CHAPTER 5
The Supervisor as Partnership Builder and National Service Representative

Community partners are key to getting things done in America's communities. In a sense, building a partnership is like building a team, only on and with a broader base of people and organizations. Partnership building involves National Service supervisors and community residents in developing a common vision, belief, and strategy to address a problem. Partnerships are formed out of need and are built on trust and inclusiveness. Strong community partnerships mean more comprehensive ways to address community problems, increased coordination between community agencies and the community at large, development of new leadership, and promotion of an ethic of collaboration and resource sharing.

To help you begin the process of partnership building, we focus on three areas in this chapter:

- Community needs assessment,
- Building and sustaining collaboration, and
- Conducting effective public relations.

Community needs assessment and building and sustaining collaboration are major skill areas. And because partnering activities tend to push the supervisor into the role of National Service representative, we include tools and techniques for conducting effective public relations so you can clearly and succinctly communicate your program's mission and efforts to partnering organizations and to the community at large.

Supervisor's TOOL KIT

(These tools begin on page 5 21)

Community Needs Assessment

Checklist for Surveys

Helpful points for designing your own surveys

Sample Community Survey and Sample School Survey on Crime and Crime Prevention

Two prototype surveys you can adapt for your own assessment process

Building and Sustaining Collaboration

Basic Planning Questions for Your Group

A comprehensive set of questions to guide collaborative project planning

Community-Oriented Problem Solving

A description of the steps and principles involved in identifying and solving problems with community and agency partners

Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration

What leaders in the field have identified as essential elements for building collaboration

Meeting Agenda and Summary Form

A form for organizing meeting agendas and documenting meeting outcomes

Cost-Benefit Analysis

A format for considering the advantages of a particular solution in relation to its costs

Conducting Effective Public Relations

Eight Strategies for Getting People to Listen to You

Helpful hints for the public speaker

Fourteen Questions to Ask About Your Audience

Figuring out the people on the other side of the podium

Sample Media/Public Relations Pieces

Samples of a press release, a public service announcement, and a media advisory

A Day in the Life ...

Betty walks into her office and, before she can hang up her coat, the phone rings. It's Alicia, and she's upset about a situation at the community center where she serves as a youth aide. Alicia alternates between tears and anger as she tells Betty how the local tenant association is trying to ruin the community center. In a soothing voice, Betty asks Alicia to slow down, take a deep breath, and start from the beginning. Alicia tells her about how much the community needed the center and that the center programs were running fine until this past week when the tenant association published a scathing article about how the center was run by outsiders. Alicia's voice rises on this last word.

The center had opened after three of Betty's AmeriCorps members were assigned to the East Side Community Action Agency. The agency decided to set up the center to conduct general education courses, make community social service referrals, and sponsor some recreation programs for kids. The East Side is an old section of the city located near a bustling business district. Once a proud neighborhood of African Americans and Hispanics, it is now considered a marginal area where housing and drug problems are becoming more serious every day. Alicia explains that the placement of a community center was ideal. It would bring valuable services to the community, give young people an alternative to hanging out on the street, and generally help the community reestablish its feelings of pride.

According to Alicia, just when things seemed to be going really well at the center the tenant association put an article about the center in their biweekly newsletter, which is read by nearly the whole neighborhood. One of the young people who attends classes at the center brought Alicia a copy. The article basically accused the center staff of not having the interests of the local people at heart and, in so many words, characterized the center staffers as people who only come in to "help" the community as long as the work can be accomplished during business hours. The article also identified a couple of the community center's activities as "examples of inappropriate use of local resources and energy." Alicia notes that several people have abruptly stopped coming to the center activities this week, apparently in response to the negative publicity. Alicia tells Betty that she remembers calling the tenant association at the time they were planning the new center, but she never heard back from them directly. Someone on the community center staff had mentioned a long time ago that the tenant association didn't do that much in terms of community

development activities, so Alicia and her colleagues forgot about them after that.

As Betty listens to this story, she notes Alicia's genuine commitment to the East Side community. She also senses the disappointment and frustration Alicia is experiencing from seeing her community service work challenged. After a while Alicia calms down and asks Betty for some advice on what she and her fellow members should do now. Betty looks down at her writing pad, where she has jotted down some rough notes. She tells Alicia she wants to ask her a few questions that she hopes will get Alicia started thinking about some positive next steps. Betty's questions are:

1. Who from the community was involved in the decision to establish the center?
2. Who from among the people working at the community center (AmeriCorps members and/or East Side Community Action Agency staff) lives in the community where the center is located?
3. How was the decision made to establish a community center? What kind of information was gathered to help the decision makers?

Betty tells Alicia to take several minutes to think her responses through, then call her back to continue their discussion. She also asks Alicia to fax her a copy of the newsletter article. We'll check in with Betty and Alicia a little later to see what they decide to do about the community center predicament.

Assessing the Community's Needs and Strengths

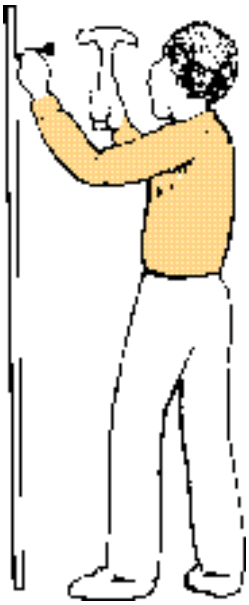
Why you do it

As a supervisor, you have to start with the notion that the community knows more about their vitality and their problems than you do. Until you find out from community members/ volunteers what they think their needs truly are and what they have already done for themselves, you cannot begin to work alongside them to help them solve or build anything. You must talk to people, particularly community leaders and project stakeholders, and listen to what they have to say. Some of this information gathering should be informal, some more structured and focused. Once you discover which groups of people are interested in and perhaps already trying to achieve the same objectives you are, you can safely begin building collaboration.

How you do it

Assessing community needs requires three important steps:

- Identifying a broad range of community leaders and seeking their input into the appropriateness of your National Service project;
- Identifying community needs and resources—i.e., gathering information, opinions, and ideas to determine where and how community needs and strengths match with the general goals of the project; and
- Identifying stakeholders in the community who are affected by the problem or issue at hand and your project's proposed activities for addressing it.



