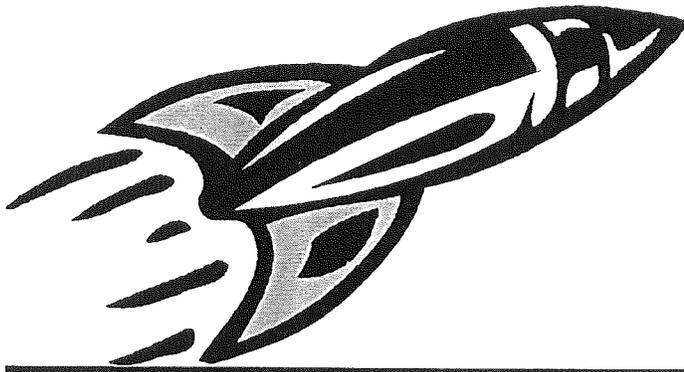


***Where do you want to go?***



## **Career Transitions Toolkit for National Service Participants**

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# INTRODUCTION TO FACILITATORS

## Why Career Transitions?

This curriculum was created to meet the high volume of requests from national service staff for tools to help members and volunteers explore the topic of career transitions or “Life After National Service.” Experience has shown that most national service volunteers do not join AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps\*VISTA with clearly defined career goals in mind. Even fewer participants possess the necessary resources (e.g. knowledge of the labor market, career portfolios) to identify and market themselves to potential employers.

**National Service Experience Does Impact Career and Education Choices.** According to a 1998 evaluation study conducted by Dr. Changhua Wang of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, national service does impact future education and employment choices of AmeriCorps members. In a survey completed by 130 former AmeriCorps members, 83 percent of the respondents were employed. Of these, 63 percent indicated that AmeriCorps helped them actually find jobs, and 73 percent indicated strongly that the AmeriCorps experience influenced their long term career choices.

This data suggests the pivotal roles that program staff can play in assisting members to explore their future options. NWREL developed the *Career Transitions Facilitator Guide* and accompanying *Career Transitions Toolkit for National Service Participants* to enable staff to provide that support as thoroughly, efficiently, and effectively as possible.

*“I am extremely thankful for my experiences with AmeriCorps. I gained valuable leadership skills, training and was able to translate what I learned into furthering my education and other jobs I have since had. I learned a lot about myself, my strengths, as well as my weaknesses.”—Former AmeriCorps member*

## Training Design

The design of this curriculum is based on the tenet that career exploration training is most effective when it occurs throughout the entire year of service, rather than in the final month or only in the last term. Effective adult learning models allow participants to intake and utilize information over an extended period, rather than in an abbreviated two-hour or two-week time frame. Establishing career transitions training as an ongoing process allows time for in-depth reflection and exploration for participants. It also helps members create a richer experience as they approach national service with a sense of purpose and create personal goals for themselves.

A multi-phase career transitions training approach also lets you work with participants to fine-tune their professional skills and contacts, and to understand the importance of networking. It creates the opportunity to help participants create a polished “career toolkit” for themselves. A well-designed portfolio, sharp résumé, and established network will help members feel proud of accomplishments and will give them a solid edge in finding that satisfying “next step.”

## **What's Inside: Information for Facilitators**

The career transitions training curriculum and accompanying toolkit were designed with program staff balancing multiple priorities (sound familiar?) in mind. The career transitions materials can be flexibly adapted to meet your program's needs.

The curriculum is divided into three main components and is structured for delivery during pre-service, mid-service, and at the end of service. Each training outline contains approximately three hours of activities. These activities are arranged to foster interaction and are designed to meet a variety of learning styles. There are several individual and small group activities, and most require physical movement and engagement of the participants. However, as a facilitator, you will be most aware of the particular learning styles and needs of your group. Most of the training outlines can be structured for varying levels of interaction.

You may wish to add your own activities and/or omit some that we have suggested. You can also divide the training outlines into shorter segments. For example, if you typically reserve every Friday as a training day, you could dedicate one Friday a month to career transitions training and conduct one to two hours of activities on that day.

For each training outline you will find a brief introduction, a list of needed materials, and several goals for the session. At least eight to ten activities exist in each training outline, and total the three hours of suggested time. At the end of each section, you will find "Key Points." These are points you should be sure to cover with participants throughout the training and repeat at the close of the workshop.

The curriculum also contains resources and a list of activities that can support further career exploration for participants beyond the training sessions. These options should be discussed with participants during the actual training sessions if possible. Encourage participants to be proactive with all of the training information.

The training outlines are as follows:

**Part I: Taking Inventory of Your Skills, Interests and Experiences**

**Part II: Exploring Career Options**

**Part III: Filling the Toolbox**

**Part IV: Appendices**

Each training outline includes references to page numbers in the participant toolkit that correspond with the recommended activities. In addition, there are several appendices that augment the actual training outlines to assist you in your presentation. These are labeled as appendices.

## **Participant Toolkit**

The participant toolkit contains plenty of information and activities and is intended to be a “workbook” for training participants. Participants should plan to bring their toolkits to each training. The toolkit is divided into parts that correspond to the training outlines provided. However, you can use the information in the toolkit as you see appropriate; don't limit yourself to the order provided in the training outlines. For example, the overview of portfolio information is included in **Part III of the Participant Toolkit**, but portfolios are a topic in **Training Outline I**. Therefore, it makes sense for you to have participants look at the portfolio overview during the first training.

Familiarizing yourself with the participant toolkit will help you maximize use of the information included. Prior to delivering the trainings, you might want to carefully go through the toolkit and make notes about themes or ideas you wish to highlight with participants.

## **Technical Assistance and Training Support**

If you have any questions or would like assistance in adapting the career transitions curriculum to meet your program's needs, please contact:

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# CAREER TRANSITIONS TRAINING I

## Taking Inventory of Accomplishments, Abilities, and Interests

### Introduction

This is the first in the series of career transitions training outlines. The purpose behind this training is to *begin* the process of exploring post-service opportunities with members. This training is approximately three hours long and should be offered early in the program year, setting the framework for the remainder of the service year. Ideally, the session will help participants think about what they *know*, what they *value and enjoy*, and what they *want* in terms of the future after national service. As they begin to identify these priorities, this workshop can help them determine what steps can help them achieve their goals. It can also start them thinking about how to get the most out of their year of national service.

It is important to remind participants that career exploration is a journey, and there is no direct or formulaic route. Each person's path will be unique and will reflect his/her passion, values, and experiences. As participants, they are in charge of their own futures. This presents them with a host of opportunities but requires responsibility and persistence. As a facilitator, you will guide them through a series of activities to help make that path more visible. You will offer your own experience, tools and resources for exploration, and connections to opportunities. The rest of the work lies with each participant.

During the first session, be sure to provide participants with a brief overview of the career transitions trainings to be offered throughout the year. Clarify your expectations for their involvement in the workshops and additional career-related activities.

### Materials:

- ✓ Career Transitions Toolkits for each participant
- ✓ File folders for each participants' portfolio materials
- ✓ Post-It notes
- ✓ Flipchart paper
- ✓ Ball of yarn for web activity

### In this workshop participants will:

- View national service experience in terms of personal and professional growth
- Begin career portfolios
- Identify transferable skills already learned
- Identify interest areas and priorities for future employment

### I. Warm-up session

**The Web Activity.** The web activity works with a minimum of ten participants. The warm-up activity is useful for groups who don't know each other very well. The facilitator poses a

question like “What talents do you bring to this group?” or “If you could learn one thing this year, what would it be?” Participants answer the question when they catch the ball of yarn. Participants then hold on to the string and toss the ball to another member. A “web” is created between participants to show that we are all connected to one another and support each other. This is true for service to community and for professional development. Share the Martin Luther King Jr. quotation and the Six Degrees of Separation theory (**Toolkit, page 4**). Remind participants to look for opportunities to make connections throughout this service year and to network with and for others in attaining career and educational goals.

## **II. Overview of Training**

Provide participants with an overview of the session and its goals. Invite them to contribute additional goals or a list of questions they would like answered during the session.

## **III. Starting With Themselves: Gathering Information**

Discuss the importance of matching career choices with personal priorities and interests. Job satisfaction is the key to choosing careers. If individuals are satisfied with their jobs—feel intrinsic value in them—then they will continue in their careers or positions. Even part-time jobs participants might pick up while in school should be chosen because they are satisfying and relate to their chosen careers. Surveys of workers say that job satisfaction, not money or power, is the main reason for remaining in or leaving a position. And discovering the path to satisfying work requires self-examination, reflection, and exploration.

Talk to participants about your own career decision and career pathway. Why did you enter “third sector” employment, and why are you still doing it?

Have participants complete the “**TIME Person of the Year**” activity (**Toolkit, page 6**). Ask participants to think ahead one or two years. They have just been nominated *TIME* person of the year. Have them draw themselves on the cover of *TIME* and indicate what personal success they have achieved to deserve this nomination. Ask participants to share their pictures with each other in small groups. Have them define what “success” means to them. Note that success requires a personal definition that participants need to create for themselves. What is satisfying to one person may make another miserable!

