Code of Conduct.") An early discussion document described the training "beyond the normal cross-cultural experience that resulted from such an exchange program. Conflict Resolution training would include a broad-based intellectual as well as practical experience, to include the U.S experience in labor management relations and living in a multi-cultural society to broaden understanding of and respect for different traditions within a democratic society."

Early discussions also raised concerns about the potential for one community to be (Catholic/Nationalist or Protestant/Unionist) over-represented as well as the need to ensure that both communities and traditions were represented to clearly negate any perception that the Program was helping one more than the other.

Finally, the manner in which the Program would be funded was considered: To what extent would the Program be self-funding? In the earliest discussions, it was suggested that the Program would be largely self-funded with participants paying for visa fees, airfare, and initial temporary accommodations. This was all dropped subsequently with the realization that the long-term unemployed may not have the means to pay their own way.

The legislation assigned different roles to DOS and INS. The DOS would be responsible for the overall Program, including the selection and oversight of the Program Administrator. The DOS would also disburse U.S. government funds for the administration of the U.S. portion of the Program and approve (certify) all U.S. employers nominated for Program participation. The U.S. Consulate in Belfast and U.S. Embassy in Dublin were responsible for screening Q-2 visa applications and issuing visas in accordance with the regulations and eligibility criteria governing the Q-2 visa. The DOS also had responsibility for developing rules and regulations. Among other things, these set forth requirements regarding participants' health insurance, participant and employer certification, and the consequence of participant job lost.

The INS was also charged with developing rules and regulations governing the Q-2 visa and ensuring compliance. Among the key INS responsibilities were tracking Q-2 visa holders, maintaining records of non-immigrant status and residence, reporting Q-2 overstays to Congress in the Annual Congressional Overstay Report, approving participant employer changes, and providing preflight inspections at Shannon or Dublin airports. Participants' changes of employment once in the U.S. became a significant issue and, over time, the rule was amended. There were other problems with the rules and regulations, discussed below, that often made Program administration difficult.

Throughout 1999, as the U.S. Program concept began to take shape, DOS and INS officials forged working relationships with NI and ROI training and employment agencies whose ministers had tasked them with making the Program work. Subsequently, the three governments and their respective agencies, formalized an agreement about the roles and responsibilities with regard to Program implementation formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding in November 1999.

3.2 T+EA AND FAS ARE ENGAGED

The Training and Employment Agency (T+EA) in Northern Ireland and the Training and Employment Authority, Foras Asianna Saothair (FAS) in Ireland were appointed to serve as partners in the delivery of the Program.[8] Both agencies had extensive experience dealing with programs for the unemployed. They would serve as the primary sources for participants for the Walsh Visa

[8]The WVP identified T+EA as the Northern Ireland partner. T+EA was subsumed under the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in 2001, and will be referred to as DEL beginning with our discussion of Groups 6-16.

Program. The two agencies' network of offices throughout the Island provided the most appropriate infrastructure for reaching the widest range of potential participants.

The following section will provide some idea of the negotiation and "give-and-take" that occurred throughout 1999 as DOS, INS, T+EA, and FAS brought the Program into existence. Much of what was discussed (e.g., having participants bear substantial program costs) would not become part of the Program. Other issues (e.g., who would provide pre-departure training, the nature of screening and [crucially] Program administration) were brought up but not sufficiently settled, and some would become points of friction at various stages of the Program.

A series of bilateral meetings beginning in July 1999 discussed the modalities for implementing the Program with FAS in Dublin and T+EA in Belfast.

3.2.1 FAS (Dublin)

The meeting in Dublin was attended by U.S. representatives from DOS, INS, and the U.S. Embassy in Dublin. Representatives from Ireland included officials from FAS as well as the Irish Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. The FAS Secretary General started the meeting on a positive note by stating it was "not a matter of if but *when* the Q-2 Visa Program would be implemented in Ireland and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss who does what and who pays for it" (DOS cable from July 20, 1999). Items for discussion included identifying and selecting eligible participants, promoting the Program to communities in the border counties, and working with welfare agencies.

With regard to eligibility, FAS stated its preference for participants to have been unemployed for at least six months and to have resided in one of the six border counties for at least six months. FAS also expressed its desire to include another category of participants who had been "made redundant" or laid off through no fault of their own due to downsizing or a factory closing. FAS preferred that these participants not have to wait six months to apply. FAS also suggested that employers should be able to nominate employees to participate as well.

According to DOS minutes from the July 1999 bilateral meeting, FAS offered to create a training program to ensure that participants achieve a standard of numeracy and literacy and computer skills along with some personal development skills. But after discussion, FAS decided that candidates would not get much training beyond fundamentals before going to the U.S. and no long-term training was envisioned. FAS stated that its goal was to have participants enhance their employability rather than gain a pre-ordained set of skills while working in the U.S. It was understood that employers would have to be made aware that some participants might lack technical skills. In response, FAS said it would design a method for describing an individual's skills and competencies.

FAS WVP Key Functions

- Promote the Program
- Recruit and screen eligible candidates
- Provide Pre-Departure Training at selected FAS Training Sites
- Provide financial support (Stipends and Contingency fund), PDT allowance, flights, and temporary accommodation in the U.S.

The U.S. proposed that FAS and T+EA designate unemployed individuals qualified to undertake certain types of work (e.g., Information Technology [IT], hospitality, tourism, call centers, and light manufacturing). A list of job vacancies would be made available to the candidates. (The DOS representative also noted that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) offered to adapt their jobs and skills databank to the needs of the Program. DOL would in fact play no formal role in the Program.) Through a job application procedure yet to be developed (i.e., through a website or on-site interviews with employers), a job match would be made between a potential participant and a U.S. employer. Once the employer and employee had agreed, the Program Administrator would verify that a match had been made and would provide the participant with a letter of certifica-

tion. Using the certification, the candidate would then apply to the U.S. Consulate or U.S. Embassy for a visa.

The issue of paying for participants' travel, subsistence, and health insurance was broached but no final solutions agreed upon. Having participants pay part of the cost or having welfare agencies front-load welfare benefits to pay for part of the travel and initial subsistence costs were discussed. Since health insurance would be mandatory for all Q-2 visa holders, it was decided that DOS would determine if potential employers would pay health insurance costs. As it turned out, offering health insurance was a condition for becoming a WVP employer.

The INS discussed the legislative requirement to submit an overstay report to Congress and the ways in which the two agencies could help INS verify that participants had returned home. This later became the responsibility of the PA, and considerable effort was made to account for the whereabouts of participants who had absconded or whose return home had not been verified. The INS had hoped to rely on an electronic I-94 arrival and departure recording system, but departures were not always recorded. In the end, in the spirit of the Program, overstays did not become a significant concern as regular contact with participants was maintained, their return flights were arranged, and they were contacted after their departure to verify they had departed the U.S. and returned home,. The definition of an overstay was somewhat confusing for the PA and the definition changed over time.

A timeline was discussed for start-up of the Pilot Phase. FAS asserted that an October 1, 1999, start date was not feasible and a start date after the new year was more practical. FAS wished to start slowly with a Pilot Phase of 100–120 participants from the South, plus 300 from the North. FAS and T+EA would promote the Program, recruit and select participants, and train them in clusters of 20 in the fall. They anticipated the first visas being issued after the first of the year. Lastly, they envisioned an evaluation to follow, with a plan for fine tuning the Program and increasing the numbers later on.

3.2.2 T+EA (Belfast)

Representatives from DOS, INS, and the U.S. Consulate in Belfast met with officials from T+EA. T+EA officials confirmed that the British and Irish governments intended to work jointly on the Program. They agreed with FAS about starting slowly with a pilot program and issuing the first visas in the new year. T+EA agreed that the target population should be individuals from 18–35 who had been unemployed for at least six months. Although the attendees did not specify quotas, they agreed to roughly one quarter of the participants coming from the Republic of Ireland and three quarters from Northern Ireland.

T+EA WVP Key Functions

- Promote the Program
- Recruit and screen eligible candidates
- Provide Pre Departure Training at selected T+EA Training Sites
- Provide financial support (Stipends and Contingency Fund), PDT allowance, flights, and temporary accommodation in the U.S.

Representatives from T+EA "did not believe that the Walsh Visa Program should draw people out of employment but agreed that employers could nominate employees to take part (but employed people should not be able to nominate themselves)." They also agreed with the FAS suggestion that those being "made redundant" should be allowed to apply but should be limited to those who had been unemployed for three months since those being made redundant typically get jobs quickly. T+EA also noted that financial support would be given only to those who had been unemployed for six months, as they were considered the primary target group.

Although T+EA had discussed providing a list of economic sectors or job skills to target for the Program, it stated that "the goal now was to improve the employability of the chronically unemployed, rather than develop skills in specific sectors." However, the representatives noted that IT and other

knowledge-based fields; the hospitality and tourism sectors, and wholesale and retail would be preferred target areas for job opportunities.

The U.S. representative explained that they envisioned having an overall U.S.-based Program Administrator who would be responsible for identifying job openings in specific geographic locations. Candidates would search job openings at T+EA or FAS and apply directly to the U.S. employer. The employers would decide which candidates would be offered jobs, and the consulate and embassy would determine who among them would be eligible for a visa. If the Program were to proceed in this way, T+EA and FAS would recruit, select, and train candidates from among the long-term unemployed and certify the candidates' qualifications.

T+EA advised that if the U.S. planned to use a local organization for pre-departure training, it would be best to use T+EA given its substantial experience with other comparable programs. If a U.S.-based organization were used, T+EA offered to draw up a checklist of items to be covered. T+EA warned of the necessity to be "very careful with the selection of a local agent to manage activities as selecting the wrong agency could disadvantage the Program." In a T+EA representative's view, there were no obvious organizations that could perform the task.

All attendees at the meeting agreed on the need for a re-employment component to help ensure that Program participants would return home able to contribute to economic regeneration. One idea was to persuade American multinational companies operating in NI and ROI, such as DuPont and Seagate, to become involved in the Program. These companies might be willing to bring participants on for a short while; participants would then go to the U.S. for training with the promise of a position upon their return. Marriott was already making that commitment on a smaller-scale project in Northern Ireland. All agreed that the private sector should be involved and fully consulted in the Program. (In retrospect, larger companies with ties to NI and ROI were not as involved as envisioned, with the exception of WVP employers from NI and ROI that nominated their employees, referred to as Category 2 participants, for temporary "upskilling" opportunities in the States.)

Concerns were raised about the long-term unemployed having sufficient funds to pay towards participation in the Program. Opinions differed regarding support. Some T+EA officials expressed concern that "if there was no cost for participants, they would be going over to bum around on a free trip, but if they paid a token charge, they would have been more willing to invest in it." Another remarked, "What you get for nothing is worth nothing – no personal responsibility." In any case, T+EA stated that at this point it was not in a position to finance the cost of an airline ticket and initial living expenses, estimated at roughly 3,000 GBP per participant. There were discussions about making the Walsh Visa Program part of the New Deal Program (the U.K. government's welfare-to-work program to address unemployment), which could make such funding available. Like FAS, T+EA would not be able to provide health insurance for participants and agreed with FAS that only U.S. employers willing to pay health insurance should be able to participate in the Program. This was a key decision as it began to define the makeup of the employer pool. In some cases it would limit that pool, especially when it came to entry-level positions for those with limited skills. Quite often, those types of entry level jobs would not offer health insurance.

The next step was for T+EA and FAS to present a joint proposal to the U.S. Government outlining how the two agencies intended to participate in the Program. Because the Program was untested, T+EA agreed with FAS that they should start slowly and carefully with a Pilot Program. Once the two agencies and the U.S. agreed on the modalities for the Pilot, T+EA would begin recruiting 250–300 participants to join 100 participants from the Republic of Ireland. After training and orientation in the fall, visas would be issued in January. After identifying problems from the Pilot, the number of participants would be increased.

In these meetings, not much attention was devoted to the precise nature of applicant recruitment, screening, and pre-departure training. This would have a large effect on the preparedness of the first WVP participants for work and life in America.

3.3 AGREEMENT - THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MOU

An MOU, dated November 16, 1999, was developed based on the meetings and discussions among the three governments. The MOU outlined the roles and responsibilities for the main stakeholders and defined the roles of T+EA and FAS in promoting the Program; identifying, recruiting, and selecting suitable applicants; providing appropriate training in basic and pre-employment occupational skills; certifying applicant skill levels; co-coordinating with the U.S. Program Administrator; and determining and making available financial support measures aimed at assisting participants. It was ultimately agreed that financial support would include a pre-departure training allowance, visa application fee, a round-trip flight to the U.S., an initial living stipend, and temporary accommodation for the initial stay in the U.S.

Eligibility criteria for the target participant groups were to be formulated by T+EA, FAS, and the appropriate U.S. government authorities. Participating organizations were expected to determine the economic and occupational sectors within which job opportunities would be provided. T+EA, FAS, and the Program Administrator, in cooperation with the private sector in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, also intended to facilitate job placement for all participants upon completion of their job and training experience in the U.S. In support of this, T+EA and FAS would provide information on employment vacancies to the Program Administrator. The MOU called upon all of the participating organizations to monitor the Program to ensure equal opportunity in relation to community background, ethnic origin, gender, and disability throughout all phases of the Program.

3.4 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The DOS was to select a contractor to serve as the Program Administrator for the start-up phase beginning September 29, 2000. In fulfilling the DOS task order, the PA was expected to identify, document, and execute the requirements to support DOS's Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program. The Statement of Work (SOW) required the contractor to "establish the framework for the Program, thereby facilitating a clear understanding of the responsibilities, relationships, and objectives of all public and private participating organizations involved." The contractor was to develop a comprehensive goal for the Program as well as "clearly articulated objectives that could be used as a basis for measuring Program performance." DOS's concept for contract support of the Program encompassed four tasks:

Logicon (PA) Key Functions

- Day-to-day management of Program
- Deliver U.S. components of Pre-Departure Training
- Identify employers with job/training opportunities and recommend to DOS for approval
- Hub city identification (quality, job market, livability, organization)
- Oversight of hub city organizations
- Certify participants, produce
- Certification Letter for visa issuance
- Monitor participant status and compliance with Program rules and regulations
- Develop and maintain database and website to underpin all Program functions

- Task management - planning, execution, and reporting of task activities
- Start-up phase - planning, set-up, and execution of processes and infrastructure for the initial groups of Program participants
- Systems implementation - design, development, and implementation of technology-based support systems
- Program transition - modalities for ramp-up through the follow-on phase

DOS officials tasked with getting the Program off the ground felt enormous pressure to do so as soon as possible. They therefore turned to companies with which they already had existing contracts to which new work could be added with some alac-

[9]In 1998 Logicon was a wholly owned subsidiary of Northrop Grumman Corporation. In 2001 it was renamed Northrop Grumman IT. We will refer to Logicon as Northrop Grumman Corporation (NGC) beginning with our discussion of Groups 6-16 (starting in May 2001).

rity and a minimum of difficulty. Companies on an existing DOS Consular Affairs contract were given the opportunity to bid on the Walsh Visa Program. In September 1999, DOS selected Logicon[9] as Program Administrator for the start-up phase of the six-year Walsh Visa Program.

Logicon was expected to identify other organizations that would play a role in the Program and to develop a Task Management Plan as well as a Program Definition Document that identified Program components, participating organization responsibilities, and processes and systems.

The Program Administrator tasks included:

- Identifying job/training opportunities in designated economic sectors located in a number of geographic hubs across the U.S., depending on availability of jobs, relative cost of living, and other relevant factors, and recommending employers to DOS for approval
- Making available, through electronic means, information about job/training openings to participants, and assisting them in securing job placements
- Certifying to the appropriate U.S. consular official that each qualified participant has a certified job offer
- Providing pre-departure and pre-employment orientation seminars to Program participants
- Assisting participants with a smooth transition to life in the U.S.
- Monitoring participants' compliance with Walsh Visa Program requirements while in the U.S.
- Verifying participants are receiving the agreed-upon training skills
- Cooperating with FAS and T+EA in all aspects of the Program including assisting participants with finding jobs in their home countries upon completion of the Program
- Coordinating and providing Conflict Resolution training

These tasks essentially defined the PA's roles and responsibilities in preparation for participant selection in early 2000. But not all of the requirements were equally served as the Program developed. For example, the provision of "Conflict Resolution training" was listed in Program Administrator management plans and remained a PA concern, particularly as the Program developed after the first year, but conflict resolution did not appear in the final intergovernmental MOU. In fact, conflict resolution would remain a matter for negotiation among the stakeholders throughout the Program. Similarly, the SOW is explicit on the matter of Logicon's role in "home country job placement." This, too, became a matter for continuing negotiation among Logicon, FAS, and T+EA (by then under its new name, Department for Employment and Learning [DEL]).

3.5 RULES AND REGULATIONS

More than the legislation itself, the Federal Rules and Regulations set out the day-to-day working parameters of the WVP for the public record. The purpose of the regulations was to identify and define the Program and establish requirements. The U.S. federal regulations for the Program were developed collaboratively between October 1998 when Public Law 105-319 was passed and in September 1999[10] when Logicon came on board as Program Administrator. On March 17, 2000, the first federal rules and regulations were officially published in the Federal Register *after* recruitment and training for the first groups of participants in the Program were well under way.

Planning and developing regulations prior to the Program's implementation presented challenges as stakeholders were planning for an untested Program with many unknowns. Once the Program got under way, the necessity to fine tune the regulations became apparent and a second set of DOS regulations was published in October 2001. The INS regulations remained unchanged.

Although the rules and regulations were somewhat clear, the PA alleged that they often lacked detail and were ambiguous, producing problems in interpretation. As the Program developed and changed in response to challenges, decisions made at intergovernmental meetings and in the legislation itself—for example, changes in age, residency, and employment status—the lack of

[10] Citations for the Rules and Regulations can be found in Appendix 4.

currency and failure to update the regulations in line with the changes created administrative and managerial difficulties. The PA looked to the federal regulations for guidance and clarification on such issues as termination for cause, approval of employment changes, certification of participant eligibility, determination of overstays, and Program versus visa status or compliance issues. These crucial areas (and others) were not sufficiently specified in the regulations, were not updated to reflect Program changes, or put the PA in conflict with FAS and DEL, as in the case of eligibility certification. One PA put it this way: "The regulations were never current, contained data that was not recognized by FAS and DEL, and put a burden on the PA to interpret intentions." He also indicated that this state of affairs made NGC vulnerable at times. This was, in short, a major source of concern for Program Administration.

Meanwhile, a long delay in securing the necessary funding to implement the authorizing legislation resulted in a shorter time frame for actually getting the Program off the ground. At the time the Program was signed into law in October 1998, an aide to Rep. Walsh recalls that financial or programmatic support had not been fully secured. Appropriations bills had already been passed for that fiscal year (FY 1999), so there were no funds to set up the Program. Rep. Walsh approached Rep. Sonny Callahan (AL-R), House Chairman of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, for assistance. Rep. Callahan was successful in getting United States Agency for International development (USAID) to re-program funds for use by the Walsh Visa Program. Finally, the Desk Officer for Ireland and Northern Ireland at DOS could begin scoping the project. For FY 2000, the follow-on phase funding was a Congressional add-on or "earmark" requested by Rep. Walsh for the Consular and Diplomatic Affairs section at DOS.

It was not until September 1999 that the Program Administrator was selected and funding for the Program's start-up became available, nearly a year after the initial legislation was signed into law. This left limited time for planning, employer development, sourcing jobs, developing training, and coordinating with FAS and DEL in preparation for the first groups anticipated to begin Pre-Departure Training just after the first of the year.

Moreover, immediately upon being named Program Administrator, Logicon's selection set off a firestorm of criticism, particularly from New York's Emerald Isle Immigration Center. The EIIC was unhappy with the selection of Logicon saying that the EIIC's "10 years of working with Irish immigrants was disregarded" (reported in the *Irish Times*, April 10, 2000). In a letter to Rep. Walsh, EIIC expressed concern that "support services and Irish-American involvement would be marginalized" and that the Program could turn into a "hotel management training program" (*Irish Times*, April 10, 2000).

Also controversial was Logicon/Northrop Grumman's perceived public profile as primarily a defense contractor. In an article about the Program, the *Irish Times* included a quote from the director of an Irish development agency who commented on the "irony that a defense company involved in preparing military forces for war should be chosen to administer a project whose stated aim is to encourage grassroots support for long term peace" (*Irish Times*, Nov. 20, 1999). Logicon's selection also became the subject of public discussion in the Irish Dáil where concern about the selection was raised with the Taoiseach (Dáil debates official report, Nov. 24, 1999).

Nevertheless, DOS, with support from Rep. Walsh, was prepared to defend the selection. Logicon responded, in turn, by emphasizing its involvement in training programs for young people and IT projects. In a November 19, 1999, press release, Logicon noted its successful multi-year IT contract with Consular Affairs and its proven ability to manage large complex projects. Additionally, since the contract called for web-based technology for Program administration, this was squarely in line with Logicon's standard business. That, along with the company's "size and geographical reach were important in Logicon's receiving the Walsh Visa Program assignment."

Despite outside criticism, within Logicon the Program quickly attracted individuals for the first Program management team who whole-heartedly committed themselves to the Program's success. Two members of the senior Program management team, one of whom had recently completed a counseling degree, told us that they sought involvement in what they saw as a unique and worthy endeavor to help young people and the

Peace Process. Early on, the senior management team met with Rep. Walsh to discuss the Program and learn more about his hopes and desires for it. They were inspired by his vision and shared his enthusiasm. A decade later, Logicon (NGC) staff still express a deep sense of fondness for the Program and pride for having been involved. Pride was also expressed by several DOS desk officers, T+EA, and FAS officials (those who had the most to do with shaping the Program and endured all of its early crises and controversies, [see below]).

Shortly after contract award in September 1999, Logicon began planning for the training, placement, and arrival of 420 participants in the coming year. Of those, approximately 300 would come from Northern Ireland and 120 from Ireland. It was becoming evident to some at Logicon that 4,000 participants per year was an unrealistic number. (Officials in NI and ROI, on the other hand, told the GMU team in August 2001 that they believed that number unrealistic from the start.) Within a few weeks of Logicon's assuming responsibilities for the Program, the Program Manager and Deputy Program Manager traveled to the Island on an official trip arranged by DOS. The Deputy Program Manager recalled being committed to making the Program work. He saw the Program as "an opportunity to help young people, who through no fault of their own, had limited employment options and lived in a divided society."

Once on the Island, the two managers from Logicon met with Government ministers and legislators both in Ireland and in Northern Ireland to generate support for the Program and help with recruitment. FAS, T+EA, and DOS ensured that the two Logicon managers met with a balanced number of political and community groups representing both factions, including the Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionists. They quickly learned that feelings about the Program on the Island were mixed, with some strong support, but vocal opposition as well.

All stakeholders came together in November 1999 for a two-day intergovernmental planning session followed by a public briefing and formal press conference at DOS announcing the Program's roll-out on November 19, 1999. The meeting attendees were asked to identify both technical and organizational issues and factors that needed to be addressed for successful Program implementation. They brainstormed issues involved in execution of the start-up phase and tasks required to make the Program function. In their discussions, they identified "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats" (SWOT) that could either assist or deter the Program team's implementation of the start-up. According to the facilitator, prior to the brainstorming session, no one had determined how participants would flow through the Program, which offices of what agency would be involved, and what documents participants would need. It was an important exercise in recognizing what remained to be done and any potential pitfalls in preparation for publicly announcing the Program the following day.

Representatives from the USG, the Irish Minister of State at the Department of the Environment and Local Government, and the Northern Ireland Minister for the Economy and Education attended the public briefing and official roll-out to provide their support. Despite having to field some tough questions about the selection of Logicon to administer the Program, particularly from Irish community groups unhappy about being left out, a Northern Ireland official recalled in an interview a decade later the significance of the occasion and described it as "three governments working together for the good of the people of those countries."

With the formalities behind them, the principal stakeholders turned their attention to the future Program participants. Logicon continued establishing the DC hub operations, developing alternative hub cities, and identifying organizations to support them. Priorities included identifying employers, particularly in the hospitality and IT sectors. Shortly after the kick-off event, the Logicon Deputy Program Manager returned to Ireland to coordinate training activities, promote the Program, and begin working with groups of participants eager for new opportunities in the U.S.

In the following section, we discuss the end-result of the design and planning process, which moved from the language of the legislation and regulations to engineer the structure of the Program for initial implementation. The elements discussed are: the concept of the "hub"; aspects of promotion, recruitment, and screening by T+EA (hereafter: DEL) and FAS; Pre-Departure Training (PDT); and employer/job identification.