We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

Martin Luther King (1929–68)

Identifying Community Leaders

Community newcomers sometimes make the mistake of assuming that the neighborhood lacks leadership. Every community has an indigenous leadership structure. If you are working in a public housing development, there are formal leadership structures such as neighborhood councils composed of tenants who set policy and make decisions on behalf of the residents. In less organized neighborhoods, there are less formal leaders. Grassroots neighborhood leaders have been anointed by the community as the people who should be included in all important decision making affecting the community. Churches and schools are other important sources of leadership. Your role, as a National Service supervisor working to build partnerships, is to do enough homework to identify the leadership structure of the community. Suggested ways to identify community leadership are:

- Asking residents who live in the community;
- Going to community association meetings; and
- Using the following contact points to locate the leadership: social service agencies, businesses, churches, law enforcement, government agencies, youth groups (Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H, YMCAs/YWCAs, etc.), judicial systems, housing authorities, schools, and city councils.

This list is only a starter and will differ from community to community.

Identifying Community Needs and Resources

To determine what the community needs, ask thoughtful questions and listen carefully to community leaders and residents. The problem or issue you are working on has probably been addressed in some form or to some degree by others in the past. If so, you need to find out what their specific experiences have been and how successful they were. The following questions will help you get started on the quest for opinions and ideas:

1. Who is the target community? What are its boundaries?
2. What groups of people and physical characteristics are in the community?

3. Who are the leaders and communicators in the community?
4. Are there any special subgroups that hold informal community power?
5. What are some of the problems or issues community residents have identified?
6. What are some of the resources available to work on these problems?
7. Given what they know about National Service, what assets or resources do they think members/volunteers can bring to the problem-solving process?
8. What other kinds of help might be needed?
9. What are some obstacles to developing and implementing service programs that will respond to community problems?

To help community members/volunteers share and discuss their answers to these and other questions, you need to offer them a structure and a forum. For example, you may want to hold informal talks with people from different social sectors and geographic areas in the community. One structured and objective format for gathering information is the community survey. Using mailed questionnaires, door-to-door canvassing, or telephone interviews, you can survey residents' views about what they regard as high-priority concerns. You can also focus the survey to collect information on a particular concern or issue.

Conducting a survey is a serious activity in the sense that people in the community will base their perceptions of your program on how well you and your members/volunteers interact with them. Most members/volunteers will benefit from training in how to approach and interview the public. Role-playing, for example, is a pleasant way to practice social interaction skills and build members'/volunteers' confidence.

See your tool kit for samples of community survey questionnaires and a checklist for designing and implementing your own surveys.

Identifying project stakeholders

Stakeholders are people who have an interest in the problem your project intends to address and/or the solutions your project proposes to implement. Some of these people will be community leaders you have already identified; others may be less obvious and you will need to ask community members/volunteers and groups to help you recognize them. Once you know who the stakeholders are for your particular project or service emphasis, you need to analyze their potential interest in and impact on the work: Are they in favor of or opposed to your project goal(s)? Can they be convinced to support the project and influence others to do the same? What interests and resources (positive and negative) do they bring to bear on the project? If they won't give their support, should you and your directors substantially modify or even scrap the proposed work?

The important point to remember in stakeholder analysis is that any key person who can contribute to a clearer understanding of the problem should be included in the collaboration process. As the planning and implementation unfolds, your most supportive stakeholders will become your primary partners.

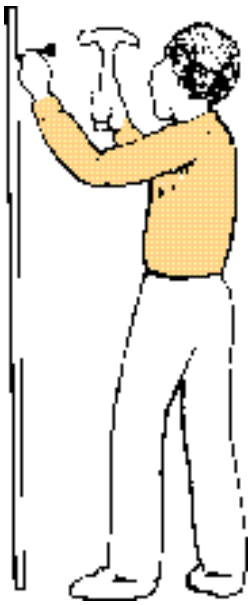
Building and Sustaining Collaboration in the Community

Why You Do It

National Service supervisors need to build and maintain collaborative relationships because community members (individuals, organizations, and agencies) know more about their problems than anyone. The more you involve community members in defining and developing your service activities, the more they will buy into the project and sustain their efforts over the long term. If you are from outside the community, you will gain insights from your partners' institutional memory; they will remember who has tried what in the past. Community partners increase your program's potential to offer better services and accomplish things neither group could do alone because you are pooling your ideas and energy along with other resources.

How You Do It

Successful collaboration requires the application of nearly all of the skills presented in the earlier chapters of this guide. Here are several critical elements:



Setting mutual goals and defining meaningful roles for each community partner

(See Chapter 3—The Supervisor as Team Builder)
As community partners, you need to establish the reasons why you are joining forces—i.e., what it is you hope to accomplish together that you cannot do as well alone. As the relationship becomes more defined, you need to assign distinct but complementary roles so that everyone understands what is expected of them. It is also important that you recognize the different motivations each partner may have for wanting to be involved in the project. Look for ways to meet the expectations

of individual partner without sacrificing the larger goals of the service work.

Collaborating on problem identification and solutions

(See Chapter 2—The Supervisor as Advisor)
When you are working with partners, it is extremely important to use a structured problem-solving process to help you work through what it is you want to change and how you plan to go about it. Without structure, you risk vague problem definitions and impractical solutions. See your tool kit for an outline of problem solving adapted for use with community groups.

Careful planning of project activities

(See Chapter 4—The Supervisor as Planner and Manager)
Once you and your community partners have selected solutions and strategies for addressing an issue, you need to draw upon your planning skills to help you flesh out the project. This step includes defining the human and physical resources each partner can contribute, defining partners' roles and responsibilities; setting specific timelines; and establishing milestones for monitoring the work. Help one another stay realistic on what the partnership can accomplish given everyone's work load. Your tool kit has a list called "Basic Questions for Your Group" that will guide you through the planning sequence.

Managing meetings effectively and establishing communication channels

(See Chapter 4—The Supervisor as Planner and Manager)
Meetings are where community partners do most of their communicating, decision making, and planning. People need to be clear on the meeting agenda and what outcomes are expected. The facilitator in particular should be organized and efficient, or the partners will feel their precious time is being wasted. During one of the first meetings, you should work out a process for communicating information in a clear and timely manner. Be sure to address the need for written documentation, such as records of meeting agendas and minutes, and memoranda of understanding.

Sharing leadership and building capacity among partners

(See Chapter 3—The Supervisor as Team Builder)
All partners in a community collaboration need opportunities to gain new knowledge, enhance skills, and assume leadership roles. Partnerships are not just about getting things done—they are also about capacity building. Share the control and make sure everyone has a chance to lead activities.