Ask participants to complete the “**Work Values Inventory**” (**Toolkit, pages 13-14**). The inventory will help them define their personal priorities. In small groups, have participants share their inventory findings with each other. Have them consider which of those values exist in their current positions and what types of future opportunities could incorporate those values.

## **Matching Interests and Priorities With Careers**

Many participants have career interest areas or skills but have not matched them to specific job titles. Job seekers will be more successful if they can identify specific job titles through research. College applicants will have stronger applications, will enjoy focused studies, and have better chances of graduating on time if they have specific career goals in mind.

The series of trainings is designed to help participants zero in on specific job titles and specific career missions. As a facilitator, you can encourage participants to generate specific titles as they conduct the career exploration activities. Be prepared with your own list of careers and information that might interest participants. Encourage job shadowing and research from the very beginning of the service year. Throughout this training guide, we will suggest ways you can help participants dig deeper.

#### **IV. Introducing a Future of Possibilities**

Generally participants will be looking at approximately five options after national service:

- Employment in the private sector
- Employment in the government or public sector
- Employment in the “third” or nonprofit sector
- Continued domestic or international service
- Education

Briefly discuss how participants can use the career training sessions to explore these options in greater depth. More time should be spent discussing all of these choices in the second training, “Exploring Career Options.”

Since participants will be the least familiar with the “third sector,” this is a good time to provide a brief overview. It may help you to review the article in the **Participant Toolkit (page 60) titled “Nonprofit Sector Trends and Careers.”** First, ask participants what they know and understand about the third sector. Explain that many opportunities for employment exist in the third sector, also known as the nonprofit sector. The first sector is business/industry, and the second sector is government. The third sector nurtures healthy communities through funds from government, private companies, and individuals.

Right now the third sector is growing, because government is shrinking and is looking to community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide direct service and to advance innovative practices. Providing direct service helps create healthy communities and helps CBOs survive, because each service opportunity expands the organization’s web. Corporate contributions to nonprofits only account for 10 percent of funds. Individual community members support community-based organizations primarily.

#### **V. Identifying Skills**

Have participants complete the **“Transferable Skills Inventory” (Toolkit, pages 10-12).** Have them meet in small groups and discuss what they discovered by completing the inventory. In what areas did they find their skills and strengths were concentrated? Did they think about any career possibilities that could tap into their skills and talents? What did they notice about the skills they enjoyed or would like to learn? Remind them that this is critical information for their career exploration journey.

## And/Or

Explain “**All Aspects of the Industry (AAI)**” (Toolkit, page 7). This chart illustrates the variety of skills involved in each project, job, and position.

Have participants choose projects that they completed or jobs that they held. Ask them to complete the AAI chart for their particular projects (Toolkit, page 8). Provide an example for the group by completing the AAI wheel for your own position. Once participants have completed their own wheels, group them into pairs to help each other complete their wheels. It helps for you, the facilitator, to walk around and contribute ideas as participants work. Invite one or two participants to share the results from their project wheels to the whole group.

Explain that the AAI chart can be used to help participants conduct and evaluate project planning during the year.

## Value and Interest Clarification

Sometimes participants will point out that the skills that they possess are not always in line with what truly interests them. Through this training, you can help them bridge this gap. Remind them that their skills do apply to many jobs that are interesting and align with their values. Sometimes it takes investigation to identify those particular jobs. (*Part II: Exploring Career Options of the Facilitator Guide, page 13, addresses this topic further.*) Also, don't let participants fall into a trap of dismissing career options because they don't feel they have the necessary skills. Encourage participants to acquire and improve the skills that can help them find satisfying work. National service allows the opportunity for such skill enhancement. The “**Transferable Skills**” (Toolkit, pages 10-12) and **Work Values** (Toolkit, pages 13-14) inventories are effective tools for self-exploration and provide important learning. If someone finds, for example, that he/she really enjoys working alone, it can help him/her focus exploration of more solitary jobs.

In national service, you often see common values such as “social change” emerge as priorities. You can use this opportunity to discuss the career options that are in line with these values. Discussing educational careers, nonprofit opportunities, and socially conscious jobs in the private sector helps participants begin to think creatively about their future work. You can also have participants identify areas of their current positions with national service that they find most engaging and interesting. Such identification gets participants thinking about what they have enjoyed and prioritized to date and how that affects their future choices.

## VI. Planning Ahead: Getting the Most Out of National Service

This is a good point in the training to have participants think about what skills they want to learn during their terms of service. While they might not be clear on their specific career goals, they can identify general skills they wish to explore. Ask participants to complete the “**Getting the Most Out of Your National Service Experience**” activity (Toolkit, page 15), or conduct a similar future planning activity. Have participants share their goals with each other. This activity should help you to plan trainings and provide leadership

opportunities to participants. It also provides participants with a tool to monitor their own self-progress throughout the service year.

## **VII. Creating Career Portfolios**

Introduce the concept of career portfolios to participants. Portfolios began as a way for artists to show their work, but now many different professions are using career portfolios. Portfolios provide opportunities for participants to shine during job interviews and can help them write résumés. It is important that participants collect examples of their work to place in portfolios. If you have the time, you can spend one or two hours delivering the enclosed “Creating Career Portfolios” training script (**Appendix I**). Participants respond well to this in-depth introduction to the concept of portfolios, as it may be a foreign or intimidating project to them.

Share your own portfolio and portfolio filing system with participants. A good filing system keeps many examples of work that can be placed in the portfolio. Ideally, each example should have a date, a description of why the example is important, and what skills are exemplified.

Hand out an expandable file folder and Post-Its for filing portfolio items to participants. Tell them that you’ll continue to offer career transitions training throughout the year and that they should bring their folders to share with other participants. If you’ve arranged for folders to be kept in a central location, talk about ways they can access their folders.

## **VIII. Developing a Network**

Show participants the “**Contact Log**” (**Toolkit, page 36**) and explain how to use it. Throughout the year they will be expanding their web of contacts and will need to keep track of the people they meet. The contact log is a good place to keep business cards, contact information, and most importantly why those contacts are important. The contact log can help participants develop a network (a topic in Training Session II). If participants have business cards, this is a good time to distribute them.

## **IX. Questions and Answers**

## **X. Workshop Evaluation**

# TAKING INVENTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ABILITIES, AND INTERESTS

## Key Points to Participants

- Career Exploration is an ongoing and often lifelong process.
- National service provides a unique path to a satisfying next step and often a satisfying career.
- Personal interests, skills, values, and priorities are important considerations when searching for a career.
- Career exploration requires focused effort, time, and an open attitude to people and opportunities that present themselves.
- Every community has an underlying “web” of support—people, organizations, and resources—that helps it function. Be aware of your role in the web, and learn how to draw upon its support when searching for satisfying work.
- “Success” is an important concept to define for yourself. Often individuals can get confused between what society considers successful and what they personally find successful. Evaluate for yourself what you think is important.
- Defining success will help you get to know yourself better, become more aware of your needs, and to envision a positive and satisfying future career.
- Your values shape how you define success, what choices you make, and how comfortable you may feel in a given occupation or position. Be aware of your values, and work to align your actions and career choices with your personal values.
- There are several options falling under five main categories that you may wish to pursue following service. Familiarize yourself with these options, and begin to think about which ones seem most appropriate for you.
- The nonprofit sector offers many viable career options for national service participants. Use this year to become more knowledgeable about the various opportunities in this growing sector for work.
- Your skills are a fundamental part of your career toolbox. Being aware of the skills you possess is good for your personal growth and will help you eventually network and market yourself to potential employers or educational institutions.
- Every job or position requires multiple skills. As you complete service projects or consider career options, investigate what skills are required and utilized. Often you will be surprised at the depth of skills that are necessary and that you already possess. Knowing this will help you find a match between your abilities and potential jobs.
- Your year of national service offers you a prime opportunity to focus on developing or fine-tuning specific skills. Plan ahead. Plot a course for skill attainment according to your personal goals.

- A career portfolio is a tool you can use to document your skills and accomplishments.
- Career portfolios allow you to portray both the depth and breadth of your abilities, with more detail than a one page résumé.
- Portfolios can be used to help you reflect on accomplishments, to obtain admittance to a graduate school, to supplement your résumé in a job search, and for other reasons that you personally identify.
- There is not one specific formula for developing a career portfolio. However, a solid portfolio will contain an introduction, résumé, commendation letters, and several artifacts.
- Portfolios can and should be tailored to your experiences and to the position or program to which you are applying. A flexible portfolio should allow you to add and remove specific items from your portfolio to customize it for the specific purpose or audience.
- Portfolios should say something specific about you and your abilities. Review your portfolio and ask colleagues to look it over and say what the portfolio tells them about you, its author. Is this the message you want to convey?
- Portfolios require time, creativity, and a commitment to collect and store useful "artifacts." Starting your portfolio now will help you create a successful product for the end of your service year.
- To build your network of support, you should start now by documenting the contacts you make this year. You can use the enclosed contact log to help you.

