

MODULE ONE

This is the introductory module. In the content session, members discuss the qualities of an effective citizen. In the action session, they read a summary of the action sessions and they begin exploring their community by looking for assets and resources that may help them with an action project.

CONTENT SESSION: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

This session introduces members to the elements of effective citizenship. It asks members to think about what it takes to be an effective citizen. First, members read about citizenship. Then in small groups, they brainstorm the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action it takes to be an effective citizen.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 1A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Brainstorm components of effective citizenship in four areas: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action.
2. Rank and defend their opinion of the most important citizenship components in each of these four areas.
3. Explain how AmeriCorps helps members develop citizenship knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action.

Notes

Effective Citizenship

Introduction

In AmeriCorps, citizenship can mean much more than memorizing names and dates from a history book or spending a Saturday cleaning up a vacant lot. What is citizenship *really* about, and how can it help you make a real and lasting difference in your own life and the life of your community?

I. Citizenship in Our Free Society

AmeriCorps encourages its members, and indeed all of America, to embrace a renewal and expansion of the idea of citizenship. At a basic level, citizenship means voting, obeying the law, and serving on juries. On another level, it means much more. Citizenship also means:

- Becoming informed about the critical issues facing our nation and its communities.
- Making a commitment to personal responsibility for the welfare of ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.
- Getting involved at the grassroots level to solve problems and build a better future for everyone.

II. Activity

In small groups, do two tasks:

First, list as many ideas as you can in response to these four questions:

1. What does an effective citizen need to **know**? (How laws are made, etc.)
2. What **skills** does an effective citizen need? (Speaking, etc.)
3. What **attitudes** (values, dispositions, and outlooks) does an effective citizen need? (Belief that one person can make a difference, etc.)
4. What does an effective citizen need to **do**? (Vote, etc.)

Second, from the answers you have brainstormed, choose the top three answers to each question.

III. For Discussion

1. What do you think are the three most important citizenship skills? The three most important attitudes? Items of knowledge? Actions? Explain.
2. How can the AmeriCorps experience help develop citizenship knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action?
3. What do you think makes a good citizen?
4. What could AmeriCorps do to encourage good citizenship?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "Who in your opinion is an effective citizen?" (Accept various answers.)
2. Tell members that they are going to read about citizenship and think about what it takes to be an effective citizen. Distribute **Handout 1A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Citizenship in Our Free Society**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.
3. Put members in groups of four. Tell them to brainstorm answers to the four questions about citizenship in **Section II: Activity**. Each member should be responsible for recording on paper the group's answers to one question.
4. When the groups complete the brainstorm, ask them to do one more task. Have them rank in order of importance what they consider their top three answers to each question.
5. List these headings on the board: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Action. After the groups finish ranking their answers, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**. As groups report their top three answers, list them under the appropriate heading on the board.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In this first action session, members are introduced to the action sessions and they start identifying community assets and resources. First, members read and discuss an overview of the 10 action sessions. Then they read tips on finding government and non-profit agencies in the community that are concerned with AmeriCorps issue areas. Next, they are assigned to find and record contact information about these groups. In the next action session, they will report on the agencies they find.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 1B for members
- Four 3 x 5 cards for each member

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Identify and distinguish non-profit and government agencies from one another.
2. Use resources to locate community agencies working on an AmeriCorps issue area.
3. Describe various agencies working on community problems.

Notes

Introduction to the Action Sessions

Introduction

Part of the mission of AmeriCorps is to empower members to become a force for positive change in the communities of America (in other words, to become effective citizens). These 10 modules are designed to serve this purpose. Each module has two sessions. The first focuses on skills, attitudes, or knowledge helpful to effective citizens. The second session focuses on action. It will take you through a civic action project in the community. Your action project will not just help the community. It will also help you develop leadership and other citizenship skills. Below is a summary of the 10 action sessions.

I. The 10 Action Sessions

- 1: **Identify Community Resources.** Find other community agencies working on the AmeriCorps issue areas.
- 2: **Identify Problems.** Find problems in the community.
- 3: **Take an Opinion Poll.** Find out which problems the community considers most important.
- 4: **Select and Research a Problem.** Decide on a problem area that you want to focus on and research this problem.
- 5: **Analyze Policies.** Examine policies related to the problem, which members have discovered doing their research.
- 6: **Decide on Action Projects.** Break into teams and decide on the most suitable project for your team to do.
- 7: **Plan and Do the Projects.** Each team will do a project.
- 8: **Check Progress on the Projects.** Report on your progress, compare notes with other teams, and get guidance.
- 9: **Evaluate the Projects.** Reflect on what you did and how you did it.
- 10: **Spread the Word.** Tell others about your projects.

II. For Discussion

1. How do you feel about doing an action project? Why?
2. What value do you think an action project might have?
3. Which of these sessions do you think will be the most challenging? Why?

III. Activity

In this activity, you will look for community assets and resources. Divide into four groups. Each group will be assigned one AmeriCorps issue area.

You should find government and non-profit agencies in the community that work on your AmeriCorps issue area. Fill out a 3 x 5 card for each agency. Put the following information on the card in this order:

1. AmeriCorps issue area the agency focuses on.
2. Name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail, and web address of the agency.
3. Government organization or non-profit.
4. Name and job title of a contact person.
5. Short description of the agency's purpose.