3.6 THE HUB CONCEPT

From the Program's start, it was envisioned that participants would go to specific cities in the U.S., called "hubs," rather than be placed in one city or scattered throughout the nation. The hub concept was developed to ensure availability of sufficient jobs and opportunities with approved employers in the job sectors identified by FAS and DEL. Each hub included a Program Office responsible for implementing Program operations in that city and nearby communities. The roles and responsibilities of the hubs included participant support tasks as follows:

- Recruiting employers and job development
- Arranging temporary housing and assisting participants with identifying permanent housing
- Providing a "soft-landing" orientation for incoming participants
- Providing support services, such as assisting participants with job changes and emergencies; maintaining a 24/7 emergency contact line; monitoring participant adjustment, progress, and compliance with Program Q-2 rules and regulations
- Offering participants social and cultural training activities, in line with the goals of the Program, that will enhance their careers and promote their conflict resolution skills

The Program Administrator was responsible for selecting hubs according to several criteria: quality of the city, job market, housing, cost of living, education/training availability, public transportation availability, potential hub management organizations, staffing, support groups, and other relevant factors. The choice of hub cities was complex. Economic, social, and political factors all played their part in promoting one city over another. Washington, DC, and CO were selected as the first two hubs. The Logicon division administering the Program was headquartered in the National Capital Region and also had a large office in Colorado Springs, making these two cities logical first choices for hubs.

CO was also an attractive choice due to the presence of the Broadmoor Hotel, a five-star hotel that was to become the anchor employer in CO. The Broadmoor was very involved with other visa Programs and already had Irish students as employees and, thus, was interested in the WVP. The Broadmoor contacted Logicon and advocated strongly for CO and the Broadmoor. Broadmoor staff also participated in initial planning meetings on the Island with staff from DOS, FAS, and DEL and made presentations to them about the Broadmoor. Logicon and DEL conducted a site visit to CO in March 2000, during which they toured the Broadmoor and met with Broadmoor managers and J-1 visa students, including those from Ireland.

While Logicon and DEL met with additional employers during their site visit to CO in March 2000, the Broadmoor remained the sole employer. The fallout from the Broadmoor as sole CO hub employer would have far-reaching consequences.

It was expected that six to eight hubs would be opened to ensure sufficient employment opportunities for the candidates. Logicon, FAS, and DEL were especially keen to involve organizations that had experience with the Wider Horizons Program. Other hub options were explored in 2000: Orlando, FL (specifically Disney World and Meristar, a hotel and resort organization); New York City; Austin and Dallas, TX; Myrtle Beach, SC; Las Vegas, NV; Chicago, IL; and Vermont. Each was considered due to the presence of a large employer that could serve as an anchor in the hub, such as large hotel chains. In addition, these cities were regarded as "neutral" places, that is, ones without large Irish American populations. (Later this criterion was reconsidered as Boston and Pittsburgh were chosen as hubs.)

However, all of these options were put on hold when severe problems arose in CO and DC (see following section), and Logicon had to direct its attention and resources to address them. Eventually, Boston (BOS) and Pittsburgh (PGH) became hubs (in 2001) followed by Syracuse in 2002.

The initial goal during the planning phase was to recruit employers in each hub city that were willing to hire 8–12 participants. As the arrival of the first two group approached, neither CO nor

DC had sufficient employers in place to meet this original goal. Instead, a much higher number of participants were placed with each employer. In CO, the Broadmoor Hotel became the single employer. In DC, the Marriott Hotel, Metrocall (a call center), and Streamline (an online grocery store) were the first three employers, with Omni Shoreham added for Group 2. Other employers had been approved and offered participants jobs; however, participants did not go to new employers in DC until Group 3.

Logicon personnel staffed the two start-up hubs. However, it was anticipated that future hubs might contain a mix of Logicon and subcontractor staff, where the subcontractor(s) would be local agencies (or NGOs) experienced in working with both resident and non-resident immigrants. In fact, the three new hubs established after DC and CO were managed by local nonprofit organizations. The initial staff functions envisioned for each hub included a hub manager, administrative assistant, and staff assistant(s), as well as coordinators for housing and employment and case manager(s). The size of hub staff would depend on the number of participants served.

4. PILOT PHASE I - PHASE 1
(INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION)

The Pilot Phase (or Phase 1) began with the selection of the first group of participants and ended with the arrival and semi-stabilization of Group 5c over an eight-month period from February 2000 to September 2000. The Pilot Phase proved to be a much bigger challenge than anyone anticipated. Not long after it began, it became evident to all stakeholders that Program pre-planning was insufficient. Problems immediately began to surface with screening and selection and Pre-Departure Training. The problems continued to build as the Program moved into employment, hub preparedness, housing, and other Program elements. The following section describes these Program elements and the progression of participants from recruitment through employment in the U.S.

4.1 PROMOTION/RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

Under the 1999 intergovernmental MOU, T+EA [DEL] in the North and FAS in the South took primary responsibility for promoting the Program to potential applicants (recruitment) and selecting applicants. The PA was not initially involved with screening but continually lobbied for a greater role, a point that proved contentious over time.

During the start-up phase, DEL and FAS placed advertisements in their respective offices and in local newspapers. The PA Deputy Program Manager participated in a few radio and television announcements and interviews designed to promote the Program. The U.S. Embassy in Dublin and U.S. Consulate in Belfast also promoted the Program. While these methods attracted a sufficient number of participants for the start-up phase, some participants (during early assessment visits to the training centers) indicated that they did not believe the Program was widely advertised in the media. Some saw posters at job centers; others said they had heard of the Program by word of mouth or even from relatives in the U.S.

To meet the intent of Rep. Walsh's vision and the spirit of the legislation, the Program sought to recruit a balance of Catholic and Protestant participants, especially in NI. A perpetual Program challenge was the relatively low numbers of Protestant participants (see below). Some on the Island attributed this to two primary factors: first, Protestants traditionally viewed America and anything associated with the Peace Process as pro-Irish Catholic or pro-Nationalist, and, thus, the Program was less attractive to them; second, Catholics were more likely to be unemployed than Protestants. Traditionally, higher levels of unemployment among Catholics were attributed to both active and passive discrimination. Access to employment was also a factor as members of the Catholic community feared entering certain areas.

We were told by some DEL officials that applicant screening at this stage was minimal at best. FAS and DEL ensured that applicants met the legal requirements for the Program:

- 18–35 years of age
- A resident of Northern Ireland or one of the designated six ROI border counties for at least three months before applying to the Program
- Unemployed for a minimum of three months before applying or have received a redundancy (layoff) notice from last or current job

However, aside from the eligibility requirements, there was little in the way of assessing suitability. The question of suitability would become a vexing one and a significant concern throughout the Program.

4.2 PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING (PDT)

The 1999 intergovernmental MOU called for Logicon to participate, as appropriate, in the provision of pre-departure training, but primary responsibility for PDT remained with FAS and DEL. As such, Logicon delivered training mostly concerning American culture and resume preparation and, over time, would increase its training role. DEL and FAS provided six weeks of training for participants during the start-up phase. On average eight local training sites were used during the start-up, six in the North and two in the South. The goal of DEL and FAS training was to provide participants with "life skills" (aimed toward enhancing employ-

ability) and computer familiarity. One DEL official noted that there was no coordination between training in the north and south, no standardization even between the training centers in the North, and only an outline of what to cover.

Elements and Structure of PDT

- 8–10 geographically dispersed training centers in ROI/NI
- PDT length (six weeks)
- Culture and work preparation
- Training in resume writing, interviewing skills, and IT
- Employers traveled to NI/ROI to interview participants
- Participant eligibility verification and certification
- Visa application and interviews at Consulate/Embassy

With one exception (Letterkenny, ROI), both agencies used already-contracted training providers. Once again, time (and political) pressure affected the way the Program looked at the start-up. Much like DOS had used an "open" contract to find its Program Administrator quickly, DEL used similar open contracts with local training agencies to get the Program moving. (FAS controlled its training sites directly and, in some cases, contracted additional staff to train WVP applicants.) DEL officials said the trainers were told the basics of the Program and to get the applicants "ready for work in the States." Training was totally unstructured and initially officials relied on whatever judgments the trainer made to accomplish the goal. Training sites featured extremely variable facilities and idiosyncratic curricula. Not surprisingly, the trainers themselves varied as to their own expertise or knowledge regarding American culture.

Providing training on "American culture" rested with Logicon; it was in this capacity that Logicon personnel participated in PDT. Logicon's role was originally intended to be a 40-hour presentation on living and working in the United States, including practical work in writing American-style resumes and role-playing American-style interviews. Logicon was not sufficiently prepared for a PDT role in Phase 1. They had only one trainer in Belfast during the first two groups of the start-up phase; an additional staff person joined for the third group. They had few resources and no office, just a rental car and cell phone. NGC did not officially open an office until the Program's follow-on phase. Logicon's role in PDT during Phase 1 was ill-defined, and specifics were not fully integrated into a coherent training curriculum.

The short six-week time frame in which participants had to secure employment and visas in order to travel in a group to their designated hub city presented its share of challenges. The participants had to have job commitments by the end of the fourth week of training. This made it particularly challenging for trainers to work with participants to identify skills and work preferences, develop resumes and interviewing skills, apply for jobs, and receive job offers within the compressed six-week time period.

4.3 EMPLOYMENT

4.3.1 Employer Identification and Certification

The necessity to provide suitable employment for participants was key to the success of the Program. Thus, one of the most critical tasks of the PA (and later the hubs) was to recruit suitable employers. Before they could be approved or certified, potential employers were required to satisfy specific Program criteria: jobs had to be in one or more of the designated employment sectors; provide a living wage and healthcare benefits; had to offer career development opportunities; and had to be accessible to public transportation.

All employers had to be approved by DOS. As part of the employer nomination process, companies provided job descriptions, including salary, and career progressions. Once the PA was satisfied that the employer would make a good Program employer, documentation was provided to the State Department with the PA's recommendation.

Recognizing the essential role of employers in the WVP, the PA, and later the hubs, searched widely to identify potential employers for the Program. This became one of the most difficult tasks in the first year and more time consuming than

anticipated. Gradually, several key companies were identified, and various sector niches were filled. The PA came to the conclusion that fewer and larger companies made more sense in the hospitality and IT sectors as they allowed for multiple work sites in multiple hubs. In addition, larger companies could hire more participants at a time, making the process more efficient. "Pure" IT jobs in sufficient numbers were difficult to find for participants, so customer service jobs were added, provided that the companies were in either the hospitality (e.g., reservations) or the IT (e.g., technical support) sectors. Unskilled or minimally skilled entry-level employees often gain access to the IT industry through customer care assignments.

WVP participants, with few exceptions, did not qualify for junior or entry-level IT positions and had to be placed initially in customer care positions. Thus, the PA began to concentrate search efforts on large corporations, such as insurance companies and hotel chains that maintain their own IT support staff. Initially, differences between IT jobs in Ireland and those in the U.S. caused some confusion. In Ireland, an IT job might include data entry or word processing whereas the PA was attempting to source IT jobs requiring significantly more advanced skills and training. Although pure IT jobs in sufficient numbers were difficult to find, participants had opportunities to advance into IT–related jobs. For example, a participant who began as a front desk clerk at the Omni Hotel in Washington had, by the end of his time on the Program, developed a front office and guest services software package used at Omni Hotels nationwide. The engineering sector caused some confusion as well. In Ireland, engineering essentially included jobs in trades or building maintenance. In this sector in the U.S., several participants with experience in the trades were hired as maintenance engineers at large hotels or property management companies.

Misunderstandings over these job sectors, combined with the fact that participants were not being directly recruited for specific employment sectors, eventually led to less emphasis on identifying jobs in employment sectors and more on identifying jobs and employers specifically suited to the participants' skill levels and experience.

Employers seeking to participate in the Program were asked to guarantee participants a living wage for the geographic area and a healthcare benefits package within a reasonable time after beginning employment. While employers were not expected to provide Walsh Visa Program participants either special treatment or special benefits, the PA reviewed the employers' benefit packages, job descriptions, and salary ranges to ensure that the minimum Program standards were met.

The three governments had hoped that participants would move beyond the entry-level positions in which they began and progress over their time in the U.S. to positions of greater responsibility and authority as appropriate to their performance and experience. To this end, employers were required to identify career paths within their firms.

The goal was for participants to have a reasonable commute from lodging to work as well as reasonable proximity to the hub city's cultural and social facilities. In addition to access to public transportation, transportation schedules were to accommodate their work schedules. Despite these established criteria, transportation issues emerged as a significant problem during Phase 1. Some participants faced either unreasonably long commutes or were placed at work sites distant from any public transportation. Limited availability of housing and jobs presented challenges but, as time went on, hubs aggressively addressed the problems with noticeable improvement in the situation.

4.3.2 Job Placement

Once participants were assigned to a particular hub, they could apply (while still in PDT) for available jobs with approved employers in that hub city. Likewise, employers in that hub could review the resumes of participants in the group. The original plan was for Logicon to develop a website listing available jobs for the participants to browse, but the Walsh Visa website did not become fully functionally until after the first groups had gone through PDT. Limited availability of the Internet at most training centers was an immediate problem, so Logicon staff distributed used hard copies listing available jobs. The most important skills taught during PDT, American-style resume writing and interviewing skills, became paramount.

Logicon and later hub staff, assisted in scheduling and facilitating the interviews. Ideally, in-person interviews were conducted when possible. If in-person interviews were impracticable, employers conducted telephone interviews and, to a lesser extent, video teleconference and webcam interviews. This worked reasonably well, although the time differences created a much smaller window than employers in the Mountain or Pacific time zones would have been preferred for interviewing large groups. The video teleconference interviews were difficult to conduct due to time delay in speech processing, technical difficulties, limited capacity at some training centers, and the tendency for participants and employers to look at their computer screens rather than the camera.

Job Matchups. Logicon's Employer Operations Manager coordinated all interviews, placements, and certification. Working with the corporate-level liaisons in the United States and the training site managers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the Employer Operations Manager oversaw the process and worked to provide maximum consideration of and by the participants.

Employers were required to make job offers in writing, signed on company letterhead. The job offers had to contain the position description, start date, wage, and deadline for the applicant to respond. When an offer of employment was made and accepted, the Program Administrator prepared a certification of the employment supporting the applicant's application for a visa to the U.S. Consular Officer.

Acceptance of Job Offers. As participants were hired, copies of the job offers and the participants' signed acceptances were faxed to the PA office. The U.S. Certification letters were prepared and forwarded to the U.S. Embassy in Dublin or the U.S. Consulate in Belfast, depending on the nationality of the participant, as part of the visa application process. (Once NGC opened an office in Belfast, the certification letters were processed at the NGC Belfast office instead, which was more efficient and avoided long delays in processing.)

5. CHALLENGES IN PHASE 1
(GROUPS 1–5C, MARCH–SEPTEMER 2000)

Table 5-1. WVP Phase 1 Timeline, 2000

Phase 1 Initial Implementation (Pilot Phase)		
2000	Mar–Sept	Groups 1–5c arrive
	Mar	DOS and INS Federal Regulations published in Federal Register Group 1 arrives in the U.S.
	Jun	Phase 1 Program Review
	Sept	Group 5c arrives, Phase 1 concludes Logicon awarded Cooperative Agreement for WVP Follow-on Phase

Table 5-2. Phase 1 WVP Participant Population

	Phase 1 Program Year 2000							FAS (ROI) T+EA (NI)	Total
HUB	1 Mar	2 Apr	3 May	4 Jun	5 Jun	5b Jul	5c Sep		
Boston									
CO Springs		48	33	53	13			FAS (31) T+EA (116)	**147**
Pittsburgh									
Syracuse									
DC	77	20	34	35	1	31	7	FAS (65) T+EA (140)	**205**
Total	**77**	**68**	**67**	**88**	**14**	**31**	**7**	FAS **(96)** T+EA **(256)**	**352**

Phase 1 began with the ambitious goal of bringing 420 participants to the U.S. during the initial phase. As it turned out, a total of 352 participants (Groups 1–5c), Table 5-1, arrived in the Washington, DC, and Colorado Springs hubs between March and September 2000 (96 FAS and 256 T+EA). The first 77 participants arrived in the Washington, DC, as Group 1 on March 31, 2000. Over the next six months, 126 more participants arrived in DC. On April 25, the first 48 participants arrived in Colorado Springs; 99 more followed over the next three months. Table 5-2 details the arrivals to each hub by groups. Even as the first participants were deplaning, lessons were being learned. It is unlikely that the PA, FAS, DEL, or DOS could have anticipated or prepared for the chaos that marked Phase 1.

After the arrival of Group 1, it quickly became apparent that Logicon was not prepared for the task that unfolded before them. Several participants had been drinking heavily on the seven hour flight from Shannon one requiring hospitalization for apparent alcohol poisoning. Logicon underestimated transportation needs, prepared an inadequate temporary housing plan, lacked a detailed initial orientation schedule, and displayed an apparent lack of cultural awareness.

A DEL official described the arrival as "bedlam," and a Logicon staffer described the scene as "chaotic." It soon became clear that neither Logicon nor the Program's stakeholders were prepared for the number or magnitude of the problems they would face in Phase 1 of the Program.

Logicon was critically understaffed at both the hub and Program levels and resources were inadequate for the task. A number of reasons for these resource shortfalls have been offered. Chief among them are that stakeholders totally misjudged the amount and degree of participant support required and the rapid transition from Program planning to operations. Phase 1 featured the highest return rate of all the subsequent phases. By September 30, 2000, when Phase 1 ended, 219 of the 352 participants who arrived in the U.S.

(52%) returned home. In large measure the problems faced concerned the size and frequency of group arrivals. Groups were arriving every two to three weeks rather than every six weeks, as originally agreed upon. Over the first 60 days, 160 participants arrived in DC and 140 in CO. Logicon was overwhelmed. In subsequent phases, group sizes were dramatically reduced and arrival intervals lengthened. In some measure, problems stemmed from insufficient appreciation of "the issues" brought by the participants, alcohol in particular. "We all underestimated issues with alcohol," a DEL official said. "They weren't bums or drunks, but they drank when stressed." Problems were also related to screening and PDT on the Island.

5.1 SCREENING AND RECRUITMENT

On the Island, for both FAS and DEL, the political pressure to get the Program off and running was very strong. As a DEL official noted, "The push from the senior level that the Program needs to move, we need to get bodies out there. It was difficult to say we're going to cut back [in a group ready to move] from 70 to 30. There were waiting lists." And, he added, "There was no screening." As noted earlier, FAS and DEL ensured applicants met the minimum legal requirements, but other measures designed to screen out those possibly incapable of adapting to the stress of moving and working in the U.S. were not in place. Then too, there was the unique goal of the Walsh Visa Program: taking disadvantaged, unemployed youth from their homes and preparing them to live and work successfully in a new culture for up to three years.

Although FAS and DEL had some experience with cultural exchange programs through the Wider Horizons Program (FAS particularly), the WVP was much more ambitious and its structure much more complex. Moreover, both had been primarily focused on employment and training (job skills)—not on cultural exchange programs. Both organizations did provide some "work skills" assessment during pre-departure training, but no systematic pretesting. There was no parallel "life skills assessment" available. Health screening became an issue with regard to substance abuse, or other potential employment barriers. Participants arrived with serious health issues, including a collapsed lung, and one participant required dialysis. Initially, criminal background checks were made only if a U.S. employer required it; otherwise, U.S. Embassy/Consulate visa issuance guidelines were relied upon.

Screening at start-up was minimal due to the pressure to move the Program, lack of experience in programs of this intercultural complexity, and absence of detailed selection criteria or requirements (other than the minimal legal requirements for applicants), for example, a "life skills" assessment. This was one of the main challenges faced by the Program. FAS and DEL would address screening making continuous improvements throughout the remainder of the Program.

5.2 PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING (PDT)

Shortcomings in PDT contributed to many of the problems in Phase 1. PDT was not well planned or executed, and stakeholders underestimated its importance. At first, all of the various training sites had no uniform and coherent curriculum. Many local trainers had never been tasked with preparing people for work in another culture—many knew as little about U.S. work culture and expectations as the participants. Others pieced together their own material from working with the Wider Horizons Program or other employment schemes. While the American "cultural component" was to be provided by the Logicon Deputy PA, he was not an expert in cross-cultural training, knew very little about Irish culture or Northern Ireland, and was continually travelling to 10 geographically separated training centers (eight in NI, two in ROI) over the six-week period. While, involvement was planned for two weeks per training cycle, the PA support extended the full six weeks. The increased involvement of Logicon's staff person in PDT was at the expense of both his management and other task assignments relating to development of other Program elements. Additional trainers were needed on the Island to cope with the volume of work. The quality of the training materials was also an issue. Early on, videotapes of the TV program *Friends* was provided as an example of American culture.

Besides the lack of a standardized and culturally appropriate PDT curriculum, the whole of PDT was driven by the fundamental requirement that participants receive a job offer from a Program-

certified U.S. employer before being allowed to apply for the Q-2 visa. As noted earlier, the first PDT was six weeks long. The goal was to have a job offer in hand by week 4. Resumes, job selection, and interviewing all had to be attended to in order to satisfy the employment aspect. An accelerated job placement process meant that other training aspects of PDT (centered around "life skills") were downplayed. The process of getting a job, for both trainer and participant, "ruled" PDT and added much anxiety and pressure to the entire course.

There were, finally, problems early on in the structure of the PDT. Some local trainers did not sufficiently communicate basic expectations of daily attendance, timeliness, and sobriety. There was no PDT code of conduct, and rules were not enforced. The criteria for dismissing a participant from the Program—and who was authorized to do so—were not (as noted above) clear to anyone. One NGC staffer commented, "Participants were coming in and out when they felt like it." Some barely attended PDT and then showed up for their visas. In addition, local trainers didn't always fill up all the hours of the six weeks with training; there was much down time. Therefore, it was not surprising that many participants arrived in the U.S. ignorant of and unprepared for the demands of the American workplace, or for living independently.

The mechanics of the job search and getting hired into a job proved problematic as well. At the start, no clear processes and procedures were in place. Coordinating employer interviews and tracking interviews and job offers at up to 11 training sites proved chaotic. Jobs were not easily searchable on the WVP website, as would be the case in Phase 2. Instead, staff used job lists from the employers. The interview process also had shortcomings. In some cases, participants were unclear about what positions they were interviewing for until they received a job offer. Most interviews were cursory at best. In some cases, participants were simply placed into jobs (particularly hospitality jobs) by the employer rather than applying for a position, being selected for an interview, and receiving a formal job offer. This problem was later addressed with a more formalized job search process that required participants to make job choices using detailed job descriptions for live job offers. But problems persisted. The chaotic job matching process, coupled with insufficient numbers and ranges of job offers led to dissatisfaction of some participants once they achieved employment in the States, particularly when it became clear that many were taking any job, with little forethought, just to get to the States.

5.3 SOFT-LANDING, ORIENTATION, AND HOUSING

Logicon was responsible for developing "soft-landing" orientation procedures. The hubs (managed by Logicon during Phase 1) were responsible for implementing the procedures. The chaos that prevailed during the arrival of most Phase 1 groups indicated that planning and procedures were lacking. No one anticipated the high maintenance and dependence of participants. Hubs were understaffed and management unready. Specific problem areas included:

- Temporary housing
- Transportation
- Participant discipline
- Stipend management
- Money management by participants
- Lack of contingency planning
- Lack of clear lines of authority and communication

During the start-up phase (Phase 1), the formal orientation period was three to four days long depending on what day each group arrived and their expected first day at work. A number of required activities during the orientation period had to be completed before the participants could begin work:

- Registering with the Social Security Administration
- Securing State ID cards through the local DMV office
- Establishing a bank account with ATM privileges
- Learning the public transportation system and, in particular, commuting routes

Additionally, other activities proved effective during this soft landing:

- Providing hub-specific information
- Searching for permanent housing
- Discussing local customs, including laws

and practices

- Meeting with employers in an informal setting

According to hub staff and observers, even after the first "chaotic" arrival, early orientations were somewhat disorganized due to lack of staff for handling the large group sizes and the pace of their arrival, and general problems of miscommunication, and lack of coordination between staff. One problem, described by an observer who attended Group 1's orientation in DC, concerned the relationship between Logicon hub staff and the participants. The staff were viewed as very professional and knowledgeable; however, "they did not seem to appreciate the unique needs of this disadvantaged population" and the need for relationship building. Rather, to this observer, participants perceived staff to be more "mechanical" than "human." This perception of the Logicon hub staff persisted throughout the first year and was one reason why FAS and DEL insisted during the second year on recruiting organizations with experience and knowledge of both Ireland and the population likely to be participants in the WVP.

