# Chapter 5

# Supporting Materials

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# PST DECISION-MAKING MATERIALS
# (Supporting Chapter 1)

## Hints for an Effective PST Design Team

1. **Keep the design team small enough to function as an effective work group** -- five to seven people is usually ideal. Invite additional people for particular meetings based on the agenda.

2. **Try to get a mix of training specialists and people who understand the projects to which members will be assigned.** Look for people who possess a range of technical skills and community experience. Be sure some of them have strong writing and training design skills. Look for diversity in the factors especially important to your program.

3. **Be sure to include at least one AmeriCorps member or former member, and someone from a host site.**

**LESSONS LEARNED:**
**SITUATIONS TO AVOID**

Some AmeriCorps grantees with limited training experience have chosen to involve a large number of collaborating agencies in training design. While this helps to bring a range of experience and perspectives, a very large design team can be unwieldy. No meeting date seems convenient for all the members, and those who miss one meeting may expect a lengthy update at the following meeting -- taking time away from the purposes of the meeting. Some grantees have found that decisions they thought were final were revisited when different design team members were present.

Unless clear decision-making procedures are specified -- and the right of the grantee or other lead agency to have the final say when disagreements arise -- the design team may assume that consensus is required or that each member has one vote.

The process of managing the design team has sometimes seemed to take as much time and effort as the actual design of the pre-service training.

4. **Set a regular schedule for meetings and keep to it.**

5. **Make it clear that agreeing to serve on the design team means agreeing to attend meetings regularly.** You probably have limited time to design the PST, and you don't want to have to revisit issues and decisions because attendance at an important meeting was poor.

6. **Be sure your design team members have the authority to make PST decisions on behalf of their organizations.**

7. **Encourage members to listen to the experts on the design team** -- for example, give special weight to the training experts on training methods and to the site supervisors and program experts on content.

8. **Try to work informally using consensus, but be clear about who has the final decision-making power when there are disagreements about particular types of issues** -- when it will be the AmeriCorps program, and when it is the group as a whole.

9. **Give everyone something to do, but make assignments appropriate to skills and time available.**

10. **If you are going to use consultants to deliver the training, involve them early in the design process** (even though it costs more); this makes them a part of the team and enables you to be sure they are on the right "wave length" for your program.

# Sample PST Decision-Making Meeting Agenda

## I. Introduction

- Purposes of the meeting:
  - To review decisions to be made about the PST
  - To review and corroborate our needs assessment information
  - To make basic decisions about the PST
  - To identify PST roles and responsibilities
- Desired outcome: to have made key decisions about this year's PST and agree on a process for making additional decisions

## II. Decisions to be Made

- **Why** PST is needed and what outcomes you hope to accomplish
- **What** PST will be provided -- and what part of it will be:
  - Centralized and/or decentralized
  - Program and/or project focused
- **When** centralized PST will begin and end and when any decentralized PST will be scheduled
- **Where** the PST will be held -- decide on the area so you can seek an appropriate facility
- **Who** will be responsible for designing and implementing the PST
- **How** the PST should be organized, planned, and evaluated

## III. Review of Program Structural Considerations

- Program and project levels and responsibilities
- Operating scope and location/geographic spread
- Size -- number of members and host sites
- Member characteristics

## IV. Review of Existing PST Plans/Designs

- Designs from past years
- Specifications in proposal
- Work done to date
- Adequacy of these plans/designs
  - Prior year evaluations
  - Other assessments

## V. Review of Training Content Needs

- Needs assessment information from members and host sites
- Implications of priority areas and types of member assignments
- Implications of member characteristics
- Perspectives of various participating groups
- Past experience

## VI. Other Factors to Consider

- Resources
- AmeriCorps program, collaborating agency, and host site training capacity/experience
- Other

## VII. Decision Making

(Use *Decision Worksheets A* , page 45, and *B*, page 51, from Chapter 1 of the Design section)

## VIII. Next Steps

- Subcommittees or individual assignments
- Date for next meeting
- Other action

# Less than a Month to Plan?
# Tips for a Short PST Design Process

This brief guide suggests how to make the best use of very limited PST planning time, and what materials from this manual are likely to be most helpful if you have only three or four weeks to develop your training. Even if you have several months to plan, these tips can be useful for making the best use of available time.

1. **Choose your design team and begin to collect information before program funding is finalized.** The shorter the time available to prepare your PST, the more people -- reliable, interested people -- are needed to share the work. Let people know when final word on funding will be received and arrange to have those who are not in the vicinity join you at meetings through conference calls. Identify the team leader. Set tentative meetings for the design team.

2. **Try to get member training needs assessment information from every member as part of the selection process.** If that was not done, delegate responsibility for member needs assessment to someone immediately available who is not a key member of the design team (Use the *Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form*, page 165, in this chapter, with appropriate modifications to fit your program).

3. **Once funding is assured, give top priority to determining desired PST outcomes** *(Decision Worksheet A,* page 45*)* **and making the "key decisions"** *(Decision Worksheet B,* page 51*)***,** making them at a single meeting if possible. Of special importance are decisions about the following:

   - **Desired training outcomes and which should be met through your centralized PST.**

   - **What part of the PST will be centralized and what part will be decentralized**. Once this is decided, service sites can begin their own PST planning.

   - **The extent to which centralized PST will include project-specific training as well as program-focused training.** You may find it easiest to leave the project-specific training to the service sites, or you may want to integrate project- and program-focused training.

   - **Timing and duration of the PST.** Give yourself as much time as possible before PST starts. Remember that a few extra days of preparation can be extremely useful.

- **Whether consultants will be hired to help with the design and/or training.** If the answer is yes, start looking for them immediately (see *Hints for Hiring and Using a Training Consultant*, page 185, in this chapter).

4. **Get organized! Call the key people together in a meeting or conference call, get agreement on a streamlined workplan and responsibilities, and agree on a team leader.** Emphasize to everyone the critical importance of making deadlines once they have been agreed upon. Use the *PST Workplan Format* and *Sample PST Workplan and Format*, page 59, in Chapter 1 as a model. Be sure to schedule firm dates for key products, especially the following:

   - Design team meetings -- in person or by conference call;
   - Submission of training materials;
   - Selection of consultants (if needed);
   - Selection of a training facility;
   - Completion of member and trainer notebooks;
   - Trainer training (if required);
   - A mock session to review and test materials; and
   - A final pre-PST meeting (essential if there is no mock session).

5. **Assign one or two people to quickly develop an overall PST outline and some standard formats for developing training units, for review by the entire design team.** Use information from Chapters 1 and 2 to organize this effort:

   - Use your completed *Decision Worksheet A: Desired Outcomes*, page 45, in Chapter 1 to prepare a chart of *Outcomes and Training Topics*, page 75, in Chapter 2 and determine which topics will be covered in the centralized training. Inform service sites of which topics you will not be covering, so they can include them in decentralized training.

   - Develop a training outline which specifies topics and the order in which they will be presented, and indicates when you need host site supervisors, crew/team supervisors, or other non-members to be at the PST site. Review the *Sample Format for a PST Training Outline*, page 81, in Chapter 2 and the three sample formats for two-week (page 171), one-week (page 177), and three-and-one-half-day (page 181) PST sessions in this chapter. Use *Chart D: Training Unit*

*Summary*, page 105, to outline each training unit and identify time requirements; handouts, equipment, resources, and trainer skills needed; and an appropriate evaluation strategy.

- Look at formats in the Training Topics & Activities section for both suggested activities and ideas on how to structure your training units and materials.

6. **Have someone not responsible for the content of the PST deal with logistics.** Use the *Sample Logistical Arrangements Checklist*, page 219, in this chapter; revise it as needed. Focus on the following tasks:

   - Find and contract with a training facility;
   - Inform service sites and members of PST dates and locations, and when they are expected to arrive;
   - Arrange for needed materials and equipment, such as member notebooks and audio-visuals;
   - Make other key facility arrangements (e.g., facility selection, sleeping and meeting rooms, meals); and
   - Arrange transportation for members and others.

7. **Have someone not assigned to either training design or logistics take the lead in identifying trainers, consultants, and presenters.** This means:

   - Deciding who should serve as lead trainers and ensuring their availability;
   - Locating and hiring consultants if needed; and
   - Working closely with the individuals doing the PST outline to identify the need for community representatives, experts on particular topics, member, and host site representatives to serve as presenters, and arranging for their participation (see *Hints for Preparing Outside Presenters*, page 207, among the Supporting Materials in this chapter).