Listening and feeding back to the community

(See Chapter 1—The Supervisor as Communicator)
Let community residents know that you are listening to and taking action on their concerns. Give them clear examples of how you are using their insights and ideas. If possible, use forums such as a town meeting to learn about what people have on their minds and how they are perceiving your work.

Celebrating successes

(See Chapter 3—The Supervisor as Team Builder)
Just as National Service team members/volunteers need recognition of their accomplishments, so do community partners. When you do something well, pat each other on the back in public. Celebrate however your community sees fit.

Community partnership building is a complex process that requires considerable time, commitment, and elbow grease. Everyone on the National Service staff needs to help establish and maintain collaborative efforts in the community. Your most important role is to get the process going and engage your members/volunteers, colleagues, and program directors in the effort.

Checking Back in with Betty and Alicia...

Let's listen in on the rest of Betty and Alicia's phone discussion about the community center dilemma. If you recall, Betty asked Alicia to think about three questions relating to partnership building. (Who from the community was involved in the decision to establish the center? Who among the people working at the center lives in the community where it's located? How was the decision made to establish a center?)

A: When I stopped to think about it, I realized there was no one from the community involved in planning the project. The East End Community Action Agency folks felt they knew the issues, and we just followed their lead. They had all kinds of statistics that made the idea of the center sound appropriate. Plus, we'd heard about a similar and very successful AmeriCorps project downstate, so we got excited about trying the same type of thing.

B: Do you see how important it was for the community to play a role in identifying the problem and the responses? This doesn't mean they wouldn't have come up with the same ideas you guys developed, but the ideas would have been theirs, not from outsiders.

A: Yeah, I see how we could have made a better effort at engaging the community. We could have held a public meeting right there in the neighborhood—at one of the churches, maybe—to discuss our preliminary ideas and ask for their help. Maybe the tenant association would have come forward and shown their interest and any reservations at that point. We really underestimated their interest and influence in the community. One of my first reactions to their letter was to sit down at the computer and pound out a rebuttal, but everything I wrote sounded defensive. Betty, do you think I should try to write a letter to the editor stating our intentions and clearing up some of the misinformation in that article?

B: Alicia, just as you pointed out, it's very hard to write rebuttals without sounding defensive. Sometimes "letter wars" get started and do harm to everyone involved. I think I'd look for other ways to establish some kind of contact. You know, Alicia, earlier today I was struck by your strong desire to work with the East Side community. Your commitment is heartwarming. But neither you, nor anyone at the community center, can offer help

without the community's permission. In the case of the tenant association, we're maybe talking about more than permission. Reading between the lines of that article, I think the tenant association has heard some positive things about what the center is doing, but they feel left out of the decisions and plans that get made there—decisions and plans that affect the residents in their association. I'd say we're identifying a potential partnership here, but at the moment you seem to be competing against one another. What do you think you could do to change that to collaboration?

A: I think we can start by acknowledging our mistakes to both the community and the association. We need to arrange a meeting with the key people at the association and get their issues, and ours, out in the open. Actually, there's a part-time worker at the center who lives in one of the housing projects and is involved in the association. He's very quiet during our meetings, so we kind of forgot about him. I think we should get him more engaged and ask him to introduce us to the association leadership. You know how we did that visioning and goal-setting session a few weeks ago at the AmeriCorps conference? Maybe we could try to do something similar with the association. I'm pretty certain we have similar goals, but maybe different ideas about how to get there. If we put our ideas and resources together, who knows what kind of community center we might end up with! They have lots of contacts within the neighborhood families; we don't. We have things like meeting space and computers that they may not have access to and....

B: [Betty breaks in.] That's the idea, but don't move so fast you forget about the community at large. How will you involve them in the center's future and start to build their trust?

A: Maybe the tenant association and our center could jointly organize and co-host a community meeting. We could have an open house at the center: ask for volunteers from the community, ask them for their ideas for new programs, and things like that.

B: Good. Now keep going with this idea. Can you think of anyone else to include in planning the open house event? Maybe someone who's shown some interest already in the center's activities?

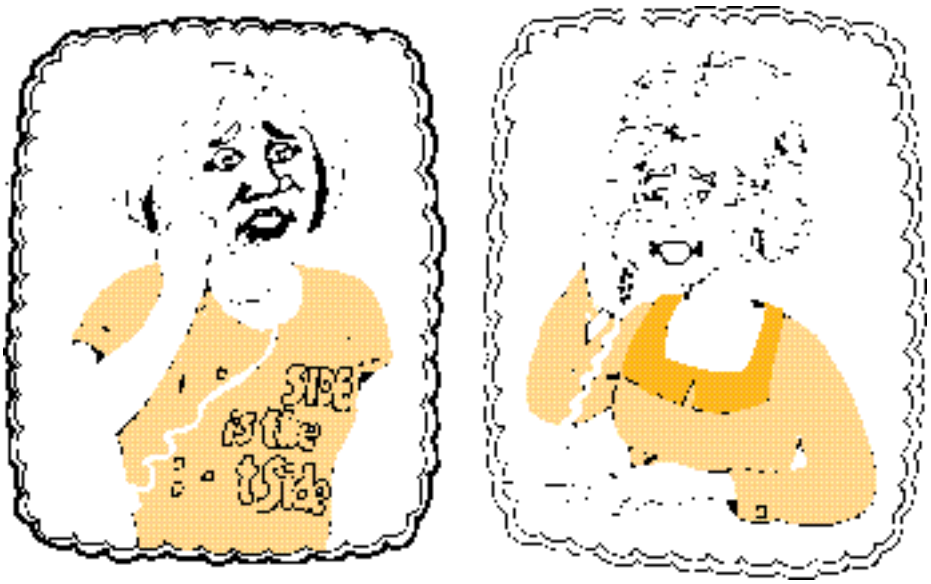
A: [Thinks for a few seconds, then nods her head.] Of course! Reverend Carson. He's come by the center a couple of times to check out what we're doing and seems interested, or at least curious. If he has the time, I'm sure he'd be helpful planning such an event. His church does similar things all the time. I've seen the fliers around town. You know something else? He'd be a valuable partner because he's not directly affiliated with either the tenant association or the community center. He'd have an objective perspective on

the current situation and future direction of the community center.

One other thing I could do is call the AmeriCorps project downstate and ask them how they got collaboration from their community...Hey, I think I'm having a breakthrough here!

