

2010 AmeriCorps Grantee Meeting
September 13-15, 2010
Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, MD

Monday, September 13, 2010

Program Start-Up Institute Peer Panel Discussion:

Introduction: *My name is Tyrone J. Begay and I am a Program Coordinator that oversees a Tribal AmeriCorps Grant, titled Rough Rock AmeriCorps Program, which is located on the Navajo Reservation in the state of Arizona. I have been overseeing the program since January, 2001. The program is currently in its 11th year of existence, originating in 1999. We are part of the Tribal AmeriCorps Set-aside initiative.*

General Reflection:

What do you wish you had known when you began working with AmeriCorps?

- Wish I had known what AmeriCorps was? (came into program not knowing what it was and all that encompassed it)
- If the program had a handbook that encompassed general answers to the program, in terms of what it entailed, funding source, contacts, how program was run, what the objectives of the program are and how to go about administering a program.
- Also how do participants in the program fit in the grand scheme of this overall aspect of AmeriCorps, i.e., how do members in a rural setting incorporate the ethic of service and the concept of volunteering into their lives while situated in areas that are high in unemployment, low socio-economic standing, and isolated from readily available resources
- Where I could access forms or literature that would allow me to provide guidance to corps members
- That T/TA providers are available for programs and that Program Officers are there to assist and answers questions about the program as well as giving general guidance to where to go for additional information
- That the program I oversaw was part of something special, in terms of being a Tribal AmeriCorps, and that it was also part of the AmeriCorps family, where programs existed as National Directs, State, and Ed Award Programs

What are the most important things to know about AmeriCorps?

- That the ethic of service comes about in many forms and for native people we have been practicing this act for years but never considered it service but as a way of showing respect for others
- That you need to educate your stakeholders, site supervisors, sponsors, and whomever you will be providing to service to about the program, the members, and how things will operate and what your objectives are for the program
- That they have contacts to turn to, such as: CNCS Program Officers, other Service programs, T/TA providers for AmeriCorps, like for Tribal AmeriCorps Programs, you have ACKCO, Inc.

- The collection of member hours can come in many forms, but always have a system that allows you to give members a copy of their hours, system that tracks their hours through excel or some type of spreadsheet and housing their hardcopy of service hours in case your system crashes or you get a site visit from CNCS
- A system for tracking progress, such as what forms will be used, and how to determine if your collecting data to meet your program's objectives
- Planning out member development trainings for your members that will cover the aspect of what is needed to know in the onset, the middle and the end of their term. This should include a concept of Life after AmeriCorps where you will prepare members for using their education award or giving them an opportunity to come back for a second term and possibly gearing them for the work force
- How to encompass teambuilding activities into the program that will allow members to bond and work together as a team and also give them a chance to get to know one another
- That with service that they provide is beneficial and in some instances will touch someone's life whether that was through tutoring a student, providing service to an elder to help provide subsistence to their way of life or give them a feeling of being wanted and worthy and that with service they can demonstrate what they do for their own community, thus showcasing SERVICE over SELF
- Covering the Rules and Regulations for members as well as site supervisors or to staff that will be dealing with your members or for those grantee staff that will oversee financial aspect of your program (more specifically cover prohibited activities, grant provisions, financial procedure, member forms, in-kind match, and reporting parameters, using eGrant database program)
- Member development that will develop members to meet program's objectives and tailored to educate and inform the members on the inner workings of service, more specifically the service programs affiliated with CNCS, including AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, and Learn and Serve.

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Program Start-Up Institute Peer Panel Discussion:

General Reflection:

What are your lessons learned related to member recruitment, development and support?