8. **Arrange for someone, ideally someone from a nearby service site, to take responsibility for setting up community activities.** (See *Chapter 14: Community Projects*, page 575, in the Training Topics & Activities section for ideas.)

9. **Stay coordinated! Make sure the team leader keeps in close touch with the design team by telephone.** Check in often with key individuals to be sure you know when obstacles arise. Have the team meet in person when you have materials to review and decisions to make. The larger the design team and the shorter the deadline, the greater the need for coordination.

10. **Be sure to set aside a weekend or several evenings for a mock session, which will be critically important to PST success.** Ideally, spend a weekend doing a run-through and refining assignments. Bring a computer and printer so someone can make changes as you identify materials that need revision. Bringing together trainers and presenters including service site representatives not only makes them familiar with the materials, but helps ensure a common understanding of program philosophy and a sense of team identity -- which can be extremely important to the success of your PST.

# TRAINING DESIGN MATERIALS
# (Supporting Chapter 2)

## Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment

To understand member pre-service training needs as well as skills they can share, you may want to ask members to complete a training needs and skills assessment. It can be prepared and sent prior to PST, providing input to PST design. It can be brought to -- or completed during -- PST, and used as part of an early session focusing on training needs and peer training opportunities.

Following is a sample member training needs and skills assessment form. Modify it to fit your program, priority areas, and member assignments, and your PST model. It can be modified for use with host site staff and supervisors.

Include instructions with the assessment form which tell the member when and how to complete the form and where to send it if mailing is required. You will want to provide a rationale as well, perhaps including something like the following in a cover letter accompanying the form:

> *We know that our AmeriCorps members have varying backgrounds, training, experience, and interests. We want to provide pre-service training which effectively prepares you for your AmeriCorps assignment and answers your important questions about the program. We also recognize that you come to us with a broad range of skills and experience which you can share with others. During the pre-service training, we will provide peer training opportunities.*
>
> *Please complete this training needs and skills assessment form and send it to us by XXXX, so that we can plan pre-service training which meets your needs and provides opportunities for you to share your knowledge and skills with other members.*

**LESSONS LEARNED:**
**SITE SUPERVISORS**

For many AmeriCorps programs, including host site supervisors is a critical part of pre-service training, and both members and supervisors attend the entire session. If host site supervisors will participate in the PST, having them complete a Needs and Skills Assessment provides valuable information about their own training skills. You may find that they will be valuable members of your training team.

# AmeriCorps Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form

**1. Please review the following list of knowledge and skill areas. Then indicate the extent to which you feel you need training in that area -- or could provide peer training to others.**
Please respond circling the appropriate choice:

1 = High-priority training need for me
2 = Average-priority training need for me
3 = Low-priority training need for me
0 = Not a training need for me
* = Could provide peer training to other members in this topic area

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | AmeriCorps history, program requirements, and administrative forms and procedures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| b. | Building a sense of teamwork with other AmeriCorps members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| c. | HIV/AIDS awareness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| d. | CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| e. | Responsibilities of citizenship | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| f. | Multicultural awareness and appreciation of diversity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| g. | Working with diverse AmeriCorps member groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| h. | Working with diverse communities and individuals | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| i. | Group planning and problem solving | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| j. | Negotiation and conflict management and resolution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| k. | Running meetings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| l. | Leadership styles and situational leadership | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| m. | Conducting community needs assessments and surveys | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| n. | Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with community members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| o. | Encouraging community involvement in programs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| p. | Planning and implementing community assistance projects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| q. | Working effectively in office and professional settings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| r. | Keeping a journal or portfolio | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |
| s. | Setting objectives and plans for your AmeriCorps assignment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | * |

ADD:

Skills required for your AmeriCorps assignment [AmeriCorps program staff: specify major types of skills needed]

2. **Looking back at question #1, please CIRCLE up to five training topics which you feel are the most important topics to be covered in the pre-service training.**

3. **Please identify any other areas in which you feel pre-service training should be provided, and explain why you feel this type of training is important.** (Attach additional sheets if needed.)

4. **Please identify what you feel are your three greatest strengths and most important experiences in preparing you for your AmeriCorps assignment.**

5. **Have you had experience in providing training to other people?** ___ Yes ___ No

   **To other adults?** ___ Yes ___ No

   **If yes, please describe the training you have provided.**

6. **Please identify up to three areas in which you would be most interested in providing peer training to other members.** For each, describe the kind of training you could provide, and tell us a little about your training and experience (Attach additional sheets if needed).

7. **Besides covering appropriate training topics, please tell us what you feel can be done to make the pre-service training experience most valuable for you** (Attach additional sheets if needed).

[Use the following question if this assessment is being done ahead of training and you want members for your PST design team.]

**8. Would you be interested in being a part of the pre-service training design team for our program?** ___ Yes ___ No

**If yes, please tell us about your availability for meetings during XXX period, and indicate what kinds of input you feel you can bring to the design process.** (Attach additional sheets if needed.)

# Sample Training Outline
## Two-Week PST

This outline assumes that members will come together for a centralized residential PST, and that they will then be assigned to several different locations and host sites, carrying out assignments in several different priority areas, and that they will receive "technical" training related to their service assignment during an additional week of decentralized training following the centralized PST. It also assumes that the members are very diverse, some of them with no work experience and others with a great deal; some with advanced degrees and others having recently earned a high school diploma or GED. It assumes a two-week residential PST; however, with some minor changes such as reducing the number of evening sessions, it would also work for a non-residential program. It requires that site supervisors be present on the last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and so those days focus heavily on transition to the local sites and project assignments. Assuming they can drive or fly in on Thursday evening, the host site supervisors will miss only one weekday at their own organizations.

