

*The newsletter of the
National Service
Resource Center*



*A project of ETR
(Education Training
Research) Associates
funded by the Corporation
for National and Community
Service under Cooperative
Agreement
No. 98CA-CA0011*

The Personal Touch: Training the Team Yourself

Maybe you've searched for a trainer and no one is available to train your members or volunteers on a particular day. Maybe you know the subject matter better than anyone else. Maybe you want the experience of training your team yourself so you can handle questions that arise or convey the information precisely.

Whatever the reason, there will likely come a time when you as program coordinator or staff member will be responsible for training your members or volunteers. It does not have to be a daunting experience. The trainer's responsibility is to facilitate the learning of information through activities and discussion. Don't think you have to lecture. In fact, it's better if you don't. By being prepared and planning creative activities for participants to learn from, your job as trainer will be easier and participants will walk away with the skills they need.

Pat Taft, project director for CHP International's training design project for the Corporation for National and Community Service, offers these suggestions to help first-time trainers:

Begin with a needs assessment. A needs assessment does not need to be long or time-consuming. It can be a simple phone call or one-page survey for members or volunteers to

complete. By doing a needs assessment, you can create a training that the participants will take ownership in. (What's a needs assessment? See page 3.)

Involve participants in their own learning. Adults want training that is applicable to their present situation, that uses their experience and knowledge, and that is adapted to their different learning styles. Little is gained in training that is mostly lecture (see "The Learning Pyramid" on page 4). Effective training incorporates experiential activities that build on the participants' own skills. Examples of experiential learning activities are:

- Case studies: Descriptions of actual situations are used as a basis for discussion to analyze or solve a problem.
- Role play: Individuals take on roles to act out a situation or try out material being learned.
- Dyad discussions: Individuals pair off and discuss topics being presented in the training.
- Work plan exercise: Individuals or groups create a plan for the next steps to apply their learning.
- Reflection: Individuals or groups evaluate a topic by answering a series of questions.

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Editor's Box: The Nuts and Bolts of Training

In this issue, we take on the topic of training. We start out with an article on training your team yourself—how to start, what you need to know, what to watch out for. The next article shows how to conduct a needs assessment to accurately determine which topics need to be covered in your training.

To expand your options for trainers beyond doing it yourself, we include articles on working with outside consultants and trainers, finding trainers in your community, and using your members, staff or volunteers as trainers.

The next article shows you how to tap into the national network of training resources, from T/TA provider organizations to publications and online resources. The Library Spotlight offers a plethora of publications on training available through the NSRC website and lending library.

Finally, scattered throughout the issue are helpful sidebars on creating a training agenda, the learning pyramid, helping trainees transfer their new skills, and keeping participants focused during trainings.

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Incorporate different learning styles.

Learning styles vary from person to person, so try and vary the way information is conveyed. Some people (visual learners) learn best if information is presented on flip charts or overheads, in videos or handouts. Auditory learners prefer to hear information through discussion, lecturettes, or audio tapes. Kinesthetic/tactile learners appreciate handouts or any opportunity to learn using objects or interacting with others. Active learners like to be active throughout the training, rather than listening passively.



Provide opportunities for reflection.

At the close of the training and (when the training is lengthy) at the mid-point in the training, give participants an opportunity to reflect on what they've learned and to offer feedback to you. To help participants reflect, ask questions like these:

- Recall: What have we done so far? What was the purpose?
- React: What surprised you? What part did you like the best? What part did you like the least?
- Interpret or synthesize: What new insights have you acquired? What is the significance of this experience?
- Integrate: What are the implications for the way you will do your work? What are the next steps? What do you want to learn more about later?

Create an environment that is conducive to learning. It is critical that:

- Participants feel safe and supported, and feel their abilities and achievements are acknowledged.
- The environment fosters intellectual freedom and encourages creativity and experimentation.
- Participants are treated as peers by the trainer, and their opinions are listened to and appreciated.
- The learning is self-directed and participants take responsibility for their own learning.
- Information is disseminated at a comfortable but challenging pace.

- Participants are actively involved in the learning and are given opportunities to interact with other participants and try out new information.
- Participants give and receive regular feedback.

While you cannot motivate someone to learn, these steps can help make the training more conducive to learning and more beneficial to participants. ■

Creating a Training Agenda

A training agenda should describe the time allocated for each segment, the content and skills to be covered, the materials required, and the person responsible for presenting the content. Keep these agenda pointers in mind as you develop your own training:

Beginning

- Include a review of the learning objectives and agenda. Ask participants what they expect to get out of the training.
- Plan a getting-acquainted activity or ice-breaker that helps you learn about the skills or background of participants. (For ideas, check out "Training Brief 14: Choosing Ice-breakers with a Purpose" at www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html.)