### **Suggested Follow-Up Activities:**

- Use the **AAI chart (page 7)** when you plan member projects. This will continue to help them identify the skills they are building.
- Have participants do an AAI activity on your organization or the organization in which they conduct their service.
- Use part of a Friday training session to catch up on portfolio development progress and contact log use.
- Create a “dream jobs” bulletin board. Post articles, business cards, and résumés of people participants meet who seem to have great jobs in a common area.
- Have participants create a “career development” plan. They can use this to identify skills they want to gain, careers they wish to explore, and activities they want to undertake to further their professional experience.
- Look for articles in newspapers or magazines about workforce trends and opportunities in education or the nonprofit sector. Have participants do the same and share their findings at meetings or events.
- Take participants to the library and have the librarian show and explain occupational reference books. These books contain job descriptions and skills lists for many occupations (**see Toolkit, page 54, for suggestions**).
- Show participants Internet sites for labor market information, community-based organization homepages, the AmeriCorps Web site, NWREL’s AmeriCorps Network NW Web site, and other pages (**see Toolkit, page 53, for suggestions**).
- Walk participants through other pertinent self-discovery inventories and activities in the packet.
- **“Nonprofit Sector Trends and Careers” (Toolkit, pages 60-64)** and **“Landing the Perfect Nonprofit Job: A Personal Manager’s Top 10 Tips” (Toolkit, pages 55-59)** are excellent starting points for discussions about the nonprofit sector. You could either have participants read them together and share their thoughts, or you can read them as background material to help you present information.

## Resources

Boldt, Laurence (1993). *Zen and the art of making a living*. New York: Penguin Books.

Covey, Stephen (1989). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Hartzell, Nedra Klee (1997). *Life after AmeriCorps: Next steps*. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National Service.

Koonce, Richard (1994). *Career power*. New York: Amazon.

Sinetar, Marsha (1987). *Do what you love, The money will follow*. New York: Dell.

# CAREER TRANSITIONS TRAINING II

## Exploring Career Options

### Introduction

*Exploring Career Options* is designed for participants approaching the middle of the service year. This session should help participants consider concrete career options that incorporate the priorities and skills they have outlined for themselves. It asks participants to go beyond self-reflection and thoroughly examine the world of people and careers that surrounds them. Ultimately they need to translate and narrow down information from this internal and external evaluation into an actual range of career choices. As a facilitator, you should familiarize yourself with the local and regional job market. This will strengthen your ability to deliver this training and to serve as a resource for participants.

The training introduces and emphasizes the concept of “networking” and other strategies that participants can use to explore careers and the job market. Networking is a critical life skill that goes beyond career exploration. It increases participants’ ability to be successful in service, professional, personal, and community life by utilizing the wealth of human resources that surrounds us. Participants headed directly toward school will discover that networking seriously impacts opportunities in higher education. Networking may have negative connotations as a strategy used by those wanting to “get ahead” or individuals interested in self-promotion. You can help overcome these stereotypes by demonstrating ways that networking is a positive force in community development and partnership building.

As you approach this session, consider how networking has created opportunities for you in personal and professional life. Refer participants back to the web activity from the previous session, and encourage them to tap into resources by networking.

### Materials needed:

- ✓ Career Toolkits for participants
- ✓ Participants’ portfolio files
- ✓ Flipchart

### In this session participants will:

- Identify potential careers and fields of study that fit their skills and interests
- Explore creative or non-traditional careers
- Begin assembling a network of people to assist them with college or job searches
- Practice informational and formal interviewing
- Locate helpful print resources for college or job searches

## **I. Overview of Training**

Provide participants with an overview of the session and session goals. Invite participants to contribute additional goals or create a list of questions they would like answered during the session.

Explain that this session builds on the previous workshop on career transitions. The first workshop focused on gathering information about themselves as participants. This session concentrates on gathering information about careers and possible employment from other resources.

## **II. Thinking About the “Ideal Job”**

To get participants thinking about potential career opportunities, ask them to silently think to themselves about who they know who has a “dream job.” If they can’t think of someone, ask them to make up an imaginary, but ideal job. Once they have done this, have them list five reasons why the job seems ideal. Break participants into small groups to discuss the defined characteristics of dream jobs and to explore common themes.

Remind participants to be aware of these characteristics of dream jobs, and to be looking for them in the career exploration phase. Encourage participants to be “researchers.” As they encounter people who seem to have ideal jobs, they need to ask questions like “*How did you get here?*” and “*What skills does this job require?*” The informational interview activity below will cover this topic further. Let participants know that the only thing standing between them and ideal jobs might be lack of information. You might also stress that even “ideal jobs” have their downsides, and they need to look for those points as well.

## **III. Sharing Portfolio Progress**

Ask the group to generate questions, issues, or concerns about their portfolios in progress. Use group discussion to mediate these issues/concerns. The resource section or list of suggested activities might also be helpful.

## **III. Taking a Look at the Facts**

Talk to participants about the “**Job Search Facts and Job Search Steps**” (Toolkit, pages 23-24). These facts were accumulated from a variety of sources. You might want to include your own stories or regional data into this information page. Statistically, most successful job seekers rely on a network of supporters to find employment. Résumés and cover letters alone will not do it. Participants need personal contact with employers.

If participants are thinking about undergraduate or graduate education, the same principles apply. Because college is very expensive, competition for scholarships, teaching assistantships, and research positions is fierce. Applicants need solid letters of reference and contacts with people at the college.

Also, knowing experts in participants' chosen fields can help them select where they send applications. Research on companies, colleges, and the people who work in these institutions will help participants make the right choices for long term career satisfaction.

## Finding A Niche

Career educators suggest most economies host five career areas: Health & Human Services, Industrial/Mechanical, Natural Resources, Arts & Communications, and Business & Marketing. Someone interested in the health field may, at first, decide to become a doctor. That is a wonderful goal, but the initial choice may not align with his/her values, needs, or life goals. Any field hosts many different career types that may satisfy participants' values, needs, and goals. Encourage participants to look more deeply into career titles within a field, starting now. Have them look for people who have unique and interesting careers. They often are very easy to identify; they have very obscure titles, and they cannot explain their jobs in less than five minutes. **"Informational Interviews" (Toolkit, page 20)** are effective tools to stretch participants' ideas about potential careers, and they add complexity to their knowledge of the field.

You can review the general list of careers (**Appendix 5**), and have participants discuss which capture their interest or how they could adjust careers to fit their needs. You may also facilitate a **Hybrid Careers activity (Appendix 2)**. Use this list to help participants brainstorm career possibilities. Cut up the Hybrid Career titles into slips of paper. Place set A into one box and set B into another box. Have each participant select a slip of paper from each box and think up a job that would fit into both categories.

Finally, you should help participants learn to recognize new trends and niches that arise in the job market. Consider, for example, how technology and the expansion of the World Wide Web created thousands of new jobs in a few short years. Look for informative articles in the news about the economy, business, the nonprofit sector, and other related topics. Encourage participants to think about how current events might impact or stimulate new markets. Skim over the most recent career resources at the local library or bookstore to find out what authors predict for careers in the future.

## IV. Charting Progress

Throughout the year, you will want to help participants reflect on the skills they are acquiring and their progress toward future goals. This is an appropriate time to choose any or all of the following options for assessment; ask participants to repeat the **"Transferable Skills Inventory" (Toolkit, page 10)** to see if information has changed as they have taken new opportunities, *or* you can have participants complete the **"All Aspects of the Industry Chart" (Toolkit, page 7)** using a project that they have completed in the second term of service, *or* you can ask participants to revisit the **"Getting the Most Out of National Service" worksheet (Toolkit, page 15)** to examine their initial program goals.

With all of these activities, allow time for small group discussion of what participants learned. Pose questions like these listed below, and add your own according to the group needs.

- What new skills have you learned so far with national service, or what skills have you improved upon?
- What are the “surprise” achievements you did not expect to get through national service?
- What have been some of the challenges with national service, and what have you learned from them?
- What are some things you still want to work on before the end of the year?

#### **IV. Collecting Career Input**

Have participants work in pairs or small groups to complete the “**Collecting Career Input**” activity (**Toolkit, page 19**). Increasing the number of participants allows for more ideas that can be generated. Ask volunteers to share with the large group the career ideas they have collected, and make a list on flipchart paper. Encourage participants to continue to collect career input as they chart their paths to future success.

#### **V. Networking**

What is networking? “Networking” often has negative connotations. Networking, generally, is about forming and sustaining relationships with people who can help you. Mentoring is an intense form of networking. Networking is a two-way street. The network of supporters get gratification and assistance in return. Let participants know that they can network for each other and for their project sites, not just for themselves. Do a group brainstorming activity around the term “networking,” and then formulate a group definition. Place group brainstorming ideas and a definition on flipchart paper.