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | Evening<br>Time/Topic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1<br>Sunday | | 3:00 p.m. Members arrive and check in<br><br>3:30 - 6:00 p.m. Get-acquainted and teambuilding activity; discussion of PST expectations and agreement on PST objectives and "norms" (see Chapter 6, Activity #1, and Chapter 7, Activity #7 and Supporting Information) | 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. Informal get-together and get-acquainted period with group activities (see Chapter 7, Supporting Information: *Using Icebreakers*) |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 2<br>Monday | 9:00 -<br>10:30 a.m. | Formation of cooperative learning groups (see Chapter 5, *Introduction to Cooperative Learning Groups for Adults*)<br><br>Small-group discussions of training needs and skills, with plans for sharing skills and helping to meet each other's training needs (see Chapter 5, *Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment*)<br><br>Thinking ahead: discussion of project assignments and the knowledge and skills needed | 1:30 -<br>5:00 p.m. | "Things every AmeriCorps member should know," Part I -- orientation to AmeriCorps including purposes, history, and requirements, using cooperative learning groups to teach others (see Chapter 6, Activities #1-2)<br><br>Introduction to using a portfolio of your experiences and learning (see Chapter 13, *Using Portfolios for Self-Assessment and Evaluation*) | 7:30 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Member group meetings organized by project assignment; discussion of tasks and needed skills (extension of morning session) |
| | 10:45 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | | | | | |
| Day 3<br>Tuesday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | "Leadership and Self-Understanding" -- introduction to leadership styles, situational leadership, what motivates you and others (see Chapter 8, Activities #9-12) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Multicultural/diversity awareness: introduction and activities (see Chapter 11, Activities #20-21)<br><br>Group activity on appreciating differences (see Chapter 11, Activities #22-23) | 7:30 -<br>8:30 p.m. | Individual journal keeping or other portfolio work (see Chapter 13, *Using Portfolios for Self-Assessment and Evaluation*) |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 4<br>Wednesday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | "Things every AmeriCorps member should know," Part II -- administrative information and forms (see Chapter 6, Activity #3)<br><br>Establishment of work groups for community projects -- initial get-acquainted and planning activities (see Chapter 14, Activities #34-35) | 1:30 -<br>5:00 p.m. | Working effectively in groups (skills-focused) -- group planning and problem solving; negotiation and conflict resolution (see Chapter 9, Activities #15 and #17-18)<br><br>Interim assessment/ reflection on PST (see Chapter 4 and also Chapter 5, *Sample Interim or End-of-PST Evaluation Form*) | 7:30 -<br>9:30 p.m. | Initial work group planning session for community project (see Chapter 14, Activity #35) |
| Day 5<br>Thursday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Group process skills -- meeting skills, communication skills (link to community projects and member assignments) (see Chapter 9, Activities #13-14) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Community-related skills -- community needs assessments and surveys, community relations, encouraging community involvement (see Chapter 14, Activity #34, and Chapter 12, Activity #28 and Supporting Information) | 7:30 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Planning for community survey as first stage in community project (see Chapter 14, Activity #34 and Supporting Information) |
| Day 6<br>Friday | Morning | Begin work on community survey (see Chapter 14, Activity #34) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Member skill-sharing sessions (see Chapter 5, *Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment*)<br><br>Activity integrating group process and planning or problem solving (see Chapter 12, Activity #26 and Chapter 13, Activity #29) | Joint social activity in the community | |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | Evening<br>Time/Topic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 7<br>Saturday | Morning Continue work on community survey (see Chapter 14, Activity #34) | Afternoon Complete community survey and carry out group work to summarize findings (see Chapter 14, Activity #34) | 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. PST evaluation - modeling of reflection (see Chapter 4, especially *Developing and Using PST Evaluation Tools*) |
| Day 8<br>Sunday | Free Day | | |
| Day 9<br>Monday | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Presentation of community survey results; processing of experience and implications for member assignments (see Chapter 13, especially Activity #33) | 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. Planning of second phase of community project (see Chapter 14, Activity #35 and Supporting Information) | 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Final planning for community project (see Chapter 14, Activity #35 and Supporting Information) |
| Day 10<br>Tuesday | Morning Carry out community project | Afternoon Continue to carry out community project | Free evening |
| Day 11<br>Wednesday | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Processing and generalizing from community project (see Chapter 14, Activity #35) | 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. Preparing for your project assignment (see Chapter 13, Activities #30-32) | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Session on organizational culture and professional skills (for all or for members without prior related experience) (see Chapter 10, Activity #19 and Supporting Information) |
| Day 12<br>Thursday | 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast meetings of site supervisors and members<br><br>9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Site orientations by site supervisors | 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. Member assignment planning and objectives setting (members and site supervisors) (see Chapter 13, Activities #29, #30, and #33) | 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Presentations and sharing of site plans by site teams |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | Evening<br>Time/Topic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 13<br>Friday | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Knowledge and skills needed for specific site assignments: preparing for the decentralized PST next week | 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. Knowledge and skills preparation for specific site assignments (continued) | Individual work on journal or portfolio |
| Day 14<br>Saturday | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Maintaining team cooperation across sites (see Chapter 7, box and Hint in introduction, and Chapter 13, Activity #33, *Planning Format*) | 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. Final PST evaluation - including use of portfolio and other written and oral assessment (see Chapter 4, especially *PST Evaluation Design Format*, and Chapter 5, *Sample Interim or End-of-PST Evaluation Form*) | 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Graduation dinner and group activity |
| Day 15<br>Sunday | 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Final breakfast<br><br>11:00 a.m. PST ends | | |

# Sample Training Outline
# One-Week PST

This outline assumes that members will come together for a centralized residential PST, and that they will then be assigned to several different locations and host sites, carrying out assignments in several different priority areas. This group will have one to two weeks of decentralized PST at local sites, depending upon the amount of technical training needed for their assignments. The PST outline assumes that the members are very diverse, some of them with no work experience and others with a great deal; some with advanced degrees and others having recently earned a high school diploma or GED. The PST takes advantage of weekend time to extend the training period beyond one work week, and requires that site supervisors be present on Friday and Saturday. Assuming they can drive or fly in on Thursday evening, they will miss only one weekday at their own organizations.

| **Date/Day** | **Morning**<br>**Time/Topic** | **Afternoon**<br>**Time/Topic** | | **Evening**<br>**Time/Topic** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1<br>Sunday | | 3:00 p.m. | Members arrive and check in | 8:00 -<br>9:30 p.m. | Informal get-together and get-acquainted period with group activities (see Chapter 7, Activity #7 and Supporting Information: *Using Icebreakers*) |
| | | 3:30 -<br>6:00 p.m. | Get-acquainted and teambuilding activity; discussion of PST expectations and agreement on PST objectives and "norms" (see Chapter 6, Activity #1, and Chapter 7, Activity #7 and Supporting Information) | | |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 2<br>Monday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Formation of cooperative learning groups (see Chapter 5, *Introduction to Cooperative Learning Groups for Adults*)<br><br>"What every AmeriCorps member should know," Part I -- orientation to AmeriCorps including purposes, history, and requirements, using cooperative learning groups to teach others (see Chapter 6, Activity #2) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | "Leadership and self-understanding" -- review of individual member needs and skills assessments; introduction to leadership styles, situational leadership, task preferences, and motivation (see Chapter 5, *Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment* and Chapter 8, Activities #8-12)<br><br>Introduction to using a portfolio of your experiences and learning (see Chapter 13, *Using Portfolios for Self-Assessment and Evaluation*) | 7:30 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Project assignments: discussion of project assignments and the knowledge and skills needed (see Chapter 13, especially Activities #30, #31, and #33, and Supporting Information) |
| Day 3<br>Tuesday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | "Things every AmeriCorps member should know," Part II -- administrative information and forms (see Chapter 6, Activity #3)<br><br>Establishment of work groups for community projects -- initial get-acquainted and planning activities; relating of community projects to member project assignments | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Multicultural/diversity awareness: introduction and activities (see Chapter 11, Activities #21-22)<br><br>Work group activity on appreciating differences (see Chapter 11, Activities #22-25) | 7:30 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Session on organizational culture and professional skills (for all or for members without prior work or related experience) (see Chapter 10, Activity #19 and Supporting Information) |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 4<br>Wednesday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Working effectively in groups (skills-focused) -- group planning and problem solving; negotiation and conflict resolution (see Chapter 9, Activities #15, #17, and #18) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Community-related skills -- community needs assessments and surveys, community relations, encouraging community involvement (see Chapter 14, Activity #34 and Chapter 12, Activity #28 and Supporting Information)<br><br>Interim assessment and reflection on PST (see Chapter 4, and also Chapter 5, *Sample Interim or End-of-PST Evaluation Form*) | 7:30 -<br>9:30 p.m. | Work teams plan community projects (see Chapter 14, Activity 39) |
| Day 5<br>Thursday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Group process skills -- meeting skills, communication skills (link to community projects and member assignments) (see Chapter 9, Activities #13-14) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Afternoon to be spent doing a community survey -- each team to be responsible for one aspect (see Chapter 14, Activity #34 and Supporting Information) | 7:30 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Presentation of community survey results; processing of experience and implications for member assignments (see Chapter 13, especially Activity #33) |
| Day 6<br>Friday | 7:30 -<br>9:00 a.m.<br><br>9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Breakfast meetings of site supervisors and members<br><br>Site orientations by site supervisors | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Member assignment planning and objectives setting (members and site supervisors) (see Chapter 13, Activities #29, #30, and #33) | 8:00 -<br>10:00 p.m. | Final planning for community project |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 7<br>Saturday | Morning | Carry out community project | Afternoon<br><br>4:00 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Complete community project<br><br>Process/assess community project experience and examine relevance to member site assignments (see Chapter 14, Activity #34) | 6:00 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Graduation, with site team presentations to full group; goodbyes |

# Sample Training Outline
# Three-and-One-Half-Day Orientation

This orientation outline assumes that all members will be working in the same state or area, and that resources permit only a short residential orientation. It also assumes that training for specific assignments will occur at a local level. Site supervisors are expected to be present during the last day, both to oversee the community survey or project, and to be involved in the processing of that activity, some preliminary planning for member assignments, and graduation.