Middle

- Develop content in a logical fashion—build from theory to application and from knowledge to skills.
- Alternate passive and participatory phases.
- Facilitate reflection midway through the training or following critical segments.
- Build in occasional breaks if the session is longer than 90 minutes.

End

- Help participants process the experience through reflection, discussing participants' reaction, how what they learned reinforces or expands what they already know, and how it applies to real situations.
- Ask participants to fill out evaluation forms before they leave.

Needs Assessment: Planning Your Training for Maximum Effectiveness

Trying to decide which trainings are the most important to provide your volunteers or members this year? You can start by asking them. The first step when planning training is a needs assessment. The assessment should not only unearth the topics participants want training in, but also their level of interest, current skill level in the topic, and need for the skill. You can also identify what tasks volunteers or members need to complete and what they must learn to get those tasks done.

“It’s a process that helps people reflect on and narrow down what [they] really want to know,” said Susan Hailman, project director for Campaign Consultation, the sustainability training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

If a training does not meet participants’ needs, they’ll walk away from the training wondering how it will be useful and whether their time was well spent. For example, perhaps you’re wondering about your program coordinators’ expertise in fundraising. A needs assessment can help you determine whether the coordinators need the training, whether they are interested in the topic, and what their current skill level is.

The needs assessment should narrow down, as much as possible, what participants will realistically be able to learn and use, building upon what they already know and do. Complex topics cannot be covered and real skills cannot be developed in a training session that lasts only an hour.

Another important aspect to look at during the needs assessment is the participants’ environment, Hailman said. People often know what they would like to learn, but their work environment is not conducive to implementing their new skills. “A coordinator may say, ‘I need to market my program better,’” Hailman said. “But he’s a one-man shop and every day has 20 phone calls to answer before he can do anything else.” Simply training this beleaguered individual to write a marketing plan is not enough. Part of the needs assessment process is determining how the work environment will support the new behaviors and skills learned in the training.

Take the time to plan with your volunteers or members how they will fit in the new tasks they will learn in the training. Look at whether their supervisors will support their new skills or if there are peers from whom they can get support. One

option is to set up a buddy system that encourages participants to check in with and support each other post-training.

One way to conduct a needs assessment is by scheduling a meeting for that purpose. On June 15, 2001, the Arkansas State Commission spent a day with the state’s program directors to assess their training needs for the upcoming year. The directors shared goals for the upcoming program year, brainstormed about skills and tools needed to accomplish annual goals, and examined which skills and tools could best be handled by local programs and which could use the assistance of the state commission. The day ended with prioritizing training needs, obtaining feedback on previous trainings, and looking at the coordinators’

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Keep Them Focused!



Trainers must constantly battle the human body’s tendency to zone out or become fidgety when forced to sit in one place for too long. Suzanne Richards, training director at the National Crime Prevention Council, has these suggestions for keeping participants focused:

- Change instructional activities, exercises, methods, media, etc., every 20 minutes.
- Present no more than seven items of information before the learners are asked to do something.
- Devote one-third or less of a course to presentation and two-thirds or more to application and feedback.
- We remember best the items covered in the beginning and end of a session, rather than those covered in the middle. Therefore, cover key items early in a session and review them again at the end of the session.
- Take a break in mid-session so learners will be eager to resume. Have exercise breaks—move about, do some stretching.
- Always seek opportunities for learners to respond and be active.

Working with Outside Consultants and Trainers

Bringing in an outside consultant to train your team can bring fresh ideas and a new perspective to the topic. While a new trainer can invigorate your team, they also know little about your team's needs and experiences. To make the most of the time and money spent on the training, be prepared to spend some time and energy working with the consultant beforehand to ensure your training goals are met.

Training is a multibillion-dollar industry. In 1999, U.S. organizations spent \$62.5 billion dollars on training, and \$15 billion of that amount was spent on outside training providers. Trainers vary in presentation styles, training techniques and areas of expertise. Don't be afraid to be selective and specific about your training needs when finding and preparing outside trainers.

"They're not your permanent employees, yet they're going to make or break your training," said Nick Zefran, national training director for AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). "Selection and preparation is critical. Nurturing from beginning to end is appropriate."

Professional trainers who work with the Corporation for National and Community Service offered the following advice to national service programs:

Selecting a Trainer

■ Develop an annual training plan so you will be able to secure a trainer several months in advance of your planned training event. Most trainers need at least six weeks' advance notice.

■ Ask for the trainer's background. Has he/she worked primarily with for-profit corporations or nonprofit community agencies? Has he/she trained mainly adults, young adults or a specific population? Has he/she trained volunteers or members of national service programs before?