How do you network? Share your own networking success stories, and ask participants for examples of networking interactions. Talk broadly about how networking can happen: on the bus, with friends and family, or at community and neighborhood meetings. Networking is rarely about making blind phone calls to complete strangers. It is more about sharing your interests and passions, and listening to others. Make sure you cover a variety of examples related to education, careers, and community opportunities. Discuss how participants can use networking even if they don’t have specific career goals in mind yet. Talk about how networking opportunities can work for them even if education, not necessarily a job, is the next step. Deconstruct these ideas to create a list of networking strategies that work. To foster a creative discussion networking, share the following examples with participants:

#### **Story I**

*I had an idea that I wanted to go to graduate school, but I wasn’t focused on what program to enter. I wanted to combine studies in both the social and natural sciences and utilize my background in political science. Unsure of what next step to take, I began setting up informal meetings with colleagues I respected. I explained my interests and general goals, and I asked for feedback and creative possibilities. In one*

*of these meetings, a mentor of mine suggested a field that I was completely unaware of: “cultural geography.” She even directed me to a professor in the region conducting innovative work in this field. After more research and a productive meeting with the recommended professor, I discovered this field was a perfect fit. Had I been afraid to network because my goals weren’t well-defined, I might not have learned about this unique area of study.*

## **Story II**

*A couple of nonprofit professionals in the Portland area began discussing the fact that there were many colleagues like them in the community but a lack of support systems. After some consideration they decided to make an attempt to connect people in the nonprofit field, both volunteers and staff, to each other to provide mutual support. They decided to host an initial informal potluck, sharing the news by word of mouth with interested people. Nearly 25 people showed up for this event. Six months and several potlucks later, this network of nonprofit professionals has expanded to a flexible group of nearly 100 people. They meet bi-monthly and communicate job and educational opportunities with each other through a listserv. There is now an active steering committee determining the potential expansion of this group into a formal nonprofit. And it all started with a good idea and a few good networkers.*

## **VI. Informational Interviews**

Networking should happen long before a job search begins. Cultivating relationships with people is important just for informational purposes. An informational interview is a more formal way of getting information about an occupation or education field. It is also a great way for participants to feel comfortable talking about their experiences and goals—a prized job interviewing skill.

Refer participants to the **“Informational Interview” section (Toolkit, pages 20-21)**. Pair participants up and have them role play an informational interview. The interviewee should assume the role of a person in an occupation in which the interviewer has high interest. Use questions provided in the Guide.

In order to set up informational interviews, participants should use their current social network to find someone to interview. Participants can conduct informational interviews in any social setting by asking people around them what they do for a living.

After informational interviews, participants should be prepared to follow up with thank you notes. Thank you notes should ask interviewees if the member can call for further advice.

## **Job Shadows and Informational Interviews**

Have participants identify three occupations they would like to explore through job shadows or informational interviews. Work with participants to help them set up informational interviews or job shadows. Brainstorm a list of questions participants have about the prospective occupation that they can have answered at a job shadow or informational

interview. Have participants use the AAI wheel to reflect on the occupation observed. Participants can also use the “**Informational Interview**” (**Toolkit, page 21**) questions located in your packet as guides. Have participants report back to the group what they learned from the shadow or interview.

## **VII. Letters of Recommendation**

Employers are asking for letters of recommendation with less frequency. However, college admissions nearly always require letters of recommendation, and they are important to have on hand and in career portfolios. This is especially helpful if the employer may know the recommender in some way.

Recommendation writers often ask for guidelines or things to mention in letters. Participants should provide the recommenders with a list of accomplishments, a résumé, and job description for the position. Recommendations can be generically addressed “To Whom it May Concern” to save recommenders time. **See pages 33-34 in the Toolkit for tips on recommendations.**

Have participants brainstorm a list of potential recommenders. Remind them that it is important to collect recommendations during their terms of service, rather than waiting until the end.

## **VIII. Career Information Resources**

**Refer participants to the resource section in the Toolkit (beginning page 53).** If training is at a college or public library, have participants locate and use career information resources.

## **IX. Questions and Answers**

## **X. Workshop Evaluation**

## Key Points

- Career Exploration requires both self-reflection about your skills and priorities as well as active investigation into the world of career and educational opportunities around you.
- Knowing what is important to you in a career is half of the battle. Now you need to find a way to apply that information towards a viable career path. Networking, job shadowing, and informational interviewing are three strategies used to help you discover career options.
- Networking is a critical skill and an avenue to help you find a fulfilling post-service opportunity. Take advantage of networking opportunities.
- Throughout your service year, you should seek out people who have jobs that seem appealing or ideal to you. Consider what characteristics these jobs entail, and look for them as you begin your career search.
- As you look outwardly into the world of career, service, and educational options, do not forget to continue to focus on your personal development and progress. Revisit your skills assessment or goals for the year, and consider what you have improved upon or learned.
- It is important to go beyond just general ideas for future work. Begin to consider specific job titles and career fields. Friends, colleagues, or community members can help you identify those titles. Ask them for input on potential jobs that would fit your talents and aspirations.
- The meaning of “networking” has been misconstrued, giving it a bad rap that it does not deserve.
- Networking is a valuable strategy that can help you and your service program. Networking is mainly about connecting people to each other. Ideally, networking helps build a bridge between needs and resources.
- Networking is a two-way street. As you look for people to assist you in your career exploration or to assist your service project, consider how you can be a resource to others.
- People like to network.
- Networking can be informal or formal. It can happen on the bus, at a coffee shop, at a community meeting, or over dinner with relatives. Do not limit yourself when it comes to networking.
- Informational interviewing is an effective way to explore unfamiliar careers, occupations, or programs of interest.
- You can conduct informational interviews with people you already know. This is a great place to start.
- Informational interviews are *not* job interviews and should not be treated as such.
- You can obtain specific information (e.g. skills or degree required, work environment, average pay) about a particular field or job through an informational interview.

- Job shadows offer another way to observe and investigate specific careers. They are more formal and extended than informational interviews, allowing you to actually view interviewees on the job.
- Job shadows can help you get a “feel” for certain work that may not be visible through an interview. The work pace, environment, and daily tasks become evident through a job shadow opportunity.
- To maximize your own learning, you should carefully plan for and structure your job shadow. Come prepared with an observation plan and a list of questions you want answered.
- Take time after your job shadow to reflect upon what you learned from the experience. Determine if the experience changed your opinion of or interest in a particular field. Follow up with additional questions and exploration if your curiosity remains piqued.
- Recommendation letters are important to collect, for personal and professional reasons. They provide an impartial and third-party assessment of your strengths and abilities.
- Begin to collect recommendation letters now. Consider project sponsors, national service supervisors, or other community members as potential recommenders.
- In order to network effectively and eventually be hired, you should be able to articulate your talents and experiences. This may require some practice.
- Consider various service and work situations and what you have learned and experienced. Practice pinpointing challenges you have overcome and specific lessons you have learned through national service. This will help you and others (potential employers) understand your problem-solving style and abilities, and also your background.

## **Suggested Follow-Up Activities:**

- Have participants set up job shadows with people in the community.
- Have participants attend a career fair—often hosted by a local college or university or state employment department, or host your own career fair.
- Ask participants to set up at least two informational Interviews with community members of their choice.
- Have participants conduct a college visit. Participants can meet with other students, professors, and admissions counselors.
- Have participants make a financial aid officer visit.
- Invite a former AmeriCorps, VISTA, Peace Corps, etc. member to talk about career paths with current ACMs. Also consider project sponsors or other community leaders as potential speakers.
- Take participants to the career information resources center.
- Have participants talk to direct supervisors about career potential and talents. Some supervisors may have insights.
- Assist participants by using your network to expand their networks.

## Resources

AmeriCorps Alumni Association (202) 337-2563 or [www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org)

Career Fair listings: [www.careerfairs.com](http://www.careerfairs.com)

On-line Career Center: [www.occ.com](http://www.occ.com)

Riley Guide: [www.jobtrak.com](http://www.jobtrak.com)

U.S. Department of Labor: [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov)

What Color is Your Parachute?: [www.washingtonpost.com/parachute](http://www.washingtonpost.com/parachute)

Aburdene, Patricia and John Naisbitt (1992). *Megatrends for women*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Brady, John (1976). *The craft of interviewing*. New York: Vintage Books.

Helgesan, Sally (1990). *The female advantage*. New York: Doubleday.

# CAREER TRANSITIONS TRAINING III

## Filling the Toolbox

### Introduction

This is the final session in the Career Transitions series. Some of the topics covered in this session may have already arisen in your earlier workshops. This action-oriented session focuses on helping participants to zero in on their quickly approaching next steps after service. It also helps to arm them with necessary tools for job hunting. If you find that many of your participants are enrolling full-time in school immediately following service, you may wish to adjust this training accordingly. However, most of the skills covered in this session are considered “life skills” and are valuable for all participants.

As a facilitator, your role in this session becomes more specialized as you attempt to meet each participant according to his/her stage in the career exploration process. Some participants may need individual coaching or attention to help them meet specific needs or overcome obstacles. Others might feel decided and settled in their choices and may not see the necessity of this training. It will require your keen attention to help the participants get the applicable information they need for their circumstances. Don't be afraid to break your audience into small groups and conduct individualized activities. Allow plenty of time for questions, answers, and goal-setting at the beginning of the session to provide you—the facilitator—with necessary information.