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1<br>Sunday | | 3:00 p.m.<br><br>3:30 - 6:00 p.m. | Members arrive and check in<br><br>Get-acquainted and teambuilding activity; discussion of PST expectations and agreement on PST objectives and "norms"; get-acquainted activity is based on site assignments and getting to know other people who will have similar assignments or be assigned to the same organization (see Chapter 6, Activity #1, and Chapter 7, Activity #7 and Supporting Information) | 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. | Host site team meetings -- affiliation and teambuilding; focus on individual assignments (see Chapter 7, Activity #7 and Supporting Information) |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 2<br>Monday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Formation of cooperative learning groups (see Chapter 5, *Introduction to Cooperative Learning for Adults*)<br><br>"Things every AmeriCorps member should know" -- orientation to AmeriCorps including purposes, history, administrative information, and requirements (see Chapter 6, Activities #2-4) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Multicultural/diversity awareness and competence (see Chapter 11, Activities #20-25) | 7:30 -<br>8:30 p.m. | Informal discussion and reflection on affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network, teambuilding, and diversity (see Chapter 7 and Chapter 11, especially Activity #21) |
| Day 3<br>Tuesday | 9:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Leadership and self-understanding (see Chapter 8, especially Activities #8, #9, and #11)<br><br>Working effectively in groups (skills-focused) (see Chapter 9, especially Activity #15, and Chapter 12, Activities #26-28) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Group planning for a community project or survey (see Chapter 14, Activities #34-35) | 8:00 -<br>9:00 p.m. | Session on organizational culture and professional skills (for members without work or related experience) (see Chapter 10, Activity #19 and Supporting Information) |

| Date/Day | Morning<br>Time/Topic | | Afternoon<br>Time/Topic | | Evening<br>Time/Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day 4<br>Wednesday | 8:00 a.m. -<br>12:00 noon | Carry out a community project in the local area or a community survey (see Chapter 14, Activities #34-35) | 1:30 -<br>5:30 p.m. | Processing/generalizing from the community project or survey: what did we learn and how will it apply to member assignments (joint with site supervisors) (see Chapter 13, especially Activity #33)<br><br>Preliminary planning and objectives setting for actual project assignments (joint with site supervisors) (see Chapter 13, Activities #29-30)<br><br>Written assessment of orientation (see Chapter 4, especially *PST Evaluation Design Format*, and Chapter 5, *Sample Interim or End-of-PST Evaluation*) | 6:00 -<br>8:00 p.m. | Dinner celebration and graduation, plus activity to plan for ongoing contact among members while at their various project assignments<br><br>(Members and site supervisors leave in the evening or the next morning) |

# Hints for Hiring and Using a Training Consultant

1. **Decide what you need from the consultant.** Which of the following do you want the consultant to do: take primary responsibility for designing the materials, work with others to design the materials, build on your PST outline, prepare others to serve as trainers using the materials, serve as a senior trainer, evaluate, manage the entire PST effort? Be sure to find out which of your collaborating partners and host sites has experienced trainers who may be able to provide consultation at no or low cost, reducing the amount of help you need from a paid consultant.

2. **Think about whether you want an individual consultant or a group.** If you have a diverse member group or require a range of content skills, you may be happy with a consultant team. You may want to hire several people individually to meet specific needs, or ask that interested consultants suggest a group (either through a firm or existing nonprofit organization, or by having consultants suggest a team of individuals who are comfortable working together).

3. **Consider your resources.** How much money is available for PST training consultants? What does that translate to in terms of a daily rate? Consider the relative priority you place on each type of assistance you need -- training design, trainer training, training delivery -- and how your needs compare to your resources.

4. **Try to find out typical daily rates for training consultants in your area.** Talk to people you trust who have used training consultants regularly. Be sure to ask about rates for designing versus delivering training. Sometimes, consultants have a daily training rate which builds in the costs of training design. If you want PST design to be done separately so you have the materials for your own use afterwards, the rate may be different.

5. **Prepare a written scope of work.** Be as specific as you can about the work you want done, how you want it done, what products you expect, your deadlines, desired "products" including format and level of detail, and who must approve them. Clarify the extent to which the consultant will be working as part of a team and attending meetings, providing trainer training, etc. Indicate whether the consultant or you will produce the "camera-ready" version of the materials. If you have a sense of the number of days you think will be required, provide it. If funds are very limited, you may want to indicate the amount of money available, and ask the consultant to propose what s/he can do for that amount. (To help the consultant understand what you want, you might provide sample formats such as the *Sample Format for a PST Training Outline*, page 81, in Chapter 2 or sample activities with Trainer's Notes and Member Instructions from any of the Training Topics & Activities chapters of this manual.)

6. **Ask people you trust to recommend possible consultants.** Get recommendations of individuals or groups that have done training for groups similar to your members. Check with organizations that regularly use training consultants like the Support Centers of America, United Way regional training centers, or other nonprofit organizations involved in capacity building. Look to former members as possible members of your consultant team.

7. **Develop a consistent screening process.** You might begin with an initial telephone or personal meeting and a request for information about the consultant's experience and rates. Then you might formally send out the scope of work as a Request for Proposals, with a specified deadline. Or you might operate less formally, providing promising consultants the scope of work and asking them to meet with your design team or several key people involved with the program.

8. **Be sure to meet with serious candidates and ask them substantive questions.** Having a consistent list of questions helps ensure a fair process, and gives you important information. Particularly important are questions like the following; pick those which fit the tasks you plan to have the consultant carry out:

   - What is your training philosophy?
   - What is your prior experience in doing pre-service training for volunteers or for personnel being prepared for specific assignments?
   - What experience have you had with diverse groups, and with groups similar to our program's members (specify their characteristics)?
   - How do you like to work with a group like ours -- attending meetings, providing draft materials, etc.? Can you suggest how you would organize the assignment and work with us in carrying it out?
   - Are you prepared to develop detailed training materials that we can continue to use in future years, whether or not you serve as the trainer?
   - Suppose you were developing a training unit on leadership styles and situational leadership [or pick another topic of interest to your AmeriCorps program]. How might you organize that unit -- what activities would you use, what handouts would you provide?
   - What kinds of experiential learning do you use most often? Do you use cooperative learning structures, and if so, how?
   - What do you do to keep training participants alert and involved?

- What kinds of audio-visuals do you like to use?

- How do you assess how well training is going? If you identify problems, how do you resolve them?

- Suppose you were training a group, and it became clear that there were some intergroup problems related to gender [or race/ethnicity, or social class], so people were not becoming a cohesive team. How would you handle the situation?

- If you were to serve as our senior training design consultant, how would you involve members and host sites in the design?

- Can you provide some references from groups you have trained? May we see some sample training materials, to get a sense of how detailed they are and how they are formatted?

Listen carefully not only to what the consultant says, but how s/he interacts with you. See how the consultant's preferred style of developing training materials fits with the degree of involvement you want to have in the process. Get a sense of the level of commitment to experiential learning, and the extent to which the consultant can suggest a variety of experiential approaches. Beware of vague responses.

9. **Try to observe the consultant conducting a training session.** If no "live" session is scheduled, perhaps the consultant can share a videotape of a training session. If this is not possible, and it is difficult to make a decision just through an interview, ask for a brief but realistic demonstration session. You may have to pay for a day of the trainer's time, but the money will be well spent if it assures you the right trainer for your PST. Have the trainer take one unit of your materials and then deliver training to a group of people, including the decision makers and, if possible, one or two past or current members. Arrange for some challenges so the trainer must demonstrate skills that are important to you. Be sure to do this long enough before the PST that you still have time to find someone else; don't wait until the final mock session.

10. **Check references and review sample materials.** Determine the nature of the relationship; is this a professional reference rather than a personal friend? Talk to former clients and people who have participated in past training sessions. Ask specific questions similar to those you asked the consultant, such as whether materials were of high quality, whether deadlines were met, about skills in working with various types of groups, and about effectiveness in providing knowledge versus skills versus attitude training. Ask how the trainer handles conflict. Ask about use of experiential learning techniques. See if there are any types of people the consultant is NOT good at training. Ask if the reference would hire the consultant again. Look at sample materials in terms of content, level of complexity, completeness, format, and overall quality.

11. **When you think you have chosen your consultant, ask him/her to prepare a draft scope of work for the contract.** This helps ensure that the consultant really understands what you want done. Ask the consultant to include interim dates for deliverables such as drafts or sections of the training package, and clear cost projections. Review that document carefully in making your final decision. If you are finding it hard to choose between two consultants, ask both to provide this written information.

12. **Negotiate costs.** Most training consultants have a daily rate; sometimes they may reduce the rate if you will accept a fixed price for a specific product. Effective trainers are not inexpensive, but you may be able to arrange lower-cost services if you contract with a nonprofit organization with some links to your AmeriCorps program, or if you produce the final materials and otherwise minimize costs other than the consultant's time, or if you identify some other basis for a discounted fee.