B: [Laughing.] I think you're right. And I think you don't need any more assistance from me, at least for now. Call me when you've had some initial contact with the association. Perhaps I can help you work out an approach for discussing the major issues. And if you start making any concrete plans for that open house, I'll look for my invitation in the mail!

A: Thanks, coach!



Conducting Effective Public Relations

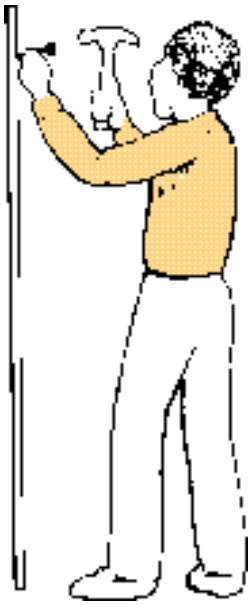
Why You Do It

As you begin to build partnerships with community groups and other service agencies, you will find your program increasingly in the public eye. People in the community will want to know more about National Service and see its members/volunteers in action. You in turn will want to take advantage of the community's curiosity to spread the message about National Service's commitment to grassroots development through local community service. Whether it's giving a presentation to a local social services association or organizing a public service announcement for an up-coming fundraising event, effective public relations involves sending clear, accurate, interesting, and timely messages about your project to people who need or want the information. By developing your public speaking skills and learning to work with the media, you'll be able to take advantage of opportunities to highlight your members'/volunteers' real and potential contributions to the community. More importantly, you'll be able to train your members/volunteers to speak for themselves and serve as National Service ambassadors.

How You Do It

Public Speaking

If you are the type of person who has always feared being asked to "say a few words," please keep in mind that effective public speaking is an acquired skill. Some people may appear to be "born speakers," but they have probably developed their



eloquence and grace through emulation, careful preparation, and lots of practice. You can start by keeping in mind the three Vs:

Vocal Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard.
Visual Smile! Create visual images with your words. Use props, charts, etc.
Verbal Make sure that what you're saying is easy to understand and interesting. The words you choose and the way you organize your talk will determine your influence on the audience.

Organizing Your Presentation

The introduction

- Get to the point quickly; introduce your topic or theme within the first two minutes of your talk.
- Use an attention getter, a personal anecdote or a specific example (this will create a visual for the audience), a startling statistic, relevant quotes, or an analogy or comparison.
- Then make a smooth transition into the main body of your talk.

The main body of the talk

- Keep the main body of the talk simple and concise. Stick to three or four main points, support each one briefly and colorfully, then move on.
- Make your "call to action" early in the main body of the talk. Create a feeling of common bond or shared purpose.
- Use specific examples, visual language, props—anything to keep the audience tuned into your message.
- Vary the length of your sentences and phrases. (For example, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge, and more."—John F. Kennedy)

The conclusion

- Let the audience know you're getting near the end. ("In the last few minutes of our time together today...")
- Summarize your main points.
- Use another attention getter to build momentum for your "clincher," the final thought you leave with the group.

Ways to stay cool and calm

- Before the presentation, cruise the room by yourself. Sit in a chair in the audience. Stand behind the podium. Make sure any equipment you're using (VCR, monitor, overhead projector, etc.) is working and cued. Checking the room and equipment is critical. Nothing is more disconcerting to the audience or the speaker than when the equipment fails to work properly. It's like paychecks: when they come on time nobody thinks twice about them, but let them be late and.... The same is true of presentations. People expect things to go smoothly and when they don't, that's what they remember about the event.
- Take deep breaths, count to ten, shake out your arms and hands.
- Practice, practice, practice your talk. Then do something calming just before you're about to speak. Read something funny. Do something physical.
- Imagine that the audience is a gathering of your best friends who desperately need the information you have.
- Focus on a friendly face until you loosen up.
- Slow yourself down as you speak. It may seem like you've been talking forever, but you haven't. Keep your pace, don't rush.
- Take care of your hunger and thirst before you begin your presentation.

Remember that being nervous is a natural response. Even the most experienced speakers get a little anxious, or at least "pumped up," before speaking in front of a large group. Use this extra energy to send your message clearly and strongly to your audience!

Your tool kit includes more tips on how to construct and deliver speeches and other types of presentations.

Working with the Media

Getting the word out about what your project has done or what you are planning to do is beneficial to your program and your community. You want to inform, educate, excite, and persuade people. So do the media. There's a natural match-up—a partnership if you will—between your community service program and the news service.

The CNCS Office of Public Affairs publishes a short but comprehensive booklet entitled, "Guide to Working with the Media." The booklet begins by describing the relationship between National Service and the media. Getting your story out can help you

- Recruit National Service members/volunteers and sponsors,
- Reach potential funding source,
- Educate the public about your project, and
- Highlight members/volunteers and activities that are getting things done in your community.

Reaching the news media starts with doing some homework, planning a strategy, and applying some objectivity. When making a decision about media relations, remember this fact of life: You've got a lot of competition. Many other organizations will be trying to get their stories and events covered. Understanding the media is the crucial first step in public relations. Publicity is simply a means of telling people what you want them to know. For National Service, you want your audience to know the purpose of the program, who's involved, how it operates, and why it's important to your community. Rather than sharing this information with one person or a small group, the media takes your message to thousands of people instantly.

The media guide provides information on the following themes:

- Types of media (newspapers, magazines, wire services, television, radio, public affairs programs)

- Reaching the media (developing a media list, working with reporters, getting information to the media)
- Developing a media plan
- Planning an effective press conference
- Communicating through public service announcements
- Tips on writing for the media, sample press releases and public service announcements, etc.

The "Guide to Working with the Media" will serve you well as you begin to develop your public relations approaches. Check with your project director to see if your site already has a copy of this publication. If not, call the CNCS Office of Public Affairs and order one right away. Your tool kit includes several sample media pieces from the booklet. The suggested reading list also offers other publications related to working with the media.

Courage happens when people unite.