### Materials Needed:

- ✓ Career Transitions Toolkits for Participants
- ✓ Participant Portfolio folders
- ✓ Portfolios
- ✓ Computer access (for word processing and printing)
- ✓ Flipchart
- ✓ Markers, crayons, and colored pencils

### In this session, participants will:

- Begin a résumé and cover letter
- Write skills statements
- Practice job interviewing
- Focus the job/school search

## I. Overview of Training

Provide participants with an overview of the session and session goals. Invite participants to contribute additional goals or create a list of questions they would like answered during the session.

## II. Reflecting on National Service: The Coat of Arms

Begin this workshop by allowing participants to reflect on their accomplishments and learning by using the **“Coat of Arms” activity (Toolkit, page 25)**.

Once they have finished, ask participants to share their coats of arms with each other in small groups. Ask participants what they learned through this activity about values, priorities, and potential contacts that they can apply to their career searches. As a large group, brainstorm a list of ways that they can incorporate this information into their career “toolboxes” and to express qualifications to potential employers. For example, a participant could ask the person who has influenced him/her the most to write a recommendation letter. In addition, a participant could translate the *greatest accomplishment* section of his/her coat of arms into a line item for the résumé.

## II. Career Exploration Sharing

Ask participants to share portfolio progress, job shadow experiences, and the development and expansion of their network. In a large group, generate a list of issues or concerns, and use discussion to create some potential solutions.

## III. Documenting National Service Skills

Refer participants to the **“Killer Verb” list (Toolkit, page 45)**. Brainstorm a list of skills participants attained by participating in AmeriCorps or VISTA. At this point it may be helpful to revisit the “Transferable Skills” inventory as well as the “Getting the Most Out of a Year of National Service” forms. Participants may also want to brainstorm a list of careers for which they are qualified.

## IV. Résumé Writing

Ideally, résumés should be sent toward the end of your job search to a focused group of people. Networking and researching employment opportunities focus that search. **(Refer participants to pages 38-45 in the Toolkit.)** Participants’ résumés should stand out and must show a “fit” between the job descriptions and their skills.

The résumé should be one page long, single-sided. Participants should keep their résumés updated, because job opportunities can occur at any time! The résumé should be stored on a computer in a commonly used word processing program so that it can be changed quickly and (if available) e-mailed to employers. Faxing and e-mailing résumés is less preferable than mailing, unless the advertisement specifies using fax or e-mail. Participants should invest in tan or off-white middle weight, bond paper for résumés.

Résumés should highlight members' skills in distinct, punchy statements. Each statements should include a "killer verb" and describe skills. Refer to the brainstorming activity to edit a skills statement. Refer to "The Functional and Chronological Résumé Templates" (Toolkit, pages 39-40) to show participants where to place skills statements.

Show participants how to turn a skills statement into an experience statement. Employers want to see that applicants have experience and skills. On the résumé's job description section, participants should write experience statements using killer verbs and provide employers with a sense of number served, quality of work, and/or impact of work. Employers are more prone to hire people who can (a) make them money, (b) save them money, and/or (c) add some value to their company through community outreach.

Discuss the differences between the functional and chronological résumés. Participants with little employment experience might consider the functional résumé.

## **Résumé Writing: Meeting Varied Experience Levels**

Participants may come to this training with a variety of experience levels related to résumé writing. Most national service programs require résumés. Some participants will have highly polished résumés; others may have next-to-nothing on paper. To use participants' time effectively, consider structuring a workshop with multiple options. You may host a "voluntary" working session on résumés, or offer one-to-one résumé consultation time. You could also split your group into smaller parts to critique each other's résumés, while those without résumés begin developing them.

It is helpful to provide all participants with the same basic information about résumés, as résumé writing is subject to trends and timely topics (e.g. how to submit a résumé over the Internet).

### **V. Writing Cover Letters**

Résumés should not be sent without cover letters. A cover letter is one page long and is printed on heavy bond paper. Cover letters should follow business letter format and should be proofread/edited by someone other than the writer. **(See page 46 of the Toolkit for cover letter information.)**

The applicant should use a cover letter to (a) show his/her personality, (b) show his/her strong desire for the job, (c) talk about his/her knowledge of the company or school, and (d) talk about their knowledge of the field. Employers review cover letters for a fit with the job description and in order to get to know applicants better. Employers also use poor grammar, spelling, and form to screen out applicants.

### **VI. Looking through the Employer Lens**

Conducting the "You're the Employer" activity (Appendix 4) helps participants consider how they are evaluated by potential employers. Divide participants into groups of three or four. Disseminate mock evaluation criteria, résumés, and cover letters. In this simulation,

participants comprise a hiring committee and must screen applicants according to the criteria. Within their groups, have them score each applicant individually, and then discuss how and why they rated the particular applicants. This is a timed activity. For the three examples, allow participants about ten minutes.

During discussion, record what participants like and dislike about each cover letter and résumé. This list becomes a criteria list for their cover letters and résumés.

For those entering school, this process is somewhat similar to the enrollment committee process.

## **VII. The Hiring Process**

After an initial screening, participants can expect to be interviewed at least once for a position. Many companies interview applicants two or three times. At some point a committee of co-workers and supervisors will interview the applicant. For those entering school, interviews do not routinely occur. Those applying for fellowships and scholarships should expect interviews but should read application criteria to see if interviews are required.

## **VIII. Reviewing the Educational Award Options**

This is a good time to review the educational award process with participants and to talk about other AmeriCorps opportunities. The Corporation for National Service and the AmeriCorps Alumni Association offer the most up-to-date information on educational award usage and tax information.

## **IX. Question & Answer**

## **X. Workshop Evaluation**

## Key Points

- Now is a good time to reflect upon what you have learned and experienced through national service. Keep in mind the various ways you can apply what you have learned to your career search.
- Learn how to define and explain your national service experiences in a succinct manner. This will be valuable as you design résumés and cover letters and apply for school.
- “Killer verbs” are action-oriented and precise, making the reader take notice. Practice using these verbs to describe your accomplishments gained through national service. Use killer verbs in cover letters and résumés.
- Your résumé is the primary tool for marketing yourself to potential employers.
- Your résumé should be short and highlight your skills in distinct, dynamic statements.
- Be sure to keep your résumé stored on a computer and updated. Career, scholarship, or award opportunities may arise at any time, and you will want to be prepared.
- There are two main types of résumés: functional and chronological. Decide which résumé is most appropriate for your experience and audience. Many employers may be turned off by functional résumés, so be aware of this bias.
- Keep yourself updated on important résumé trends. Visit local career services centers and the library to get recent information about effective résumé writing and development.
- A cover letter must be included with every job application and résumé that you submit. Do not send a résumé without a cover letter.
- The cover letter is one page long and should follow business letter format. It should express your personality and interest in the job as well as your skills and knowledge of the job or organization.
- Employers use cover letters to acquire a sense of the applicants’ skills and personalities, and to screen out those who might not fit the position. Be sure your cover letter has been proofread and uses correct grammar and spelling.
- Interviews are a part of any career search, and sometimes a part of the admissions process to an educational or service organization. Strengthening your interviewing skills will help set you apart from other applicants.
- Practice interviewing. Visit the library for books and other information about effective interviewing strategies.

## **Suggested Follow-Up Activities**

- Bring a human resources specialist or personnel director in to speak to participants about the job hiring process.
- Contact a one-stop career center and have a career counselor or vocational rehabilitation specialist talk to participants about free services, the job market, and potential careers.
- Have employers conduct mock interviews with participants and provide ample time for feedback.
- Have participants check Internet Web sites for résumés. There are many search engines that can point them in the right direction.
- Have participants go to a bookstore or library and read through a “How-To” résumé guide.
- Bring in a union representative to talk to participants about what unions do.



## Resources

Purdue University Web site clearinghouse: [www.purdue.edu](http://www.purdue.edu) (go to "Career Info & Help," then "Job/resume Web Sites")

On-line Career Center: [www.careerfairs.com](http://www.careerfairs.com)

U.S. Office of Personnel Management job vacancies: [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

Geisel, Theodore (Dr. Seuss) (1990). *Oh, the places you'll go!* New York: Random House.

Parker, Yana (1996). *The résumé catalog*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

# APPENDIX 1

## Career Transitions I: Taking Inventory of Accomplishments, Abilities, and Interests

### CREATING CAREER PORTFOLIOS TRAINING SCRIPT

#### Introduction

**Instructions to Participants.** Using only five words or less, write down what you do at your AmeriCorps or VISTA project site or on your team. When you are finished, turn to the person next to you and share with him/her your five words, and then actually describe the experience.

Facilitators invite a few participants to share their examples with the entire group. Have a couple of people give their examples.

#### Key points

- We need to be concise and focused in our job searches and in our resumes and cover letters.
- However, trying to cram what we've done, what we want, and what we can offer into résumés can be frustrating and can downplay our true abilities. It's not easy to describe AmeriCorps in five words or less, much less our site descriptions.
- Portfolios offer us a tool to show a little bit more for ourselves and prospective employers.

#### Portfolio Overview

- **Ask Participants:** What is a career Portfolio?

Write down their answers on a flipchart. Then share the definition from the overhead.