■ Ask to see a résumé and copies of materials for trainings they have designed. Check whether the trainings include experiential learning opportunities, whether they accommodate a variety of learning styles and whether they address the different skills of the audience.

Preparing the Trainer

■ Provide information on the organization and the goals of your program. Also provide information on your team, including level of background and experience in the topic, related community experience, and age range.

■ Clearly delineate or work with the trainer to develop learning objectives for the training.

■ Contact the trainer personally and provide written information about the training audience, topic, format, location, and any additional information that will help the trainer tailor the training to the circumstances.

■ Require that the trainer provide you with an outline of the training and learning objectives he/she has prepared to ensure the proposed training will meet your needs.

■ Clearly articulate what is required of the trainer in the contract, including a timeline and specific expectations.

■ Make sure the trainer understands your approach to training. If possible, provide a written document that reflects your organization's training philosophy. Work with the trainer to develop experiential learning activities and other participatory methods of presenting material.

Before, During, and After the Training

■ Prior to the training, call or meet with the trainer to discuss the flow of the training session and iron out any details. If possible, bring in the trainer the day before the training to review the curriculum and to ensure everything is understood.

■ Give trainers opportunities to share their expertise and knowledge, and treat them like professionals. If you're asking them to deliver a curriculum that's already prepared, they may have some valid ideas on how to improve on it.

■ Be timely with your payment. Many consultants perform trainings for a living and rely on trainings as a primary source of income.

■ Be flexible and willing to work with the trainer to create a quality training.

■ Finally, effective trainers know they must tailor their materials to participants' needs and goals. Outside trainers will rely on you to provide them with information and support so they can provide your team with a quality, customized training experience. ■

*For more information, check out "Training Brief 7: Guest Trainers: Ensuring Success" at www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html. Contributors to this article include Nick Zefran, AmeriCorps*NCCC, Susan Hailman, Campaign Consultation, and Pat Taft, CHP International.*

The Learning Pyramid

Research done by the National Training Laboratory shows these average retention rates for different teaching and training methods:

- 5% Lecture
- 10% Reading
- 20% Audiovisual
- 30% Demonstration
- 50% Discussion Group
- 75% Practice by Doing
- 90% Teaching Others

Finding Trainers in Your Community

They're out there—people with the expertise to train your volunteers, members or students in the skills they need, at little or no cost to your program. The problem is, they don't know you're looking for them.

Finding effective but inexpensive trainers and technical assistance resources in your community will take a little research, networking and old-fashioned asking. But the time and effort put into finding local trainers can improve the training your team receives.

Trainers can charge exorbitant fees, but they will often do training for nonprofit organizations at reduced or no cost. "If the individual has been contacted early and has the available time, based on the good merits of your program and the need for the training, it will be hard for them not to say yes," said Pat Taft, project director for CHP International's training and technical assistance project for the Corporation.

The first challenge is finding someone to ask. A good place to start is within your own program or organization. AmeriCorps–St. Louis Partners places AmeriCorps members in local schools. Part of the school district's written agreement with AmeriCorps–St. Louis Partners is to provide training for the members. The agreement also states that AmeriCorps members will be included in any staff development opportunities provided to the teachers.

"If you're going to partner with us, you're going to have to provide training," said program director Kathleen Becherer. "So all the training they provide new teachers, they provide to us." The schools are willing to provide the training because they know they'll receive better members at their schools as a result. Other project sponsors will also see a direct benefit to providing your team with training.

Your staff, board, members, volunteers or students may have skills they can use to train the team. Each of them also is tapped into a network of individuals—friends, spouses, neighbors, or relatives—who they can ask to provide training. Members from national service programs have used their connections to bring in trainers on various topics, from multiculturalism to incorporating living history into the classroom curriculum.

Another close training ally is the national service network in your state or community. Your state commission (check with the PDAT coordi-



nator), Corporation state office, or state education agency can help you plan your training program or connect you with a regional network of local training resources. And other national service programs can either help provide training or connect you with local trainers they have used. AmeriCorps–St. Louis Partners has sent its members out to other national service programs to conduct trainings on CPR/first-aid, diversity and conflict resolution.

You can also look beyond the walls of your organization and the national service community. Local colleges, universities, and community colleges have a large resource base of individuals who can provide skill-based training, as well as training on a variety of topics. "They prove to be a tremendous resource by either having trainers on staff at the college or knowing trainers from work in the community," said Nick Zefran, national training director for AmeriCorps *NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

He recommends starting with the college or university's community service or service-learning department, which are usually housed in the office of student activities. Taft recommends seeking out the student activities council, which may know people who can train on a variety of personal and professional topics.