Corporation for National Service
A Facilitator's Guide to Effective Citizenship Through AmeriCorps

Handout 1C

Conducting the Session

1. Inform members that each module will include an action session, which will take them through a service project in the community. Tell them that in this session they will locate other community organizations and agencies. Ask members: "What community agencies do you know about that address the AmeriCorps issue areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs?" (Accept various answers.)
2. Distribute **Handout 1B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction and Section I: The 10 Action Sessions**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have. Then hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.
3. Put members in four groups. Assign each group one of the four AmeriCorps issue areas. Ask members to read **Section III: Activity**. Distribute **Handout 1C**. This is a handout that will help them complete the activity. Answer any questions that members may have.
4. Pass out four 3 x 5 cards to each member. Tell them that each member will be responsible for filling out four cards and that groups will report their findings at the next meeting. Give the groups some time to plot their search strategies.
5. In the next action session (in Module Two), each group will present the agencies they find out about.

Effective Citizenship

Introduction

In AmeriCorps, citizenship can mean much more than memorizing names and dates from a history book or spending a Saturday cleaning up a vacant lot. What is citizenship really about, and how can it help you make a real and lasting difference in your own life and the life of your community?

I. Citizenship in Our Free Society

AmeriCorps encourages its members, and indeed all of America, to embrace a renewal and expansion of the idea of citizenship. At a basic level, citizenship means voting, obeying the law, and serving on juries. On another level, it means much more. Citizenship also means:

- Becoming informed about the critical issues facing our nation and its communities.
- Making a commitment to personal responsibility for the welfare of ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.
- Getting involved at the grassroots level to solve problems and build a better future for everyone.

II. Activity

In small groups, do two tasks:

First, list as many ideas as you can in response to these four questions:

1. What does an effective citizen need to **know**? (How laws are made, etc.)
2. What **skills** does an effective citizen need? (Speaking, etc.)
3. What **attitudes** (values, dispositions, and outlooks) does an effective citizen need? (Belief that one person can make a difference, etc.)
4. What does an effective citizen need to **do**? (Vote, etc.)

Second, from the answers you have brainstormed, choose the top three answers to each question.

III. For Discussion

1. What do you think are the three most important citizenship skills? The three most important attitudes? Items of knowledge? Actions? Explain.
2. How can the AmeriCorps experience help develop citizenship knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action?
3. What do you think makes a good citizen?
4. What could AmeriCorps do to encourage good citizenship?

Introduction to the Action Sessions

Introduction

Part of the mission of AmeriCorps is to empower members to become a force for positive change in the communities of America (in other words, to become effective citizens). These 10 modules are designed to serve this purpose. Each module has two sessions. The first focuses on skills, attitudes, or knowledge helpful to effective citizens. The second session focuses on action. It will take you through a civic action project in the community. Your action project will not just help the community. It will also help you develop leadership and other citizenship skills. Below is a summary of the 10 action sessions.

I. The 10 Action Sessions

- 1: Identify Community Resources.** Find other community agencies working on the AmeriCorps issue areas.
- 2: Identify Problems.** Find problems in the community.
- 3: Take an Opinion Poll.** Find out which problems the community considers most important.
- 4: Select and Research a Problem.** Decide on a problem area that you want to focus on and research this problem.
- 5: Analyze Policies.** Examine policies related to the problem, which members have discovered doing their research.
- 6: Decide on Action Projects.** Break into teams and decide on the most suitable project for your team to do.
- 7: Plan and Do the Projects.** Each team will do a project.
- 8: Check Progress on the Projects.** Report on your progress, compare notes with other teams, and get guidance.
- 9: Evaluate the Projects.** Reflect on what you did and how you did it.
- 10: Spread the Word.** Tell others about your projects.

II. For Discussion

1. How do you feel about doing an action project? Why?
2. What value do you think an action project might have?
3. Which of these sessions do you think will be the most challenging? Why?

III. Activity

In this activity, you will look for community assets and resources. Divide into four groups. Each group will be assigned one AmeriCorps issue area.

You should find government **and** non-profit agencies in the community that work on your AmeriCorps issue area. Fill out a 3 x 5 card for each agency. Put the following information on the card in this order:

1. AmeriCorps issue area the agency focuses on.
2. Name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail, and web address of the agency.
3. Government organization or non-profit.
4. Name and job title of a contact person.
5. Short description of the agency's purpose.

Identifying Community Resources

Two important things to remember in searching for information are:

1. **Take notes of where you search and with whom you talk.** Do this throughout your action project.
2. **Whenever you talk to someone at an organization, ask if that person knows of other similar organizations.**

For this exploration, you may not even need to leave your home. Your telephone book and a few telephone calls may provide you with the answers you need. The Internet is another source. If you don't have a connection at home, try the local library.

Telephone and telephone book. Your telephone book is a major resource. Many phone books have helpful information about community organizations in the front. The government pages (usually found in the front of the White Pages) list government offices under headings of city, county, state, and U.S. government. Look in the Yellow Pages for non-profits listed by the service they deliver. If you know the name of an organization, find it in the White Pages.

Local library. The library holds lots of information about the community, usually at the reference desk. Tell the reference librarian what you're looking for.

Internet. Many cities, counties, and non-profits have web sites. Use a search engine and track them down.

Map of the community. You may get one free from the Chamber of Commerce, Auto Club, Tourist Bureau, or City Hall.