As part of soft landing, temporary housing and the move to permanent quarters proved to be one of the most difficult problems during the start-up phase in the DC hub. The PA was charged with identifying and securing temporary housing (30 days) for participants prior to their arrival. Contractual issues, the scarcity of appropriate apartments, the varying number of apartments needed, and short time frame between groups moving out of temporary housing before new groups arrived all contributed to an ongoing housing crisis, especially in DC.

In both DC and CO, the behavior of participants caused a number of problems.

In some cases, participants trashed their temporary housing or stole property. In CO, one apartment complex refused to house more participants in their accommodations.

Participants were responsible for securing long-term housing, with support from hub staff in the search process. Originally, the PA anticipated that one month of temporary housing would be sufficient for participants to find and move into long-term housing. That assumption proved faulty due to both the difficulty in finding apartments and the failure of the participants to assume expected responsibility. The hub staff also said they did not have time to help each participant find permanent housing, and many stayed in temporary housing well past the four weeks. The overstay in temporary housing caused problems for FAS and DEL, which had agreed to pay for the temporary housing accommodations.

Compounding the housing issue was the question of transportation. It became clear that most participants would remain dependent on public transportation during much of their time in the United States. Locating apartments with sufficient transportation service was of paramount importance. Of course, such housing stock is prime and means higher rents and hub staff had to work with participants to begin the search earlier and more intensely. Likewise, this issue affected the choice of work locations and required cooperation from the employers as to work sites and schedules. In a number of cases during the start-up phase, participants failed to adjust due either to lengthy commute times to and from work sites or feelings of isolation from their friends and the "downtown" parts of the city.

Further compounding the housing issue were cultural prejudices held by some participants. Hub staff and past participants commented that some participants would refuse to live in neighborhoods where they perceived a high percentage of African Americans lived, even though they were safe working-class or middle-class neighborhoods near public transportation and other amenities. Their prejudices and assumptions narrowed their choices of "acceptable" places to live, compounding the problem of finding permanent housing at an affordable price. (This was in most cases a prejudice built on fear—and on an image of the American city born from American television and film.) Some participants from rural Ireland had never seen a person of color in their lives.

One way in which PDT changed was to introduce race matters on the Island, and hubs addressed the issue more effectively and sensitively as time went on. To foreshadow: one of the demonstrable effects of the Program was the high number of participants who remarked to evaluators and others how diverse their friends and circle of acquaintances, many from work, had become and

how they, in turn, had become more comfortable and "tolerant" of differences [see Section 11.1.2].

5.4 EMPLOYMENT

Employment, a key component of the Program and critical to the achievement of Program goals, was a persistent source of concern among stakeholders and participants. Problems with employment centered on the following main issues:

- Getting jobs (job choices and interviewing)
- Taking any job to acquire the visa
- Changing jobs once in the U.S.
- Termination from jobs for various causes
- Taking second jobs
- Single employers in the hubs
- Participant attitudes towards entry-level jobs and work ethic and performance issues

Participants knew that getting a job offer was their ticket to the Q-2 visa and the U.S. If a participant did not have an offer of at least one job by week 4 of the six-week PDT—as time ran out for visa processing—anxiety increased. For this reason, some participants ended up taking any job they were offered and then sought to switch jobs once in the U.S. (This became a problem in Phase 1, and part of the restructuring of the follow-on phase placed significant restrictions on job changes. These, in turn, became a point of friction between the PA, representing INS/DHS, and DOS, FAS, and DEL.)

Another issue was the ability to work a second job. INS regulations forbade it[11]. Many participants (and some FAS and DEL officials) questioned this restriction. According to one FAS official, "The participants had images of streets paved in gold, the land of opportunity–they wanted to work hard, but they had no chance to work hard. With the visa restrictions, they couldn't work second jobs. But if they had been working in the evenings, they might not have gotten into trouble." The issue of a second job was sometimes also tied to that of a "living wage." This surfaced in the planning for the follow-on phase. More immediately for the first groups, employment problems were rather specific. CO had only one employer at first, the Broadmoor Hotel, and DC had only three employers. The largest problems—amounting to crises—occurred in CO.

The Broadmoor, a large luxury hotel with hundreds of employees (including foreign workers) lobbied strongly for inclusion in the Program and offered a wide range of jobs from entry-level to management positions in several of the designated "sectors," especially hospitality and tourism. Although there were efforts to identify other employers in CO, the Broadmoor ended up as the sole employer there. Between April and September 2000, nearly 150 WVP participants worked at the Broadmoor.

Despite the initial enthusiasm of all concerned—NGC, FAS, DEL, and the Broadmoor—the disadvantage of having a sole employer in a hub became apparent. First, if a participant left the company, either voluntarily or involuntarily, with no other employers approved in that hub (and their housing dependent on Broadmoor employment), Program regulations stated they had no choice but to return home. Second, the conditions of residence were not ideal. Participants were living in a relatively rural setting and many felt isolated, far from the amenities of an urban area and, for some, far from a familiar Irish American local population—and pub. The hotel had rented a block of apartments for participants in a nearby complex and provided transportation to the hotel and back. But the situation deteriorated. Excessive partying and drinking by some led to the destruction of some residences, and some participants engaged in the larceny of hotel property. According to a Broadmoor HR staffer at the time, "We had some real success stories but then some dismal situations. Some ended up on the front pages of Colorado and Irish newspapers."

The Irish American newspaper, the *Irish Voice*, carried a story (one of several that year) highly critical of the Program, carrying the headline [participants] "homeless after job dismissals." This was because the apartment complex management evicted some participants after apartments had been severely damaged. The issue of cultural prejudice mentioned earlier was evident here as

[11]The current Program Administrator clarified: "Second jobs were never allowed. The Certification Letter established their visa eligibility for work. They could only work for the employer listed on the Cert. and only for an approved employer. That is not to say that many worked (illegally) at second jobs. When we [NGC] found that out and could verify it, they were terminated from the Program."

well. One young participant said to the reporter that the complex "was referred to as the 'ghetto' by [Colorado Springs] locals." He went on, "It is full of Hispanic, Puerto Ricans, Jamaicans—we felt uneasy, we're not used to that society." He told the reporter the Irish didn't feel safe living there.[12]

FAS, DEL, and Logicon officials visited CO more than once during the year to "put out fires," and one DEL official acknowledged what everyone involved had come to agree, that the Broadmoor had been a mistake. A Program review commissioned by FAS in 2000 concluded that "the concentration of young people from this social background in one location is not desirable." A later Program Administrator stated, "There was never any controversy about ending Colorado Springs."

Meanwhile, the DC hub also experienced problems because of too few employers. Only five employers hired participants during Phase 1, and there were few jobs in the Logicon database. (The original goal Logicon set out to achieve was 160 jobs.) Moreover, FAS and DEL had been concerned that many of the jobs advertised on the website weren't "real," meaning that they were not available for hiring. Conversely many of the available jobs were perceived as entry-level, low-skilled jobs that did not meet the participants' nor FAS and DEL's expectations. As a senior FAS official said, "What kids were being sold was very different from what the job realities would be. They needed to find more employers." The issue of the types of jobs versus the expectation was directly attributable to the ambiguity in the law of what disadvantaged meant—individual or area.

Logicon felt that the jobs being offered were appropriate for the target population, but agreed more employers and job varieties were needed. The process of identifying employers, vetting them, and securing DOS approval was not always easy. It required promoting the Program and educating employers about how the Program worked and how they could benefit from it. It required convincing candidate employers to agree to Program regulations and submitting the necessary paperwork. Asking employers to work within the restrictive parameters of the PDT schedule also presented challenges as the employers would have to interview candidates, mostly over the telephone, and make job offers in a short turnaround time so that participants could be certified in order to apply for the visa and travel as a group to the hub. The employers also had to be willing to hold positions, sometimes for up to six weeks, until the participants completed PDT and orientation once in the hub city. When the employer advertised a job, it was not exclusively for WVP. Americans were applying for those same jobs. Sometimes at the start of PDT, an employer would have a job opening but once participants applied, the job may have already been filled or was no longer available. It was a question of keeping live jobs updated, which was not easy to do.

The quality and range of jobs led to relatively constant tension among NGC, FAS, and DEL during the first year of the Program. The tension was also the result of perhaps unrealistic expectations. FAS, DEL, and the participants may have believed the jobs were too low-skilled; however, many of the participants weren't skilled enough to acquire more advanced positions. The tension around the quality of jobs was reduced somewhat as participants who excelled received promotions and it became clear that entry-level or low-level jobs were merely a starting point for many to achieve higher-level positions with more responsibilities. This problem also abated as new employers were added in subsequent years and offered a wider range of positions.

5.5 CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING

Conflict resolution was a priority for Rep. Walsh. The DOS desk officer at the time explained, "Rep. Walsh would ask me, 'How's conflict resolution going?' But there were so many other issues to deal with, there was not much time to focus on it." Said a DEL official, "Conflict resolution was lost in the chaos [of the first year] on this side of the Atlantic."

According to Logicon's Program Definition Document of 31 July 2000, submitted to DOS, "The Walsh Visa Program Manager is charged with providing Conflict Resolution training and practice for participants. During the start-up phase there was no activity in this area. The follow-on phase

[12]The Irish Voice June 20, 2000, Volume 14, Issue 25, p. 6

would require development of a training program and the implementation of ongoing opportunities for participants to engage in conflict resolution exercises and real-life experience."

5.6 PARTICIPANT SUPPORT SERVICES

Despite all of the design and planning, the extent to which social services support would be required for many participants caught all the stakeholders off guard. It was also an area where ambiguity or lack of specificity in the federal rules and regulations created difficulties for the PA. Logicon certainly recognized that social support in some form was necessary. Their Task Management Plan for DOS included a Risk Management strategy with a goal of identifying risks as soon as possible to mitigate unexpected issues. One risk category related to the identification, selection, management, and support of individual Program participants. A specific risk identified was "difficulty in adjusting to U.S. culture, work environment, and family separation." It was assumed that participants would be successful if the mitigation strategy was followed by continuous support, monitoring, and contact. Logicon/NGC, FAS, and DEL also discussed participant issues at their November 1999 "SWOT" meeting. The agenda included topics such as "What personal issues/problems can we anticipate from participants?"; "How will the personal welfare of the participants be looked after in the U.S.?"; and "Should participants sign a behavioral contract?"

While U.S. government agencies and Logicon/NGC recognized that some support would be necessary for "cultural adjustment," they were not prepared for the level of support required and the numbers of participants requiring support beyond basic "cultural adjustment" needs. For example, the NGC office in CO was initially staffed by one person who was expected to work the Program for 10 to 15 hours per week—"to act like a den mother." However, as the staff person recalled, the participant needs and issues became more like a 24/7 job for her. Lack of preparation for participant issues can be directly linked to screening. As one DEL official noted, "there was no means of sifting applicants—it was first come first served if you met the eligibility criteria." Applicants who were less equipped to cope with the rigors of employment and independent living away from home ended up on the Program and very few were removed from PDT.

While FAS and DEL officials maintained that they had had a better idea that more support would be needed, even they admitted that they "were caught by surprise" at how much more. The initial vision of case management and requirements for support services were very limited. The PA had to maintain knowledge of and contact with the participants. The hubs were to provide a 24/7 emergency contact line, monitor participant adjustment and progress, and ensure compliance with Program and Q-2 rules and regulations. A hub Statement of Work in 1999 described the support that hubs were to provide: "The safety net in each hub will include a hub coordinator and a toll free pager number for obtaining assistance and information. Support will be provided to the participants for the duration of their work experience."

The lack of sufficient anticipation and planning for participant issues in this phase was a significant challenge for the Program. Most participants required some level of support and encouragement during the transition period between arrival and settling in. The personal and cultural issues associated with emigrating, beginning work, and interacting with people of differing cultural backgrounds made adapting to life and work in America all the more difficult.

While many of the participants had some work history, their jobs were, for the most part, occasional and rather informally structured. Some could be categorized as structurally unemployed (for whom the Program was targeted), and some were university graduates who in some cases quit their jobs to become eligible for the Program (not for whom the Program was intended and would later be precluded once the Program was amended). As with all participants, university graduates brought their share of challenges. Some viewed the opportunity to come to the States as a free trip to America and were not serious about employment. Many participants appeared not to have developed a solid work ethic. As jobs were generally entry-level, university graduates were dissatisfied and others had a difficult time adapting work. Moving into the American workplace with fixed hours, low tolerance for tardiness and unexcused

absences, and even lower tolerance for alcohol and drug use resulted in a significant percentage of participants returning within 30 to 60 days of arrival. Some failed mandatory drug tests. Many had not seriously considered what a three-year absence from home and family would mean; homesickness was a serious problem for many.

Even those participants who appeared to be making a successful transition to work and life in the United States needed to experience the presence and support of a dedicated staff person. This required a level of staff commitment that could not be provided in the start-up phase due to the frequency of arrivals of new groups and the severity of issues with those participants who "crashed and burned" upon arrival. NGC's Program Administration did in fact respond to the challenge of providing more comprehensive social support, initially by a social worker based in Reston and subsequently with support in the different hubs. Nevertheless, the root cause of confusion regarding social services support was the absence of any baseline standard of what support services entailed. What constituted "appropriate" levels and types of support became a source of tension between NGC and some hub mangers and FAS and DEL. Many of the problems in Phase 1 resulted from poor planning; screening inconsistencies; inadequate PDT preparation; underestimating participant needs; lack of guidance, rules, and regulations; and inadequate staffing. As a result, several stakeholders summed up this phase, especially for the earliest groups to arrive, in one word: chaos. Whether the Program would continue was the matter for discussion in a series of critical review meetings by the major stakeholders; and, if it were to continue, how would it have to change to meet the challenges of the first phase?

5.7 PRE-PLANNING FOR PHASE 2: INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS

According to a DEL official, it was with Group 5 that "the wheels came off in the DC hub." Groups 1–4 had arrived in large numbers and in short frequency. The issue of temporary accommodation was particularly problematic. Previous groups had not left in the expected time-frame, and there was no room to accommodate any new participants. Logicon asked DOS to stop Group 5 from arriving on schedule in June. DOS complied (simply by halting the visa process). This created immense problems for FAS and DEL since Group 5 was ready to go—participants had given up their lodging on the Island, sold possessions, and so on. Some participants complained to their local political representatives, who queried the ministers, who in turn, queried the civil servants. (Although Group 5 did eventually leave for the U.S., it did so in three subgroups: "a" (to CO); "b" (the main group, to DC, in July); and "c" (the remainder, in September). Under this pressure, the DEL official said, "There was the very real possibility that Group 5 was going to be the last WVP group." In fact, all future plans for new groups were put on hold.

In response to the apparent crisis, a series of intergovernmental stakeholder review meetings occurred in June, October, and December 2000 and March 2001. At these meetings, the stakeholders identified a significant number of problems and recognized the need to work together to resolve them and hopefully salvage the Program. The unexpected range of issues and the lack of sufficient planning, organization, and experience by the implementing partners on both sides of the Atlantic were evident in several significant challenges. Thus, there was a comprehensive rethinking of all aspects and elements of the Program.

The issues and recommendations were summed up by the stakeholders as follows:

Applicant Screening

- Issues
  - o Non-rigorous participant screening that did not include criminal background checks
  - o Some participants not committed to Program goals (view it as paid holiday)
  - o Reputation of Program
  - o Number of returns/quality of participants
  - o Increased expense to FAS and T+EA (returns)
- Recommendations
  - o Make Program entrance competitive
  - o Instill work practices into pre-departure training (attendance standards)
  - o Define health, criminal, substance abuse, behavioral criteria

Pre-Departure Training

- Issues
  - o Length and PDT curriculum
  - o Rushed employment process
  - o Participants not sufficiently prepared for Program
  - o No standardized curriculum, too much wasted time
  - o Lack of sufficient NGC in-country training staff
  - o Group size and arrival intervals
  - o Misunderstandings (size of metropolitan DC area)
  - o Surprises (U.S. tax structure)
  - o U.S. employment environment
  - o Cultural differences
  - o Division of labor between local and U.S. trainers
  - o Participants' behavior during PDT and problems of accountability
- Recommendations
  - o Develop curriculum changes by joint committee of FAS, T+EA, Logicon, and DOS
  - o Make groups smaller and increase the interval between arrivals at hubs
  - o Move more material to pre-departure from post-arrival orientation
  - o Provide better information on jobs (description with offer)
  - o Develop program rights and responsibilities

Hub Livability

- Issues
  - o Housing, transportation – housing too far from jobs and public transportation
  - o Social services—ill-defined and ill-equipped to address participants' personal problems, especially alcohol/substance abuse
  - o Lack of hub staff knowledge, understanding, and preparation related to participants' culture
  - o Lack of consistent routine contacts
  - o Participant dissatisfaction with Program and Logicon
  - o Participant expectations
  - o 20% of participants take up 90% of Logicon's staff time
- Recommendations
  - o Allocate resources to make routine personal contact
  - o Provide newsletter, town meetings, and social gatherings
  - o Provide an Internet discussion forum (already in place)
  - o Update website with information for participants in U.S.

Employment

- Issues
  - o Many participants took any job simply to get to U.S.
  - o Livability wage – many participants were not making sufficient income due to low pay or reduced hours (especially in seasonal or gratuity-based jobs). They also suffered from a lack of budgeting skills and financial discipline.
  - o Employers and jobs—single employer in CO, few in DC, range and numbers of jobs
  - o Many saw Program as simply a free vacation in the U.S., with no accountability and little motivation to work
  - o Unrealistic job expectations, frequent job changes, alcohol/substance abuse
  - o Not enough information from job description for responsible decision making
- Recommendations
  - o Develop Livability model; ascertain livable wage in each hub
  - o Require employers to provide job description with job offer
  - o Allocate more resources to find new employers, more jobs
  - o Provide better, more current employment information on the website

Behavior

- Issues
  - o Program reputation
  - o Housing and employer retention on Program
  - o Lack of problem-solving skills
- Recommendations
  - o Develop conduct code that each participant signs
  - o Establish disciplinary Review Panel with authority to recommend return to home country
  - o Provide for financial recourse for non-attendance at orientation and soft landing

Housing

- Issues
  - o Staff time
  - o Increased expense to FAS and T+EA
  - o Employer-sourced lease model not working
  - o Participant morale and adaptation to U.S.
- Recommendations
  - o Evaluate other options
  - o Outsource housing function to housing specialists
  - o Obtain leases for temporary housing follow-on (Logicon)

Finances

- Issues
  - o Increased volume of loan requests
  - o Full-time position or more to handle stipend
  - o Seasonal periods for some jobs
  - o Bad credit behavior
- Recommendations
  - o Reassess living wage standard in DC
  - o Reevaluate stipend adequacy for DC and Colorado Springs

Returns

- Issues
  - o Program reputation (U.S. and Ireland/ Northern Ireland)
  - o Staff time to facilitate returns (both sides of Atlantic)
  - o Increased expense to project, FAS and T+EA
- Recommendations
  - o Establish formal assessment process for returns (emphasis on Broadmoor)
  - o Establish appeal process
  - o Define Program roles and responsibilities for returns
  - o Define standard return package (hotel room, living allowance)

Participant Support

- Issues
  - o Lack of consistent routine contacts
  - o Participant dissatisfaction with Program and Logicon
  - o Participant expectations
  - o Twenty percent of participants take up 90 percent of staff time
- Recommendations
  - o Allocate resources for routine personal contact
  - o Provide newsletter, town meetings and, social events
  - o Create internet discussion forum
  - o Update website with information of interest to participants

While FAS and DEL agreed that screening needed to be improved, for them the fundamental problem concerned the Program's target population. Was the Program for young people disadvantaged by personal problems and barriers to employment (substance abuse, mental health or psychological disorders/impairment, criminal backgrounds, learning disabilities, etc.) or for young people from disadvantaged areas who lacked education, skills training, and experience due to a lack of jobs or

lack of access to jobs? FAS and DEL seemed to assume participants in both categories would be included, while U.S. agencies and NGC planned for the latter. FAS and DEL assumed this because, they argued, as economic conditions in ROI and NI improved, along with demand for labor, those applicants in the available "target pool"—the long term unemployed—were likely to be so because they had employment (and other) "issues" or barriers to employment.

Moreover, said one DEL senior official, given these issues, the participants faced a more demanding (or less forgiving) work culture in the U.S. "The working environment and working conditions and the nature of employment in America are extremely different to here. U.S. employers are far more robust in how they respond to people who are performing unsatisfactorily." At the same time, even FAS and DEL acknowledged they had not anticipated the severity of the problems the participants would pose. The DEL official continued, "We knew some wouldn't fit, but didn't realize the volume of who wouldn't do well." Finally, as many FAS and DEL officials told us, and as noted by Andrew Wilson in his study of the first year of the WVP (Wilson 2001:251), many of the problems stemmed from the lack of personal responsibility of individual participants. A DEL official summed it up in this way, "the very core purpose [of the Program] was giving people with the least opportunity the most opportunity in the States but this caused the greatest problem."

Despite the crises and problems of the start-up phase, not everyone saw it as a complete disaster. Challenges were faced and, as one NGC staff remarked, "Crazy times were well managed." Subsequent evaluations with participants who had stayed through the start-up phase found many "success stories" that had been overshadowed by a few unfortunate events, bad publicity, some disgruntled participants, and some partisan groups quick to criticize. In fact, all of the principal stakeholders, for their own reasons, were determined to continue the Program, albeit all agreed that significant changes had to occur. Importantly, Rep. Walsh remained firm in his support. Commenting on the high attrition rate, Walsh, an ex-Peace Corps Volunteer, wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Irish Voice* (5 February 2002), "Even the highly successful American Peace Corps, despite its forty year history, has a drop-out rate approaching 50%."

5.8 LOGICON/NGC AWARDED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

Before the final groups of participants arrived in Phase 1 and with the WVP task order nearing completion, DOS issued a Request for Proposals for the follow-on phase of the Program. Logicon/NGC was awarded a Cooperative Agreement in October 2000 to continue as Program Administrator. FAS and DEL requested substantial changes to Logicon's taskings and DOS concurred with those changes. CO would cease to be a hub when all existing participants departed. Sending additional participants to DC was put on hold. Logicon had proposed the addition of three new hubs: Boston, Pittsburgh, and Syracuse. Boston and Pittsburgh were accepted by FAS and DEL at the December 2000 meeting; a decision on Syracuse was deferred. Logicon renewed its efforts to engage the conflict resolution component of the WVP more fully.

5.9 NEW HUBS

The PA sought to identify the most well-suited organizations to manage the proposed new hubs. Nonprofit organizations were selected in each city; two with strong ties to the Irish community: the Irish Immigration Center (IIC) in Boston, Massachusetts, and the Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh (IIP) in Pennsylvania. The third, the Metropolitan Development Association (MDA) in Syracuse, New York had strong ties to the employment scene in that city. NGC had also approached the Emerald Isle Immigration Center about joining the Program as manager for a NYC hub. The EIIC declined.

The reasons for the selection of organizations and cities varied. One of the lessons learned was that hub staff familiar with Irish culture and history would have a better rapport with participants and facilitate their integration into the community. This was recommended by all agencies involved in the WVP.

The IIC in Boston and the IIP in Pittsburgh were aware of the WVP legislation. They visited DC offering suggestions and assistance and, during the start-up phase, were even somewhat prescient in their concerns regarding the large numbers of

people going to DC and CO and the lack of skills evident in the hub staffs. They were afraid the Program would turn into a disaster. However, these contacts with Logicon were not fully appreciated at the time, and it was not until DC and especially CO, were seen as largely having failed during the first year that NGC courted IIC and IIP.

Syracuse was in some ways a less obvious choice and in other ways a very obvious one. It was located in Rep. Walsh's legislative district, and some felt it would be a tribute to Walsh if it became a hub city. There were early calls by FAS and DEL to include New York as a hub, though in all likelihood it was New York City they intended. The new Program Administrator met with the director of MDA in the summer of 2000. Although this sort of program was not the usual work of MDA and they expressed some hesitation, in the end they agreed to become a hub.

After the PA presented Pittsburgh (PGH) and Boston (BOS) as hubs at an intergovernmental meeting and following FAS and DEL's visits to those hubs, FAS and DEL were highly supportive of having them serve as hubs. They were impressed by PGH's experience with Wider Horizons, and with the director and her staff at BOS. They were convinced that both organizations understood The Troubles, knew the populations the Program was dealing with, and that their connections to the local Irish communities would be a benefit. However, there was some initial concern, especially by DEL, that picking "Irish towns" and organizations that had strong Irish Catholic ties (both organizations were headed by nuns) and Nationalist leanings (or at least were perceived as such) would be problematic for the Protestant participants. DEL already had problems recruiting Protestants because, as one official put it, anything identified with America and the Peace Process was assumed to be "pro-Green" (Irish). Both PGH and BOS understood this concern and sympathized with it. Both were able to overcome their "greenness."