Many large businesses, hospitals, corporations or government agencies have their own training staff who may be able to help with the training or know of colleagues to whom they can refer you. They also may be willing to provide training space, to assist with the cost of food or to support your cause in other ways.

"Most businesses, corporations and educational facilities are very community-oriented and welcome an opportunity to demonstrate that to their community through involvement," Taft said. "Approach them with an offer to make another contribution to their community through the loan of their training staff."

And if you're initially turned down, don't forget to ask for other ideas. Asking "Can you refer me to someone?" is often your best avenue for finding trainers. "Whether it is for the personal recognition, recognition of their organization or business, a tax deduction, an opportunity to be part of a community event, or just the pleasure they derive from training, if they agree to it, they will gain from it," Taft said. ■

For more information, check out "Training Brief 8: Guest Trainers: Where to Find Them" at www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html.

Using Your Members, Staff or Volunteers as Trainers

Rather than bring in outside experts for training, national service programs can often find what they need right in their own programs. Members, staff, and volunteers bring their own skills to an organization or learn new skills while serving the community that can be passed along to the rest of the program team. Asking people from within your organization to conduct training is cost-effective and gives them an opportunity to gain and improve valuable skills.

Generations Incorporated in Boston decided to make member development a priority for its 20 AmeriCorps and three AmeriCorps*VISTA members. But, with four full-time staff members running three different intergenerational programs, committing the necessary resources was going to be a challenge. “Like most AmeriCorps programs, we have a pretty small staff,” said Melissa Gartenberg, Generations Incorporated deputy director. “Each staff member is responsible for everything from maintaining relationships with site partners to effectively supporting AmeriCorps members.”

So, they recruited AmeriCorps leader Carie Goral to be responsible for planning weekly member development days. Goral not only brings in community trainers but also works with

AmeriCorps staff and members to conduct trainings for the team. Using members as trainers has allowed them to gain leadership and public speaking experience, and has given the team training in a wide spectrum of topics they would not have been exposed to otherwise. “This is a great training experience for AmeriCorps members to learn how to put together a training for somebody else,” Gartenberg said.

AmeriCorps–St. Louis Partners in St. Louis, Missouri, often enlists second-year members to help conduct trainings so they are not experiencing the same training twice. And with a team of 95 full-time AmeriCorps members, the more individuals who can help train, the easier it is to conduct training.

“It gives members more opportunities to practice their presentation skills and facilitation skills,” said program director Kathleen Becherer. “Hopefully, those skills are going to support them in their lifelong ethic of service, because they will continue to facilitate at their neighborhood meetings or at their PTOs [Parent Teacher Organizations] or lead Boy Scout troops, or whatever it happens to be.”

At St. Louis Partners, all AmeriCorps members are potential trainers. The program looks at what skills their members bring to the programs and what skills they learned during the year. A member who studied journalism in college taught other members how to produce middle-school newspapers. A member who was a physical therapist led the team in exercise. The program paid to have a few members trained to be CPR/first-aid trainers, who then trained the rest of the team. Now those members are available to other programs in Missouri for CPR/first-aid training. St. Louis Partners members also have gone into the community to train in community disaster preparedness, urban search and rescue, diversity and emergency preparedness.

Senior Corps participants also have a lot to offer as potential trainers—many of them have a lifetime of experience in such professions as teaching or nursing.

By using staff to train, you can ensure the members and volunteers receive training that is specific to the program and not a cookie-cutter training given by someone else. It also adds a little diversity to their jobs. “It’s helpful for mem-



St. Louis Partners members train in CPR.

bers to see their bosses as experts,” Gartenberg said. “As a staff member, sometimes it’s fun to get to do a training and is different than what you might be doing every day.”

When you can’t afford to send everyone to a conference or a training, consider sending one or two team members who can then come back and share the training with the rest of the team. However, be wary of relying too heavily on your own members, staff and volunteers for training. “If you rely only on internal staff for trainings, they may not always be the best people for it,” Gartenberg said. “To rely exclusively on your own staff could be limiting the expertise you’re bringing in.”

Your team also can tire of seeing the same people conduct training. Bringing in outside trainers can be a refreshing change and add variety, Becherer said. Also, some sensitive training topics such as diversity and conflict resolution are better handled by outside trainers, so members feel free to openly discuss issues or concerns.

Another thing to keep in mind is that most members, volunteers and staff are not professional trainers—they will need support and guidance along the way. At Generations Incorporated, one of Goral’s primary responsibilities is providing support to members who are planning trainings. She sets deadlines, provides resources, helps them brainstorm and gives them a realistic baseline of what they can accomplish.