- In terms of recruitment, I find that for the area that we live in the following methods seem to work best, they include: Flyers put up in the local area as well as having them placed in the surrounding area/communities, using former members to spread the word of AmeriCorps, having local school staff assist with recruitment by informing their own immediate family on the program, going to local high schools and providing them presentations on the program and its benefits, running ads in local newspaper that covers our area, placing our need for members on the school's website and tapping into family's where brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and cousins have all taken part and they in turn talk of the program's influence on their lives

(NOTE: The program is situated on the Navajo Reservation, an area equivalent to the size of the state of West Virginia and situated in three states within the four corners area. The program actively brings on members from the surrounding communities of Rough Rock, AZ, from areas as close as 15 miles away and from areas as far as 50 miles away one way.)

- For member development, the program relies upon the concept of Service over Self and using the traditional concept of Ke'e (Navajo Kinship Term) for making a member well rounded and familiar with providing service in Indian Country

What are some of the most helpful tips you would like to share about member recruitment, member orientation/training, member support/retention and keeping recordkeeping/member files?

- For member recruitment, tapping into your areas local high school and spreading the word of AmeriCorps and its benefits can bring on potential members
- Setting up recruitment drives during local events, functions, and program outings can bring on potential members as well
- Getting your program's objectives in line and based on that, determining what your ideal applicant should have in terms of education, knowledge and possibly age
- Setting up orientation that will cover all aspects of what you intend to have your members doing, by providing them with training that will familiarize them with your objectives and what tools will they need to get that done (*e.g. if tutoring program in school district and focusing on Reading scores then you would need members to be able to know about teacher expectations, some basic classroom management skills, Reading awareness, comprehension and what reading programs the school may be using*)
- Within your orientation period making sure you incorporate Teambuilding activities to lighten up the mood, promotion of communicating with one another, as well as getting them to begin working as a Team
- For recordkeeping/member files, having an adequate database system is a must, for the tracking of member service hours as well as being able to breakdown service hours into appropriate categories, such as classroom, tutoring, after-school, construction, fundraising, elder-watch, etc... Also having this system allows you to track living stipends aside from your fiscal office, health care if you are a tribal program, where you will be able to capture that as In-kind for your program, attached is a sample of the spreadsheet used by my program. (*see attached file*) Members will also have individual spreadsheets for their personal information as well.
- As a reminder hard copies are also encouraged in the event you are audited by CNCS or your computer should crash or files become lost
- Having adequate forms that will capture your member's service activities
- Member files must also be locked and secured and in the event they need to be reviewed you must have a sign-in sheet indicating who needed access and for what reason. Posting a sign that indicates files are located in the appropriate area and that all files are confidential and only authorized individuals are allowed to view files as well authorized persons

- Keeping members engaged and keeping them well informed as well as having them do journals allows you to dictate what members are needing, lacking or having difficulty with during their term of service as you will review their entries at some given time and using that information will allow you gauge what the member may/may not be needing during their term

What are some of the most helpful resources out there that program directors can tap into (networking, resource center tools) to help them with member management?

- Being able to have access to the Internet and getting onto the AmeriCorps Website and using the for programs link that have resources listed for programs to use
- Creating a conversation with Program Officer and getting guidance from them on what resource center tools they are familiar with and what other programs that they have in their portfolios use as well as getting first hand information from their experiences
- Using the NSRC website where they archive tons of information and tools/forms and sample documents that programs can modify and/or adopt for their own usage
- Finding out what T/TA providers are available for your type of AmeriCorps Program (i.e., National Direct, State, Tribal or Ed Award program)
- Subscribing to the AmeriCorps Listserve (e-mail) where you are able to post a question to all that are subscribed to and from there you can get infinite answers you may have or allow you to post questions that others may respond to
- Attendance to conferences, grantee meetings, sponsored by CNCS or other entities that allow you to take part in and networking during that time, gaining answers to questions you may have from similar programs or from other program directors in attendance
- Finding other programs that do the same initiatives you do and making contact with them

In closing, creating opportunities for yourself come in various forms and times and knowing how to use them will allow you to make yourself knowledgeable and above all else, know that you are not alone but there are answers out there for you.

Also I am willing to answer or assist in any way that I can so feel free to seek me out, my contact information is listed below:

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