13. **Be sure the contract is specific and clear.** For example:

- Consider the implications of various costing methods -- for example, a fixed price versus a daily rate with a stated maximum number of days.
- Use your scope of work along with the consultant's scope of work to develop a clear list of tasks, deliverables, and due dates.
- Include progress payments based on interim deliverables.
- Build in specific meetings.
- Include a clear description of required review and approval of materials, including what individual has authority to approve materials.
- Consider a clause enabling you to cancel the contract if quality standards are not met or unexpected problems arise. Many organizations have a standard clause which allows either party to cancel on a specified number of days' notice, and be paid for the work done prior to cancellation.
- Be sure the contract meets your organization's contracting requirements; if you do not have a typical consultant contract, get legal advice in preparing one.
- Be sure to meet any requirements specified in your AmeriCorps contract.

14. **Develop a comfortable working relationship with your consultant.** Get to know each other, and establish open communication, so that you both feel comfortable raising issues and problems before they become serious.

15. **Brief your consultant about AmeriCorps.** Emphasize philosophy, purposes, and terminology; be sure the consultant understands that AmeriCorps is not a jobs program nor a short-term volunteer program.

16. **Hold your consultant accountable and show that you are also accountable.** If you establish at the outset a mutual respect for deadlines, you may avoid problems during critical periods. This not only means expecting materials to be submitted on time, but also providing feedback to the consultant on a timely basis.

17. **Be prepared to make a change if serious problems arise and cannot be resolved to your satisfaction.** If it becomes clear that there are serious problems with the quality of work, deadlines, training philosophy, or other important issues, deal with them. If the problems cannot be resolved, you will probably find it easier to make a change early in the process than to wait until PST is about to begin. Modifying the scope of work may be a solution. For example, if you find that a consultant with strong training skills is less skilled at materials development, you may want to keep the consultant as a trainer but bring in someone else to help prepare materials.

18. **Don't take your consultant for granted; treat the consultant as a part of your team and give credit for high-quality work.** A consultant who prepares excellent materials deserves written credit in the training notebooks. An effective and committed trainer deserves public recognition during the training, and a letter of appreciation which can be shown to potential clients in the future. Showing appreciation to consultants has the same effect as showing appreciation to members, host site supervisors, or program staff -- it tends to maximize their effort, commitment, and quality of work.

## DEFINITION OF SERVICE-LEARNING

**Service-Learning . . .**

is a method that helps people learn & develop through active participation in service experiences.

These service experiences.. .

- meet real community needs.
- are coordinated between the community and the program.
- are integrated into intellectual & cognitive areas of growth & practice for each individual.
- provide structured time for individuals to reflect (through thinking or talking or writing) about what they did during the service activity.
- enhance what is taught (& learned) elsewhere by extending the learning environment beyond what we usually consider to be its "normal" limits.
- ask participants to apply their experience and knowledge to the present circumstances.
- help foster caring for others.

Source: **AmeriCorps*National** Civilian Community Corps, ***Service-Learning Resource Kit.*** **Washington, D.C.:** no date given.

# Service-Learning

**The process of understanding service-learning begins with pre-service training.** Members learn about service-learning principles, values, and practices. PST also offers an opportunity for structured pre-service reflection. PST provides members with preparation and planning time for the year of community service that they are about to experience.

According to the AmeriCorps*National Civilian and Community Corps, the points in the box are at the heart of service-learning.

**SERVICE-LEARNING**

- **The "learning" of service-learning is experiential.** This kind of learning grows out of the recognition (made by many theorists and practitioners in our century) that people learn best when they learn from what they know and do -- and when their learning is not separated (by always taking place in a classroom, for example) from the times and places where people do their work.

- **The "learning" of service-learning is broad.** Service-learning recognizes that, in addition to traditional academic skills, young people need to develop personal, social, career, and citizenship skills; members need all these skills to participate effectively in their communities.

- **The "service" of service-learning is for and with a community.** Members will help make long-lasting change in communities when they fit their work to community needs and strive to include community members in what they do.

Source: AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps, *Service-Learning Resource Kit*. Washington, D.C.: no date given.

While service-learning is incorporated into all Corporation for National Service programs, one program -- Learn and Serve America -- is based on it. Learn and Serve America uses service-learning to integrate service into schools, which enables young people to serve their communities through their classrooms. Through the K-12 program, service activities are part of a school curriculum or community-based learning program, and through the Higher Education Innovation Programs college students are engaged in community service.

## AmeriCorps Members as Adult Learners: Reminders

In designing training for AmeriCorps members, think of them as a special group of adult learners. Consider the following:

1. **AmeriCorps members are adult learners who share some important learning characteristics.** Research has shown that adult learners typically:

   - Bring to training a strong sense of purpose -- they tend to focus on how what they learn can be used in real-life situations (like their AmeriCorps assignment).
   - Are self-directed and motivated, provided the training is relevant to their needs.
   - Have considerable life experience that serves as an important resource for their own learning and for other members of the group.
   - React best to a training model in which they are active partners, not passive recipients.

**FIELD-SENSITIVE LEARNING**

Research shows that students prefer to learn in environments that are consistent with their own personal learning styles. Recent research on multicultural education emphasizes that many students, including racial/ethnic minorities, learn best through methods which are "field-sensitive" -- capitalizing on human associations. However, much teaching and training uses primarily methods which are "field-independent" -- individualistic and competitive -- such as teacher questions to the whole group and individual work assignments. "Field-sensitive" approaches like small-group cooperative learning and other interactive methods such as peer teaching seem particularly successful with these learners.

See, for example: Carlos Díaz, ed., *Multicultural Education for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1992.

2. **Adult learners need varied learning opportunities to fit different learning styles.** For example, you might want to:

- Combine individual and small-group activities.
- Use both cooperative and competitive approaches.
- Use both inductive methods (building a model step by step) and deductive methods (starting with the whole model and breaking it down into components).
- Appeal to many senses and use multi-media approaches.

3. **Experiential learning can address most of the needs and capitalize on the interests of adult learners.** The adult learning model is a type of experiential learning (see *The Experiential Learning Cycle*, page 85) -- the only experiential component it does not explicitly require is "reporting" following "experiencing."

4. **AmeriCorps members will have a special interest in learning practical skills they can use during their service assignments.** This includes both general skills useful regardless of their specific assignment, and project-focused technical skills related to their specific duties. Skills need careful introduction so that the member both sees the whole skill and understands its component parts. One way to approach the teaching of skills is to use the following steps, which relate to the experiential model:

- *Introduce the skill* to be learned (for example, how to plan and conduct a community needs assessment), with background and rationale.
- *Show* the whole skill (what does a completed community needs assessment look like).
- *Show and tell* by presenting the various segments of the skill (e.g., need to decide on scope, identify information sources, prepare questions or areas of inquiry, gather information, aggregate and analyze information, write results). If you understand the needs assessment process, you can divide it into major segments and explain what goes into each and the logic behind this.
- *Check the group's understanding;* ask questions, and provide for initial use of the developing skill (for example, have the group describe ways to gather information).

- *Provide for practice;* have small groups prepare and present a plan for conducting a community needs assessment; have them critique each other; answer questions and provide hints.

- *Provide an opportunity to use the whole skill* if possible -- e.g., conduct an actual limited needs assessment as part of the PST.

- *Conclude and summarize;* provide hints and re-emphasize the main points.

**5. Avoid situations which may discourage learning,** such as:

- Providing direct, public criticism without first being sure that members have the self-confidence to be comfortable with such criticism.

- Expecting members who have been out of school for years (or who had negative school experiences) to take paper-and-pencil tests or write documents for sharing with other members.

- Duplicating what may have been negative classroom experiences.

- Expecting their full attention when personal or family needs have not been met.

**RESOURCES:**
**REFERENCE ON ADULT LEARNING**

For a practical summary of adult learning research and its practical implications, see Susan Imel, "Guidelines for Working with Adult Learners," ERIC Digest No. 154. Available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1900 Kenney Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090. It is also available from the AmeriCorps clearinghouse:

National Service Resource Center
ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830

Telephone: (800) 860-2684 or
(831) 430-9471
TTY: (831) 461-0205
Fax: (831) 438-3618
E-mail: jenniferr@etr.org
Website: http://www.etr.org/NSRC

6. **Assess member needs before and during the PST; members may be more varied in their knowledge and experience than many groups of adult learners.** You might:

- Send a needs and skills assessment to members before the PST, and ask them to bring it with them, for sharing in an early session, or send it ahead, so results can be aggregated before the session.

