

## CHAPTER 8:

# Cyber Tools

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*With the Internet, help is never too far away. Several Internet resources exist specifically to help national service providers. Below are three resources available online to help with recruiting AmeriCorps members, learning about innovative practices from your national service peers, and reporting AmeriCorps grant requirements.*

## Recruiting AmeriCorps Members Through the Web

AmeriCorps' new web-based recruitment and placement system—AC\*RPS—uses the power of the Internet to connect potential AmeriCorps members with AmeriCorps opportunities that best match their interests. The new system is expected to convert many more people curious about AmeriCorps into serious AmeriCorps applicants.

Now applicants can find and apply for multiple programs via the web, and they can also track the selection process. Programs can search the profile database of prospective applicants using criteria that best suits their program.

Once AmeriCorps programs register with AC\*RPS, they can list information about their program and update the information at any time. Programs with multiple sites or that support both AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can choose to post separate listings for each opportunity.

AC\*RPS was developed based on issues, ideas and suggestions articulated by hundreds of people, including AmeriCorps program staff, state commission staff, Corporation staff, and AmeriCorps members and alumni. AC\*RPS simplifies the AmeriCorps application process, strengthens customer service, and provides a more comprehensive method to promote AmeriCorps and generate interest among the growing number of people who access the web. AC\*RPS can be located on the web at:

*<http://www.americorps.org/resources/>*

Programs without web access can still participate by calling their local AmeriCorps recruitment program specialist or the AC\*RPS toll-free number at 1-800-942-2677.

## Finding and Sharing Effective Practices with EpiCenter

Innovative and effective ways of addressing common issues, problems, and challenges are being implemented in programs across the national service network. Until now, sharing and finding effective practices from other national service programs was like shouting into a noisy crowd.

The Corporation for National and Community Service created EpiCenter to give national service programs easy access to effective practices through the Internet. EpiCenter is an online database of effective practices that specifically addresses issues related to national service. Through the web, national service partners can search for effective practices on dozens of topics and submit effective practices through a web interface.

In addition to working with national service programs and training and technical assistance providers to submit effective practices, the EpiCenter staff at the National Service Resource Center peruses research studies, published literature, and service-related websites for effective practices. Launched in August 2000, EpiCenter now gives visitors access to more than 100 effective practices on topics such as education, environmental issues, literacy, mentoring, sustainability, tutoring, volunteer management, and all the streams of service.

Each effective practice contains an abstract and link to either a summary of the practice or the full text, if the practice is from already published material. Some practices also include links to sites related to the topic. Visitors can search EpiCenter using keywords or browse the database from a list of presearched topics.

What is an effective practice? It's a strategy or idea that addresses a common issue or problem and that can be replicated or modified by other national service programs. It can take the form of an effective model, technique or tool. National service programs can submit a practice for consideration in EpiCenter through the Internet or by contacting the EpiCenter database coordinator.

For assistance in finding or submitting an effective practice, call toll-free 1-800-860-2684, ext. 100, or e-mail [epicenter@etr.org](mailto:epicenter@etr.org). On the web, you can find EpiCenter at:

<http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter/>

## Using the Web to Streamline Reporting and Increase Accountability Through WBRS

With a minimum of technical requirements, the Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS) now offers the Corporation, state commissions, national-direct parent organizations, and AmeriCorps programs the ability to better manage AmeriCorps grants. Among the system's features are:

- Electronic enrollment of AmeriCorps members
- Reports on project progress, expenditures, and financial match requirements
- Better program management
- Real-time input of data by programs
- Monthly service-hour tracking for each AmeriCorps member
- Detection of irregularities that could indicate fraud or mismanagement
- A built-in audit trail that keeps track of every action taken within the system, who took the action and precisely when
- A full complement of management tools allowing programs and commissions to make better management decisions
- Automation of Federal Financial Status Reports using information from program expense reports
- Automated compilation of program Financial Status Reports into an aggregate report for each state commission
- Highly automated progress reporting, allowing users at any level to view what's been done at any time

For further information about WBRS, contact Lance Potter at the Corporation for National and Community Service: (202) 606-5000, ext. 448.