In the beginning of the year, she mostly asked community organizations to conduct trainings for the team. Now, she’s relying more on the members themselves to plan and deliver training. “They really enjoy seeing each other shine and learn from each other,” Goral said. “It definitely mixes it up. I truly believe if I would’ve kept on bringing in different outside trainers, they would’ve gotten bored.”

Goral urges all program coordinators to consider using members and volunteers as trainers. “I know it’s hard because you’re taking the risk of not knowing if it is an effective use of time,” she



Generations Incorporated AmeriCorps members doing a team-building exercise on member development day.

said. “I still think it’s a win-win situation. The member who is planning is learning to grow and helping another member.” ■

Generations Incorporated is a nonprofit organization in Boston which aims to strengthen communities through the development of intergenerational relationships. Programs include Generation Clubs, which create long-term relationships between adolescents and elders in senior residences and facilities, and Leaps in Literacy, which brings older adults into elementary schools to work one-on-one as reading coaches with second and third graders. For more information, call 617-423-6633 or access this website: www.generationsinc.org.

Members at AmeriCorps–St. Louis Partners serve throughout the city of St. Louis addressing critical needs in the areas of education and public safety. Members serve in St. Louis Public Schools, on the Emergency Response Team, and on a Conflict Resolution Team, providing conflict resolution training in the St. Louis Public Schools. For more information, call 314-772-9002.

Tapping into the National Network of Training Resources

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides a national system of training and technical assistance (T/TA) resources to ensure that all Corporation-funded programs and projects have access to support when needed. You can make use of this system in a variety of ways:

■ The Corporation has established cooperative agreements with a selection of national training organizations who can provide training and technical assistance services to grantees, sub-grantees and projects in a range of sectors. These sectors include common areas of need, national priority and national standards, such as sustainability, financial and program management, education, civic engagement, evaluation, and leadership development, among others. For a list and description of each of these national provider organizations, go to the National Service Resource Center (NSRC) website at <http://www.etr.org/nsrc>, and click on “T/TA resource guide.”

■ These providers are often utilized through state-level, regional or national training events, which program and project personnel may be able to attend. Many are organized by, or in cooperation with, state commissions and Corporation state offices, often working together, and are conducted to respond to needs that have been determined through needs assessments. Others may be organized by national parent organizations or by the Corporation itself (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve America). For more information, and for guidance in identifying training needs and possibilities, contact the training coordinator or program officer at your state commission (the commission often plays a coordinating role in this effort). Be aware of the commission’s training calendars, needs assessment efforts and informational systems (website, listservs, newsletters), as well as those of state offices and parent organizations. There is a great effort to increase collaboration in training events and provide access to national providers across all the national service streams.

■ These national T/TA organizations can also provide a variety of direct services to Corporation-funded programs and projects through telephone or electronic technical assistance and materials. They are available in this way to help you explore and define your needs and gain assistance from them in meeting them. For this type of technical assistance, you may call or contact them directly to explore possible areas of assis-

tance (click on “T/TA resource guide” on the NSRC website).

■ In the national T/TA provider system, the National Service Resource Center plays a central role. The NSRC maintains both a website and a toll-free number that can be accessed to gain specific information on the provider system, areas of assistance, and publications and materials produced by the providers or the Corporation. Many publications are directly available online and can be downloaded for printing by accessing the NSRC website and clicking on “online documents.” Hard copies of these and many other publications are also available through the NSRC lending library and publications distribution (click on “resource library” and “publications distribution”). Also, see the Library Spotlight in this newsletter (page 10).

■ The NSRC also maintains or can provide access to a series of listservs that have been created for specific programs and/or sectors and have been joined by commission, program and project personnel and members/volunteers across the country. The listserv subjects range from ACList (AmeriCorps) to ReadsList (literacy and tutoring) to NSSCTalk (Senior Corps). To learn more, click on “electronic discussion groups” on the NSRC website.

■ For several sectors, the Corporation maintains specific resource centers, such as the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC), which plays a similar central role in coordinating resources and information for service-learning projects and those desiring assistance in the service-learning area. You can access the NSLC by going to www.servicelearning.org. In addition, the Senior Corps maintains a Technology Project resource center at www.seniortechcenter.org that serves the national network of Senior Corps programs—Foster Grandparent Programs, Senior Companion Programs, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program—and helps them make meaningful and effective use of technology.

■ The Corporation also supports a special effort to promote and diffuse effective practices in a variety of national and community service areas. This initiative, called the Effective Practices Information Center, or EpiCenter, consists of an online database of effective practices, arranged by category, contributed by national service programs and organizations around the country. You can access EpiCenter through the

T/TA Master Calendar

This is a calendar of events, conferences and meetings of interest to programs in national service. To find out what’s happening, visit www.etr.org/nsrc/calendar.html.