—Anonymous

Checklist for Surveys

- **Rationale:** Why are you doing this survey? What do you want to know from or about your subjects? Make sure those objectives are related to your program.
- **Subjects:** Whom should you survey? For instance, if your concern is with crime in elementary schools, talking with parents of high school students will not be helpful.
- **Unit and Sampling:** Decide what your unit of measure is. Are you looking at classrooms or individual students' attitudes, a neighborhood block's concerns or residents' individual concerns? Do you intend to ask everyone, or just pick a sample? How will you be sure the group you sample reflects the makeup of the community as a whole?
- **Questions:** Write clear, simple questions. Ask only one question at a time. Avoid negatives and words that suggest a specific kind of answer. Generally, it is better not to ask "essay type" questions.
- **Test:** Try your questions out on a small group to make sure the questions are understood as you meant them to be and the answers give you information you can use.
- **Method:** Decide whether you will mail the survey (which is cheaper but risks low returns), use in-person teams for interviews (which can be accurate but time consuming), or ask questions by telephone (which can be efficient but may anger people who want to be able to read the questions).
- **Execute the Survey:** Create a questionnaire, based on your tested questions, that allows appropriate space for answers to be filled in. Train interviewers as necessary to ensure they will all discuss the survey the same way. Administer the survey to the group selected and collect the data.
- **Disclosure:** Make sure that the survey interviewers disclose 1) who is asking for the information, and 2) how that information will be used. Even if your survey seems relatively simple and

Checklist for Surveys

CONTINUED 2 OF 2

straightforward to you, it may appear threatening to the person on the receiving end.

- **Tabulate:** Tally up the different answers you get, by type. Don't forget to include a space for tallying those who did not answer the question. Decide whether to count them or not; once you do decide, be consistent.
- **Analyze:** What's surprising? What's expected and what's not? Negative as well as positive results and divided responses (such as "no clear majority agreed on liking ketchup") are important findings.

[Adapted from: *Charting Success,* National Crime Prevention Council, 1995.]

National Service Community Needs Assessment

Demographic Data

Respondent is:

Age 15–20 ❒
Age 21–35 ❒
Age 36–50 ❒
Over 50 ❒

Male ❒
Female ❒

Add other pertinent data you need to know, such as ethnic background and site of the interview (respondent is a community member/volunteer interviewed on her front stoop; respondent is a public official interviewed in his office; respondent is a student interviewed on the playground, etc.)

1. Please place a check mark next to the items you believe are problems in your community in each of the categories below.
2. Of everything you have checked, circle the three most important items.
3. What do you think National Service members/volunteers can do to help solve these problems? Please write your suggestions in the space provided.

Sample Survey

CONTINUED 2 OF 3

Education

_____ High student dropout rate
_____ Overcrowded schools
_____ Need for quality teachers
_____ Other

Health

_____ Teenage pregnancy
_____ Substance abuse (drugs, alcohol)
_____ Emotional problems
_____ Other

Law Enforcement

_____ Gang activity
_____ High crime rate
_____ Vandalism/graffiti
_____ Other

Social Services

_____ Lack of quality child care
_____ Lack of service for seniors
_____ Lack of available, affordable healthcare
_____ Other

Recreation

_____ Lack of programs
_____ Lack of facilities
_____ Lack of supervision in parks
_____ Other

Employment

_____ Lack of job opportunities
_____ High unemployment rates for youth
_____ Inadequate job training
_____ Other

Cultural

_____ Lack of tolerance in the community
_____ Conflict between ethnic groups
_____ Lack of knowledge about ethnic groups
_____ Other

Please write your suggestions on the back of this page on the lines provided.

Thank you! Suggestions:

Suggestions:

[From: *Handbook for Continuous Improvement*, Corporation for National Service, 1994.]

Sample Survey

A Questionnaire for Parents of Children in the Sunnyside Day Care Program

Please tell us which of these elements of our program are most important to you

	Very Important	*Important*	*Neither Important nor Unimportant*	*Doesn't matter at all*
The staff likes my child	1	2	3	4
The program's hours fit my needs	1	2	3	4
I want to be kept informed about my child's successes and difficulties	1	2	3	4
The staff gives my child enough help and supervision	1	2	3	4
I want to be informed about program activities	1	2	3	4
I want to be informed about program decisions	1	2	3	4
I want the staff to tell me about agencies or funds that could help me	1	2	3	4
I want to feel free to visit whenever I can	1	2	3	4
I can afford the fees	1	2	3	4
My child is safe	1	2	3	4
My child is given enough to do	1	2	3	4

Sample Survey

CONTINUED 2 OF 2

What do you feel is the most important purpose of this program? Please CIRCLE one sentence

- Be a safe place for my child while I work
- Be open during the hours I can't take care of my child
- Be a fun place where my child can play with friends
- Be a place where my child learns new skills and interests
- Be a place where people care about my child and share ideas with me about my child's well-being
- Other (please describe)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

If there is anything else you would like us to know, please write it here.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

[From: *Handbook for Continuous Improvement,* Corporation for National Service, 1994.]

Basic Planning Questions for Your Group

Assess the Need

What is your target community?
What are the facts about that community?
What are some of the problems in the community?
What are some ways to address those problems?
What assets can your group bring toward solving those problems?
What other kinds of help might be needed?
What are the drawbacks or possible difficulties?
What would each of you like to do to help with the problem?

Plan a Successful Project

What will your project do?
What changes should or could happen because of your project?
What are your goals, objectives, and strategies?
What are the steps for getting started?
Whose approval must be obtained?
Who should be involved in planning, reviewing, and doing the tasks?
How long will the project take? Can this be broken into several shorter projects or separate phases?
How will you know whether your project has been successful?
How will you thank workers and celebrate success?

Line Up Resources

What specific talents do members/volunteers of the group bring?
What other help must be provided—goods, services, people, money?
Who might want to help? Who else shares an interest in solving this problem?
What are the best ways to recruit the kinds of help needed?
What can be done to build the individuals in the group into a team?
How will it be clear that the resources belong to this project, not some other one?
What kind of event should be held to thank those who helped?

Basic Planning Questions for Your Group

Act on Your Plan

Who will handle problems?
What kind of training—of who and to do what—is needed?
Who (including teens) can provide training?
What will you do to keep and build on participants' enthusiasm?
How can you be sure you are most efficiently using resources?

Nurture, Monitor, Evaluate

What did you decide would be the indicators that your project was successful?
How can you measure those indicators?
How will you ensure that the project results in a quality product?
What information should be collected, who should collect it, and how frequently should it be obtained?
How will any needed "mid-course" corrections be made?
What do participants—workers and those who benefit—think of the project?
What would have happened if your group had not done the project?
How can you find out about special stories of success in your project?
How can workers best be honored individually? As a group?

[From: *Charting Success*, National Crime Prevention Council, 1995.]