In contrast to PGH and BOS, Syracuse (SYR) received only a "provisional yes" at this time. During their first visit there, FAS and DEL felt the potential housing was inadequate. There was also some concern that SYR might not attract participants because it lacked the same level of amenities offered by Boston and Pittsburgh. FAS and DEL also had concerns about the cold weather, public transportation, and whether having Catholic Charities (which had been sub-contracted by MDA to run the day-to-day operations) delivering hub services would turn off some participants from the North. (Eventually, when participants did come to SYR in July of 2002, there would be no explicit connection between hub management and Catholic Charities).

The management and staff at the BOS and PGH hubs were indeed knowledgeable about Irish culture and the impact of the conflict on young people. This is not to say, however, that these hubs did not also experience a measure of "chaos" when the first groups arrived in Phase 2. They too had to meet challenges for the Program to succeed. The participant "demographic" of WVP was not identical to that of Wider Horizons, and the responsibilities around housing, employment, and support were significantly greater and longer lasting. Neither organization had worked with a Program of this size and complexity or received groups of this size. They too became in danger of being overwhelmed. One advantage that all the later hubs had was that none of them had to deal with the number or frequency of arrivals of participants that DC and CO faced in Phase 1. Most importantly, they had the benefit of lessons learned from DC and CO in the chaotic first year. For example, whereas DC received more than 200 participants in a six-month span, PGH and BOS did not reach that level for 27 months.

As a result of intergovernmental meetings and visits by all the stakeholders to the U.S. and the Island, it was agreed to continue the Program with a significant restructuring to occur in the second phase. The most significant changes were as follows:

- Recruitment
  - o Interviews and enhanced screening introduced
- PDT
  - o Smaller group sizes established
  - o Standardized modular curriculum provided for all training centers
  - o Overlapping groups at pre-departure stage discontinued – one-week gap between groups ending and starting in

PDT and nine weeks between arrivals in the U.S. introduced

- o Training increased from six to eight weeks to allow more time for securing jobs, processing visas, and communicating orientation material, as well as more time for participants to make decisions on apartment sharing
- o Three-day cross-border residential training introduced

- Hubs
  - o Colorado Springs put on hold in year two and closed in year three
  - o Washington, DC, put on hold in year two, then renewed in May 2002
  - o New Hubs – Boston and Pittsburgh began accepting participants in May 2001, and Syracuse began in July 2002
  - o PA established regular hub meetings
- Livability
  - o Livability model introduced, hub information packs developed
- Soft-landing Orientation
  - o Increased from three to four days to a full week
- Housing – temporary, permanent
  - o Increased temporary housing from 30 to 45 days
- Employment and Job Development
  - o Increased number and range of employers and positions
  - o Participants expected to remain in a job for at least six months
  - o One job change permitted thereafter
  - o Enhanced contact with employers by hub staff
- Support Services
  - o Increased support services–NGC added a social services director to PA staff
  - o City & Guilds employment skills certification scheme added (see below)
  - o Social/cultural activities increased
- Conflict Resolution training engaged
- WVP website launched with increased functionality
- Monitoring and evaluation of Program initiated
- DOS Regulations published October 16, 2001, with new requirements:
  - o Participants required to read and sign Code of Conduct prior to issuance of certification letter and visa
  - o Employers to offer 40 hours of work per week and six months of employment
  - o Participants terminated for cause allowed 10 days to depart the U.S.
  - o Participants laid off allowed 30 days to find new employment
  - o Cause for termination to be verified by PA, and PA to be allowed reasonable opportunity to mediate between employer and participant, if possible, before actual termination
  - o Adequate and continuous health insurance required for participants
  - o Category 2 internship Program established to offer work experience for university students
  - o Exit interview added
- Intergovernmental meetings
  - o Three governments agree to quarterly intergovernmental meetings

6. PHASE 2: THE PROGRAM STABILIZES AND CONSOLIDATES
(GROUPS 6–16, OCTOBER 2000 TO SEPTEMBER 2003)

Table 6-1. WVP Phase 2 Timeline 2001–2003

Phase 2 Program Restructuring (Follow-on Phase)		
2001	May–Sept	Groups 6–8 arrive, new hubs, GMU and PPD/CR training introduced
	May	Group 6 arrives in new hubs (BOS, PGH); First Cat. 2s enter Program
	Oct	New DOS Federal Regulations published, October 16, 2001
2002	Mar–Sept	Groups 9–12 arrive
	July	SYR receives first participants; DC reinstated as hub
	Oct	Congress extends Program one year (to sunset in '06) (Public Law 107-234)
2003	Mar–Sept	Groups 13–16 arrive; Colorado Springs hub closed
	Oct	Legislation introduced to extend and amend Program
2004	Dec	Legislation to extend and amend Program signed into law, to sunset in 2008 (Public Law 108-449)

With the many improvements and equally numerous lessons learned from Phase 1, the Program had stabilized significantly by the arrival of Group 6. However, despite fixes, the Program would continue to encounter new challenges in addition to some persistent problems that had carried over from Phase 1.

Phase 2 comprised Groups 6–16 (see Table 6-2); 607 Category 1 participants arrived in Phase 2, 295 from FAS and 312 from DEL. As indicated in Table 6-2, Groups 6–8 arrived in May, July, and September of 2001; Groups 9–12 arrived in March, May, July, and September of 2002; and a legislative extension permitted the arrival of Groups 13–16 in March, May, July, and September of 2003. Group 16 was the final group permitted by law to enter the Program, prior to the passage of revised and extended legislation in 2004. Phase 2 also welcomed 273 Category 2 employer-nominated participants and university interns dispersed at work placements nationwide. Six Q-3 visa holders were also admitted during this phase. Q-3 visa holders are the spouses and children of Q-2 visa holders. They may enter the U.S. while their spouse or parent is a valid Q-2 visa holder, but are not authorized to work.

Table 6-2. Phase 2 WVP Participant Population

	Phase 2													
Program Year	**2001**			**2002**				**2003**				FAS (ROI)	T+EA (NI)	**Total**
HUB	6 May	7 Jul	8 Sep	9 Mar	10 Mar	11 Jul	12 Sep	13 Mar	14 May	15 Jul	16 Sep			
Boston	25	28	29	28	23	8	32	23	17	11	14	FAS (119)	T+EA (119)	**238**
CO Springs				28										
Pittsburgh	26	28	25		26	13	28	21	19	21	21	FAS (121)	T+EA (135)	**256**
Syracuse						16			18		23	FAS (28)	T+EA (29)	**57**
DC					2	7	13	16		18		FAS (27)	T+EA (29)	**56**
Total	**51**	**56**	**54**	**56**	**51**	**44**	**73**	**60**	**54**	**50**	**58**	FAS **(295)**	T+EA **(312)**	**607**
Total Cat. 2	**8**			**111**				**154**						**273**
													Phase 2 Total: Cat. 1 and Cat.2	**880**

6.1 GROUPS 6–8 (2001)

Group 6 arrived in the U.S. on May 1, 2001. Adhering to the proposed changes in group size, Group 6 was much smaller than the first group (of 77) that arrived in March 2000 (all went to the same DC hub). Group 6 comprised 51 individuals (30 DEL and 21 FAS); 25 headed to BOS and 26 to PGH. Group 7 arrived on July 11, 2001 and Group 8 participants arrived in PGH on September 9 and BOS on September 10, 2001.

Group 8 was barely over their jetlag when the 9/11 tragedy occurred. Along with everyone else in America, the WVP participants, both new and old experienced many days of stress and anxiety, heightened by the worries and concerns of friends and relatives back home. The Program Administration staff and hub staff in DC, CO, BOS, and PGH moved quickly to assuage the fears and deal with the anxiety. FAS and DEL also remained in close contact with participants in the U.S., as well as anxious relatives and friends at home. The PA acknowledged the shock the attack would likely have on the U.S. hotel, tourism, and restaurant industries, a major source of WVP employment, but reassured everyone the Program would continue.

Phase 2 saw the most significant reconfiguration of the WVP, affecting all aspects of its operation. This is the "complete overhaul" referred to earlier. This reconfiguration was the accomplishment of all the stakeholders working together. Changes in the structure, processes, procedures, and functionality are discussed in this section.

6.2 HUB CHANGES

In August 2001, NGC, FAS, and DEL returned to Syracuse for follow-up visits. They viewed apartments and met with MDA/Catholic Charities and employers. Verbal approval was given for SYR to become a hub in 2002. The first participants sent to SYR (Group 11) arrived in July 2002.

FAS and DEL confidence in DC's hub management had been eroded by the chaos of Phase 1. With DOS's concurrence, participant flow to DC was halted temporarily. During 2001–2002, DC hub staff worked hard to reestablish confidence in their hub by demonstrating that the participants who took the Program seriously and had stayed did in fact do well. The hub staff provided statistics on wage increases, promotions, and other successes (e.g., a participant who started off rolling silverware became the Food and Beverage Director at a local hotel). They indicated that one group netted an average wage increase of 40% in one year. The DC hub also showed that they had found more suitable temporary housing nearer to transportation. Their confidence-building efforts worked and, in 2002, DC received one participant in March (Group 9), two in May (Group 10), and a more sizeable group of 12 in July (Group 11).

In 2001, the first Q-2 Category 2 visa holders arrived in the U.S. They were not hub-based; responsibility for their oversight was delegated first to CO and thereafter to the DC hub or the hub closest to the city in which the Category 2 participant lived and worked. Category 2 participants differed significantly from Category 1 participants in other ways:

- They were not sponsored by FAS or DEL, but by businesses or universities
- They were primarily from Northern Ireland
- They lived in the U.S. city where their jobs were located
- They did not receive intensive support; monthly contact with their hub Point of Contact was required

6.3 CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING INTRODUCED

The Walsh Visa Program legislation clearly mandated Conflict Resolution training for the participants. Conflict resolution fell through the cracks during the start-up phase due in large part to the crisis atmosphere. According to the Program Definition document from July 2000, Conflict Resolution was envisioned as follows:

> *The Walsh Visa Program Manager is charged with providing Conflict Resolution training and practice for participants. During the start-up phase, there was limited activity in this area. There was some, though clearly not enough, conflict resolution (e.g., be a good neighbor, how to deal with supervisors) in the living & working in America module at the home country orientation. A lecture on conflict resolution was introduced in the DC hub for Group 5b.*

However, this was considered insufficient to meet the Program objectives. To address this, NGC

approached George Mason University in August 2000 about developing a conflict resolution (CR) curriculum and conducting CR training during PDT. GMU was also asked to monitor and evaluate the Program on a regular basis (discussed in a separate section, below). These activities were supervised jointly by senior faculty from the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) and the Peace Operations Policy Program (POPP) in the School of Public Policy.

6.3.1 Conflict Resolution Becomes "Personal and Professional Development"

GMU subcontracted with the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) to develop and deliver the conflict resolution curriculum, provide mediation services, and intervene in conflict situations as needed. The PA presented the initial plan for the conflict resolution curriculum to DOS, FAS, and DEL at the intergovernmental meeting in Reston, VA, in December 2000. FAS and DEL expressed serious reservations with the term "conflict resolution." According to a DOS official who was present, "We touched a nerve when we got into CR. They were saying we're sending our youth over, they're being exposed to a multi-ethnic society, but when you get into looking at our history and what happened in The Troubles, going back years of history, that's where the rub came in. They didn't want to call it conflict resolution." A FAS official recalled that at the time, Catholic and Protestant communities were coming together to talk about mutual understanding but weren't coming together to resolve anything. Reconciliation was a sensitive issue.

The reluctance of FAS and DEL was understandable. For them, any reference to CR meant "The Troubles," and (particularly for DEL) this was a politically sensitive topic, one they perhaps felt best not to be explored by outsiders who had not experienced it firsthand. DOS consented, and topics dealing with the divisive issues of the Northern Ireland conflict, and on sectarianism generally, were eliminated from the curriculum.

Personal and Professional Development Training (PPD)

- GMU and ACT hired for PPD
- PPD curriculum developed
- Training for Trainers
- PPD added to PDT, orientation and in the hubs

The attendees at the December 2000 intergovernmental meeting agreed to replace conflict resolution with training in "Personal and Professional Development" (PPD) mainly oriented to individual and not community-wide or social issues. FAS and DEL also asked, and DOS concurred that attendance at PPD not be made mandatory for participants. Although there were several reasons not to make attendance mandatory, the decision contributed to the relatively low attendance at conflict resolution—PPD—training sessions in hubs after soft landing.

The original conflict resolution curriculum objectives were replaced with objectives designed to address PPD:

- To develop enhanced capacity to effectively address interpersonal, work-related, and cross-cultural conflicts
- To increase cross-cultural skills to enable participants to effectively adapt to living and working in the U.S.
- To increase constructive views of conflict in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, and other cross-cultural differences
- To increase tolerance and appreciation of human differences

The new goal of the Conflict Resolution training, now PPD, was to expose participants to alternatives and hopefully use what they learned in the U.S. when they returned home.

The curriculum was to be delivered in three phases: eight hours (one day) on the Island during PDT; 24 hours (three days) during the "soft-landing" orientation training and first month in the U.S.; and 40 hours delivered in regular intervals over the three-year period of the participants' stay in the U.S.

The eight-hour pre-departure training component focused on living and working in the U.S., including such topics as cultural diversity and adaptation, culture shock and homesickness, anger management, and conflict resolution skills for the workplace and with housemates. The 24-hour orientation training focused on additional

basic conflict resolution skills (communication, understanding conflict, problem-solving skills) and additional culture and diversity skills (understanding cultural differences, culture and conflict, tolerance and respect). The 40-hour follow-on training was designed to develop skills in two stages. The first stage focused on helping participants explore and problem-solve the types of cross-cultural situations and conflicts they were experiencing in the U.S. The second stage was to help participants reflect on their experience and learning in the U.S. and prepare them to take their lessons learned back home.

The hubs in BOS and PGH requested that PPD be localized. They believed they had the staff to do it and thought they would be more successful in increasing participant attendance. The PA agreed. Therefore ACT changed its role to provide a "training of trainers" and then to certify local trainers in Boston and Pittsburgh who would deliver PPD as part of the soft-landing orientation (reduced to one day), as well as part of follow-on training in the U.S. However, when the Syracuse hub opened, ACT provided the PPD training during the soft-landing orientation for Group 11 (July 2002) and for Group 12 (September 2002) in the DC hub. Subsequently all hubs were responsible for delivering their own follow-on training.

6.3.2 Challenges Delivering PPD

An interim assessment of the WVP by DTZ Consulting in 2002 (hired by DEL and FAS) concluded that at least 84% of participants had attended PPD training by the time of their evaluation. This was considered extremely encouraging for a non-compulsory course. Nevertheless, throughout the WVP, the hubs found it very challenging to get participants to attend PPD training activities after soft landing and the participants had settled into permanent housing. Data collected by the PA indicated the average attendance rate per event in 2004–2005 ranged from 10% to 35% across the four hubs, with an overall average of 20% over the year.

The low participant attendance in PPD training—besides the obvious fact that it was not compulsory—was primarily attributed to scheduling conflicts, interest level, training topic, and venue. Many participants, especially those in the hospitality sector, worked evenings and weekends and could not get time off work. Hubs began scheduling events at alternate times, which helped but did not eliminate this obstacle. When the training was first offered, it was held in a classroom environment, which was not inviting to participants. Hubs began offering training in bars and restaurants, which helped draw more participants, especially since the training was then combined with a social event (after the training). Many participants simply objected to attending training during their valuable free time. In addition, the longer participants had been living in a hub city, the less inclined they were to attend hub-sponsored events as their personal lives had become busier, they had established friendships, and they found it less necessary to rely on hub-sponsored activities for socializing.

Another factor was that despite the intent of the Program to focus on Conflict Resolution training, not much attention was paid to it during PDT. A primary problem was the way in which the Program was presented to participants. The local job centers initially focused exclusively on the employment aspect of the Program—admittedly the primary focus of the Program—without focus on the Program's role in supporting the Peace Process. Promotional materials did not mention the Conflict Resolution training component. Although the U.S. implementing agencies mentioned the PPD training during PDT and ACT conducted a two-day PPD training during PDT, this aspect of the Program was generally downplayed or ignored by local agencies during recruitment and by training sites during PDT.

The fact that it was not mandatory and was not put forth as an integral component of the Program may have resulted in participants' general lack of motivation to attend PPD training activities. But ultimately, attendance did improve over the years for several reasons: a revised curriculum, greater emphasis on experiential and creative activities outside the classroom, fewer training events but of higher quality, improved promotion of training events in the U.S., and financial incentives (offered by the PA and hubs). Hubs also planned weekend field trips (e.g., rafting and skiing) that combined training activities with free activities to entice participants. On a few occasions, hub cities planned joint events (e.g., in Washington, Boston, and New York City), which gave participants the opportu-

nity to travel to new places and visit old friends who had gone to a different hub.

Interestingly, when participants were asked to evaluate the PPD trainings, most said they had found them interesting and useful. Written evaluations of training events during PDT and in the U.S. also tended to be very positive. Nevertheless, participants seldom saw PPD as a priority—it was not mandatory, and work commitments and other interests dictated their attendance. It was not until Phase 3 when FAS and DEL increased emphasis on this element of the Program, and dedicated training and a residential to CR. This, combined with the PAs renewed focus on CR, resulted in increased attendance and greatly improved content and training focus.

6.4 CHANGES TO SCREENING

Screening and participant selection in Phase 1 were problem areas. FAS and DEL committed to developing a process whereby participants were selected not only on the basis of legislative and regulatory eligibility criteria, but also on evidence of their commitment, maturity, and basic capacity to be successful in the Program. They did not want to send people out who could not cope or who did not have the ability to live independently. Participants were pre-screened for eligibility at job centers and, if they met the eligibility criteria, they received an application. At the request of FAS and DEL, they also received information packs from the PA providing an overview of the Program along with detailed information about life and work in the hub cities and costs of living. The hub information packs were key in helping participants gain a clearer picture of what to expect. It was necessary to emphasize to participants that once they got a flight to the States and initial financial support for temporary accommodation, they would be financially responsible for themselves and have to maintain full-time employment to remain in the Program. After submitting an application, candidates were invited to formal interviews where they would be assessed on their maturity, independence, motivation, goals, awareness of financial management, and perceptions of problems likely to be encountered in the U.S. DEL administered numeracy and literacy tests as well to ensure participants met a minimum standard. In short, FAS and DEL implemented a structured screening process with the aim of identifying potential participants who:

- Were unlikely to be able to stick with the Program in the U.S. due to their perceived immaturity and/or lack of commitment to the Program objectives
- Displayed behavioral characteristics incompatible with those required for working in the U.S.

Participants were not just assessed during the interview. Once accepted to the Program, the goal was to continually assess them for readiness during PDT. FAS and DEL developed a participant behavior contract that participants were required to sign, and readiness interviews were held to help participants really think through the Program and their rights and responsibilities as participants.

In response to problems participants were experiencing in the States (e.g., timekeeping and attendance issues, termination for "no call, no shows"), FAS and DEL implemented a "three-strikes you're out policy" to mirror a common employer practice in the States. (Examples of "strikes" would include "no call, no show" or continued tardiness; timekeeping and attendance issues; and disruptive behavior.) The three-step warning process consisted of a verbal warning, written warning, and then termination from the Program. The improved screening and rules aimed to give participants more responsibility, accountability, and discipline and a better idea about the American workplace and work ethic, but would not eliminate all issues. The need for increased discipline and accountability during PDT was evident early and the three strikes rule helped but was not always consistently enforced, which caused some issues.

The residential component of PDT, added for Group 6, served a number of functions, including team-building and giving some participants a sense of living away from home. But it also served as a screening device. One DEL official remarked that, since alcohol was available, "The residential gave them some freedom and access to alcohol. Usually [there were] a few casualties from each residential—the idea was to give them enough rope to hang themselves." Another DEL official provided more nuanced "cultural context" on the matter—the difference between perceptions in a "drink culture" (in his words) versus the U.S.:

"Make sure there's drink there. Don't mind if they get blotto so long as they can get up the next day and function."

6.5 CHANGES TO PDT

In addition to adding the three-day residential component, Phase 2 saw significant changes in the pre-departure program. Whereas previously groups ran simultaneously, with one group starting before another had finished (described by one official on the Island as bedlam), groups would now be scheduled with one week between group departures and arrivals. PDT training was increased from six to eight weeks. A two-day PPD and cultural diversity training was introduced. The pre-departure training was conducted in seven different training centers in Northern Ireland, and two centers in the Republic of Ireland.

The hubs gained a new role in PDT beginning with Group 6. During week two of PDT, hub staff spent one to two days in attendance. During this visit, hub staff delivered a presentation focusing on employers and available jobs in their hub city. Additionally, hub staff met individually with participants assigned to their respective hubs. The purpose of these meetings was to work with the participants in targeting their resumes to the specific employment opportunities available in the hub that matched their interests, aptitudes, skills, and goals. In addition, it was an opportunity for relationship building between hub staff and participants—a key concern and recommendation from the start-up phase. This proved very successful, benefiting both hub staff and participants. Hub staff returned to the Island towards the end of PDT to participate in residential.

Elements and Structure of PDT

PDT Structure and Staffing

- Belfast office opened
- Hub staff visits to PDT
- PDT Code of Conduct added

PDT Curriculum

- New standardized curriculum
- Training extended to eight weeks
- Personal and Professional Development Training (CR) added
- Residential added
- City & Guilds added

The NGC Belfast staff, FAS, and DEL collaborated closely to develop a more rigorous curriculum for PDT and to standardize the curriculum across training sites. As one DEL official explained, "Rushing into the program with undue haste, the three governments hadn't sufficiently scoped out what they needed to do – hadn't thought through cultural issues." Subsequently, in preparation for Phase 2, workshops were held to develop training that would be appropriate to prepare participants who were going out. With the longer PDT, the majority of training topics added were focused on preparing participants for work and life in the U.S. The NGC training increased from about 40 hours to about 65 hours during PDT. NGC also hired additional staff to help develop and deliver the training. There was increased emphasis on money management and budgeting and the need for discipline when managing money. Modules on banking and taxation issues helped to reduce participant's surprise with the deductions taken from their first paycheck and to help them develop realistic expectations. There was increased focus on U.S. employer culture and workplace expectations.

PPD was also introduced with Group 6 and focused on interpersonal conflicts (with supervisors, coworkers, housemates, and others), cultural diversity in the U.S., and homesickness. According to one NGC staffer, the number of participants leaving early due to homesickness decreased after PDT and hub staff focused more on this topic. "If people did leave early, it was assumed there was probably a real problem or reason."

Since FAS and DEL participants trained separately, it was considered important to bring all of the participants together before their departure so they could get to know one another before winding up living together in temporary accommodations in the States. As noted earlier, the three-day cross-border residential training began with Group 6. The residential offered team-building activities led by Highpoint, a local organization subcontracted by FAS and DEL. NGC Belfast staff, Hub staff, and GMU/ACT staff also participated in the residential

and helped facilitate select activities. The participants were placed in self-catering accommodations, given a budget for groceries, and required to prepare their own meals to give them a sense of living away from home, budgeting, and sharing accommodations with others. The first residential was largely a success, though some excessive drinking occurred. The residential provided an opportunity for staff to observe participants in a more social environment to better evaluate their readiness and suitability to remain in the Program. There were only a few occasions where participants were disqualified due to inappropriate behavior.

6.6 THE LIVABILITY MODEL IS INTRODUCED

FAS and DEL raised serious concerns about the cost of living in the hub cities proposed for the follow-on phase and whether participants would be paid adequate wages to afford the cities' cost of living. To address the issue, the idea of a "livability model" was first introduced by FAS and DEL at the October 2000 intergovernmental meeting in Dublin. The PA initially resisted as it was not included in the agreed-upon scope of work, but DOS concurred with FAS and DEL. FAS and DEL made acceptance of the livability model a condition of approval for the hubs and for sending participants to BOS, PGH, SYR, and DC.