- **Ask Participants:** When and why might you use a career portfolio?

Encourage a variety of answers. Review information from overheads. Give stories on how you have seen career portfolios used. Ask participants how they plan to use portfolios and what motivated them to attend this workshop.

#### Portfolio Composition

**Explain to Participants (Use overheads).** A portfolio is a collection of artifacts. There are countless kinds of artifacts that can be included in a portfolio to represent you and your

accomplishments. You are only limited by your creativity. Break participants into groups of five, and have them do the following activity.

**Instructions to Participants.** Write down a recent activity that you have done and feel proud of on an index card. Be brief, but fully explain the activity. (e.g. I just designed a tutoring lesson for my students.) Once you have finished, pass your card to the person on the left. That person should write down one sample artifact that could represent the described accomplishment in a portfolio. The cards then get passed to the left again and a new artifact idea should be written. Continue this until all group members have written on each card. Then return the cards to the original owners. You should each have four different ideas for potential artifacts. Take a moment to review these ideas for artifacts.

➤ **Ask Participants:** Can anyone volunteer to share with the group the activity you listed and the artifact ideas that you received from your group?

Chart the artifact ideas that are shared. (e.g. certificates, photographs etc.) Ask the participants to brainstorm additional artifacts.

## The Standards

**Explain to participants:** There is not one specific formula for developing a career portfolio. Portfolios should be tailored to the individual and to the purpose of the portfolio. However, to help in designing a career portfolio, there are four main categories of portfolio information. How each of these is designed and compiled is flexible and at the discretion of the owner.

Use the appropriate overheads to correspond with the following points.

- **An introduction.** An introduction, while not required, is a very useful way to frame the content and intent of your portfolio. The introduction is the first thing that the portfolio reviewer will encounter in your portfolio. It could be a photograph, a personal essay, a paragraph describing the content of your portfolio, or simply your résumé. It could be a specific artifact you find important. What is critical is that you should be sure that the introduction conveys the initial message that you wish the reviewer to receive. For example, if you wish to represent yourself very creatively through your portfolio, the introduction should reflect that message.
- **Résumé.** Since there are countless resources and workshops about résumé writing available, we won't spend much time on that topic. However, a résumé is a useful piece of information to include in your portfolio, and the portfolio is a handy place to store your résumé.
- **Commendation letters.** (Go over each point on the overhead). These letters are very important to have on hand, and they can provide a representation of the people who support your work. Commendation letters are important in a portfolio, because they provide a secondary voice about your accomplishments and an outside perspective about your abilities. This adds to the primary source information that you can include in your portfolio.

- **Artifacts.** We have discussed various options for artifacts already and ways to think about portfolio artifact possibilities. Each portfolio should have a minimum of ten artifacts.

## Tailoring Your Portfolio

Break participants into groups of five to eight. (Use the overhead to help guide this activity.)

**Instructions to Participants.** The following activity will help you think about customizing your portfolio. Portfolios should be unique, not generic. Portfolios can and should be tailored to the individuals designing them and to the prospective position or purpose of the portfolios. As you design and present your portfolio, consider your audience and how they will view your portfolio. You can then add or remove information accordingly.

Consider the following situations. Brainstorm five artifacts that each individual might put into his/her portfolio to reflect the position for which he or she is applying.

1. An AmeriCorps member with experience tutoring with an after school program is applying for a teaching position
  2. An AmeriCorps member with Conservation Corps experience is applying for an environmental education position with a nonprofit organization.
  3. An AmeriCorps/VISTA member who has trained and coordinated volunteers is applying for a Volunteer Coordinator position for a local business.
- **Ask Participants:** What were some of the artifacts you selected for each position and why? What did you learn from this activity?

## Sample Portfolios

Keep participants in small groups. Give each group a sample portfolio to review. (You should have about four to five samples)

**Instructions to Participants.** Take a few moments to look through your portfolio. What do you like or dislike about the portfolio design? Come up with five descriptive words about the portfolio. What does the portfolio tell you about the individual?

## Pulling It Together: Portfolio Timeline

**Explain to Participants (Use overheads and refer participants to toolkit).** Pulling together a portfolio cannot happen overnight. You need to start as early as possible to gather a variety of information and to create a quality product that reflects your talents and abilities. The following timeline demonstrates how you can spend a little time each month and have a portfolio that you are proud of by the end of your service term.

**Instructions to Participants.** Think of several artifacts that you want to collect to put in your portfolio already. List them in your career toolkit. Also think of a list of people from

whom you would like to receive commendation letters, and write down their names. It is important to give people plenty of time to prepare letters, so ask them well in advance.

## **Evaluation**

# WHAT IS A CAREER PORTFOLIO?

**Port-FOL-i-o** 1a. A portable case for holding material, such as loose papers, photographs, or drawings. 1b. The materials collected in such a case, especially when representative of a person's work.

## A portfolio is:

- a collection in progress.
- a place where you store things related to your training, work and service experience, contributions, and special accomplishments.
- a tool to help *you* understand and remember your talents and accomplishments.
- a tool to help you communicate your talents and accomplishments *to others*.
- used at some point during a job interview.
- a tool contains only relevant material to the job for which you are interviewing.
- a collection that will change and evolve over time.

## Why Is A Portfolio Useful?

**A portfolio is useful because it:**

- is a *cumulative documentation* of your career development.
- gives you a sense of accomplishment.
- encourages you to hold yourself accountable for your life.
- emphasizes what you *can* do, rather than what you cannot do.
- requires self-reflection.
- is a tangible product.

**When should you start pulling your portfolio together?**

**NOW!!!**

## Artifacts

**AR-ti-fact** 1. Any object made by human work; especially a simple or primitive tool, weapon, or vessel. 2. a wahtchuhmuhjing. 3. a thingy 4. a physical representation of your highly competent achievements.

**An *artifact* is that which you put in your portfolio, such as....**

- pictures of people you helped, land you worked, or things you built.
- certificates you earned through training.
- charts or statistics of program changes you brought about.
- flyers or promotional material from an event you organized.
- agendas from meetings you coordinated or attended.
- reports you wrote that were disseminated.
- newsletters you wrote, edited, or formatted.
- copies of commendations for work well done.

## MADE TO ORDER

You will benefit by tailoring your portfolio to fit the needs of the job or position that you are seeking.

Write down five items that you should put into your career portfolio for each of the following positions:

1. A VISTA Volunteer with experience tutoring with an after school program is applying for a teaching position
2. An AmeriCorps member with conservation corps experience is applying for an environmental education position with a nonprofit organization.
3. An AmeriCorps/VISTA member who has trained and coordinated volunteers is applying for a Volunteer Coordinator position for a local business.

## PORTFOLIO TIMELINE

Now is the time to start pulling together your career or service portfolio. With the planning timeline below, just one activity per month will put you on the road to portfolio completion.

| MONTH         | ACTIVITY  |
|---------------|---|
| <b>One</b>    | Find a box or accordion file. Label it "Portfolio Stuff."   |
| <b>Two</b>    | Save your AmeriCorps orientation and training agendas. Put them in the "portfolio stuff" box.   |
| <b>Three</b>  | Did you have to write an application essay, conduct a self-assessment, or do a visioning activity as part of your introduction to the program? Save that and toss it in the "portfolio stuff" too.                      |
| <b>Four</b>   | Bring a camera to your AmeriCorps project. Take at least ten pictures. They can be of students, nature, finished projects—as long as they represent your work.  |
| <b>Five</b>   | Collect at least three artifacts that represent three different service projects you have completed with AmeriCorps. If you are at one site for the whole year, think of the different things you do at your site.      |
| <b>Six</b>    | Collect at least one letter of commendation from a site supervisor, community member, team leader, or other professional contact. If you get a good evaluation from a supervisor, save it to include in your portfolio. |
| <b>Seven</b>  | Collect two more letters of commendation from other people and at least three more artifacts.   |
| <b>Eight</b>  | Begin assembling your portfolio. Use a three-ring binder or other format. Make sure you have at least ten potential "artifacts."  |
| <b>Nine</b>   | Review the artifacts and materials you have assembled so far. Determine what you want to be sure to add in the final few months of your AmeriCorps experience.  |
| <b>Ten</b>    | Write an introduction to your portfolio. This can help you focus what you include and if you want to look for additional materials.   |
| <b>Eleven</b> | Put together your portfolio in its "final" version. Include final commendations from supervisors or others.   |
| <b>Twelve</b> | Ask two or three people to review your portfolio and make suggestions for improvement. Revise as you like.  |

## Portfolio Table of Contents

Artifact \_\_\_\_\_

**Letters of Commendation From:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Recommendations

You are not in this job search alone. In the interview, you may be a soloist, but you have a choir of people—your professional network—to back you up and recommend you.