Community-Oriented Problem Solving

Most community organizers and managers find that identifying and addressing problems is a substantial aspect of their work. The basic steps for doing this are the same whether you are working on a problem by yourself or within a group to solve a problem that affects everyone. These steps include

- Identify and state the problem
- Clarify the problem
- List potential solutions
- Evaluate solutions and make recommendations
- Develop a work plan to implement solution
- Implement the work plan
- Evaluate the plan and modify it as needed

Identify and State the Problem

This step is important because you must have a clear idea about what is going wrong before you can take steps to correct it.

This is especially important when working on the problem in a group because different group members may identify the problem differently. There must be agreement in the group as to what the problem is before solutions can be identified.

Clarify the Problem

In many problem situations, there is a larger issue or problem that can be readily identified but must be better understood before it can be resolved. Perhaps the problem needs to be broken down into a number of smaller problems that can then be addressed. Or, to better understand the problem the cause of the problem must be identified. Another way to clarify the problem is to discuss why it is a problem or how is it related to other problems.

To clarify the problem it is necessary to obtain more information about it through written materials and reports, interviews, etc. Further discussion is then needed. This often results in a restatement of the problem. Once it is more clearly understood, the problem can usually be stated in simpler terms. Occasionally, the problem as originally identified needs to be changed to better reflect the new information.

List Potential Solutions

This is the time for creative thinking. Don't prejudge ideas. Get as many different thoughts and ideas as possible.

When a group is trying to solve a problem, a technique such as brainstorming can be extremely effective at this step.

The result of this step is a list of all possible solutions to the problem, even though only one idea becomes the chosen solution. It is important to keep them all, because it may be necessary to come back to others if the selected one doesn't work out.

Evaluate Solutions and Make Recommendations

All of the possible solutions should now be reviewed to determine whether they are likely to solve the problem and whether their implementation is feasible.

Techniques that are valuable at this step include identifying the pros and cons of each option, conducting a cost-benefit analysis, and applying a specific criterion for success.

The result of this step is the identification of the most desirable options for solving the problem (usually two to four options) and a recommendation of the one most desirable option.

When others who are affected by the problem and must make a decision about it have not been involved in the problem-solving process, this step should also result in a written report that could be used to make the decision. This report should state the results of the problem-solving steps to this point and conclude with the recommendation.

Develop a Work Plan to Implement the Solution

To ensure that the solution is carried out and has a chance to work, a detailed work plan should be developed. This should include

- Goals and objectives to be achieved (objectives should be SMART—i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound),
- Strategies to be implemented,
- What specific activities are to be carried out,
- When each activity is to be completed,
- Who will be responsible for each activity (implementation and supervision),
- What resources will be needed and how can they be secured,
- What training and technical assistance is needed to achieve the goals and objectives,
- Potential problems or barriers that may occur and how they could be addressed,
- When reports will be needed and how monitoring is to be done and when, and
- How results will be determined.

When the problem is being addressed by a group, the group needs to develop and understand the work plan and commit the resources necessary for its implementation.

Implement the Work Plan

The result of this step is a detailed plan of action.

This step involves following the work plan as it was developed. It requires monitoring the plan to determine whether progress is being made or modifications are needed in light of new problems or information.

When the work plan has been developed by the community, communication during implementation is critical to ensure that activities are coordinated and everyone is informed of the status and progress of the solution. When modifications are needed, they are appropriately identified for the group so that everyone understands and agrees how the changes are to be carried out.

The result of this step is the implementation of the identified solution to the problem.

Evaluate the Plan and Modify It as Needed

This step requires measuring the results of your action and determining whether the problem has been resolved. Using the objectives from your work plan, you assess both the process and the outcomes of the group's work. The evaluation often produces more information about the original problem and indicates that additional work needs to be done; therefore, the steps should be repeated.

The result of this step is clear information about how well the chosen solution worked.

CONTINUED 4 OF 6

Problem Solving Techniques

Techniques to Define and Clarify the Problem

Brainstorming

The group is asked to generate ideas quickly and the ideas are recorded on a flipchart. As many ideas as possible are obtained but none of them is evaluated until all ideas are put forward and recorded. (See the Chapter 2 Tool Kit.)

Nominal Group Technique

Each person writes down ideas before sharing them with the group, allowing everyone time to think about the topic and offer an idea.

Graphic Illustration

Each member/volunteer, either individually or in a team, illustrates the problem as he or she sees it, through drawings, cut-outs, or illustrations.

Card Exchange

Group members/volunteers describe the problem, as they see it, on cards and put the cards in a large envelope or box so that each idea can be considered anonymously.

Key Word Analysis

Each group member/volunteer is asked to give his or her definition of key words in the problem statement.

Round Robin

The leader goes around the group, asking each person in turn for his or her input.

Role Reversal

Members/volunteers adopt one another's roles in an effort to understand one another's positions.

Ways to Break the Problem into Small Pieces and Generate Solutions

Positive and Negative Forces

Group members/volunteers work together to identify forces working to make the problem worse and better. (See the Chapter 2 Tool Kit.)

Negative Brainstorming

The group generates ideas about all the things that can possibly go wrong in this situation. They can then consider strategies to overcome these difficulties.

Major Questions

The group is asked to answer the who, what, where, why, when, and how of each issue.

Choosing the Best Solution or Setting Priorities

Applying Criteria

The group identifies its criteria for an acceptable solution by completing the statement "An ideal solution to this problem would have these characteristics..." and then comparing each solution with the list of criteria to choose the best one.

Straw Votes

Straw votes are nonbinding votes that "take the temperature" of your group. Each member/volunteer votes informally by a show of his or her hand. This process usually lets you dismiss some solutions to concentrate on others.

Rank Order

Members/volunteers are asked to rank-order the alternatives. The least popular alternatives are omitted.

Weighted Voting

Each participant gets 10 votes to distribute among alternatives as he or she sees fit. The most unpopular alternatives are eliminated.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-benefit analysis is a way to determine the cost of implementing a solution. (See the next tool.)

Negative Voting

Ask if any member/volunteer cannot live with a specific decision.

List the Pros and Cons

Ask the group to list the advantages and disadvantages of the various solutions to help you decide which is best.

Principles of Problem Solving

Don't Take Anything for Granted

If part of the program is not working, ask whether the organization should be doing it in the first place.

Old Patterns May Hinder Solutions

Every organization has someone who, in answer to why something is done, replies, "We've always done it that way." Maybe that's the problem. There may have been a reason for doing something a certain way one time, but that reason may not hold good now. Look at everything to see if needless work is being done out of force of habit.