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Evaluating Your Training

With all the logistics to take care of when planning a training, it's often easy to overlook evaluation. However, without an effective evaluation, you can continue to plan ineffective trainings without knowing why.

"It's not just doing a 'happy sheet' at the end," said Susan Hailman, project director for Campaign Consultation, the sustainability training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service. "It's looking at the whole system. If a training didn't do what you wanted it to do, at what point did we lose that thread? Training isn't magic and it's not like a machine where you put people through and they come out different on the other side."

To determine the effectiveness of a training, you'll want to assess (1) what participants thought of the training and (2) whether participants gained the appropriate skills, knowledge or attitudes. Both types of evaluation are important but require different tools and questions.

According to *Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training* (Mosaica), assessing the quality of the training may include asking participants to rate factors such as the appropriateness of the training design, length, topics, and content; the quality of the facilitation; opportunities for experiential learning and group interaction; and the adequacy of training facilities.

To measure whether skills were gained or learning objectives were met, you may require oral or written presentations or tests, demonstrations of skills, or other performance-based evaluation. The primary purpose of these evaluations is not to grade the participants, but to determine the effectiveness of the training in helping them develop needed knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Simple pre- and post-testing is one way to gauge participants' awareness of the topic before and after the training, Hailman said. The results of the pre- and post-tests also can be useful in requesting money for future trainings because the results can quantify the difference a training made.

She also recommends asking participants to think about the questions they want answered during the training and then finding out whether participants can answer those questions at the end of the training.

Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training lists these other methods of evaluation:

- Informal feedback and discussion
- Trainer observations of individual and group performance and interaction

- Role plays and games
- Community activities applying knowledge and skills
- Member focus groups
- Member self-assessments of group process and interaction
- Member reflection such as journaling or creating a portfolio
- Self-assessment checklists

Evaluation of a training should start even before the participants walk in the door, and it doesn't end when the evaluation sheets are

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So Now What? Helping Trainees Transfer Their New Skills

- Ask trainees to develop written action plans about how they are going to use the new skills.
- After each exercise or discussion, give trainees a few minutes to think about how the skills will apply to their situation.
- Arrange a follow-up course a month or two after the original course. The purpose is to assess progress, discuss problems in application, and find ways of solving those problems. Both trainees and their supervisors should attend this follow-up course together.
- Give supervisors a training session or briefing on how to coach, guide, and encourage the use of new skills back at their site.
- At the end of the training program, have a discussion about obstacles that could impede progress in applying the new skills. Brainstorm and discuss ways of overcoming the obstacles.
- Send brief quizzes out after the course to refresh learners on course content.
- A few weeks or months after the course, phone or send a memo to participants to find out what they have done regarding the course content. Collect the responses and send them out as a mini-report to everyone who attended.

Source: Suzanne Richards, National Crime Prevention Council.

For More Information

To get help with evaluation, contact Project Star, a training and technical assistance provider. Call 1-800-548-3656 or visit www.projectstar.org.

Library Spotlight: Training

Corporation for National and Community Service programs may check out these and other items from our Library Catalog by contacting Bernadette Perez:

Phone:
800-860-2684, ext.260

TDD:
831-461-0205

Fax:
831-430-9471

Website:
www.etr.org/nsrc/library.html

Address:
NSRC/ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA
95061-1830



Opinions or points of view expressed in this newsletter or in these referenced items are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National and Community Service or ETR Associates.

AmeriCorps Education Awards Programs: Starting Strong and Staying on Track
Catholic Network of Volunteer Service
Approximately 150 pages, R1636
Sections on Corporation requirements, start-up tips, member recruitment, site supervisor resources, member orientation, program monitoring, site management, and training and technical assistance. Includes disk with sample forms.

Basic Training for Trainers: A Handbook for New Trainers
Gary Kroehnert
227 pages, C0203
Overview of training components, with guidelines for developing skills as a trainer. Includes a training needs analysis, sessions plans, methods of instruction, and training aids.

Conducting Training Workshops: A Course for Beginners
Eileen Van Kavelaar
174 pages, C0929
Outlines principles involved in planning a training workshop. Discusses how to determine the context of training, identify learning objectives, and select instructional methods and strategies.

Games Trainers Play
Edward Scannell
303 pages, C1122
Games, activities, and exercises for trainers to teach a variety of skills. Each game includes the objective, procedure, discussion questions, materials required, approximate time required, and the primary source or contributor to the activity.