**From the American Heritage Dictionary:**

**com-MEND** 1. To represent as worthy, qualified, or desirable.  
2. To express approval or praise.

### **Choose your choir and teach it to sing your praises.**

1. **Recruit five or six references.** Two should be personal references, but not family members. Four should be professional references, and at least two should be supervisors.
2. **Teach them the tune.** Talk to your references about what you would like them to say and *not* to say about you. Talk to them about your skills, talents, experiences, and mission statement.
3. **Write the Song.** Ask your references to write letters of recommendation that you can keep on hand for distribution. Sometimes your reference will ask you to write your own recommendation letter, especially if you need it quickly!
4. **Whistle While You Work.** Continually update your letters of recommendation while you are working. Periodically ask supervisors to update their letters of recommendation for you.
5. **Avoid Overbooking Your Group.** If employers do not ask for references, do not offer them. In an extensive job search, you will be contacting many employers. If all the employers called your references, your choir might lose its voice!
6. **Keep in Contact.** Call references to update them on your career search and your applications. If an employer wishes to contact them, try to contact your references first to alert them of the impending call. This will make them more comfortable.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Career Transitions II: Exploring Career Options**  
**HYBRID CAREERS ACTIVITY**

|                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community college               | Hospital                     |
| Insurance                       | Small business               |
| United Way                      | Community-based organization |
| Laboratory                      | University                   |
| School                          | Social service agency        |
| City                            | Restaurant                   |
| State                           | Department store             |
| Department of Natural Resources | Department of Forestry       |
| Computer company                | Housing project/property     |
| Union                           | Newspaper                    |
| Museum                          | Factory                      |
| Advertising agency              | Thrift shop                  |
| Restaurant                      | Telephone company            |
| Community center                | Radio station                |

|                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Support staff          | Researcher                 |
| Manager                | Buyer                      |
| Ecologist              | Salesperson                |
| Counselor              | Owner                      |
| Lobbyist               | Security chief             |
| Planner                | Photographer               |
| Developer              | Worker                     |
| Artist                 | Performer                  |
| Information Specialist | Marketer                   |
| Specialist             | Writer                     |
| Organizer              | Librarian                  |
| Advisor                | Human Resources Specialist |
| Contractor             | Painter                    |

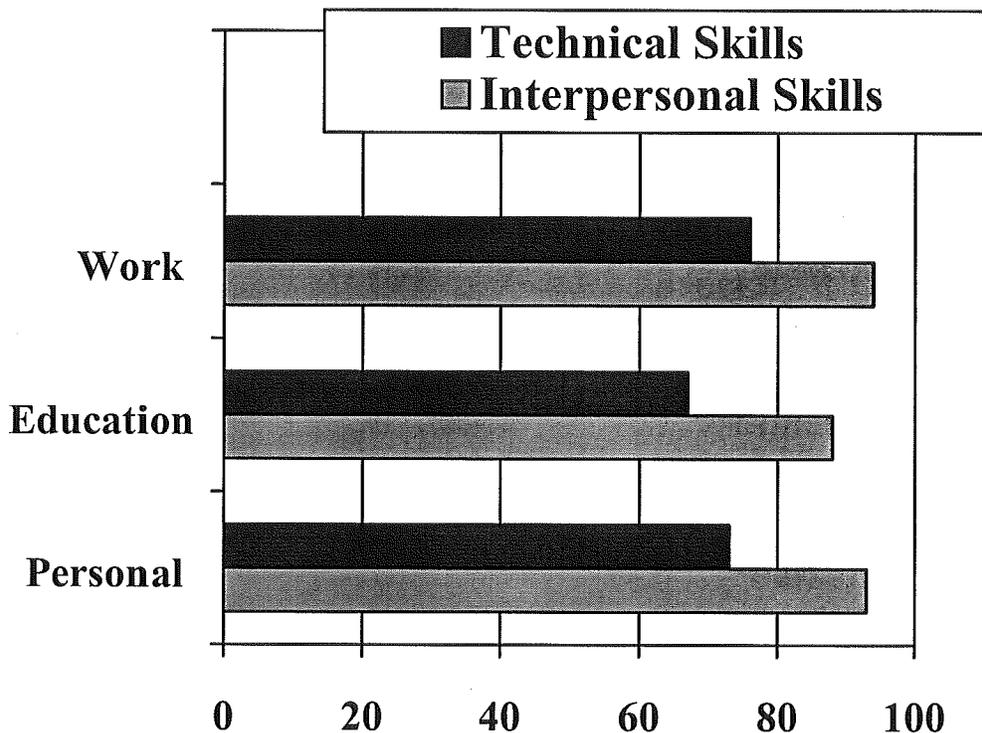
## APPENDIX 3

### Career Transitions II: Exploring Career Options

#### Interpersonal and Technical Skills

These skills can be grouped into two categories: interpersonal skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication skills, and technical skills such as literacy training and how to operate machinery. Between 88 and 94 percent of the respondents indicated that interpersonal skills they learned through their AmeriCorps experience had impacted their personal lives, education, and work lives. Between 67 and 76 percent of the respondents held the same view regarding technical skills they learned through AmeriCorps experience.

**Figure 2: Impact of Interpersonal Skills and Technical Skills Learned Through AmeriCorps on Members' Personal Lives, Educational Experiences, and Work Lives**



Between 84 and 91 percent of the respondents regarded the training they received from their AmeriCorps programs and at their service sites as valuable. Eighty-six percent reported that they had used or were using the skills or knowledge they gained through AmeriCorps. About 94 percent of the respondents indicated they would recommend their friends to join AmeriCorps in general or the programs they served.

**Source: Results of Northwest Former AmeriCorps Member Survey  
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998**

## APPENDIX 4

### Career Transitions III: Filling the Toolbox

#### Cover Letter 1

Kim Jones  
1156 Elaine Lane  
Los Angeles, CA 56169  
(203) 674-9857

April 6, 1998

Andrea Baker  
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Andrea:

Perhaps you remember me. I worked at the Los Angeles Conservation Corps in the Education and Development Departments. I saw your position announcement on the Internet, and I would like to apply my services to the work of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

My years of training and working in education, combined with the five years I spent at the Corps, have given me a broad understanding of the needs that nonprofit and educational organizations face. I am currently on my own, offering editing and publishing services to nonprofit and educational organizations.

- You need grant proposals written.
- You need training materials and employee handbooks for staff.
- You need attractive educational and informational materials for students, clients, current and potential donors.

I understand that and have experience providing these services. I consistently deliver high quality work, meet deadlines, and I work with you politely and respectfully.

If you are unsure of my experience and have a small project in need of editing and formatting, I am willing to do it pro bono to display my skills and talents.

I will call you soon to be sure you received this information and to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kim Jones

**Kim Jones**  
**1156 Elaine Lane**  
**Los Angeles, CA 56169**  
**(203) 674-98578**

## Skills

---

- **Produce professional development curricula**
- **Use Microsoft Office and Corel Office Suite**
- **Design and write Web pages**

## Experience

---

**Owner, Keeping Up with Jones.**  
**Los Angeles, CA**

**1997-present**

Independent web-page design and marketing firm. Work with contractors to design and evaluate Internet Web sites for promotional purposes. Produced newspaper advertisements for retail businesses.

**Program Specialist, Los Angeles Conservation Corps**  
**Los Angeles, CA.**

**1995-1997**

Supervised program staff on Conservation Corps worksites. Produced training material to assist with orientation training. Produced train-the-trainer curricula to assist area Conservation Corps programs to institute a safety education program.

## Evidence

---

Viper Room Web site. [www.snakes.ick](http://www.snakes.ick)

Perfect Plush Carpeting Web site. [www.underfoot.sgi](http://www.underfoot.sgi)

Steamfitters and Pipefitters Local 578 Web site. [www.local578.pvc](http://www.local578.pvc)

*Improving Safety: A Guide for Program Directors* (1996), available upon request.

L.A. County Conservation Corps (1995), available upon request.

## Cover Letter 2

April 4, 1998

Andrea Baker  
Northwest Region Educational Laboratory  
101 SW Main St.  
Portland, OR 97204

Ms. Baker:

Jennifer Nelson at the CE2 program in Tigard gave me your position announcement for writer/editor. I am highly interested in this position.

My résumé is enclosed. You had asked for samples of my editing work. The contract editing work I did for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service involved large projects—700-page documents. If you would like to see them, I can bring them to your office.

I have written one grant proposal for the Tigard School District. I worked with Jennifer and also with Steve Lake, who is a computer technology instructor at Tigard High School.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Heather Redford  
P.O. Box 5176  
Tigard, OR 67890  
(503) 694-1234

**Heather Redford  
P.O. Box 5176  
Tigard, OR 67890**

## **Education**

### **Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction**

**Portland State University**

Concentration: Reading Instruction  
Educational Technology

### **Bachelor of Arts**

**University of Michigan-Ann Arbor**

Concentration: English  
Minor: Computer Sciences

### **Teaching Certification**

Oregon- English 8-12 (provisional)  
Michigan- English 7-12

## **Employment History**

**1997-present  
(part-time)**

**Technology Education instructor, Tigard High School  
Tigard, Oregon**

*Responsibilities:* Teach basic and advanced computer technology courses to high school students, grades nine through twelve. Assist students to write, layout, print, and distribute school newsletter. Coordinate yearbook production.