The livability model presented an accurate and realistic assessment of the hub's ability to accommodate Walsh Visa participants. In addition to determining a livability wage, the livability model included information about approved employers in the hub with job descriptions and starting wages. It also provided temporary housing scenarios in the hubs and associated costs. The livability wage was calculated based on the average costs a participant might expect to incur while living in or near a hub city. Each model used a standard cost index to estimate average monthly expenses. The model included such indices as housing (i.e., based on four participants sharing a two-bedroom apartment), transportation, food, utilities, entertainment, etc. The methodology for determining average monthly expenses included surveys of current participants; research from local utility, phone, and real estate companies; and data from cost of living indices. For example, the Boston hub used The Women's Educational and Industrial Union Self-Sufficiency Standard for Massachusetts and the North Eastern University Off-Campuses Services Rental Cost Comparison Model. (See Table 6-3 for the average monthly expenses used to determine the initial Boston livability wage in 2000.)

Through analysis of monthly expenses, each hub's goal was to ascertain a recommended minimal

Table 6-3. Sample Boston Hub Monthly Expenses for 2000

Cost Category	Household Total ($)	Participant Total ($)
Accommodations	1220	305
Utilities	160	40
Local Phone	48	12
Long Distance Phone		20
Public Transportation		45
Groceries		250
Cable TV	40	10
Furniture	300	75
Health Insurance		40
Personal Items		175
Entertainment		150
Discretionary Money		112
Monthly Living Costs	**$1,768**	**$1,234**

wage that would allow participants to maintain an affordable living standard in that city. As many Walsh Visa jobs were in the hospitality industry, there was discussion about how to factor in wages for jobs that were gratuity-based, and a lower hourly wage for those jobs was eventually accepted.

In late 2000, between Phases 1 and 2 when the livability model was first introduced, the livability wage for participants in the Boston hub was determined to be a minimum of $10.00/hour gross pay. This livability wage provided participants with gross pay of $20,800/year or $1,733/month. Net pay was calculated assuming a 28% level of tax deductions. This included applicable federal, state, and local taxes, including Social Security and Medicare taxes. The net monthly pay for the Boston Hub was originally determined to be $1,248.

- Monthly Gross Pay $1,733
- Less: 28% taxes 485
- Monthly net pay $1,248

The livability model for each hub was presented to FAS and DEL for concurrence. Minimum livability wages for the three other hubs were as follows:

- Pittsburgh $8:50/hour
- Syracuse $8.00/hour
- DC $10.00/hour

Once a livability wage was determined, the Walsh Visa employers in the hub were required to agree to provide the livability wage as a condition of becoming an approved employer. Following the development of the first livability models in 2000, the models were reviewed and revised in 2002 and 2005.

6.7 SOFT LANDING, HOUSING, AND STIPENDS

The soft-landing standards developed by the PA resulted in an increase in the length of the orientation to a full week and more structure and parameters in the orientation's content. The added time enabled better preparation and "settling in" of the participants before they had to begin work. The orientation helped participants become familiar with the city and learn about differences in language, culture, work ethics, and lifestyle. It gave them an opportunity to travel on public transportation, open bank accounts, obtain identification and social security cards, meet their employers, and travel their routes to work prior to their first day. The orientation also provided housing and utility information and health, safety, and insurance information. Some hubs initiated creative experiential activities such as city-wide scavenger hunts to acquaint participants with their new surroundings. To inject some reality into the participants' perception of living costs in the BOS hub and the choices they would have to make with regard to budgeting, the hub created a game similar to Monopoly called "Walshopoly." The more interactive training worked very well and was much more effective than classroom-style lectures.

The orientation week also included more outside speakers from the community and social outings. Additionally, orientation helped participants learn what is expected of them with regard to abiding by U.S. federal and state laws while living and working in the U.S. The Code of Conduct was reinforced during orientation and expected behaviors and work ethic were emphasized. To aid the soft landing and integration of participants into the community, hubs identified local community and religious groups that could provide voluntary social services assistance, counseling, entertainment channels, and education opportunities.

6.7.1 Housing and Stipends

Beginning with Phase 2, the length of time participants could spend in temporary housing provided by FAS and DEL was increased from 30 to 45 days. Combined with the smaller group size and slower arrival rate, this made the search for permanent housing more manageable. From Groups 6 onwards, participants were generally satisfied with their housing situations. The problem of participants not leaving temporary accommodation in time was now mitigated because they had more time and staff resources to help them identify permanent housing. The improved screening and emphasis on a Code of Conduct significantly improved the participants' responsible treatment of temporary and permanent housing, which differed greatly from that which had occurred in Phase 1 in DC and CO.

Participants received an initial food pack, a one-month bus/rail pass, a phone card, $100 per week,

and a $500 moving allowance. Hub staff were also able to increase their efforts to help participants find permanent housing, as well as furniture and household items. To assist participants, they maintained a list of furniture rental agencies and/or support groups that provide free or inexpensive furniture.

6.8 EMPLOYMENT

In the June 2000 intergovernmental Program review meeting, FAS and DEL agreed that strict adherence to employment sectors was counterproductive. The sectors were never clearly identified and recruitment was not particularly tied to them. At this meeting all of the stakeholders agreed that, in the future, employment sectors would be used merely as a guide.

The new DOS Federal regulations, published October 16, 2001, contained several changes relating to employment (INS/DHS never updated their regulations). Some of the key changes were as follows:

- One authorized employer change permitted, but not prior to completing six months of work.
- Program Administrator given a "reasonable opportunity" to mediate between the employer and the participant, if possible, before termination
- If terminated for valid cause (determined by NGC), participant is expected to leave the U.S. within 10 days
- For reason of dismissal other than for cause, participant has 30 days to obtain alternative employment from an approved employer
- Employers are expected to offer 40 hours/week of employment and for at least six months

The WVP website (Figure 6-1) became fully functional during Phase 2. Using the website to search for jobs and research employers (Figure 6-2) during PDT improved efficiency and accuracy of employer and job information (though individual sites continued to vary with respect to Internet capability). NGC required employers to specify jobs they had available, and hub staff could post only live jobs on the website.

The nature and minimum requirements for each job were more accurately described.[13] The hubs also increased the number of employers and quality of jobs. While the greater number of employers was a welcome relief, it also made it unfeasible

Figure 6-1. WVP Website

[13]There had been some measure of cross-cultural misunderstanding earlier. One participant thought a job listed as a "busser" (a waiter's assistant in the U.S.) would give him a job driving a bus (*Irish Voice*, 20 June 2000, p. 6).

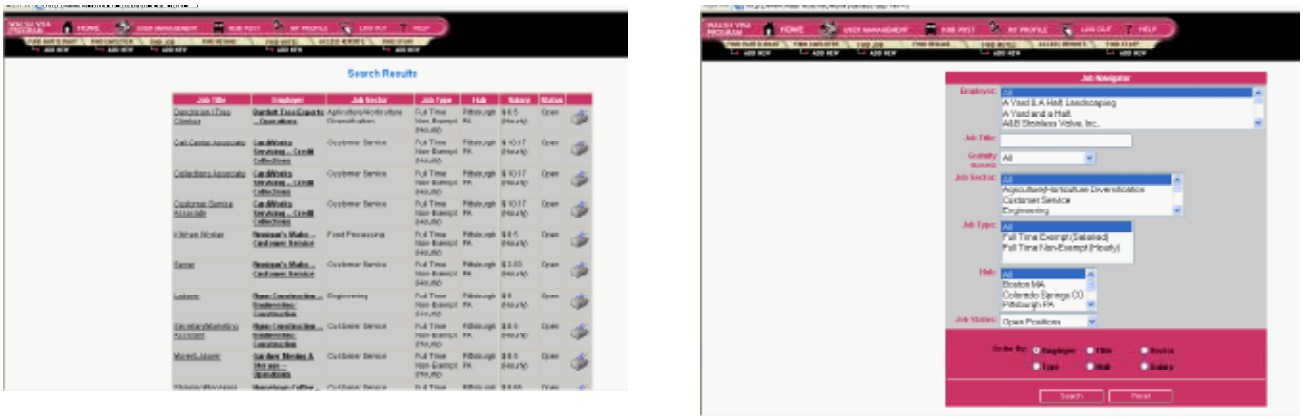

Figure 6-2. WVP Website job/employer search function

for all of the employers to go to PDT to conduct in-person interviews. Thus interviews were conducted via telephone; to a much lesser extent, videoconferencing and webcam were used. Employers were essentially hiring sight unseen as they only had a resume and a telephone interview on which to base their hiring decisions, which was not always ideal.

All the hubs were expected to recruit a wide range of employers offering a range of positions. To expand the number and range of employers and positions, the PA established a goal for the hubs to identify a sufficient number of jobs so that each participant could choose up to three job positions. These efforts increased the numbers and variety of employers and jobs dramatically in the follow-on phase and subsequent years. A total of 380 approved employers registered over the four hubs were used for Phases 2 and 3. However, there remained a concentration on relatively few employers, especially in Boston and Pittsburgh. Five employers employed (50%) of all participants who went to Boston. In Pittsburgh, one employer accounted for 37% of all jobs.[14] Therefore, despite the concerns raised in Phase 1 about the concentration of participants in just a few organizations, the situation continued somewhat in subsequent years. One important difference, however, was that with the increased pool of employers participants had greater choices as to where to work. That employees went to a relatively small pool of employers in Boston and Pittsburgh may have had more to do with those companies' high level of commitment and enthusiasm for hiring the participants than lack of other options. Some of those companies also offered participants a wide variety and range of positions. A sampling of principal WVP employers can be found in Appendix 5.

In Phase 2, participants were assisted with tools and guidance to make better job choices, knowing they were only allowed one job change, unless there were extenuating circumstances.

The restriction on job changes was put in place mainly to reduce the problem of participants' job hopping, severing ties with WVP employers, and taking any job just to get to the States. Although a new regulation required participants to remain in jobs for six months, it was agreed at an intergovernmental meeting that this rule would not be enforced if it was obvious that a participant's job was a poor fit. An ongoing problem that was not easily resolved had to do with live jobs. Employers could not always hold jobs open waiting for a participant to complete PDT and orientation. This remained a problem throughout the Program.

Gratuity-based jobs and jobs at removal companies were also a source of consternation. For some participants with seasonally impacted jobs and/or gratuity-based jobs, budgeting or making ends meet became more difficult during certain periods. Participants who were highly motivated and had more financial discipline were successful because of their ability to save for slower periods. They might also move up into salaried positions or,

[14] Fitzpatrick, D. *Final Evaluation Report on the Walsh Visa Programme Phases 2 and 3*, April 2008.

as was sometimes the case with removal companies, they would be provided with steady work as a reward for their dependability and reliability.

To address the potential problems with gratuity-based and seasonally impacted jobs, the PA ensured that participants were prepared and warned about these types of positions. If reduced hours became an ongoing issue, the PA would facilitate job changes or discourage participants from taking those jobs in the first place. Employers that would not sufficiently provide participants with a steady income were removed. This was particularly important as under the regulations, participants could only be certified to work at one job. Working a second job would result in termination from the Program.

Although employment presented persistent challenges, allowing more lead time before the start of PDT for hubs to identify specific jobs for individual participants, bringing employers to PDT to conduct interviews, providing more detailed job descriptions, and shortening PDT all helped streamline the employment process for the final groups. Over the course of the Program, many committed WVP employers were steadfast in providing participants with invaluable work experiences and unwavering support. As acknowledged by participants, many owe their present success and occupational choices to the start or opportunity the WVP employers afforded them. As noted by a former hub staff member, "For many, it was breaking the cycle of unemployment and being on the dole that ultimately gave them a stake in their economy back home." There are countless stories of success in the States and continued occupational success back home, which without the employers would not have been possible.

6.9 PARTICIPANT SUPPORT SERVICES

Phase 2 saw increased support of participants by hubs. At the start of Phase 2, the PA hired a director of social services and directed hubs to assign each participant a Point of Contact who was to maintain monthly contact, at a minimum, with the participants and ensure Status Summaries were updated at least every 30 days. Failure of participants to maintain contact with their hub POCs was considered a breach of the new Code of Conduct.

Considerable differences of opinion remained between the PA and hub managers (especially in Boston, and Pittsburgh) as to what constituted legitimate support services (and, as the WVP website improved its functionality, what should be recorded or documented as part of the social support services). The PA, wishing to limit what he saw as a potentially growing area of social service support provided by the hubs, renamed the support function "social services" to "support services," and carefully defined the activities that this function comprised. With the new definitions in place, the PA made explicit that providing direct social services (i.e., clinical counseling, rehabilitative activities, therapy, etc.) was not the intent of the WVP Program—and the Program was not funded for broader social services. Making referrals for participants in need of services was encouraged, but the PA strongly believed that the Program was not designed for participants with substantial mental health and substance abuse issues.

The crisis atmosphere during Phase 1 limited the Program staff from organizing social and cultural activities as planned. With the positive changes in Phase 2, hub staffs were able to organize regular social and cultural activities that began with the soft-landing orientation and continued throughout the participants' stay. Some of these events became integrated with PPD as a way to entice participants to attend. The social and cultural activities helped expose participants to a wider array of experiences than in Phase 1 and gave hub staff an opportunity to develop relationships with the participants, which increased the staff's ability to better support them as they adapted to work and life in the U.S. When the improved website came online, it included a "Hub Post" section in which hubs regularly updated PPD activities, social events, and photos. The Hub Post was used to build a sense of community among participants and was a valuable tool for advertising social alternatives to drinking.

6.10 CITY AND GUILDS

One issue arising from the intergovernmental Phase 1 critical review was that participants were getting work experience but returning with little or no evidence of improved job skills or employment experience and thus no proof of qualifications to

help them secure employment at home. As documenting work experience was an objective of the Program, FAS and DEL introduced City & Guilds, an employment skills certification scheme.[15] The scheme began during PDT where City & Guilds staff explained the purpose and process to participants. The hubs were then expected to help participants provide evidence and document their experiences and learning on a regular basis. After successfully completing the Program, City & Guilds would then "certify" participants' skill levels. Despite the good intentions of this initiative, very few participants were motivated to complete the necessary documentation process. The process was also perceived as cumbersome for employers, especially since the Program was not well known in the U.S. Only a few actually completed their certification and it was not worth it to those with university degrees. Given the low success rate, the initiative was discontinued with Group 16. Although it never became as problematic as job changes, second jobs, or the need for social services, Program staff regretted documenting evidence the lack of success of increased job skills. In particular, the PA remarked, "In the end I think everyone agreed it didn't work (for the Program). However, we must remember that one of the objectives of the Program was to document training, something we didn't do very well, because we (I) were reluctant to enforce that on the employers. The PA did encourage and urge participants to collect and maintain a portfolio of all training records, certifications, promotions, awards, etc. One Island official noted that "rather than a certification not widely recognized by employers, the ideal was a portfolio of evidence on what participants did so when they were coming back, they had evidence of promotions, training received, and references."

6.11 WALSH VISA PIONEER AND PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE

Negative media coverage of the Program in its first year made life difficult for all the principal stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic. In fall 2000, the *Walsh Visa Pioneer* Newsletter (Figure 6-3) was started as a communication tool to publicize hub activities and participant success stories. Lively articles of interest were solicited from each hub for the quarterly publication. The articles focused on participants, their career advancements, and contributions to the workplace and community, as well as PPD events. Participants, FAS, and DEL also contributed articles to the newsletter. The newsletter also featured pictures of participants in action at work, training, or play. The 12 to 16-page newsletter communicated Program goals and achievements within the Program community and to a larger audience of employers, legislators, and friends of the Program. It was available from the public website and emailed to a select audience.[16] The PA also began a semi-annual publication called *Success Stories*, and (later renamed *Profiles in Excellence*) to recognize individual participants' achievements. *Profiles in Excellence* highlighted and communicated the accomplishments of hub-nominated participants to a wide audience and was available on the public website. Participants shared, in their own words, insights about the Program and what they had learned. Submissions were accompanied by photos of participants performing a work-related function or actively participating in an activity. By featuring participants and their experiences and successes, the two publications helped to promote the value of the Program.

Figure 6-3. Walsh Visa Pioneer

This more sophisticated outreach by NGC helped to offset some of the critical coverage the Program received in its first year and publicly document the genuine participant success stories that were emerging.

[15]More information is available on their website: http://www.cityandguilds.com/cps/rde/xchg/cgonline
[16] www.walshvisa.net

6.12 REPATRIATION

In the pre-program planning stage, all stakeholders recognized that attention needed to be paid to repatriation. Repatriation policies were primarily aimed at handling participants who voluntarily left after a substantial period of time in the Program. Procedures had to be adjusted to handle other scenarios, such as participants who left early leaving little time to prepare for repatriation.

The PA implemented a repatriation process six months before participants' expected departure dates. The process included identifying goals the participants had not yet achieved and working closely with them to accomplish those goals. In addition, the process included career coaching, translation of resumes and portfolios into ROI and NI's preferred curriculum vitae format, and assistance with job searching via the Internet. NGC staff also provided participants with the appropriate training agency contact information for additional assistance in their job searches upon repatriation.

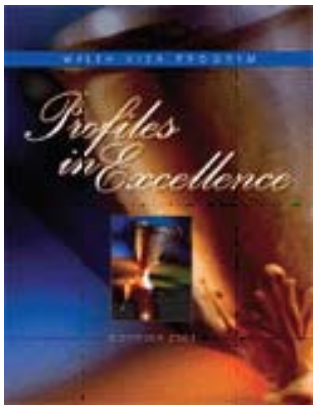

Figure 6-4. Profiles in Excellence

In the fall of 2002, the PA—with input from FAS and DEL—began drafting a repatriation protocol, usually referred to as, a "reintegration" protocol. Both agencies used their standard approaches to supporting unemployed people. DEL sent letters to participants six months prior to their repatriation date about the services they offer and information about CVs, job searching, and interviewing. DEL also invited participants to meet with job counselors at their local jobs and benefits office. FAS developed a "Welcome Home" packet to be distributed to participants; participants were also contacted by employment counselors upon their return home. The suggestion for participant tracking and follow-up was mentioned in repatriation discussions, but it is unclear why it was not carried through.

According to intergovernmental meeting minutes from September 2002, hubs recommended that FAS and DEL meet with participants three to six weeks prior to their return and a dedicated campaign be directed towards getting jobs for returning participants through use of a recruitment company. They also believed energy should be focused on Irish employers with U.S. links with a view to setting up jobs for returners. FAS and DEL both felt that participants should have developed "more independence" as a result of their WVP experience and that "special treatment" for returning participants was not required.

With the new repatriation protocol, beginning in fall 2002 the hubs were given significant responsibilities for repatriation. Hub staff were responsible for offering assistance to participants who were returning home (voluntarily or otherwise) which included, but was not limited to:

- Coordinating with FAS and DEL regarding employment in home country
- Preparing and organizing documentation for re-employment activity
- Conducting and documenting exit interviews (See below)
- Notifying the Program Administrator of participants believed to have applied for and/or obtained a legal reason unrelated to the Walsh Visa Program to remain in the U.S. and forwarding documentation provided by participants of their application for and/or approval of a legal reason unrelated to the Walsh Visa Program to remain in the U.S.
- Notifying the Program Administrator of any participant who fails to leave the U.S. as scheduled by filing a Possible Overstay Report

Program Assessments

NGC

- Exit Interviews
- PDT Evaluations (Groups 13-20)
- CR Quarterly Summaries

DTZ Interim Program Assessment (2002)

FAS/DEL Program Assessments

George Mason University/ACT

- Attitudinal Survey, assessment focus – attitudinal change, personal and professional growth and development, and challenges
- PPD/CR Quarterly Assessments
- Quarterly Evaluations

As part of the Phase 2 Program restructuring, the PA initiated a requirement to develop clearly articulated objectives that could be used as a basis for measuring Program performance. The PA tasked GMU with conducting an overall and periodic Program evaluation and assessment, to be used as a PA tool. Therefore, Phase 2 introduced more intensive monitoring and evaluation of the Program, directed by the PA. In addition to general monitoring of the Program, each assessment report focused on different aspects of the Program such as housing, employment, hub functioning, etc. A longitudinal survey, designed to assess changes in participants' attitudes, skills, and behavior regarding tolerance, was also instituted. This was resisted by participants, and trainers and hub staff considered it a burden. The PA eventually discontinued it.

Visits with FAS and DEL officials and visits to NI and ROI, training centers, and residentials supplemented the assessments carried out at the hubs. FAS and DEL also subcontracted with an external organization in NI—DTZ Consulting—to conduct an interim evaluation the results of which were published in September 2002. A final assessment was contracted by FAS and DEL with Deirdre Fitzpatrick & Associates and delivered in April 2008.

The assessment team's first task in 2001 was to define the Program goals and objectives. The legislation established these (with the ambiguities referred to earlier), but they were lofty (e.g. contribute to the success of the entire Irish Peace Process). Lower-level goals and objectives—at the "operational" or "tactical" levels—were not well specified. A GMU team travelled to the Island in April and August 2001 to speak with FAS and DEL (then T+EA) officials about their vision and goals for the WVP. Two things became clear: No stakeholders shared the same vision or set of goals, and the main divide was that between Rep. Walsh and DOS on the one hand, and FAS and DEL on the other. The Americans were focused on employment (and economic development) with a link to conflict resolution and the Peace Process. In Dublin (and more so in Belfast), the focus was mostly on jobs for the long-term unemployed. In early meetings between the PA and FAS and DEL, no one thought much about what success was or how it could be measured. Someone remarked, "Success comes when they go back." One of the first goals was to define "success."

7.1 DEFINING SUCCESS

According to FAS and DEL, one difficulty in defining success and identifying a generic set of indicators for all participants was the fact that participants came to the Program with very different backgrounds. At one end of the scale some participants already had university qualifications. For them, "Program success" might mean increasing their relatively high level of employability through managerial or "graduate-level" work experience. At the other end of the scale, for participants with lower educational attainments and a more disadvantaged social back grounds, "success" might mean a lot less. According to one report, it might just mean "getting them on a plane to the U.S. at all" (Interim Evaluation report, DTZ, September 2002). This observation was eventually shared by all stakeholders.

Interviews conducted in 2001 with principal stakeholders indicated that success was initially measured by how long participants remained in the Program. Some stakeholders said six months was the minimum effective period for U.S. resi-

dence—primarily to receive the maximum personal and professional benefits from cross-cultural experiences, Conflict Resolution training, and enhanced job skills—while DEL suggested that 13 weeks of continuous employment (post-training) be the measure of success in Northern Ireland. Soon, however, as discussions among them continued, all the stakeholders came to agree that the length of time in the U.S., by itself, was not a sure measure of success, especially with respect to the full three years allowed under the Q-2 visa. Many were convinced that other benefits, such as increased maturity, an appreciation for pluralism, social tolerance, self-esteem, and job skills could be achieved in much shorter periods of time, but were harder to measure.

To identify measures of success, beyond tenure in the Program, the question centered on what the WVP could reasonably contribute to the Northern Ireland Peace Process and economic regeneration as envisioned in the overall legislative goals. Rigorously assessing the possible contributions by the WVP to peace in general, and the Irish Peace Process in particular, was impossible. Variables such as peace and peace processes are concerned with society-wide initiatives, such as formal peace agreements that result in long-term social and political stability, and demand for their assessment large-scale aggregate and longitudinal data, (e.g., data reflecting significant reductions in violent activity and civil unrest). Similarly, economic development and economic regeneration were considered beyond the reach of the WVP.

Fundamentally, the WVP was focused on individuals. Thus, the WVP can only address the choices and behaviors of individual people. On the other hand, robust and longstanding evidence in the social sciences demonstrates that improved employability (based on work experience and history) and increased job status (promotions and professional or managerial jobs) lead to behaviors that are consistent with peaceful, civil societies. Moreover, training in conflict resolution can contribute to changes in individual attitudes about violence, tolerance, diversity in society and the workplace, family and interpersonal relations, anger management, and conflict management. These findings accord with "common sense" about social conflict by which individuals, such as Rep. Walsh, conceptualized the Program.

Therefore, based upon the individual level focus of the WVP, the GMU team endeavored to identify appropriate individual-level variables and measures of success. These included changes in participants' attitudes related to conflict resolution and cultural diversity, participant growth and development in work and life skills, job advancement and wage increases, length of stay in the Program, and job status upon repatriation. The assessment team tried to measure these initially with a formal attitudinal survey, and later, over the course of seven years, by talking extensively with numerous participants in their homes and at work. The PA continually struggled with this concept of "success" and often said in public forums that it may be 20 years before we know the measure of success of the Program, and it will only come when participants reflect back on their time in the WVP as a defining moment in their lives.

7.2 ASSESSMENT OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN WORK AND LIFE SKILLS

In addition to the attitudinal survey, face-to-face interviews and online written surveys (which focused better on work and life; response rates here were encouraging) were used to gain a better picture of the impact of the Program on participants. The interviews and surveys with participants, hub staff, and employers consistently showed positive results related to conflict and culture-related attitudes, skills, and behaviors, as well as improved skills, attitudes, and behaviors related to work (i.e., increased job skills and work ethic). Participant and employer satisfaction with the Program also became measures of success. Both stakeholders consistently reported high satisfaction with the Program on both written surveys and in interviews.