Great Trainer's Guide: How to Train (Almost) Anyone to Do (Almost) Anything!
Sue Vineyard
184 pages, C0005
Training theories in an easy-to-understand format with the goal of creating competent, honest, well informed trainers. Discusses an overview of training, the trainer, the audience, effective training formats, methods, and climate.

Looking In, Reaching Out: A Manual for Training Service Volunteers
Dorinne and Ret Thomas
192 pages, C0077
Discusses concepts and skills to assist in learning and applying human relation and communication

skills in both personal and professional settings. Benefits individuals who are training service volunteers to act as role models, mentors, and peer helpers. Includes three units of sixteen lesson plans, tests, and evaluation exercises.

101 Ways to Make Training Active
Mel Silverman
303 pages, C0196
Offers suggestions on how to organize and conduct lively training sessions. Presents techniques to get active participation, teach information actively, and make training memorable.

Trainer's Handbook
Train-the-Trainer: Facilitator's Guide
Karen Lawson
232 pages, R0994; 164 pages, C0993
Provides tools for trainers to develop skills and competencies needed for effective delivery. Discusses the training process, including analysis, design development, delivery, and evaluation. The *Facilitator's Guide* provides training information and implementation guidelines to conduct workshops for participants who are using *The Trainer's Handbook*. Includes handout and transparency masters.

Training the Trainer
Susan Walsh, editor
371 pages, C0169
Manual for use in workshops by trainers of tutors. Includes the training components of presentation, demonstration, practice, and follow up.

Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training
Mosaica, Washington, D.C.
595 pages, R0135
Helps AmeriCorps programs plan and deliver effective pre-service training. Also available for downloading at www.etr.org/nsrc/pdfs/startingstrong/starting.html.

Winning Trainer, the 3rd Edition
Julius Eittington
496 pages, C0037
Provides a trainer with techniques to involve participants in the learning process. Includes handouts and worksheets, exercises and icebreakers, and discusses diversity, cross-cultural, and cross-gender training.

Training Lingo Deciphered

The training profession has its own catch phrases and lingo that may sound foreign to the untrained ear. Here are some definitions of training terms so you can understand what you're asking for when designing a training:

Action maze: A variation of the case study in which trainees solve a problem or case by making decisions. Their decisions determine what they will see next. The consequences of their decisions provide trainees with insight and feedback.

Buzz group: A large group is subdivided into smaller groups for a quick discussion. All groups meet simultaneously for 5-10 minutes to react to a topic, generate ideas or questions, or discuss an issue.

Expanded panel: A panel with a vacant chair. Trainees can take turns sitting in the vacant chair to participate briefly in the panel discussion.

Fish bowl: A large group is divided into two smaller groups organized in concentric circles. The inner circle discusses an issue or does an exercise while the "outer circle observes and then offers observations.

Job aids: Many forms of job aids can be given to trainees to assist them in doing their jobs. These include worksheets, checklists, samples, flowcharts, procedural guides, glossaries, diagrams, decision tables, and manuals.

Simulation: The training environment is set up to allow the learners to practice a task under simulated work conditions (may include equipment or situational simulation). Often used as a blanket term for any realistic, job-like exercise (e.g., role plays and case studies can be categorized as simulations).

Slip writing: A quick method of generating questions from trainees: Ask everyone to write their main questions on paper and pass it to the leader. The leader then reads all the questions to the group and either answers or refers questions back to the group. Can be used any time a learner wishes to ask a question anonymously.

Source: Suzanne Richards, National Crime Prevention Council.

Evaluating Your Training

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turned in. Let participants know beforehand what will be expected of them in the training. Follow up with them three months after the training or at the end of the year to see how they're using the skills they obtained.

Hailman recalls one Corporation state director who scheduled conference calls with VISTA members after their pre-service orientation to talk about how they were making use of the training they received. "When people in high positions in an organization say to you they want to know how the training was used, you pay attention," she said. "It gives a real sense that [the training] is of interest."

Don't expect training participants to automatically change their performance, Hailman said. "Most people who attend trainings lose 80 to 90 percent of what they learned if they don't use it in the next 72 hours." She continued, "You need to have a plan to go back and do something that requires you to use what you've learned. And then you need a plan to try out your new skills in an environment where you can get some feedback and make adjustments. New skills take practice and you need to 'make them yours' before they are really incorporated into your toolkit."

Not only do people need to use what they've learned, they also need to experience success. Otherwise, they'll revert to their old ways of doing things. By providing follow-up support and technical assistance, you can improve the chances that people will use what they've learned. If the trainer is not available for follow-up, find someone within the organization who can provide that support. Even arranging a conference call with the people who attended the training can be helpful. "There's a tremendous amount of motivation if a peer went to the training and did something [that succeeded]," Hailman said. "You get that support factor."