- Ask members several times during the PST to provide feedback on the extent to which the PST is meeting their needs; be sure to make changes if the answer is "little" or "not at all."

7. **The first impression is very important for most adult learners; plan a strong first session.** Unlike many classroom students, AmeriCorps members are present by choice. Use your most effective trainer and some activities that have been well tested. An exciting, well planned, substantive first session sets a positive tone for the whole PST.

# An Introduction to
# Cooperative Learning Techniques for Adults*

## BACKGROUND ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning recognizes that a learning activity includes both *content* and *structure*, and provides some practical structures which are useful tools for trainers.

**Studies indicate that many individuals, both youth and adults, learn better in cooperative groups than in individual competitive situations.** This is particularly likely to be true for adult learners, who prefer to be active partners in their own learning. U.S. studies indicate that people from many cultures learn better and are more comfortable in cooperative learning settings than in more traditional educational settings.

**Cooperative learning promotes positive interaction across racial and ethnic lines.** Studies of school-age children show that having students talk and work together on meaningful structured tasks provides familiarity and contact which may not often occur in other settings. Federal consultants on race relations have reported that when they go into high schools with high levels of violence and race relations problems, they typically find lecture and teacher-controlled classroom formats. Students may sit next to each other all year but never talk or work together. They advocate changes in instructional strategies as part of race relations efforts.

**Research indicates that cooperative learning is superior for problem solving.** There has long been agreement that cooperative approaches are more effective than competitive ones for completing "lower-level tasks"; recent analyses indicate that cooperative learning is also more effective for higher-level and complex problem solving. A meta-analysis by Qin, Johnson, and Johnson, based on an examination of 46 studies published between 1929 and 1993, found that "members of cooperative teams outperformed individuals competing with each other" on all four types of problem solving studied:

> linguistic (solved through written and oral language), nonlinguistic (solved through symbols, math, motor activities, actions), well-defined (having clearly defined operations and solutions), and ill-defined (lacking clear definitions, operations, and solutions).

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* Information from this summary comes from books and articles by Dr. Spencer Kagan and by Zhining Qin, David W. Johnson, and Roger T. Johnson, as well as practical experience from users of cooperative learning techniques, especially Lori Orum, former Director, and Diane Cabrales, former Education Specialist, at the Center for Community Educational Excellence, National Council of La Raza.

The authors conclude that the practical implications are obvious:

> On the job and in the classroom, cooperative groups will be better able to deal with complex problems than will competitors working alone.

**One of the difficulties of getting cooperative learning implemented widely is that teachers and trainers may not have the time to learn and consistently apply new theory.** Dr. Spencer Kagan's innovation is to recognize this and create a practical "toolbox" for busy practitioners. Good grounding in theory and lots of training is ideal, but even the novice can make a good start if the structures are provided.

**Your PST can include a combination of individual and group activities, cooperative and competitive learning opportunities, to fit a range of learning styles.** Use of cooperative learning groups may require only minor changes in the way you form and use small groups for experiential learning, but can greatly increase interaction, member satisfaction, and group problem-solving effectiveness. Cooperative learning also encourages teambuilding, a major AmeriCorps priority for PST.

**RESOURCES:**
**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

See any of a number of books and articles by Dr. Spencer Kagan or Drs. Roger Johnson and David Johnson. Particularly user-friendly is Dr. Kagan's *Cooperative Learning,* designed for use by teachers. Published by Resources for Teachers, Inc., Kagan Cooperative Learning, 27134 Paseo Espada, Suite 302, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675, 1-800-933-2667.
Website: http://www.kagancooplearn.com

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING CONCEPTS

**Cooperative learning assumes that learning includes three critical factors:**

- Appropriate (comprehensible) input;
- Opportunity for output (practice); and
- A supportive context.

Thus, it is inherently experiential and interactive.

Kagan sums up the principles of cooperative learning as PIES:

- **P -- Positive Interdependence** among participants, who learn to work together and depend on each other, which provides a teambuilding and cooperative problem-solving environment.

- **I -- Individual Accountability** for learning on the part of each participant.

- **E -- Equal Participation** for all participants, regardless of status or other differences.

- **S -- Simultaneous Interaction** of multiple groups or "cooperative learning teams," which makes possible a higher level of participation and experiential learning than could be done if all participants worked in a single large group.

**According to Kagan's model, cooperative learning is based on two complementary group norms:**

1. **Individual Responsibility:** *"I am responsible for:"*

   - Trying: Improvement counts

   - Asking: Asking for help from teammates

   - Helping: Offering to help teammates

   - Courtesy: Making polite requests and showing appreciation

   - Support: Praising, encouraging, and building up (no "put downs")

2. **Team Responsibility:** *"We are responsible for..."*

   - Problem Solving: We try to solve our own problems

   - Team Questions: We ask teammates before asking the trainer

   - Helping: We help other teams, other participants, and the trainer

   - Inner Voice: We use a voice heard by teammates, but not other teams

**One of the most impressive aspects of cooperative learning is that participants take responsibility for helping to create a positive atmosphere and for working with the trainer.** For example, cooperative learning uses a very simple -- and amazingly efficient --

"quiet signal." When the time allotted for an activity is over, the trainer holds up one hand and makes eye contact with someone. Each participant who sees this is responsible for holding up one hand and making eye contact with someone else who hasn't yet seen the hand signal. A group of 40 talkative adults typically becomes silent in less than five seconds -- without the trainer having to repeatedly request silence, nag, or otherwise assume responsibility for getting participants to cooperate.

**Cooperative learning lets the trainer be an observer and consultant,** moving from team to team, providing content input, answering questions which team members are unable to answer among themselves, but not keeping order. The trainer may provide lecturettes and guide the group, but encourages participants to learn from each other.

**Cooperative learning teams can be temporary or long-term.** Members can be moved from one team to another to work with a variety of participants. New teams can be formed each day or each half-day. However, they can also be more long-term. Members who will be assigned to the same host site or have similar types of assignments in different locations can be grouped throughout the PST or some segment of it -- for example, they can work together on all community-related activities. If a sense of team identity is desired, the teams can be given time to agree on a name, which they then put on all the products they develop, and there can be some friendly competition among teams. Often, team members clap for their recorder, pride themselves in getting their work done first, etc. Tokens or awards can be given -- for arriving on time, for finishing on time, for completing assignments, for helping other groups -- to further build team identity; however, rewards for finishing first or for completing a difficult task will develop competition among the groups. Many options are available to the trainer.

## ROLES

**Cooperative learning has many different roles for team members.** Those which seem particularly applicable to training for adults are the following:

- **Facilitator** - the person responsible for organizing the work of the group, and being sure the group stays on task.

- **Recorder** - the person who takes notes, writes on newsprint as the group brainstorms, and/or prepares the newsprint.

- **Reporter** - the person who shares with other teams the work or conclusions of the team.

- **Timekeeper** - the person who assures that the team is able to devote appropriate time to each assigned task and complete all its tasks within the allotted time; this role is especially useful when the team has a tight deadline and a number of different tasks to complete. In a group of four, the timekeeper may also serve as observer.

- **Observer** - the person who watches the group process. If you are using the experiential learning model in your activities, the observer can provide valuable input during the "processing" phase, reporting on how the team interacted and identifying its successes and problems. While the reporter shares content, the observer shares process with the full group.

In cooperative learning, team members change responsibilities with different exercises or assignments, so everyone gets a chance to serve the various roles.

### A PROCESS FOR TEAM ACTIVITIES

**Cooperative learning often uses a number of structures and steps which are designed to assure full participation of all team members.** A progression of steps from individual work to pairs to small teams helps ensure full participation by all members. For example, the following are the steps in a structure for writing team statements about a specified topic. Notice how each step builds on the previous activity and draws participants comfortably into deeper discussion with growing numbers of people. Notice how different this approach is from assigning a task and allowing 30 minutes for a group discussion; too often, a minority of the group participates while others sit and watch. Using these steps requires clear direction from the facilitator, who spells out the steps, but not necessarily more time than would be allowed for a good group discussion. The advantages of cooperative learning are 100% participation -- which means more learning of information and skills, given the superiority of active learning -- and a learning environment which is comfortable for all members. The steps are as follows:

1. **Role Assignment:** The facilitator assigns and explains roles. It is important for everyone on the team to have something concrete to do for the last three steps. Even someone who may not know much about a topic can watch the clock or observe the process. In cooperative learning, roles are assigned for each task, and over time everyone should take every role. In staff training, a frequent rule is that the most senior person in the group is never the reporter, to avoid having that person dominate the process and to give others presentation experience.