A written survey with repatriated participants from Groups 10–20 (conducted September 2007 and including groups from Phase 3) found that 75% reported satisfaction with the overall work and life experiences they had gained, or were gaining, in the Program.

- *The WVP was an amazing opportunity, well structured and planned. I had the worst of times, I had the best of times. All in all I feel lucky to have been a part of it. – Boston*

- *I had a fantastic time on the Walsh Visa and would recommend it to anyone. – DC*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Pittsburgh. I met some great people who I am still friends with, and I don't think I would be where I am now if it wasn't for the stepping stone my work experience gave me. – Pittsburgh*
- *I benefited due to the many things I encountered in my time in the USA. It was a great living and working experience. Sometimes I found it hard due to being away from my home in Ireland. But it was worth it and I look back on it with a fond memory. – SYR*

Anecdotal stories of impressive job advancement were commonplace in all hubs. A young man who started out rolling silverware in a restaurant became the Food and Beverage Director. A young woman was promoted from a hotel front desk clerk to Assistant Manager. A bank teller was promoted to Loan Officer. There were many such stories of success.

In an attempt to gather more "hard" data about job advancement (supplementing anecdotes), in 2005, the assessment team looked at salary increases, an indirect measure of job promotions and growth, as a measure of success. Focused surveys with participants in Groups 10–16 found wage increases ranging from 12.5% to 48.9%, with the higher rates generally reflective of the groups that had been in the U.S. the longest. The highest individual salary increase was from $8.50/hour to $35,000 year plus sales commissions, reflecting more than a 100% increase in salary. These figures were impressive and higher than the average wage increases in the U.S. during the same time period, suggesting substantial career progression among participants.

7.3 EXIT INTERVIEWS

In addition to evaluations that focused on participant satisfaction, the PA introduced exit interviews in 2001. This type of interview was designed to gather information about the participants' experience with the Program and provide departing participants an opportunity to raise issues important to them. It also gave participants the opportunity to request assistance from FAS or DEL, in their job searches upon repatriation. Answers and feedback from exit interviews were also captured on the WVP website and tabulated in exit interview reports.

8. REVIEW OF PHASE 2: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES
(GROUPS 6–16, 2001–2003)

The first evaluation that FAS and DEL commissioned (DTZ Consultants), which was completed in September 2002, already noted significant improvements over Phase 1. DTZ Consultants reported that the majority of returning participants reported greater tolerance and understanding for people in the "other community," and a substantial number of new cross-community and cross-border friendships had been established among participants. DTZ also concluded that the Program was having positive impacts on participants' employability noting, however, that it was difficult to assess the Program's success against its original aims "on a quantitative basis as no outcome targets were set" (George Mason concluded the same thing in its initial 2001 assessment).

In other ways, as groups succeeded one another and hubs came to full staffing and functioning, the Program's workings almost appeared to have been made routine. Problems would arise from time to time, but the crisis atmosphere of the first year receded. Communication and collaboration among all the stakeholders continued to improve—at the very least, each was becoming used to the others' bureaucratic "style." Another plus was the stability of the main managerial personnel at NGC, FAS, and DEL. DOS desk officers came and went; though each succeeding officer had to devote less time to the Program than the one before—another measure of increased Program stability and efficient operation. Some specific changes that contributed to the increasing stability and smoother working of the Program included:

- A Code of Conduct developed by the PA/USG and a FAS and DEL PDT-specific standard of behavior code, together served to formalize rules and expectations for behavior, teaching participants accountability and responsibility. This helped them acquire the discipline and work ethic that is expected of them by U.S. employers.
- The longer PDT also enabled local and NGC trainers to better prepare participants for work and life in the U.S. The focus of training was expanded from just getting a job to a broader curriculum designed to help participants maintain their jobs and adapt to the U.S. PDT better equipped participants to cope with problems and about what to expect in the U.S., how to deal with homesickness, and so on. Half of PDT was devoted to helping participants adapt to work and life in the U.S.
- The selection of jobs better matched participants' skills and interests and demonstrated possibilities of advancement, which many achieved. Having a larger number of employers and, in many cases, smaller companies offered participants a wider range of positions and opportunities.
- The smaller group sizes and slower pace of arrivals allowed staff to ensure that a newly arrived group was in permanent housing, settled, etc. before having to deal with the arrival of a new group.
- The DC hub centralized the temporary housing, which made it easier for staff to maintain contact and support during the participants' initial six weeks in the U.S.
- The addition of an NGC Belfast Office manager and permanent trainers helped establish closer contact and cooperation with FAS, DEL, and local trainers, as well as hub staff.

The DC hub, the only hub to be part of both phases, provides the most compelling evidence of these improvements. During Phase 1, DC received 203 arrivals between March and September 2000. By the beginning of December 2000, 43% had left the Program. In contrast, DC received 57 participants between May 2002 and July 2003. Of these only four left due to termination for cause, a mere 7% over a longer period of time. The DC hub manager attributed the decrease in prema-

ture departures to improvements in pre-departure training, improvement in the selection of jobs, the slower rate of arrivals, and more staff involvement with participants. NGC closed the Belfast Office in December 2003, shortly after the last participants allowed by the Program in Phase 2 completed their training on the Island. (It was to reopen in August 2005 after passage of the new legislation; see below.)

Program stakeholders were pleased with the improvements and successes evident as Phase 2 proceeded. But a primary concern persisted, one connected to the original intent of the Program, related to the nature of the "target population." The Program had intended to reach the most disadvantaged populations in NI/ROI. There were, however, some participants in the Program who on the face of it did not meet this criterion (e.g., university graduates). Additionally, was the length of unemployment specified in the original regulations—three months—too short to capture the truly disadvantaged? As new legislation was being prepared to extend the WVP; USG, FAS, and DEL officials met to return to the question, among others, of "original intent." Congressman Walsh requested input from all stakeholders with reference to extending and amending the Program. DEL suggested that the target group be those hardest to help and furthest from the labor market. To achieve this, they recommended extending the eligibility requirement to six months unemployment to avoid participants making themselves unemployed. They also recommended reducing the visa to 18 or 24 months, raising the minimum age to 25–35 since DEL already managed several programs focused on those aged 18–24 (new deal programs), and restricting the numbers of participants with degrees. To eliminate confusion over foreign nationals, FAS and DEL requested that NI and ROI citizenship become part of the eligibility criteria.

8.1 PHASE 3: NEW LEGISLATION AND GROUPS 17-20

Congressman Walsh believed that ending the Program at this stage would be sending the wrong signal in the context of the present status of the Peace Process. Therefore, taking the suggestions for improving and/or changing the Program, Rep. Walsh introduced legislation to amend and extend the WVP. The new legislation passed in the House in October 2003. Passage in the Senate, however, was considerably delayed, and it was not passed and signed into law until December 2004. No new groups arrived in 2004 (hubs continued their support of already resident participants).

The new legislation changed the nature of the "target pool" of participants in significant ways, and the principals met to rethink screening, PDT curriculum, hub models, conflict resolution, and repatriation, in light of these changes. A significant portion of 2005 was spent in consultation among the principals. Intergovernmental meetings took place in February, April, and May of 2005.

The most significant changes in the legislation were as follows:

- Reduced length of the Q-2 visa from 36 to 24 months
- Increased minimum age eligibility from 18 to 21 years of age
- Increased unemployment eligibility from three months to 12 months
- Increased residency requirement from five months to 18 months
- Made citizenship in NI or ROI a requirement
- Restricted eligibility to candidates who do not hold a degree in higher education
- Required two years residency in home country after the Program before becoming eligible to apply for other U.S. immigrant/non-immigrant status
- Q-2, Category 2 program discontinued

Each change had a specific rationale. The reduction in length of time allowed in the U.S. by the Q-2 reflected a consensus that participants who stayed the entire three years were likely to develop roots in the U.S. (including personal relationships) that made their return and reentry to NI or ROI more difficult. (It also reflected the developing sense that length of time by itself was not a valid measure of success.) The increased age of eligibility meant that more mature participants would come, but also, specifically, that only individuals of the legal age to drink in the U.S. were eligible. Stricter rules regarding residency and citizenship refined the target population, doing away with Category 2 participants, disallowing university graduates, and increasing the length of unemployment from 3 to 12 months, sought to target the truly disadvantaged. Said one DEL official about disallowing university graduates, "It was always difficult to get who the Program was targeted for. We were always pulling in graduates but trying to get them out—they knew they'd do well anywhere and they had already mixed and socialized with the opposite community. We were trying to get those who were least integrated and whose life chances were weak."

As it turned out, the most problematic and controversial provision of the new legislation—the one for which no credible rationale has been presented—was the two-year NI or ROI residency requirement after the Program. This was affected in the new regulations as section 212(e) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, stating that Walsh Program returnees cannot travel to the U.S. for two years under any visa, even a tourist visa for vacationing. Consular officials to whom we spoke regarded this as draconic and a mistake, and FAS and DEL officials strongly agreed. As of this writing, the matter has not been resolved.[17]

[17]There is a waiver procedure in place but in order to qualify for a waiver, the applicant must show that complying with the restriction would impose exceptional hardship upon his or her spouse or child who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the U.S., or, that his or her admission to the U.S. is in the public interest or the national interest of the U.S. It is hard to imagine that anyone would be able to meet the public or national interest criteria for a vacation. (Moreover, any WVP returnee with a spouse or child who is a U.S. citizen—several marriages did take place—would have difficulty being eligible for a tourist visa in the first place.)

10. GROUPS 17–20: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES
(OCTOBER 2005–SEPTEMBER 2008)

Table 10-1. WVP Timeline 2005–2008

Phase 3 Revision		
2005	Oct	Program pipeline resumes - Group 17 arrives in BOS and PGH Cat. 2 Program discontinued
2006	Apr–Sept	Groups 18-20 arrive in BOS and PGH
2008	Sept	Legislation authorizing WVP expires Group 20 participants depart the U.S.

Table 10-2. WVP Phase 3 Participant Population

	Phase 3 2006				FAS (ROI) T+EA (NI)	Total
HUB	17 Oct	18 Apr	19 Jun	20 Sep		
Boston	11	6	12	13	FAS (21) T+EA (21)	**42**
CO Springs						
Pittsburgh	5	8	9	13	FAS (14) T+EA (21)	**35**
Syracuse						
DC						
Total	**16**	**14**	**21**	**26**	FAS **(35)** T+EA **(42)**	**77**

During Phase 3, a total of 77 participants in Groups 17–20 (35 FAS and 42 DEL) arrived in the BOS and PGH hubs between October 2005 and September 2006. (Ironically, 77 is the same number of participants that arrived in the very first group in DC, in March 2000.) In Phase 3, the first group to arrive (Group 17) was intentionally small and considered a pilot due to programmatic changes and significant changes in the participant profile. The group included 16 participants, (11 participants arriving in BOS and five arriving in PGH). Stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic were pleased with how smoothly things went on the Island and how well the group settled in and adapted to their hub cities and particularly how well they adjusted to their new jobs. A postal strike in NI slightly delayed the start-up of Group 18, which arrived in the U.S. in April 2006 with a total of 14 participants (six going to BOS and eight to PGH). The second to last group (Group 19) arrived in June 2006 and included a total of 21 participants (12 to BOS and nine PGH). The final group of 26 Walsh Visa participants arrived in the U.S. in September of 2006, 13 went to BOS and 13 to PGH). Ironically, numbers of applicants for this group were significantly higher, perhaps a result of positive feedback and a year of steady recruitment efforts. The departure of Group 20 in September 2008 marked the conclusion of Phase 3 and of the Walsh Visa Program. While institutional and historical knowledge helped with the implementation of a comparatively smooth final phase, a level of apprehension existed at the start.

Pittsburgh participants from Group 17–20 with Sir Reg Empey, NI Minister for Employment and Learning

When new legislation for Phase 3 significantly changed the eligibility requirements, the PA, hub staff, FAS, and DEL became concerned about the impact this would have on the Program. Their concerns were however not identical. While everyone praised the minimum age increase to avoid problems associated with underage drinking and lack of maturity, there was concern that the higher unemployment threshold and lack of university graduates would likely lead to a population of participants with greater problems than those in the past. This concern was based on the assumption that if people were unemployed for 12 months or more in the booming economy, it must be because there was something wrong with the person (e.g., substance abuse, psychological problems, etc). The absence of university degree holders, it was also thought, would contribute to a less well-prepared participant population than before. FAS and DEL expressed disappointment with the one-year unemployment requirement; they felt it made recruiting suitable participants more difficult. They had initially recommended an increase in unemployment to six months to avoid participants deliberately becoming unemployed. Taking this recommendation on board, the amended Program legislation introduced by Rep. Walsh called for participants to be unemployed for six months, but this was changed to 12 months in the Senate version of the bill and became law. There was a lot of discussion surrounding the definition of unemployed and ultimately, the U.S. deferred to ROI/NI definitions of unemployment.

By 2005, the components of the WVP "system," on the Island and in the U.S. were well established, and all the stakeholders knew what to expect from the others. A number of changes—to the structure, content, roles, and relationships of the different agencies and organizations—took place in preparation for Group 17 and as the subsequent groups (through Group 20, the final group) arrived.

10.1 RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

Beyond the changes in eligibility requirements, several specific changes were made in the application and screening process for Groups 17–20:

- New essay questions on the application form
- A new requirement for a letter of recommendation to be submitted with the application
- New NGC Belfast staff involvement in the interview and screening process
- Strict adherence to standards of behavior and the "three strikes rule"

In previous years, the Program application and screening was done exclusively by FAS and DEL. Beginning in August 2005, NGC's Belfast Office staff participated in evaluation and screening of applicants.

Group sizes recruited in Phase 3 were smaller due to greater difficulty in recruiting participants. This was attributed (by FAS and DEL) to the higher threshold for unemployment and other changes regarding participant eligibility, as noted above. It was also recognized that higher levels of support during PDT and in the hubs might be necessitated by the new participants' "profile."

10.2 PDT

With Phase 3, the WVP really hit its stride. Processes and procedures had now been vetted over five years. PDT, in Particular, showed significant improvement. From smaller group sizes and co-located training to greater hub and employer

involvement, the changes were evident.

Several significant changes were made the PDT training program, including:

- Shorter PDT (from eight to six weeks)
- Training group size was smaller
- Participants from the North and South trained in "hub groups" in Belfast
- Participants lodged together in Belfast, with the exception of those from Belfast
- Increased hub staff involvement in PDT
- U.S. employers conducted face-to-face interviews in Belfast
- No residentials with the exception of a CR residential for Groups 19–20 in ROI
- Conflict Resolution training introduced (replacing PPD)
- Increased cooperation between NGC, hubs, FAS, DEL, and USG

Due to smaller group sizes, the co-residence in Belfast was considered a positive change. The greater participation of hub staff in PDT and the participation of WVP employers were also commended. The lack of a residential was felt by some to be a loss, perhaps offset by the Belfast co-residence and greater hub involvement. Rather than conducting training in separate sites in NI/ROI, all participants in Phase 3 trained together in Belfast. Most participants also lived together during this time. Spending almost six weeks together before traveling to the U.S. helped greatly in providing formal and informal mutual understanding and Conflict Resolution training. This was an effective way of ensuring the groups bonded and mixed well.

Conflict Resolution training was given greater emphasis in PDT, resulting in increased training attendance once in the hubs (see below).

A shortened PDT allowed for a tighter schedule and less down time, which had been key complaints from participants in years past. Formal training was completed by week 6 for Groups 17 and 18 and by week 5 for Groups 19 and 20. Participants had also been critical of overlap and repetition, but increased coordination with local trainers reduced this. An integrated PDT schedule highlighting which topic areas were to be covered by whom as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities helped to organize and streamline the training. These positive changes were reflected in PDT evaluation surveys. Other activities added to PDT included social time with hub staff outside of the training center. A bus tour of Belfast including its sectarian neighborhoods and a pub "quiz night" where hub teams competed to answer U.S. and hub-related questions were added to allow social time for hubs to interact with participants.

Although efforts were made to involve alumni during training, it remained an ongoing challenge to get them to participate. The few alumni that did visit during PDT were a tremendous help to participants by answering questions about what living and working in the States was like. Other additions included presentations by Consulate and Embassy officials about the visa application and interview process, something that always caused participants great apprehension.

Participants were also introduced to FAS e-college, which provided an opportunity to enroll in an online course in a subject area of their choosing. The course could be completed either during PDT or during their stay in the States. Due to of the nature of PDT (with waiting time for job interviews and offer letters, and the visa application process), unstructured time was sometimes unavoidable but efforts to ensure that participants' time was productive and useful included opportunities to research employers and jobs and prepare for interviews. A half-day Walshopoly game, adapted from the BOS hub version, was played by hub teams to help educate participants about budgeting and more importantly about unexpected expenses that could arise for things such as needing a required root canal, a roommate failing to pay rent, or missing work due to an unforeseen illness or an unexpected trip home. Participants were also tasked with developing hub city presentations provided them the opportunity to learn more about the U.S. and their hub city, as well as getting to know their fellow participants while working in hub city teams.

Throughout PDT, trainers aimed to help participants develop confidence and positive self-images by identifying their skills and strengths. Getting into the routine of attending PDT each day also helped with the transition back to work. Dress code days were implemented to help participants get into

a routine of dressing professionally and being in a professional mind set. Obtaining jobs was still a slow process in Phase 3, with some participants not receiving offers until the last possible day, but increased hub staff and employer involvement in Belfast helped greatly.

10.2.1 Hub Role in PDT

With a shortened PDT, it was essential to get an early start on identifying appropriate job opportunities for participants. To assist with this effort, the Belfast Office provided the hub staff with background information on participants' employment histories and interests prior to the start of PDT. Hub staff also increased their roles during PDT. Hub cities provided a hub representative to augment the Belfast office staff for two-and-a-half weeks during PDT. These expanded responsibilities included:

- Introducing the hub city and assisting the Belfast staff with curriculum content relevant to the hub city (culture, transportation, climate, accommodations, attractions, etc.)
- Educating and introducing participants to employment opportunities and employers in the hub city, using experience of participants who had worked for specific employers
- Assisting the Belfast staff in preparing participants for job selections, applications, and interviews
- Arranging and coordinating employer visits to PDT, including itineraries, planned meetings, and interview schedules
- Meeting individually with participants, assessing their skills, and assisting in resume preparation and job searches. Hub staff worked individually with participants to manage expectations and match participants' skills to available jobs
- Conducting classroom training in accordance with the published curriculum, specifically introducing participants to and familiarizing them with the hub city, employers, cultural issues, etc.
- Monitoring job offer letters for accuracy and completion prior to submitting for participant's signature
- Attending planning meetings scheduled by the Belfast Office and coordinating all PDT activities and schedules with the Belfast office Manager

10.2.2 Employment and Job Skills Development

Another significant change was the direct involvement of employers during PDT. In Phase 2, most interviews were conducted over the telephone—not an ideal situation for either employers or participants. In Phase 3, several employers went to Belfast for face-to-face interviews. All stakeholders commented on the significant advantages of this for the interview and job selection process, especially in being able to better match participants to employers and streamline the interview and job offer process.

FAS and DEL also no longer emphasized the sectors initially established for the WVP and did not advertise these sectors in their information packets. They used more general language when describing the Program emphasizing that WVP offers "entry-level jobs in a variety of positions." Nevertheless, the majority of jobs continued to be in the hospitality and tourism and customer service sectors, with a few positions in engineering, health services, IT, and other sectors as available. As described elsewhere, participants tended to be employed by a few employers despite the fact there were more than 20 employers in Boston and Pittsburgh that had posted positions. FAS and DEL were now more satisfied with the variety of positions available. This was a marked improvement over Phase 1 and Phase 2.

10.3 CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS REENGAGED

Starting with Group 17, there was an effort by the PA, FAS, DEL, and hub managers/staff to raise the visibility and importance of CR training during recruitment and throughout PDT. The name change to CR was part of that effort. Before PDT began, participants were made aware of the CR component from the information packets, during the interviewing process, and by hub staff during PDT. This resulted in greater receptivity to CR training among participants during PDT, which also carried over to the CR training in the hubs. This was indicated by an improvement in average attendance rates at CR training events, which

increased from 16% to 33% with the arrivals of Groups 17–20.

Another important change was that in 2005, FAS and DEL hired a local trainer experienced in working with the Wider Horizons Program and in peace and reconciliation work to conduct Conflict Resolution training. As a DEL official put it, "This was another improvement in pre-departure training structure—lesson learned on conflict resolution: deal with it head on and use locals." Given they were from a local organization experienced in cross-community relations, FAS and DEL felt comfortable with them addressing issues related to The Troubles during PDT. This moved the conflict resolution focus from the interpersonal level to the societal level, which more closely matched the intent of the WVP legislation. This training was well received by the participants.

BOS Participants at Thompson Island Ropes Course

The hubs continued CR training during orientation and through quarterly events focused on the interpersonal to societal level. In 2004, during an interim period prior to the start of Phase 3, the PA decided to reengage conflict resolution. He wrote to the hubs in April 2004 announcing his intention and subsequently implemented a redesign of the PPD curriculum to meet his newly established conflict resolution requirements. The revised curriculum built on the original CR (PPD) curriculum and the experience gained in implementing it in providing conflict resolution programming for participants. The revised curriculum provided clear goals, learning outcomes, and objectives in three broad CR training areas: Culture & Diversity, Interpersonal Conflict Resolution, and Culture and Conflict Resolution in Ireland (North and South).

The topic of sectarianism was reintroduced based on the experience of hub staff in Pittsburgh, Boston, and Syracuse. They had already started focusing on events and news related to conflicts and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland and believed the participants were open to these topics.

CR Training Topics

- Culture and Diversity
- Interpersonal Conflict Resolution
- Culture and Conflict Resolution in Ireland (North and South)

The curriculum also provided sample methodologies and suggested topics and activities, learning objectives and outcomes, and suggestions for increasing attendance at CR trainings. In conjunction with the revised curriculum, the hubs submitted an Annual Strategic Plan with a Projected Annual Training Schedule to the Program Administrator. Hubs were also responsible for providing and documenting formal Conflict Resolution training. They were required to offer at least two events from each general topic area, for a minimum of 12 hours per year. Although participants were not required to attend formal Conflict Resolution training (except for 12 hours in PDT and six hours during soft-landing orientation in the hub), the hubs were required to schedule and make available training that is accessible, relevant, and rewarding.

In addition to documenting CR training events, hubs were tasked with documenting CR support services provided to individual participants coincident to the three CR curriculum topic areas: Culture and Diversity, Interpersonal CR, and Culture and Conflict Resolution in Ireland (North and South). The CR services time was documented on the website as part of the participants' record.

The PA developed two strategic goals for CR training to be implemented by hubs in 2005:

- Exposing participants to diversity and conflict resolution scenarios including interpersonal conflicts and broader sectarian issues. This goal was to be accomplished using formal, planned group trainings and

activities. The how, where, when, venue, medium, etc. would be at the discretion of hub management.

- Assisting participants in dealing with everyday personal and professional conflict issues that hinder successful participation in the Program. This goal was to be accomplished through and coincident to the administration of support services.

The hubs also offered incentives to participants to attend the training (sports tickets, gift cards, etc). Boston and Pittsburgh both reported greater attendance at these events than with previous groups. As noted, this was attributed in large part to the greater emphasis on CR and cross-community relations during PDT and to the incentives offered.

10.4 REPATRIATION

The PA assumed a more active role in Phase 3 for repatriation tasks in the U.S. to prepare participants for the transition home, as well as follow-up repatriation activities on the Island conducted by the Belfast Office, which aided evaluation efforts. The PA developed an Out-Processing and Repatriation Policy defining roles and responsibilities of the PA and Hub Staff during the repatriation process.

For Groups 17–20 the PA sent letters at the midway point of 12 months and again one month prior to their Program end date. The letters notified participants of their Program end date and advised them to begin planning and preparing for their return home, and, reminding them about the availability of hub assistance with preparations for returning home.

10.4.1 Hub Roles in Repatriation and the Belfast Office

Similar to previous years, hubs were tasked with providing support to repatriating participants by working with them to update their resumes and transform them into curriculum vitae, and helping them identify career goals and plan for a job search. During the final six months, hub staff scheduled an appointment with the participant to start the repatriation process. In addition to notifying FAS and DEL of returning participants, the hubs also communicated with the Belfast Office about the participants and their interests. In the final two weeks, hub staff conducted exit interviews, collected Certification Letters, and reminded participants of support from FAS and DEL employment representatives and Belfast Office access.