Trial and Error May Work as Well as Logic

Some solutions cannot be thought through in an orderly manner. If an idea sounds good, try it. If one person can't make a program work, give someone else a chance. To find out whether two people will work well together, let them try out as a team.

CONTINUED 6 OF 6

Find the Essential Similarities in Problems

Several seemingly unrelated problems may be solved in similar ways. After solving a problem, take time to state its solution in general terms that will apply to situations in the future.

Pay Attention to Group Process

In the organization's efforts to identify, analyze, and solve problems, have observers note how the solution was reached and the various roles the participants played. What was said that helped two factions reach agreement? What was said that hindered or blocked action? What helped the participants really hear what was said? Sharing these notes on process can turn it into a learning experience for everyone.

Look at Problems from Different Angles

The more people that are involved in problem solving, the more points of view are brought into play. The story is told of a large truck stuck under a bridge. The best efforts of the highway patrol, truck drivers, and garage mechanics could not pry it loose. Finally, a four-year-old boy who had been watching found the solution when he suggested letting the air out of the tires. For many problems, an outsider can often put his or her finger on the trouble quicker than those who are emotionally involved.

Divide Problems into Parts

Some problems are too large to deal with as a whole, such as a ten-year plan for the first year.

Anticipate Problems

Once a course of action is decided on, establish a "disaster position." Say, for example, that a large conference is to be held. List all the things that could possibly go wrong and what will be done in each case if the worst happens.

Take the Emotion Out of Problems

If $1,000 is missing from the organization's funds, think about what steps would be taken if a dollar were missing. It is basically the same problem. If an opponent makes a suggestion, think about how it would be received if a supporter had made it. In stating any problem, stick to the facts.

Anticipate the Consequences

Before deciding on a solution, think about how it will affect everyone else in the organization. If one person is given more responsibility, who is likely to be jealous and what can be done about this in advance?

Learn from Losing

It's as important to know why a suggested solution did not work as it is to know why another one did. If a community meeting attracted only a few people, was it because the people did not have transportation in from the rural areas? Was the meeting held on the wrong night?

Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration

1. Factors Related to the ENVIRONMENT

A. *History of collaboration or cooperation in the community*
A history of collaboration or cooperation exists in the community and offers the potential collaborative partners an understanding of the roles and expectations required in collaboration and enables them to trust the process.

B. *Collaborative group seen as a leader in the community*
The collaborative group (and by implication, the agencies in the group) is perceived within the community as a leader—at least in relation to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish.

C. *Favorable political and social climate*
Political leaders, opinion makers, persons who control resources, and the general public support (or at least do not oppose) the mission of the collaborative group.

2. Factors Related to MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEERISM CHARACTERISTICS

A. *Mutual respect, understanding, and trust*
Members/volunteers of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations: how they operate, their cultural norms and values, limitations, and expectations.

B. *Appropriate cross section of members/volunteers*
The collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community that will be affected by its activities.

C. *Members/volunteers see collaboration as in their self-interest*
Collaborating partners believe the benefits of collaboration will offset costs such as loss of autonomy and "turf."

D. *Ability to compromise*
Collaborating partners understand that the many decisions in a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit the preferences of every member/volunteer perfectly.

3. Factors Related to PROCESS and STRUCTURE

A. *Members/volunteers share a stake in both process and outcome*
Members/volunteers of a collaborative group feel "ownership" of both the way the group works and the results or product of its work.

B. *Multiple layers of decision making*
Every level (upper management, middle management, operations) within each organization in the collaborative group participates in decision-making.

C. *Flexibility*
The collaborative group remains open to different ways of organizing itself and accomplishing its work.

D. *Development of clear roles and policy guidelines*
The collaborating partners clearly understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities and how to carry out those responsibilities.

E. *Adaptability*
The collaborative group has the ability to sustain itself in the midst of major changes, even if it needs to change some major goals, some members/volunteers, etc., in order to deal with changing conditions.

4. Factors Related to COMMUNICATION

A. *Open and frequent communication*
Collaborative group members/volunteers interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group.

B. *Established informal and formal communication links*
Channels of communication exist on paper so that information flow occurs. In addition, members/volunteers establish personal connections, producing a better, more informed, and cohesive group working on a common project.

5. Factors Related to PURPOSE

A. *Concrete, attainable goals and objectives*
The goals and objectives of the collaborative group are clear to all partners and can realistically be attained.

B. *Shared vision*
Collaborating partners have the same vision and clearly agreed-upon mission, objectives, and strategy. The shared vision may exist at the outset of collaboration or the partners may develop a vision as they work together.

C. *Unique purpose*
The mission and goals or points of view of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals or points of view of the member/volunteer organizations.

CONTINUED 3 OF 3

6. Factors Related to RESOURCES

A. *Sufficient funds*
The collaborative group has an adequate, consistent financial base to support its operations.

B. *Skilled convener*
The individual who convenes the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills and performs the role with fairness. Because of these characteristics (and others), the convener is granted respect or "legitimacy" by the collaborative partners.

[From: *Collaboration: What Makes It Work?,* by Paul Mattessich and Barbara Monsey, St. Paul, MN: Wilder Publishing Center.]

Meeting Agenda and Summary

Call the Next Meeting (send to participants in advance of next meeting)

Collaboration name or purpose:

Purpose of next meeting:

Meeting date:
Location:
Start and end times:

Convener: Phone:

Participants (see membership roster for addresses and phone numbers):

Action Agenda

Item	*For information, discussion, or decision* Disposition	Responsibility	Time

Meeting Agenda and Summary

CONTINUED 2 OF 2

Summary of Decisions Made/Actions to Be Taken

This summarizes the previous meeting and accompanies the agendas for the next meeting

Decision Made/Action to be Taken	Responsibility	Deadline

Summary of Achievements to Date

This is a log of all achievements. It provides an excellent history and basis for evaluation. Update it regularly.

Achievements	Responsibility	Date

[From: *Collaboration Handbook*, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray, St. Paul, MN: Amherst Wilder Foundation Publishing Center, 1994.]

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Its important to consider the advantages, disadvantages, and relative costs of any solution you consider. This is especially important when you have a number of alternative solutions to a problem and the group must somehow choose between them.

Using newsprint to record the ideas and opinions of the group, consider the price of each solution—in money, people, or adverse effects. Then list the advantages or disadvantages of that solution. You may want to ask group members/volunteers to do this individually first, to give them time to think, or have them do it in groups of two or three. Whichever method you choose, be sure that everyone is encouraged to participate.