2. **Think Time:** Team members must take at least 20 seconds to think before sharing ideas; if some participants are less verbal than others, or if English is a second language for some of them, think time is often several minutes. Each individual thinks about a question or issue. This helps assure that every team member is prepared to participate in brainstorming or discussion, not just those who are most verbal or assertive.

3. **Individual Write:** Each individual writes one or two sentences on the topic. This is often paired with the think time, and helps assure that everyone organizes his/her thoughts before speaking. This encourages full participation and often improves the quality of individual input.

4. **Pair Discussion:** Members of the team pair and discuss their thoughts, before sharing them with the rest of the group. Sharing with one other person after you have organized your thoughts is much less intimidating than sharing in a full group.

5. **Round Robin:** Participants read their individual sentences, one by one, going around the table, with no comments. This is useful for brainstorming, or getting a lot of ideas "on the table," for later discussion. The "no comment" rule also creates a safe space for timid sharers.

6. **Team Discussion:** Teammates discuss individual responses or ideas, once they have been presented, asking for a rationale or further information from the person who presented them. Notice that this activity is preceded by four other steps; only now do members detail an idea to the full team and defend it.

7. **Consensus and Share:** Teammates come to consensus on a team statement and write it down on a piece of newsprint to post on the wall. To ensure full participation at this stage, give everyone a role. Some trainers even give a different color marker to each team member and insist that each team statement include every color. If the task involves a presentation to the full group, the reporter will make the presentation for the team.

8. **Processing/Synergy:** Teammates discuss the process they used, and the concept of synergy. Was there increased energy through synthesizing information and ideas from everyone? Was the group smarter than anyone alone? The observer plays an important role in this step. Sometimes, this "processing" step is done in the full group.

## CONCLUSION

Many of the concepts of cooperative learning are familiar to most trainers, even if they don't use the same terminology. Some are less obvious. In practice, cooperative learning may not seem terribly different from other interactive, experiential approaches. However, it is a well-developed approach, and some of its very simple structures and techniques can immensely increase participation and facilitate team building. It is particularly appropriate for multicultural groups, heterogeneous groups, and adult learners -- frequent characteristics of AmeriCorps PST groups.

# TRAINER PREPARATION MATERIALS
# (Supporting Chapter 3)

# Differentiating Trainer and Facilitator Roles

Providing AmeriCorps pre-service training is likely to require several distinct types of training.

**Much of the PST involves knowledge- and skill-development units,** designed to provide the following:

- Knowledge and skills related to member assignments in a particular role (such as teacher aide or violence prevention specialist) involving a specific program priority area (such as education or public safety)

- Cross-cutting or general skills such as communication skills, group problem solving, or community planning, which can be applied to a variety of different program areas.

- Knowledge of AmeriCorps history, purposes, regulations, and administrative forms.

**This type of training calls for a traditional trainer role.** The objectives of the session deal with provision of knowledge and skills, so the trainer is expected to be well versed in the topic area, to help members to develop and practice new skills and learn new knowledge, answer questions and provide examples, and ensure that all members share their related knowledge and experience.

**In addition, the PST will involve some sessions in which members are expected to carry out action planning and decision making, and the trainer will serve a coordinating role,** such as:

- Planning by a group of members for a community survey or other community project; or

- Joint objective setting and assignment planning by members and their host site supervisors.

**This type of training requires a facilitator.** The members themselves are responsible for the decision making; the facilitator helps them to consider appropriate variables and models, assures open and thorough discussion, and provides knowledge and in some cases does some skill transfer. Training skills are certainly needed. However, the primary responsibility for making decisions remains with the group. It is extremely important that the group come to a decision which fits its needs and which it "owns" because of going through a careful problem-solving or decision-making process. The facilitator should not attempt to impose his/her preferred solution

on the group. The group must implement its decisions and live with them; the facilitator may have little or no follow-up responsibility.

There is, of course, considerable overlap between the two types of roles. Most sessions require some skill training segments in order to assure that members have the information and skills needed to make decisions and plan strategies. Moreover, an effective facilitator will certainly let a group know if s/he feels that a decision being considered seems very unlikely to succeed. But the facilitator will do this through providing additional information and helping the group to consider it through a rational review process, NOT by telling the group what it should do.

An effective trainer carrying out skill training will often adopt a facilitator role, helping participants to learn from each other and encouraging them to practice new skills. Learning skills requires practice, and a facilitating role is important to encourage and build on experiential learning. Thus, both roles are usually needed in each type of session. However, the primary goal and purpose of the unit or session should determine which approach dominates.

# Hints for Preparing Outside Presenters

## INTRODUCTION

Most AmeriCorps pre-service training programs have one or two "core trainers" with primary responsibility for the session. In addition, presenters -- individuals from collaborating agencies, host sites, area universities, the community, past or current members -- serve as trainers or speakers for specific units or sessions. Typically, these presenters are subject-matter experts. However, they may have limited training experiences.

To help presenters convey their subject matter effectively may require providing them with some trainer training. At a minimum, it helps to make presenters aware of your PST philosophy and approach, and to provide guidelines of hints to help them plan their activities.
Following are some things to avoid and some hints for effective involvement of presenters.

## FACTORS AFFECTING PRESENTER SUCCESS

Certain factors have major influence on whether a presenter succeeds or falls short of expectations. Among the factors which most affect the effectiveness of presentations are the following:

1. **Objectives.** Problem: Lack of clear learning objectives. If you don't know -- very specifically -- what you are trying to accomplish, it's hard to provide a focused, effective presentation or activity. Solution: Be sure presenters receive, or are helped to develop, clear learning objectives for their unit or activity. If the presenter is to be a part of a panel or carry out one activity within a broader unit, differentiate overall unit objectives and what you want accomplished by the specific activity in which the presenter will participate.

2. **Appropriate activities.** Problem: Failure to differentiate information, insight/attitude, and skill-building purposes -- and design activities appropriate to those purposes. While it is possible to provide information largely through the lecture method (hopefully, heavily supplemented with questions and answers), skill development requires practice. Solution: When you invite a presenter, be clear on the focus of the unit or activity -- sharing of information or examples, skill development, motivation/attitude change, etc.

3. **Targeting.** Problem: Lack of targeting to your members. Many presenters have made similar presentations or carried out similar activities for different participant groups and may have a standard approach or speech. Solution: Give the presenter specific information on your members (and other people who will participate in that session), including level of background and experience in the topic, related community experience, age, knowledge of particular communities or regions, etc.

4. **Expectations.** Problem: Expectations that are unrealistic -- a panel presentation or one activity designed to familiarize members with a particular city or rural area is not going to make members into experts. Sometimes, presenters try to cram too much information into one presentation, which minimizes time for member participation or experiential learning, and can lead to information overload. Solution: Help the presenter to define a limited number of major points to be made or skills to be presented and practiced; discourage overly broad presentations.

5. **Quality of presentation.** Problem: Inappropriate or uninteresting presentations. Many PST planners have had the experience of being told they "need" to involve a particular individual or entity, because of their support, prestige, or relationship to the program -- even though they are likely to be ineffective presenters. Often, the presenters are asked to speak on a panel, where a planned ten-minute presentation turns into a 20-minute presentation with few examples and no member participation. Over-use or inappropriate use of audio-visuals, especially poorly prepared overheads, can also create a negative impression. Solution: Find ways to involve key people without having them make content presentations which are part of a focused training unit. Ask them to participate in informal lunchtime roundtables, provide awards during the graduation, or give greetings at an informal session.

6. **Need for solutions.** Problem: Failure to communicate solutions and models as well as problems and needs. Like most adult learners, members are looking for information and ideas which they can apply in their project assignment. Solution: Ask presenters to include examples relevant to the members' projects, and to present models and approaches which they can apply in their project assignments.

7. **Participatory activities.** Problem: Insufficient opportunities for member involvement. Few members want to sit passively for two or three hours, listening to other people talk. Members should not have to wait for questions and discussion until after a long lecture or presentations by multiple panelists. Solution: Work with presenters to develop experiential learning activities and other participatory methods of presenting material. If you use a panel instead of presentations, use a set of questions to guide panel discussion.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTERS

To help presenters meet your needs, you might provide them with guidelines and suggestions like the list on the following page; modify the content to fit your program and your needs.