Alumni Tracking and Follow-up

- Alumni follow-up and post-Program support for participants who return home voluntarily after April 2005
- Conducted by NGC Belfast office until October 2005 then transferred to hubs for remainder of Program

Participant Criteria for Alumni Follow-up

- Voluntary Program Departure
- Groups 16 and earlier must have spent six months or more in the Program
- Groups 17–20 must have spent three months or more in the Program
- Status documented six months after departure

Figure 10-1. WVP Alumni Information Page

The Belfast Office was credited with greatly improving the repatriation process by being proactive in helping returning participants with resources for bridging the gap between U.S. and home country employment. The staff added an alumni information page (Figure 10-1) to the website and posted information from alumni and other agencies about employment and educational opportunities in the North and South.

The staff also researched job opportunities and employers and developed a database of employers and job search resources. The Belfast staff also attempted to track returned participants in an effort to help assess Program impact after participants returned home. In accordance with CIS/DHS policy, the Belfast staff verified that participants had returned home as scheduled and were not in possible overstay status in the U.S. The post-Program support and alumni tracking were a marked improvement over Phase 2 and previous years, when there was no formal PA post-Program support or follow-up.

After Group 20 departed for the U.S. and with no new participants in the pipeline, the NGC Belfast Office was closed in September 2006. Hub managers lamented its closing because they greatly valued the tremendous support the Belfast staff had provided to participants with their transition home. Nevertheless, staff reported they were able to take on several of the activities formerly performed by the staff in Belfast and conducted the following repatriation support activities:

- Reminded participants about the alumni page on the website that provides employment and education resources and re-entry advice to repatriated participants
- Sent job announcements to alumni of openings they had found in newspapers and on websites from the North and South
- Provided alumni information about potential employers using the employer database they had developed

The hubs also took on the task of alumni tracking after repatriation. As established by the PA Alumni Tracking Policy, participants would be contacted at least three times: upon their arrival home, around the three-month mark, and at the six-month mark.

When hubs were asked to assess their repatriation efforts in 2006–2007, they reported that success from their efforts was mixed. The primary factor they reported for successful repatriations was the individual participant's attitude and competencies related to the job search process. In addition to these personal factors, hub staff identified three additional factors that helped increase repatriation success: support by the NGC Belfast Office (October 2005–September 2006), working for multinational companies, and hearing repatriation success stories. In regard to participant attitudes, they could be divided into two groups: the "pro-active planners" and the "wait and seers." The pro-active planners took advantage of the assistance offered by the hubs, NGC Belfast staff, and to a lesser extent assistance offered by FAS and DEL. They were more likely than the second group to assess their goals, make concrete and organized plans, implement those plans, and find greater success prior to leaving the Program or soon upon their return home. They were better able to "break out of the mold" at home and, when necessary, tended to be more willing and able to move to other cities where there were more job opportunities. They were also more likely to save money for when they returned home to help them make a successful transition.

The "wait and seers" group tended not to think or plan ahead. They expressed the belief that they could not do much while in the U.S. and that they would make plans and start their job searches (or seek other opportunities) after they returned home. They were more likely to say they would take a vacation first (e.g., one week to a month) or "hang out" for a while and renew their relationships at home before beginning their job searches. When asked why this group seemed resistant to planning ahead, hub staff said it seemed to be because they did not want to go home and, therefore, tended to avoid the issue by not thinking or planning ahead.

A prime repatriation success factor was the support provided by the NGC office in Belfast. Hub staff highlighted this support as a significant positive change over previous years. Specifically, hub staff said the NGC Belfast staff had become very proactive in working with hubs to identify potential employers and jobs for participants they knew were returning home and were instrumental in helping people get interviews and jobs upon their return home.

Participants who worked for multinational companies with offices in the U.K. or Republic of Ireland had greater opportunities for finding similar work upon their repatriation. They tended to get positions in their home-town branch or other city.

Hub staff also reported that they used repatria-

tion success stories to help motivate current participants, help them learn how past participants founds jobs, and show them that they can be as successful once they repatriate as they had been in the U.S. Said one staffer, "It really helps when I can tell a participant about another participant who has a similar background and interests and how that person has found a good job and situation back home. It makes them feel like they can achieve the same thing." The PA featured alumni sections in the *Pioneer Newsletter* for each hub city. The alumni sections spotlighted the work that former participants were doing back home.

10.4.2 Challenges to Repatriation

Interviews with hub staff, Belfast Office staff, and participants indicated that the challenges participants faced in successfully transitioning home could be categorized as personal and cultural challenges. Personal challenges included some participants' perceptions of what it means to go home and lack of sufficient skills in planning and implementing plans to achieve their goals. Many participants interpreted going home as synonymous with going back to the same life they had when they left for the U.S. For some, this is exactly what had happened. For example, one staff person commented, "A few are occupying their former barstools." Participants who had this perception of what it means to go home tended to not want to return home because they believed they would not have opportunities there. After living and working very successfully in the U.S., many of these participants were looking for ways to remain in the U.S. or go to another country besides their home country.

It was difficult to determine whether the perception of the lack of opportunities back home was based on fact or an exaggerated fear. While hub staff acknowledged that some participants, especially those from small, rural towns, might not be able to find work in their home communities, they also believed the problem was more one of perception than a real lack of opportunities. All hub staff interviewed saw this perception as an obstacle to successful repatriation. For some participants, especially those from smaller, rural villages, there may, in fact, have been few job opportunities. Therefore, if they wanted to find a job in their areas of interest, they might need to move to another town or city. Even for participants from larger cities, where there were many jobs, some participants are hindered by the view that those jobs were not available to them. For example, several hub staff commented that some participants from highly sectarian neighborhoods in Belfast might still not see that they could find work in other parts of Belfast outside of the neighborhoods in which they lived.

A related challenge was that some participants, for both personal and cultural reasons, did not believe moving to another town or city with more job opportunities was a viable option. Some participants wanted to stay in their home communities with their family, friends, and social networks. Some participants felt family or peer pressure not to move away, unless paradoxically it was a move out of the country. For some participants, moving to the U.S., England, or Australia, etc., was seen as more viable than moving two hours away. One explanation offered for this was that culturally, it was still unusual for people to move for jobs within the country, although this was changing as more people had started leaving rural areas and small towns to resettle in larger cities, such as Dublin and Belfast. After spending five weeks in Belfast during PDT, some participants expressed interest in relocating to Belfast, something they would not have previously considered. The efforts of hubs, the Belfast Office, FAS, and DEL were designed to help participants overcome these challenges. Yet, everyone agreed that participants were ultimately responsible for their success in repatriation.

11. GROUPS 17–20: AN ASSESSMENT, SUCCESSES, AND CHALLENGES

As part of GMU's regular assessment in March and September 2007, hub managers and staff were asked to compare Groups 17–20 with earlier groups. These interviews revealed that the concerns held about these participants, who came with a more disadvantaged profile as a result of changes in eligibility criteria, had not materialized. In fact, hub staff expressed surprise that there hadn't been greater differences. They saw no real differences in the newer groups compared with previous groups. The only change was that in the past groups, a higher percentage of participants needed no support or very little support. One staffer noted,"There were a higher percentage of stars." However, the participants in the Phase 3 groups did not have greater problems and did not need greater support than participants in the past. "There are just a higher percentage of participants who need support," another staffer said.

The absence of participants with university degrees did not adversely impact the Program. Hub staff reported that it was actually easier to find and fill low-skill jobs in the WVP Program than jobs requiring degrees and advanced skills because the latter tend to have more rigorous and lengthy interview procedures than the WVP Program was able to accommodate.[18]

Hub staff offered three reasons for the observation that Phase 3 participants were doing as well as past participants. First, the new age requirement of the participants resulted in more maturity. Second, because of the increased age requirement, they had more work and life experience, despite the fact they had been unemployed longer (although one person commented that some were not as capable). Third, several people commented that the participants were in fact more serious about the Program. As one staff person pointed out, "They were so tired of being on the dole and not having a job. They're just so happy to be doing something." The lack of adverse impact due to the changes in eligibility criteria was confirmed in subsequent GMU evaluations.

11.1 SOME INDICATORS OF POSITIVE CHANGE (GROUPS 17–20)

Assessments conducted throughout 2007 provide much evidence of positive and pro-social change for Groups 17–20. Overall, participants reported great satisfaction with their lives in the U.S., including their job experiences, their active and varied social lives, and the greater opportunities they had to see and experience different people, cities, and activities in general. Although some participants said they had experienced homesickness, they were determined to stay the length of the Program and, as one participant put it, "get the most out of my time here."

11.1.1 Work and Employment

An assessment conducted with employers and participants in September 2007 compared Groups 17–20 (while still in the U.S.) and Groups 10–16 (repatriated) in terms of personal growth, general life skills, and especially enhancement of their employment and job-related skills. The assessment found no significant differences between the groups as was initially expected. In fact, some employers reported fewer problems with Groups 17–20 than with previous groups. One employer attributed this to participant higher age range. In the past, several under-21 participants "had trouble adapting, especially related to drinking, he recalled."

Phase 3 employers rated the participants highly in terms of work skills, work ethic, confidence, communication skills, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, tolerance and respect for diversity, and getting along with supervisors and co-workers. The employers also believed the participants had improved their job skills, communication and conflict resolution skills.

- *When our employee started he had a number of issues and in the first five months overcame all of them. His punctuality and attention to detail were very poor. A few months ago he was pro-*

[18]From the perspective of cross-community relationship building, a great deal of research has found that mixing people from different ethnic groups of similar status (such as educational level, or job level) promotes prejudice reduction more effectively than when people of different status are mixed together. Therefore, the new change should promote more prejudice reduction and greater tolerance among the new participants.

moted to a Supervisor position. - Boston

- The four participants who have remained with us are among our most successful employees. They have worked their way up thru the ranks and continue to earn praise from fellow employees, and wage increases at every review period. - Pittsburgh

Employers appreciated the WVP participants. Several employers attributed much of the participants' success to the pre-departure training and hub staff support. For example, one employer said, "The staff are very supportive, especially in helping them with housing. We also employ people from other countries, such as Poland, but their recruitment organizations do nothing to help them get settled. This is the best Program I've seen." Another employer, who also participates in other international programs said, "The WVP participants come better prepared to work in the U.S. than those we hire from other countries, such as Lithuania. I think it's because of the six-week training program they get before they come here. The cultural training really stands out. We've had to deal with many incidents by the Lithuanians saying things that are racist or inappropriate, but we've never had those problems with the WVP participants. They really bond well with everyone and we're a very diverse company."

Participants' self-perceptions matched the employers' perceptions of the participants. The majority of participants (75%) reported satisfaction with their overall work and life experiences gained from the Program. Participants most often reported the following Program benefits: stronger work ethic, greater self-confidence and assertiveness, living life independently, budgeting, and greater cross-cultural understanding and adaptability.

- *My life has had a major turnaround in the past year due to coming to the USA, for better.* – Pittsburgh
- *I am delighted I applied for the WVP. I do not have any regrets whatsoever. I love everything I am doing and have achieved so far in my life—it has been a life-changing experience for the better.* – Boston

With regard to increasing job skills the GMU team looked, as it had in the past, to salary growth. An October 2007 study on wage increases among participants in Groups 17–20 found increases ranging from 13% (for Group 20 that had just arrived the previous month!) to 26%. They reported an average salary increase of 15% (after an average 15 months in the U.S). These rates were comparable to wage increase rates for previous groups in the U.S. offered a similar amount of time.

11.1.2 Participants' Personal Growth and Development

When the participants in Groups 17–20 were asked specifically about cross-community relations, participants had generally positive comments. Several participants (both Catholics and Protestants) said they had not been raised with hatred or bitterness, but nevertheless expressed they had "broadened their horizons." In fact, most participants said they felt their experience in the U.S. had broadened their perspectives and that they greatly appreciated working with and seeing people from so many cultures, including the cross-community and cross-border nature of the WVP. One participant commented about cross-community relations and differences by saying, "The Program has opened up people's eyes to see that it's such a little thing to fight about."

Several people said they learned the most about cross-community relations while in Belfast when they trained and lived together for six weeks during pre-departure. One participant from the South said, "I learned things when in Belfast. I really never thought about that stuff before, but I learned about cultural differences. I still remember the [city] tour and that we had British trainers."

The areas of personal growth and development cited by participants in Groups 17–20 are in fact similar to those reported by participants in previous years. We summarize some salient areas and report some exemplary comments:

- More confidence – All participants said they had gained more confidence because they learned to live on their own and succeed at their jobs. For example, *I've been so surprised at how much responsibility they've given me. It's great they [my supervisors] have so much confidence in me. It's given me more confidence.*

- Living independently – As stated above, participants gained confidence from their work experience and from learning to live independently. This is especially true for the participants who had never lived on their own before. *It has made me a stronger more independent person than I was two years ago. Taking part in the Program has been the best time in my life.*
- Responsibility – Several participants said they felt they had taken more responsibility for their lives and future. For example, one said, *I messed up on my job, being late and other stuff and got suspended [put on probation], but they've given me another chance and I've straightened up. I'm learning to take care of myself.*
- Customer service skills – Most participants said they have learned customer service skills, especially how to keep people happy and how to handle problems. *I have recognized the importance of good customer service skills. Instead of just doing the minimum, I have seen how a bit of consideration for the customer can reap benefits to the company and myself.* Several also said the new skills they are learning on their jobs have helped them to better deal with situations that arise in their personal lives, such as how to live with different people.
- Persistence – Several participants said they are more persistent in achieving their goals. For example, one participant is on her third job. The staff had some doubts as to whether she would make it in the U.S., especially after her second job change. However, due to her persistence (as described by both the participant and the staff), she is succeeding in her current position (as reported by the participant, staff, and employer).
- Goals and options – Several participants reported they are more focused about their goals and see more options in life and work than they had seen before.
- Living and working in a diverse society – Almost all participants said they had learned more about culture and to appreciate cultural diversity by having had positive experiences working with and meeting people from different cultures. *I enjoy working so much with people from all over the world, and I like hearing their languages, and it really makes my experience here so much richer.*
- Learning new ways to socialize – Several participants said they have learned how to socialize in new ways beyond just drinking in pubs. For example, one participant said, *I've learned that Americans really work hard, and that because they work so hard, they really make the most of their time off. I've learned from them to have fun through a greater variety of activities and not just drink and sleep on the weekends.* Another said, *I used to be in the pub all the time. Not anymore. I go out sometimes, but I also stay home and rent movies and do other things.*
- Saving money – Several participants said they have learned to save money, both from not drinking as much and because they were making enough money and were motivated to save money, especially so they could travel. In fact, some people worked overtime to save more money for travel and several people had already traveled to other cities on their own (alone or with other participants) and greatly appreciated this opportunity to see so many places and meet different people.

Almost all participants said they believed their WVP experience would open up new opportunities for them back home. For example, one participant who worked for the Hilton said, "I never would have gotten hired at the Hilton in Dublin because I'm from a small farming town on the border. People think we're backward. There's a lot of prejudice. But now, after working in the U.S., I will have greater opportunities."

It is difficult to speculate why the big differences in adaptation or success expected between Groups 10–16 and 17–20, given the different demographic profiles, did not occur. One explanation was that the effect of the difference was simply overestimated in the first place. Another explana-

tion could be that over the years the Program improved steadily in all its major aspects—from participant selection/screening and PDT on the Island to hub staff support and Program administration in the U.S. These improvements offset the effects of potentially more problematic groups of participants in Phase 3.

By August 2008, as the last participants entered their final two months in the U.S. and the Walsh Visa Program looked to its sunset on 30 September, it could be said that all the problems of the first chaotic year had been effectively dealt with and the Program was now, at least so far as its once highly problematic "day-to-day" running was concerned, finely tuned, and fully integrated. There was the sense (expressed by several stakeholders on the Island and in the hubs) that the Program was running so smoothly it was a shame it had to end.

This valedictory sentiment, however widely expressed, did not mean that some fundamental tensions (as opposed to problems in the daily workings of the Program) had all been equally resolved.

12. CONCLUSIONS: ASSESSING THE PROGRAM

Between 2000 and 2008, 1,036 young people from Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland came to the U.S. to live and work: 610 sent by DEL and 426 by FAS.[19] This was far short of the original number of Q-2 visas created and set aside by the legislation—4,000 per year for three years. No one we spoke knew for sure where that larger number came from. It was obvious to Irish and Northern Irish officials from the start that the number was wildly unrealistic (whether or not they communicated this at the start to their American interlocutors). This became obvious to the U.S. side very early on, as the chaotic first year unfolded. In assessing the Program, several evaluators noted that objective measures for success were not adequately specified at inception, particularly at the level of the individual participant, and this made a summative (outcome-oriented) Program assessment difficult. In one sense "defining success" became an ongoing discussion among the principal stakeholders. Was it length of time in the U.S.? Job advancement? Hours spent in Conflict Resolution trainings? Attitudinal changes toward tolerance and coexistence? Reaching the truly disadvantaged? The balance of Protestants and Catholics attracted to and served by the Program? Participant overall satisfaction? What Program alumni did upon returning home? As the Program evolved, all of these objectives were discussed and some were even measured—some more confidently than others, not surprisingly.

12.1 THE PROTESTANT/CATHOLIC DIVIDE

The goal set at the planning and design phase was 50-50 Catholic and Protestant split from NI. This was not achieved; DEL had difficulty recruiting Protestants. Logicon/NGC by design did not collect data on the religion of participants, and the final FAS and DEL commissioned Fitzpatrick report is silent on the matter. The 2002 DTZ Pieda assessment indicated a 21% / 79% split between Protestants and Catholics in PDT in Phase 1. DEL data showed this rising to 27% / 73% in Phases 2 and 3—almost a 30% increase, representing the concerted effort made by DEL to improve these numbers. Although, according to the NI Labour Force Survey Religion Report (NISRA) in 2000, Catholics were more likely to be unemployed than Protestants (56% vs. 44%) and, therefore, more likely to be disadvantaged, In addition, Catholics, compared to Protestants, often had long and enduring ties to the U.S. and would be more likely to go and feel comfortable there. Implicit in this is also the widely held perception in NI that many Protestants (especially from the working class) felt they had more to lose from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and would be more hostile to it, and thus perhaps (in some individual cases) more likely to play an active role as a spoiler. Several stakeholders told us some version of the following: If only one young person, Catholic or Protestant, does not join a Republican or Loyalist paramilitary who otherwise would have, the Program will have achieved its goal. In

[19]Only Category 1 participants are considered here. Over the course of the Program their average length of stay in the U.S. was just over 85 weeks.

[20]Major extramural evaluations were conducted by DTZ Pieda Consulting (2002), Fitzpatrick and Associates (2008), Optimum (2000 and 2003), and GMU (2001 onwards). The main stakeholders, NGC, FAS, and DEL also conducted Program assessments.

[21]It is worth reiterating that DEL officials worked very hard at achieving the desired balance. It is also worth citing at some length the remarks of a senior DEL administrator a decade after the Program began: "We had difficulty, particularly in the early days, in attracting applications proportionate to the Protestant community ratio. The old adage that Protestants look east (Britain) and Catholics look west (USA) is difficult to deny. Given that the programme stems from the peace process and Bill Clinton (Dublin visit et al.) it is not hard to see why there might be a misconception amongst the Protestant community that this was a programme targeted at the Catholic community. We in DEL worked hard to try and overcome this with only limited success. We ensured that our training centres were in 'neutral' venues - that's why we dropped Springvale and used only city-centre locations in Belfast. I met with Protestant community representatives. We put ads in local papers in areas of high Protestant populations. I also e-mailed Protestant community groups in East Belfast as did, I believe, [the NGC Belfast Office staff member]… (with our blessing and best wishes) but with very little to show for it. Given that we were looking at the 21+ age group there are very few groups working with this cohort. Most community groups target young people i.e. teenagers."

his interview Rep. Walsh voiced this Program goal explicitly: "In Ireland, we saw how young people were vulnerable to joining paramilitaries because their buddies did. So [in conceiving the Program] we talked about combining exchanges of ideas, have them see American values, what it's like where no one cares about your religion." Later, he described participants as "kids taken out as fodder for paramilitaries."[22] These sentiments were strongly felt by some. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental of assessment methodology that counterfactuals are hard things to measure.

12.2 GOALS OF THE LEGISLATION REVISITED

There are, of course, the goals specified in the legislation itself:

- Establish a cultural training program for disadvantaged individuals to assist the Irish Peace Process
- Develop participant job skills
- Develop participant conflict resolution abilities
- Ensure participants return home better able to contribute economic regeneration
- Promote cross-community and cross-border initiatives
- Build grassroots support for long-term peace and coexistence

As we noted earlier, some of these macro-level ("lofty") goals (e.g., assisting the Peace Process; building grassroots support for coexistence) are inherently difficult to measure with individual-level data. The economies of NI and ROI were growing ("regenerating") throughout the duration of the WVP. Attempting to disaggregate the contribution of 1,036 individuals to these large-scale trends is daunting. At the very least it necessitates a robust system for tracking alumni (e.g., What are they doing 3, 6, 12 months after their return?).

12.2.1 Repatriation and Alumni Tracking

The initial requirement for the PA clearly included repatriation activities and follow-up with participants after they returned home, both to help participants transition home successfully and to ascertain whether they became gainfully employed (or were in education/training) when they returned since this was one of the Program goals. The implementing partners had trouble agreeing on roles and responsibilities for these activities. For example, the first PAs believed they were responsible only for activities in the U.S. and that FAS and DEL were responsible once participants returned home. On the other hand, FAS and DEL saw their responsibilities primarily as the typical support normally provided to unemployed people. As such, repatriation support was absent in Phase 1, introduced in Phase 2, and increased substantially in Phase 3.

This changed when the third PA, having worked to stabilize the Program in Phase 2, was able to turn to other matters in Phase 3 (e.g., an invigorated commitment to conflict resolution). While it was open and staffed in 2005–2006, the NGC Belfast office collected information about alumni. After it closed, the hubs assumed the responsibility. To date, the Program has attempted to contact alumni who returned home voluntarily after April 30, 2005 (Groups 10–20).

As of April 2008, status has been determined for a total of 147 (see Figure 12-1):

- 104 (70%) were employed (full or part-time) by six months
- 16 (11%) were still seeking employment or not yet employed by six months
- 10 (7%) were enrolled in education or training programs by six months
- 3 (2%) were traveling by six months
- 14 (10%) unable to contact or status unknown by six months.
- 69% responded that the Program was helpful for their careers, 3% responded it was not helpful, and responses were not available for 27%.

These numbers differ significantly from those presented in the Fitzpatrick report. Out of 78 Program alumni from Groups 6–20 interviewed in that report, about 55% reported they were employed or in school. Perhaps the difference is partly accounted for by the fact that the NGC sampled only those who left voluntarily (a measure of suc-

[22]Interview conducted 23 April 2008.

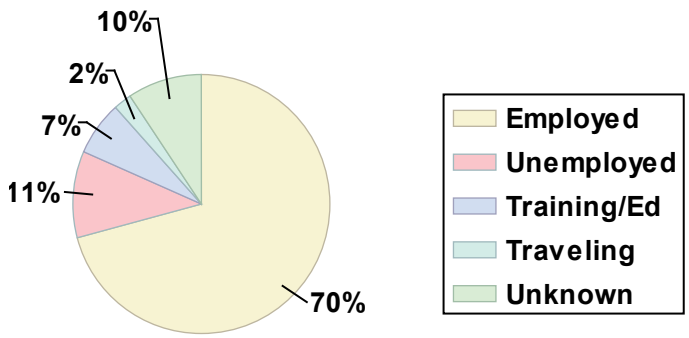

Figure 12-1. WVP Alumni Status

cess?) and Fitzpatrick's sample is a mixture of voluntary and involuntary returners. In any event, we agree with the Fitzpatrick conclusion: That if one begins with a "zero percent" employment figure, then 55% employed (much less the 77% reported by NGC) looks successful indeed.

12.2.2 Cross-Community and Cross-Border Initiatives

Increased cross-community and cross-border initiatives were featured in the legislation. Based in NI, DEL's mandate was shaped by the WVP's explicit concern with recruitment of participants from both communities. DEL struggled to attract Protestants to the Program, but also (as one DEL official explained) had to face a traditional reluctance on the part of some in the Catholic (or nationalist) community to have much to do with what they saw as a "British" state bureaucracy. (He thought this affected DEL's ability to reach returned Catholic participants especially.) At the operational level, Catholic and Protestant trainers and facilitators worked side by side; most importantly, in Group 12 and then in Groups 17–20, mixed training brought people from the North and South together and brought some individuals from the South to NI and Belfast for the first time in their lives.