After completing the lists of costs, advantages, and disadvantages for each solution, have the group make an overall evaluation of that solution, indicating whether or not to pursue it.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Problem:

1. Possible Solution	2. Price	3. Advantages	4. Disadvantages	5. Overall Evaluation

Strategies for Getting People to Listen to You

1. Picture your communication goal.

Know exactly what response you want from the listener. Before you speak, visualize what you want the listener to look like, feel like, and do as a result of your words. In other words, how do you intend to change the listener? Ask yourself what you can say and how to say it to get the change you want.

2. Know your listeners.

Who are they? What do they already know? How much detail do they need? What have they experienced prior to your message? How do they feel? What do they want to hear? Are they paying attention? Do they care about you and what you have to say?

3. Know yourself as a communicator.

Every human being has a unique way of sending messages. What is your uniqueness? How do your values, thought patterns, vocabulary, tone of voice, speech habits, moods, body language, and overall presence affect the meaning listeners receive?

4. Put your listeners in the picture.

Use vivid language, tell complete stories, and paint full pictures that listeners can "see" with their ears. Use examples, metaphors, and analogies. Use fewer words and steer clear of euphemistic language. Choose words that convey specific, concrete images.

5. Convince your listeners.

Show your conviction, confidence, and enthusiasm through tone of voice and body language. Don't overqualify, excessively preface, or apologize for messages as you send them. Shun exaggeration and overstatement. Appeal to the self-interest of listeners, who continually ask, "What's in it for me?"

6. Stroke your listeners.

Leave your listeners feeling good about themselves and about you. Be supportive and caring. Don't accuse, belittle, violate expectations, or overgeneralize. Be a good listener to your listeners. Use their names in your message. Make them glad they listened to you.

7. Control time and place.

Time the sending of messages so that listeners are ready for them and see and feel the need for them—not when you want to send them. Choose a location that is consistent with and reinforcing to the meaning you want listeners to receive.

8. Assess and respond to results.

What are your listeners telling you? What did they do as a result of your message? Have you been understood? Why or why not? What will you do differently next time?

[From: *The Managers' Book of Lists*, by Sam Deep and Lyle Sussman, Glenshaw, PA: SDD Publishers, 1988.]

Questions to Ask About Your Audience

1. What do they already know about this topic?
2. How do they feel about this topic?
3. What do they know about me?
4. How do they feel about me?
5. Are there any extenuating circumstances that are likely to affect the audience's response to me or the speech?
6. Do they want me to be here?
7. Who are the major opinion leaders in the group?
8. Who is the formal leader? The informal leader?
9. Are there different purposes to accomplish with various audience members?
10. Is there an expert on my topic in the group?
11. What are the most common questions or objections the audience is likely to have?
12. What is the best way to create positive rapport with this audience? What do they value? What do they hold dear?
13. What demographic characteristics of the audience do I need to keep in mind?
14. What strategies have worked well with this audience in the past?

[From: *The Managers' Book of Lists* by Sam Deep and Lyle Sussman, Glenshaw, PA: SDD Publishers, 1988.]

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 1, 19XX

CONTACT:
Joe Smith
212/555-1212 or

Jane Smith
212/222-3333

AMERICORPS MEMBERS INCREASE STARKVILLE LITERACY RATE

Starkville, Miss.—AmeriCorps members working in Starkville to tutor adults and children have improved the literacy rate by 5 percent since the program began in September, program director Debbie Walker announced today.

Fifteen AmeriCorps members have been working with local churches to provide after-school tutoring lessons with the Starkville Literacy Program, a statewide effort to combat illiteracy.

"The AmeriCorps members have been instrumental in helping to lower our illiteracy rate," Ms. Walker said. "Their total dedication and hard work has meant so much to the people they are helping."

Jill Lawson, 23, an AmeriCorps member who came to Starkville from New York to work on the project, said, "Teaching others to read and improve their writing skills makes me feel I'm really making a difference. We get up every day and know we are helping people improve their lives."

AmeriCorps is the national service program that engages thousands of dedicated Americans in meeting the critical needs of communities in the areas of public safety, education, human needs, and the environment. In exchange for one or two years of service, AmeriCorps members receive educational awards to help finance their college education or pay back student loans. The Starkville Literacy Program is one of approximately 400 AmeriCorps sponsors across the country.

-end-

The last paragraph can be used in your press release to provide general information about AmeriCorps.

[From: "A Guide to Working With the Media," Office of Public Affairs, Corporation for National Service.]

Sample Media Advisory

CONTACT:
Joe Smith
212/555-1212 or

Jane Smith
212/222-3333

GOVERNOR TO VISIT AMERICORPS SITE

When: Friday, January 12, at 11:00 a.m.
Where: Starkville Literacy Program, at Emerson Elementary School, 235 Main Street
Who: Mississippi Governor John Doe; 15 AmeriCorps Members; Starkville Mayor Don Jones; literacy program director Debbie Walker

Governor Doe will visit the AmeriCorps Starkville Literacy Program to congratulate the participants on their highly successful effort to teach adults and children to read and write. Since the program's inception in September, it has improved the city's literacy rate by 5 percent.

The Governor and Mayor Jones will present a citation to the program director Debbie Walker that commends the accomplishments of this community effort.

The press is invited to cover the event.

AmeriCorps is the national service program that engages thousands of dedicated Americans in meeting the critical needs of communities in the areas of public safety, education, human needs, and the environment. In exchange for one or two years of service, AmeriCorps members receive educational awards to help finance their college education or pay back student loans. The Starkville Literacy Program is one of approximately 400 AmeriCorps sponsors across the country.

-end-

[From: "A Guide to Working With the Media," Office of Public Affairs, Corporation for National Service.]

Sample Radio Public Service Announcement

STARKVILLE LITERACY PROGRAM
723 Scenic Drive
Starkville, MS 38759

Start Using: Upon Receipt
Stop Using: January 1st

CONTACT:
Debbie Walker
Program Director
(601) 555-7825

-15 Seconds-

AmeriCorps means getting things done.
In Starkville that means increasing the literacy rate
by tutoring children and teaching senior citizens how to read.
If you are over the age of 18, join us.
Be an AmeriCorps Member. Call 555-5555.
AmeriCorps. Getting things done.
That's 555-5555.

[From: "A Guide to Working With the Media," Office of Public Affairs, Corporation for National Service.]