1997-1998  
(part-time)

Writer/editor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Portland, OR

*Responsibilities:* Review data and produce Fish and Wildlife Service report "The State of the Walleye in Northeastern Oregon." Assured the evaluation report met federal report standards. Edited researcher and evaluator data and writing.

1995-1997

Substitute teacher, Portland Metropolitan School  
District  
Portland, Oregon

*Responsibilities:* Full-time substitute teacher for three Portland Metro high schools.

1995-1996

Writer, *The Syndicate*  
Portland, Oregon

*Responsibilities:* Wrote four articles for the alternative Internet newspaper that, at its height, had a circulation of 1,500 readers.

## Cover Letter 3

1526 S.W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Janesville, Wisconsin 59254  
(608) 474-9876

April 1, 1998

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Review Committee:

While reading about your organization, I learned about your posting for position #25, writer/editor. I am highly interested in this position at your organization.

I have held several positions at Jossey-Bass Press, an educational literature publishing company based in San Francisco with satellite offices in Janesville. Through this work, I have become familiar with NWREL's staff, researchers, and interest areas. I have always been impressed with the quality of NWREL's research and evaluations.

Thank you for considering this application. Hire me, and I will work hard to increase the quality of your organization's publications.

Sincerely,

Rick Herd

**Rick Herd**  
**1526 S.W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue**  
**Janesville, Wisconsin**  
**59254**  
**(608) 474-9876**

## **Skills**

- Write competency-based, student-centered math and science curriculum.
- Use Quark Express, PageMaker Plus, and Visio computer programs
- Edit texts

## **Education and Certification**

**Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Journalism**  
Beloit College, 1994

**Microsoft Office certification**  
Western Wisconsin Technical College, 1996

## **Experience**

**Writer/editor, Jossey-Bass Press; Janesville, Wisconsin**  
Co-authored *Best Practices in Project-Based Learning*, which included extensive interviews, evaluation, and production of original text. Edited *A Buyer's Guide to Education: How to Choose Your Child's School*, a pamphlet circulated to Milwaukee parents. Layout professional for "How to Talk to the Teacher: A Parent's Guide to Mediating Conflict," a web-based document written for the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1997-present).

**Curriculum Specialist, Western Wisconsin Technical College; Beloit, Wisconsin**  
Coordinated training events for a four-school consortium in the Western Wisconsin Technical College area. Located speakers that pertained to school district professional development priorities. Marketed and evaluated events. Wrote newsletter (1995-1997).

## **Documents**

Herd, R. and Methusala, B. (1999) *Best Practices in Project-Based Learning*. Janesville: Jossey-Bass Press.

Methusala, B. (1998) *A Buyer's Guide to Education: How to Choose Your Child's School*. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public School District.

Beckett, T. and Joyce, J. (1997) *How to Talk to the Teacher: A Parent's Guide to Mediating Conflict*. St. Louis: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pre-screening  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Interview  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Screening for Interview

**Rating Sheet**

Reviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Code:**  
**4. Highly Qualified**  
**3. Qualified**  
**2. Marginally Qualified**  
**1. Not Qualified**  
**0. Unknown**

|  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional editing experience  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Use Internet and other sources to search, retrieve and abstract research |   |   |   |   |   |
| Use IBM MSWord, Quark Xpress   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Format material for publication  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Maintain Timelines while under pressure                                  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Work in field of education   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Professional educational writing experience                              |   |   |   |   |   |
| Curriculum development experience  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Able to supervise other staff  |   |   |   |   |   |

Coordinate with and work on a team

Total Score

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments/Notes:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5

### Career Transitions II: Exploring Career Options

#### CAREER FIELDS

|                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Accountant                   | Clothes designer            |
| Actor                        | Coach                       |
| Actuary                      | College teacher             |
| Administrative assistant     | Commercial artist           |
|                              |                             |
| Admissions director          | Computer operator           |
| Advertising worker           | Computer programmer         |
| Affirmative action speaker   | Computer service technician |
| Agricultural extension agent | Consultant                  |
|                              |                             |
| Airline ticket agent         | Congressional aide          |
| Animal care worker           | Construction worker         |
| Announcer                    | Consumer protection worker  |
| Architect                    | Copywriter                  |
|                              |                             |
| Activist                     | Cosmetologist               |
| Artist                       | Counselor                   |
| Athletic trainer             | Court reporter              |
| Auctioneer                   | Criminal investigator       |
|                              |                             |
| Auditor                      | Customs worker              |
| Automobile salesperson       | Dancer                      |
| Bank manager                 | Dean of students            |
| Bank teller                  | Dental hygienist            |
|                              |                             |
| Bicycle shop owner           | Dentist                     |
| Biologist                    | Designer                    |
| Blacksmith                   | Detective                   |
| Bookbinder                   | Dietician                   |
|                              |                             |
| Bookkeeper                   | Disc jockey                 |
| Border patrol agent          | Display worker              |
| Broadcast technician         | Diver                       |
| Building manager             | Drafting worker             |
|                              |                             |
| Bus driver                   | Dressmaker                  |
| Buyer                        | Driver                      |
| Cafeteria manager            | Drug counselor              |
| Camp director                | Boy/Girl scout executive    |
|                              |                             |

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Caterer                      | Ecologist                 |
| Chamber of commerce manager  | Economist                 |
| Chef                         | Editor                    |
| Chemist                      | Elementary school teacher |
| Child care worker            | Farmer                    |
| Fashion designer             | Locomotive engineer       |
| Fast food restaurant manager | Logger                    |
| Financial planner            | Machine tool operator     |
| Fire fighter                 | Machinist                 |
|                              |                           |
| Fishing worker               | Magician                  |
| Food scientist               | Mail carrier              |
| Foreign service officer      | Management consultant     |
| Forester                     | Management trainee        |
|                              |                           |
| Funeral service director     | Market researcher         |
| Gardener                     | Marketing manager         |
| Geologist/earth science      | Mechanic                  |
| Government worker            | Medical assistant         |
|                              |                           |
| Guard                        | Mental health worker      |
| Guidance worker              | Merchant marine sailor    |
| Health worker                | Metal worker              |
| High school teacher          | Military service person   |
|                              |                           |
| Historian                    | Miner                     |
| Home/motel manager           | Mining engineer           |
| Illustrator                  | Motion picture producer   |
| Industrial designer          | Museum worker             |
|                              |                           |
| Industrial relations worker  | Musician                  |
| Information clerk            | News reporter             |
| Insurance adjuster           | Nuclear technician        |
| Insurance salesperson        | Nurse                     |
|                              |                           |
| Interior designer            | Nursing aide              |
| Interpreter                  | Nutritionist              |
| Investment counselor         | Occupational therapist    |
| Job analyst                  | Oceanographer             |
|                              |                           |
| Journalist                   | Office manager            |
| Judge                        | Optometrist               |
| Juvenile counselor           | Packaging engineer        |
| Labor union official         | Painter                   |
| Landscape architect          | Park ranger               |
|                              |                           |
| Lawyer                       | Parole officer            |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Legal aide                    | Pathologist                              |
| Legislator                    | Performing artist                        |
| Librarian                     | Personnel officer                        |
| Linguist                      | Pest control worker                      |
| Locksmith                     | Pharmacist                               |
| Photographer                  | Sales manager                            |
| Physical education teacher    | School principal                         |
| Physical therapist            | Secretary                                |
| Physician                     | Security/protective services worker      |
|                               |  |
| Physicist                     | Self-employed entrepreneur               |
| Pilot                         | Shoe repairer                            |
| Placement director            | Singer                                   |
| Planning officer              | Social science researcher                |
|                               |  |
| Playwright                    | Social worker                            |
| Police officer                | Sociologist                              |
| Political campaign consultant | Soil scientist                           |
| Post office clerk             | Special education teacher                |
|                               |  |
| Press officer                 | Speech or hearing therapist              |
| Political campaign consultant | Sports management worker                 |
| Post office clerk             | State police officer                     |
| Press officer                 | Statistician                             |
|                               |  |
| Prison guard                  | Store owner                              |
| Probation worker              | Surgeon                                  |
| Professional athlete          | Surveyor                                 |
| Property appraiser            | Systems analyst                          |
|                               |  |
| Psychologist                  | Tax consultant                           |
| Public housing manager        | Teacher                                  |
| Public relations worker       | Teacher aide                             |
| Purchasing officer            | Telephone operator                       |
|                               |  |
| Radio or TV broadcaster       | Teacher of English as a foreign language |
| Railroad worker               | Theatre operator                         |
| Real estate agent             | Title examiner                           |
| Recreation worker             | Training officer                         |
|                               |  |
| Recruiter, for new employees  | Transportation worker                    |
| Rehabilitation counselor      | Travel agent                             |
| Rental car worker             | Truck driver                             |
| Reporter                      | Urban planner                            |
|                               |  |
| Restaurant manger             | Vending machine technician               |
| Retail store salesperson      | Waiter/waitress                          |

|                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Retail store supervisor | Weather forecaster |
| Roofer                  | Welfare counselor  |
| Safety engineer         | Writer             |
| Sales person            | YMCS/YWCA          |
| Sanitation worker       | Youth worker       |