FAS and DEL had an established working relationship prior to the WVP (as in the Wider Horizons Program), but officials from both agencies told us that their relationship had intensified over the seven years. A FAS official remarked, "Programs like Walsh have enabled this to happen." Said a DEL official "The partnership with FAS was good but then was cemented—[the WVP] was the first really big program that FAS and DEL used to work together."

12.2.3 "Conflict Resolution Abilities"

The Conflict Resolution training component of the WVP was not formally implemented until Phase 2. Even then, it was probably not at the level Rep. Walsh had envisioned and what the PA and its subcontractors responsible for developing the training had planned. Originally, the training was to include a focus on the cross-community conflicts that had kept Northern Ireland in the grip of violence for more then 30 years. However, it was also planned that the training would initially focus on interpersonal conflict resolution skills that would help participants deal with conflicts in the workplace and with housemates. The focus on cross-community relations was planned to occur as part of the follow-on phase after the participants had been in the U.S. for a year or more.

As noted earlier, when the plan was first introduced to FAS and DEL, they objected to any focus on The Troubles. Their objection stemmed from their perception that Americans might not be best suited to address these issues and that participants would not be open to such training. This was especially true for DEL, though FAS supported them entirely. A FAS official explained the reluctance to turn conflict resolution over to trainers from the U.S., however well intentioned they were: "Catholic and Protestant communities came together to talk about mutual understanding but weren't coming together to resolve anything. Reconciliation was a sensitive issue—people from divided communities didn't want it." A DEL official commented frankly that conflict resolution "wasn't at

the top of the list that [we] were looking for, but rather [just] bringing groups together." He continued, "there is always a danger of creating more problems" adding, "I grew up on a diet of conflict resolution."

Thus, the Conflict Resolution training component was renamed Personal and Professional Development (PPD). It was not until Phase 3 that FAS and DEL, with urging by the PA, agreed to change the focus from PPD to conflict resolution, including cross-community relations. In fact, cross-community relations was a training topic in PDT during Phase 3, led (significantly) by a local NI trainer. The participants seemed to appreciate the PDT training and were open to such training once resident in the U.S. Sadly, the focus on this came too late, diminishing the potential positive impact of cross-community training in the WVP.

12.2.4 Individual Change, Sectarianism, and Tolerance

Sectarian incidents were few and far between throughout the life of the Program, reported FAS and DEL trainers, hub staff, and participants themselves. Conflicts were typical conflicts, between housemates for example, not cross-community. Even people from NI and ROI seemed a bit surprised that it wasn't an issue. One Phase 1 NGC Belfast staffer said, "I never heard anything about cross-community stuff. So at that level, it was successful. The stress of the Program, new place, new job, etc. became the focal point rather than cross-community stuff".

In interviews conducted by GMU with employers in 2007, most employers seemed unaware of the cross-community aspects of the Program. However, they also remarked that there had been no problems at work and that the participants seem to get along with everyone of all cultures. One employer at an Irish bar in Pittsburgh said he had employed a Catholic and a Protestant participant. The employer said both were benefiting from the cross-community aspects of the Program, especially the Protestant since he works in an Irish bar where he sometimes has to confront people who hold strongly pro-Irish-Catholic political views. "He has taken these situations as an opportunity to listen and learn from others and to help educate others by sharing his own experiences and perspectives," he said "Everyone is benefiting by his working here."

GMU collected a wealth of anecdotal evidence from participants supporting the idea that personal change in this direction had occurred. There were many friendships and even a few cross-community marriages. This was, as Rep. Walsh hoped and the legislation intended, a clear benefit from living and working in a diverse and multiethnic United States. Nevertheless, one should not gloss over American issues with race or ethnicity. As Andrew Wilson argues in his review of the early years of the WVP, the assumption of WVP advocates about the benefits of exposure to life in the multiethnic and multiracial U.S. "obviously gave little consideration to the possibility that exposure to some aspects of American society, particularly the ingrained racism, might be detrimental to some participants" (Wilson 2001:254). A GMU evaluator recalls a PGH participant expressing shock at the racist comments they heard by coworkers. He was not the only one.

13. LESSONS LEARNED

The major lessons learned occurred as stakeholders responded to the challenges of undertaking such an ambitious and complex Program, from creating an utterly new visa type to preparing a diverse population for living and working in the U.S.

Certainly, a first and foremost lesson learned is for all stakeholders to agree on the Program's objectives from the beginning. FAS and DEL were employment and job skills agencies and brought those strengths to the table. They were not (for reasons mentioned earlier) as committed to conflict resolution as Rep. Walsh was. DOS and INS/DHS had their own agendas (or "equities" as they are known in the interagency world of Washington, DC). NGC was tasked with negotiating all of them to make the Program work on a daily basis.

Ambiguities existed; the target population was unclear. Despite the amount of time spent in Program planning and design, there was no clear mission statement. Despite the obvious importance of post-return tracking of participants to assess success (even at the individual level), this was never equally acknowledged, or taken on, by all the stakeholders.

It is important to expect communication and collaboration problems resulting from the different cultures (national and organizational) of such a diverse group of stakeholders, including the principals (FAS, DEL, DOS, INS/DHS, and NGC) and others (hubs and university partners)—and of course the diversity of participants.[23] Both FAS and DEL and some of the hubs pointed often to the corporate style of NGC's program management and administration. (FAS and DEL pointed out to us, usually with bemusement, some differences between their styles as well.) NGC, in turn, struggled with the organizational cultures of FAS and DEL and some of the hubs, citing the lack of adequate systems in place, insufficient budget management capabilities, and expansion of social service support parameters. In the end, these differences were accommodated—mutual senses of humor helped—but the friction they caused never disappeared entirely and at times led to some real contention and programmatic inefficiencies.

The importance of attention to cultural matters leads to the suggestion that in programs like this using specialists with local knowledge and expertise (both in conflict generally and in that conflict particularly) is recommended.

Other, more specific lessons may be drawn:

- If a Program component is regarded as key (conflict resolution?), consider making it mandatory for participants; it is so in the Wider Horizons program, for example.
- Consider the timing of such programs in terms of their full benefit or impact. Even when the WVP began, the economy in the South was growing and the North's starting to come to life. One FAS official maintained the Program came "too late" for full benefit to the overall Peace Process. Positive change was already occurring.
- Think through basic elements—numbers, eligibility, screening, and training regimes—carefully and proactively, rather than in constant reaction to challenge and crisis.
- Think about assessment matters—objectives, targets, goals, and metrics—in the planning and design phase, not after the program has substantially begun.

In considering all the lessons that were learned in the course of the Program, perhaps now it is clear why the quip that began this work, the description of the WVP as being "like a bumblebee: it flew but no one quite knew how," resonates with so many involved in it. The scope and ambition of the Program and its uniqueness, coupled with the inexperience of all the stakeholders in mounting and managing anything quite like it, has made its persistence and accomplishments noteworthy, and called strongly for "the telling of the story."

There is one final area to be looked into. Should the Walsh Visa Program remain unique, a one-time experiment in peace building? Looking ahead, can it serve as a model for other such programs?

Could the WVP serve as a model for other Pro-

[23]For FAS and DEL civil servants, the "diversity" brought by many participants was sometimes related to social class.

grams with similar goals? This is a question we put to many of the people we interviewed for this work, American and Irish. Their responses were mixed. It should be noted that the possibility of wider application was recognized at the Program's beginning. In an article published in the Denver Post (23 April 2000), the reporter writes that "Department of State overseers" contend "it's too early to tell whether the new Q class visas later will be offered in Balkan, Middle Eastern, and African troublespots." He went–to quote the then- U.S. consul general in Belfast who says such a development was "not beyond the realm of possibility…. Let's see how this works. We are very much at the beginning of the Program."

Rep. Walsh is a strong believer in wider applicability. A press release from his office (30 January 2006) calls for the "replication" of the WVP: "Not only can the Program extend peace and stability in other regions of the world through new opportunities created, it can improve foreign relations and provide new insight for others into America's diverse culture and democratic heritage." Walsh's legislative assistant told us that he had followed up by writing Secretary of State Rice promoting the idea of duplicating the Program. He received an "acknowledgment but no further action." Specific countries mentioned to us were Liberia, Rwanda, Serbia, Cyprus, East Timor, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

A senior FAS administrator enthusiastically called for the U.S. to create a generic "peace visa" modeled on the WVP. A DOS desk officer significantly involved in the earliest (and stormiest) days of the Program told us that she had more recently served in Moldova, "where female trafficking was a huge problem—[she]… could envision a program to help women develop skills that they could bring back home in order to support themselves." Some hub managers have also put forth the idea of a similar program elsewhere. So support is there.

But opinions were mixed. Several noted the fact that language was not a major impediment to the adaptation of the participants and their gaining employment. This might not be the case for participants from other language communities. A former consul general in Belfast pointed out that participants would be attracted to returning home so long as the economy there continued to grow and violence was more or less over. Returning might not be so attractive if their home economies were weak and the conflict was still active. These are certainly concerns at the top of any DHS official's list. (The problem of overstays was the central one with respect to INS/DHS's "equities" in the Program.)[24] A supportive and committed "diaspora" is a plus, as are U.S.-based trainers and staff knowledgeable about the home cultures and conflicts of the participants—roles particularly well filled by the BOS and PGH hubs.

There is of course a final requirement: Political will and the willingness to commit resources. The Fitzpatrick report concluded that the WVP ultimately delivered value for money for the Northern Irish and Irish governments, but that costs to the U.S. were very high. Rep. Walsh might respond that costs are relative, and the benefit to the U.S. (as in foreign relations) outweigh the monetary costs. This last question is, at any rate, beyond the scope of this work.

[24] A senior DHS official long involved with the Program said: "My feeling is there were fewer overstays compared with other visa categories because the Program put pressure on the participants to comply with the rules."

APPENDIX 1: Walsh Visa Program Status as of September 30, 2008

Hub/ Agency		Arrivals	Departures	Transfers		Program Population 9/30/2008
				In	Out	
BOS	DEL	140	146	6	0	**0**
	FAS	140	143	5	2	**0**
	Hub Total	280	289	11	0	**0**
COS	DEL	116	114	0	2	**0**
	FAS	31	28	0	3	**0**
	Hub Total	147	142	0	5	**0**
PIT	DEL	156	156	1	1	**0**
	FAS	135	134	2	3	**0**
	Hub Total	291	290	3	4	**0**
SYR	DEL	29	29	0	0	**0**
	FAS	28	28	0	0	**0**
	Hub Total	57	57	0	0	**0**
NCR	DEL	169	165	2	6	**0**
	FAS	92	93	5	4	**0**
	Hub Total	261	258	7	10	**0**
CAT I Totals		1036	1036	21	21	**0**

COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	Arrivals	Departures	Transfers		Program Population 9/30/2008
			In	Out	
NORTH	43	43	0	0	**0**
SOUTH	0	0	0	0	**0**
Hub Total	43	43	0	0	**0**
NORTH	19	19	0	0	**0**
SOUTH	0	0	0	0	**0**
Hub Total	19	19	0	0	**0**
NORTH	2	2	0	0	**0**
SOUTH	1	1	0	0	**0**
Hub Total	3	3	0	0	**0**
NORTH	4	5	1	0	**0**
SOUTH	0	0	0	0	**0**
Hub Total	4	5	1	0	**0**
NORTH	199	198	0	1	**0**
SOUTH	5	5	0	0	**0**
Hub Total	204	203	0	1	**0**
CAT II Totals	273	273	1	1	**0**

CAT I	Arrivals	Departures	Current Population
DEL	610	610	0
FAS	426	426	0
TOTAL	**1036**	**1036**	**0**

CAT II	Arrivals	Departures	Current Population
NORTH	267	267	0
SOUTH	3	3	0
TOTAL	**273**	**273**	**0**

Combined Totals CAT 1 & Cat 2	Program Population 10/1/1999	Arrivals	Departures	Transfers		Program Population 6/30/2008
				In	Out	
	0	1309	1309	21	21	14

APPENDIX 2: Walsh Visa Program Legacy Report List of Interviewees

Name	Organization
Arbuthnot, Adrian	DEL
Armer, Mike	NGC
Attalah, Beverly	AED, Washington, DC
Bailie, Sam	DEL
Balcom, Kirk	NGC
Bonnes, Colin	North City Training
Bugbee, Gordon	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Byrne, Ann Marie	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Cascio, Chuck	NGC
Clark, Cindy	Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs
Colella, Anthony	Syracuse Hub
Comfrey, Peggy	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Conway, Eileen	NGC, Colorado Springs
Curry, Erin	NGC, Belfast
Curry, Lorna	FAS
Deevy, Lena	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Drumm, Tim	Office of Rep. Walsh
Ferry, Frances	FAS
Flood, Cora	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Frederickson, Dave	NGC
Fyda, Karen	NGC
Girard, Joanne	NGC
Haire, Drew	DEL
Hanna, Grainne	NGC, Belfast
Harte, Oliver	FAS
Hennessy, Joan	FAS
Hernandez, Efren	DHS
Hoexter, Marcia	NGC
Houston, Norm	Northern Ireland Bureau
Hunter, Tom	DEL
Keown, Thomas	Irish Immigration Center, Boston
Kerber, Frank	DOS
Lamb, Jim	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
Manring, Nick	DOS
McAuley, Patricia	DEL
McGarry, Sean	DEL
McGuigan, Michael	DEL
Miller, Dave	FAS
Montgomery, Paul	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
Nelson-Douvelis, Pat	DOS

Name	Organization
Pasini, Rebecca	U.S. Consulate, Belfast
Powell, Robert	NGC
Ramdin, Natasha	U.S. Consulate, Belfast
Redmond, Catherine	U.S. Consulate, Belfast
Rowan, Dennis	FAS
Shine, Kevin	NGC, Belfast
Simmons, John	Formerly of Rep. Walsh's office
Stayduhar, Teresa	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
Streubner, Joan	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
Taylor, Jim	Syracuse Hub
Tekampe, Bob	NGC
Tierney, Rob	Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
Toner, Brendan	DEL
Walsh, Rep.	U.S. Congress
Welch, Fred	NGC
Wetzel, Brooke	NGC
Whisler, Elizabeth	NGC, Belfast
Whitaker, Ron	NGC
Young, Dan	Syracuse Hub
Zehnder, Will	DOS

PUBLIC LAW **105-319** [H.R. 4293]
OCT. 30, 1998
IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM ACT OF 1998

105 P.L. 319; 112 Stat. 3013; 1998 Enacted H.R. 4293; 105 Enacted H.R. 4293

BILL TRACKING REPORT: 105 Bill Tracking H.R. 4293
FULL TEXT VERSION(S) OF BILL: 105 H.R. 4293
CIS LEGIS. HISTORY DOCUMENT: 105 CIS Legis. Hist. P.L. 319

An Act To establish a cultural training program for disadvantaged individuals to assist the Irish peace process.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

[*1] SECTION 1. <8 USC 1101 note> SHORT TITLE.
This Act may be cited as the "Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998".
[*2] SEC. 2. <8 USC 1101 note> IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM.

(a) Purpose.—

(1) In general.—The Secretary of State and the Attorney General shall establish a program to allow young people from disadvantaged areas of designated counties suffering from sectarian violence and high structural unemployment to enter the United States for the purpose of developing job skills and conflict resolution abilities in a diverse, cooperative, peaceful, and prosperous environment, so that those young people can return to their homes better able to contribute toward economic regeneration and the Irish peace process. The program shall promote cross-community and cross-border initiatives to build grassroots support for long-term peaceful coexistence. The Secretary of State and the Attorney General shall cooperate with nongovernmental organizations to assist those admitted to participate fully in the economic, social, and cultural life of the United States.

(2) Scope and duration of program.—

(A) In general.—The program under paragraph (1) shall provide for the admission of not more than 4,000 aliens under section 101(a)(15)(Q)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (including spouses and minor children) in each of 3 consecutive program years.

(B) Offset in number of h-2b nonimmigrant admissions allowed.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for each alien so admitted in a fiscal year, the numerical limitation specified under section 214(g)(1)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act shall be reduced by 1 for that fiscal year or the subsequent fiscal year.

(3) Records and report.—The Immigration and Naturalization Service shall maintain records of the nonimmigrant status and place of residence of each alien admitted under the program. Not later than 120 days after the end of the third program year and for the 3 subsequent years, the

[**3014] Immigration and Naturalization Service shall compile and submit to the Congress a report on the number of aliens admitted with nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(Q)(ii) who have overstayed their visas.

(4) Designated counties defined.—For the purposes of this Act, the term "designated counties" means the six counties of Northern Ireland and the counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal within the Republic of Ireland.

(b) Temporary Nonimmigrant Visa.--

(1) In general.—Section 101(a)(15)(Q) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(Q)) is amended--

(A) by inserting "(i)" after "(Q)"; and

(B) by inserting after the semicolon at the end the following: "or (ii)(I) an alien 35 years of age or younger having a residence in Northern Ireland, or the counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal within the Republic of Ireland, which the alien has no intention of abandoning who is coming temporarily (for a period not to exceed 36 months) to the United States as a participant in a cultural and training program approved by the Secretary of State and the Attorney General under section 2(a) of the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 for the purpose of providing practical training, employment, and the experience of coexistence and conflict resolution in a diverse society, and (II) the alien spouse and minor children of any such alien if accompanying the alien or following to join the alien;".

(c) Authorization of Appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section. Amounts appropriated pursuant to this subsection are authorized to be available until expended.

(d) Sunset.--

(1) Effective October 1, 2005, the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 is repealed.

A [**3015] (2) Effective October 1, 2005, section 101(a)(15)(Q) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(Q)) is amended--

(A) by striking "or" at the end of clause (i);

(B) by striking "(i)" after "(Q)"; and

(C) by striking clause (ii).

PUBLIC LAW **107-234** [H.R. 4558]
OCT. 04, 2002
[IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM EXTENSION]

107 P.L. 234; 116 Stat. 1481; 2002 Enacted H.R. 4558; 107 Enacted H.R. 4558

BILL TRACKING REPORT: 107 Bill Tracking H.R. 4558
FULL TEXT VERSION(S) OF BILL: 107 H.R. 4558
CIS LEGIS. HISTORY DOCUMENT: 107 P.L. CIS Legis. Hist. P.L. 234

An Act To extend the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

[*1] SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM.

Section 2 of the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) is amended--

(1) in subsection (a)(2)(A) by striking "3" and inserting "4";

(2) in subsection (a)(3) by striking "3" and inserting "4";

(3) in subsection (d)(1) by striking "2005," and inserting "2006,"; and

(4) in subsection (d)(2) by striking "2005," and inserting "2006,".

PUBLIC LAW 108-449 [H.R. 2655]
DEC. 10, 2004
[IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM EXTENSION AND REVISION]

108 P.L. 449; 118 Stat. 3469; 2004 Enacted H.R. 2655; 108 Enacted H.R. 2655

BILL TRACKING REPORT: 108 Bill Tracking H.R. 2655
FULL TEXT VERSION(S) OF BILL: 108 H.R. 2655
CIS LEGIS. HISTORY DOCUMENT: 108 CIS Legis. Hist. P.L. 449

An Act To amend and extend the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

[*1] SECTION 1. AMENDMENT AND EXTENSION OF IRISH PEACE PROCESS CULTURAL AND TRAINING PROGRAM.

(a) Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act.--

(1) Program participant requirements.—Section 2(a) of the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(5) Program participant requirements.—An alien entering the United States as a participant in the program shall satisfy the following requirements:

"(A) The alien shall be a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland.

"(B) The alien shall be between 21 and 35 years of age on the date of departure for the United States.

"© The alien shall have resided continuously in a designated county for not less than 18 months before such date.

"(D) The alien shall have been continuously unemployed for not less than 12 months before such date.

"(E) The alien may not have a degree from an institution of higher education.".

(2) Extension of program.—Section 2 of the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) is amended--

(A) in subsection (a)(3), by striking "the third program year and for the 4 subsequent years," and inserting "each program year,"; and

(B) < 8 USC 1101> by amending subsection (d) to read as follows:

"(d) Sunset.—

"(1) Effective October 1, 2008, the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 is repealed.

"(2) Effective October 1, 2008, section 101(a)(15)(Q) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(Q)) is amended--

"(A) by striking 'or' at the end of clause (i);

"(B) by striking '(i)' after '(Q)'; and

"(C) by striking clause (ii).".

[**3470] (3) Cost-sharing.—Section 2 of the Irish

Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note), as amended by paragraph (2), is further amended--

(A) < 8 USC 1101> by redesignating subsections (c) and (d) as subsections (d) and (e), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subsection (b), the following new subsection:

"(c) Cost-sharing.—The Secretary of State shall verify that the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland continue to pay a reasonable share of the costs of the administration of the cultural and training programs carried out pursuant to this Act.".

(4) Technical amendments.—The Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) is amended—

(A) by striking "Attorney General" each place such term appears and inserting "Secretary of Homeland Security"; and

(B) by striking "Immigration and Naturalization Service" each place such term appears and inserting "Department of Homeland Security".

(b) Immigration and Nationality Act.--

(1) Requirements for nonimmigrant status.—Section 101(a)(15)(Q) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(Q)) is amended--

(A) by striking "Attorney General" each place such term appears and inserting "Secretary of Homeland Security"; and

(B) in clause (ii)(I)--

(i) by striking "35 years of age or younger having a residence" and inserting "citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, 21 to 35 years of age, unemployed for not less than 12 months, and having a residence for not less than 18 months"; and

(ii) by striking "36 months)" and inserting "24 months)".

(2) Foreign residence requirement.—Section 212 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182) is amended--

(A) by redesignating the subsection (p) as added by section 1505(f) of Public Law 106-386 (114 Stat. 1526) as subsection (s); and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

"(t)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), no person admitted under section 101(a)(15)(Q)(ii)(I), or acquiring such status after admission, shall be eligible to apply for nonimmigrant status, an immigrant visa, or permanent residence under this Act until it is established that such person has resided and been physically present in the person's country of nationality or last residence for an aggregate of at least 2 years following departure from the United States.

"(2) The Secretary of Homeland Security may waive the requirement of such 2-year foreign residence abroad if the Secretary determines that--

"(A) departure from the United States would impose exceptional hardship upon the alien's spouse or child (if such spouse or child is a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence); or

[**3471] "(B) the admission of the alien is in the public interest or the national interest of the United States.".

APPENDIX 4: Federal Register Citations for the Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Federal Regulations

- **Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Interim Rule for Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs and Bureau of Consular Affairs (March 17, 2000)**

  Codified at 22 CFR Part 41, 139

  Federal Register Volume 65, No. 53 pages 14,764-14,768

- **Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Interim Rule for Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service (March 17, 2000)**

  Codified at 8 CFR Part 212, 214, 248 and 274a

  Federal Register Volume 65, No. 53, pages 14,774-14,780

- **Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Interim Rule for Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs and Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs**

  (October 16, 2001) Codified at 22 CFR Part 41, 139

  Federal Register Volume 66, No. 200, pages 52,500-52,506

APPENDIX 5: Sample of Walsh Visa Program Employers

Washington, DC	Boston	Pittsburgh	Syracuse
Melwood	The Briar Group	Arimoto Design and Woodworking	Cable Express
HMSHost	Gentle Giant Moving Company	CardWorks Servicing, Credit Collections	Coleman's Irish Pub
Bank Fund Staff, World Bank Credit Union	Bright Horizons Family Solutions	Cauley Detective Agency	Elmcrest Children's Center
Atlantic List Company	Brian Moore International Tours	Flynn Construction	Friends of L'Arche
AIMCO Property Management	Beaverbrook STEP Inc., Supported Living	Integracare	Kitty Hoynes
NRI Staffing	BT Conferencing	Mt. Lebanon Office Equipment	L & J.G. Stickley Furniture
EU Services	Corcoran Jennison Management	KCRS Inc.	Ramada Inn
Hyatt Hotels	Hilton Hotels	Westin Convention Center	St. Joseph's Hospital
Omni Shoreham	Home Depot	Mellon Bank	Swift Transportation
FED EX/Kinkos	Longwood Security Services Inc	UPMC, Passavent Hospital	Syracuse Label
Jurys Doyle Hotel Group	Hotel @ MIT	Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle	The Boys and Girls Club
Marriott Hotels	Roche Bros. Grocery Store	South Hills Movers, Inc	The Boys and Girls Club
Metrocall	Investors Bank & Trust	PNC Bank	The Marx Hotel
Hilton Hotels Corporation	Doubletree Guest Suites	ProKnitwear, Sportswear Manufacturing	Time Warner Cable
Mid Atlantic Federal Credit Union	U.S. Fire Prevention	Shook Roofing	Transitional Living Services