Participants aren't the only ones who should evaluate the training. Ask host site supervisors to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and follow up with them several months after the training to see if the training made a difference in performance. Also, ask the trainers to evaluate the training and get their perspectives on how it can be improved in the future. The more comprehensive your evaluation process, the more effective you will become at planning productive and meaningful trainings. ■



ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
Shipping:
4 Carbonero Way
Scotts Valley, CA 95066
Phone: (800) 860-2684
TDD: (831) 461-0205
Fax: (831) 430-9471
E-mail: nsrc@etr.org
www.etr.org/nsrc

NSRC Staff:

Carlos Pedraza, ext. 214
Director

Susan Hillyard, ext. 105
Program Manager

Jill Saito, ext. 100
Writer
EpiCenter Coordinator

Forest Monsen, ext. 197
Information Specialist

Mary Girouard, ext. 143
Editor

Bernadette Perez, ext. 260
Resource Center Assistant

Debbie Lucas, ext. 142
Administrative Assistant

**Corporation for
National and
Community Service**
1201 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20525
Phone: (202) 606-5000
TDD: (202) 565-2799
[www.nationalservice.org/
resources/training](http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/training)

Corporation Adviser:
David Bellama
Senior Training Officer,
T/TA

Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities.

Needs Assessment

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thoughts on what a “best of all possible worlds” training would look like.

“Rather than hit or miss, we decided we needed a process for assessing needs,” said Al Schneider, executive director for the Arkansas State Commission. Because of the feedback given during the day-long planning meeting, the state commission is better prepared to plan the state’s annual cross-stream training event and other member and coordinator trainings. The process also gives the program coordinators a chance to share training ideas and collaborate with each other.

As a result of the meeting, five of the programs that deal with tutoring joined together to request reading readiness and tutoring training from the Arkansas Department of Education. “This won’t cost the commission anything,” said Peggy Woosley, coordinator of the Improved Reading Readiness Program at Stuttgart Public Schools. “Three of us who are public school employees jumped on it and volunteered to [organize the training].”

Woosley appreciates the effort the state commission expends on assessing the training needs of members and coordinators. “The commission takes copious notes and sends back to us a list of the things we said we wanted to do,” she said. The commission also asks the programs which dates on their calendars are already booked, so training events do not interfere with other activities or events.

Besides holding a meeting, you can conduct needs assessments by distributing paper surveys or conducting a phone survey with a random sample of participants. For examples of survey instruments, peruse the sample forms collection on the NSRC website at www.etr.org/nsrc/forms. In particular, check out the AmeriCorps Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form and the Participant Pre-Training and Post-Training Questionnaire, which can be found under “Surveys” under “Needs Assessment.”

Remember also to ask site supervisors and host agencies what skills and tools the team will need to perform better. All the while, keep your program objectives in mind and consider which skills will be needed to meet those objectives. If you take the time to accurately assess your members’ and volunteers’ needs, you can ensure more effective and productive training for your team. ■

National Network

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NSRC website or directly at www.etr.org/nsrc/resources/epicenter.

■ The National Service Leadership Institute (NSLI) provides service-leadership training and guidance in the form of regularly scheduled courses, conferences, technical assistance and consulting services. For more information, visit <http://www.etr.org/nsrc/resguide/nsli.html> or call 510-273-0147.

■ National and regional conferences and meetings are sponsored by the Corporation to provide national service programs/projects with national guidance, national perspective, and access to resources and information on a national basis. As meetings and trainings are scheduled, they are posted on NSRC’s master calendar (<http://www.etr.org/nsrc/calendar.html>).

■ National direct parent organizations are the first line of offense for addressing the training and technical assistance needs of national direct subgrantees. National direct parents, as with their commission and other service counterparts, may perform their own needs assessments and use the results to plan for and conduct field training. In so doing, they may collaborate with the state commission training coordinator to access national T/TA providers and arrange to participate in cross-stream events and other joint activities like statewide workshops or conferences. National direct site staff should therefore work closely with their parent organizations to help ensure that their training requirements are identified and met.

■ Finally, peer-to-peer exchange is one of the most effective and practical strategies that technical assistance programs and projects can use, and it can be implemented at any level, from national to local. When seeking advice or assistance, practical tools or resources, or even on-the-job training or TA, look into the peer network that exists around you. For guidance, you may contact your state commission or state office, listservs, any of the national providers, or local or regional volunteer or service networks, and you may find in the end your best source of assistance is from someone just like you, perhaps across the country, perhaps just next door. ■

David Bellama, senior training officer at the Corporation for National and Community Service, contributed to this article.