# Sample Guidelines for Presenters

[Prepare a cover letter to send with these guidelines.]

These guidelines were developed to help you in preparing for your involvement as a trainer/presenter at the AmeriCorps pre-service training scheduled for XXXXXX.

**1. Time:** You are scheduled to participate in [Session Title], which is scheduled for [day of week, date, and time].

**2. Desired Outcomes:** The purposes and learning objectives of this session are as follows [List objectives].

**3. Format:** The expected format for this session is as follows: [Panel, lecturette to be followed by an experiential activity, which presenter is or is not responsible for facilitating, etc. Specify amount of time the presenter has for his/her section.]

**4. Content:** We would like you to focus on the following topics and content [List topics and content].

**5. Co-Presenters:** [Names, titles, contact information, plus their responsibilities.]

**6. Background Information:** Attached is summary information about the PST and AmeriCorps, including the overall agenda, desired outcomes, number and diversity of members, types of program areas and project assignments, and other information to help you target your activity to our members.

**7. Guidelines for Presenters:** We very much appreciate your willingness to take the time to serve as an outside presenter for our pre-service training. We want to use your time well. We offer these suggested guidelines to help you prepare your session so that it informs and inspires our members.

**a. Please target your presentation and activities specifically to our group of members.** We would be happy to put you in contact with a member [SPECIFY: who is part of our design team; who will be participating in the training], who can provide suggestions and feedback as you plan your session.

**b.** **Please review the learning objectives provided** and let us know if you feel any should be added or changed; then base your activity on those objectives.

**c.** **If you are taking responsibility for an entire unit, please decide how you will use the time available** and share this information with us, so we can discuss it and fit it appropriately into the overall agenda.

**d.** **Please ensure that passive activities such as lectures or presentations last no more than 20 minutes.**

**e.** **Please use experiential activities and allow for as much member involvement as possible.** We will be happy to help plan experiential learning opportunities with you.

**f.** **Please use as many realistic examples as possible.** We would very much appreciate case studies and models appropriate to member program areas and project assignments, and information about communities to which they will be assigned.

**g.** **We would appreciate receiving handouts two weeks ahead of the beginning of the pre-service training** [by XXX date], so they can be included in member handbooks. One copy suitable for copying or a disk formatted for XXXX would be much appreciated.

**h.** **We would also appreciate the following additional information** as soon as possible, and no later than XXX date:

- **What equipment or materials you require** -- easel pad, overhead projector, etc.
- **Your preferred room arrangement, and plans for small-group work.**
- **Any other special arrangements required.**

# Preparing Trainer Instructions

## RATIONALE

PST packages should be documented for ongoing use, including use by other trainers in future pre-service and in-service training sessions. Trainer instructions provide the information needed, along with member notebooks, to provide a complete package for future trainers. Moreover, if the person preparing the training materials is not going to serve as trainer, this year's trainers will need trainer instructions in order to use the materials and activities appropriately, encouraging maximum learning by members.

## PREPARING TRAINER INSTRUCTIONS

Since preparing trainer instructions can be time-consuming, it may be helpful to give trainers and presenters trainer instruction forms as part of the mock sessions, and ask that the information be written down during the sessions. If possible, have trainers/presenters provide the information as part of their mock presentation, and have someone there to take notes on a *Trainer Instruction Form*. Then someone from the program staff can type the material for future use.

If it is not possible to get trainer instructions for all the units, be sure to get them for units which will be presented by someone not involved in the development of the training materials.

## INFORMATION NEEDED

Each of the units in the Training Topics & Activities section of this manual provides trainer information. The format used in those chapters and in the *Trainer Instruction Form* on the next page can guide you in preparing your own trainer instructions. You may want to develop your own format for such instructions. Whatever the format, the following information is extremely helpful.

# Trainer Instructions Form

**Name of Unit:** _____

**1. Time allocated:**

- For entire unit _____
- For each segment _____

**2. Learning objectives**

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

**3. Information to present in lecturette or elicit from group**
(provide reference materials or list main points; suggest relevant examples)

**4. Activity(ies) to be used, and for each** [add pages as needed]:

**Activity:** _____

- Purpose
- Desired outcomes
- Emphasis on knowledge, skills, attitudes
- Equipment needed
- Introduction and directions required
- Methods for "processing" work or results

- Sum-up points
- Special concerns/warnings

**5. Ways to link activities**

**6. Applications to AmeriCorps member assignments**

**7. Key closing points**

**8. Evaluation techniques**

## Trainer Equipment, Materials, and Room Arrangements

A trainer typically needs the following equipment and materials at almost any training session:

- **Prepared newsprint** listing objectives and providing major points and group instructions to guide lecturettes and various training segments. Do it the night before or early that morning. It makes you look organized to have some of it pre-prepared; if there are two trainers, you can generate a good deal of it as you go -- but be sure someone on the training team takes responsibility for this and writes neatly. Beware of having too much prepared newsprint or trying to put too much on a sheet; you don't want members reading the newsprint instead of listening to you, nor do you want them to get eyestrain trying to decipher what you wrote.

- **Newsprint or easel pads,** to use during the training session. Pages from them can be hung up on the walls for ongoing reference. Chalkboards or "whiteboards" can be used, but are not nearly as practical because they don't remain throughout the session and cannot be taken home and typed or reviewed later. Now available are pads of "whiteboard" material which sticks to flat surfaces through static electricity and can be erased if you use water-soluble markers.

- **Magic markers.** Try to be sure you have several very dark, new, thick black or blue ones, since other colors are often less visible, especially if the group is large. Include other colors like yellow or red for use in editing or highlighting material -- and for situations in which members are asked to prepare drawings or summarize their own presentations. Some people are allergic to the alcohol-based kind so you might try the scented water-soluble type.

- **Masking tape,** to hang up newsprint around the training room. Your training area looks much more interesting once some small-group products have been taped to the walls, and some information will need to be available for ongoing reference. Many training facilities disapprove of putting tape on the walls; although masking tape protects paint, you may want to get stickpins or use "static image" whiteboard pads instead of masking tape. Be sure to ask about such restrictions when you are negotiating with a possible training facility.

You may also need any or all of the following:

- **Audio-visual equipment,** to show pre-prepared materials:

  - An overhead projector
  - Slide projector
  - Videotape player
  - Movie projector

  Some trainers use overhead projectors in place of newsprint, writing on them as they go. However, remember that (1) you can't hang them around the room, and (2) they require a somewhat darkened room, which does NOT encourage an attentive group, especially during low-energy periods such as right after lunch or late in the afternoon.

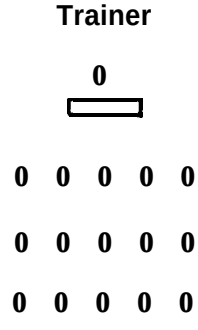
- **A videotape recorder and player to** tape the session, or to tape participants and replay the tapes so they can see themselves and be critiqued in a skill development session. This latter effort can be very useful, but requires some practice to get familiar with the equipment and use it efficiently.

- **Special equipment related to the nature of the training,** such as books or educational toys.

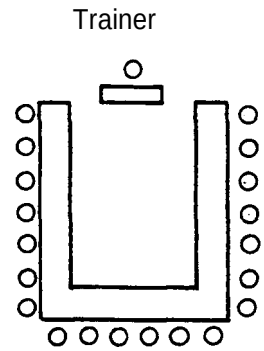
Be sure to arrange for all needed equipment and materials well in advance of the training.

**The seating arrangement of the training room is as important as your equipment and materials.** Determining this arrangement is usually a trainer or presenter responsibility. Since PST is supposed to be highly interactive and participatory, you will want a room arrangement that encourages participation.

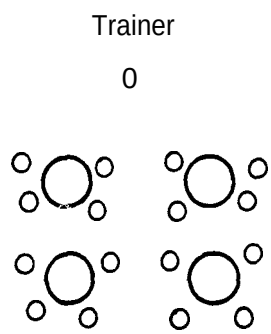
- **Avoid a seating arrangement that sets the trainer apart as the only source of information and discourages participant involvement -- such as "theater" style or "classroom" style arrangements.** For example:

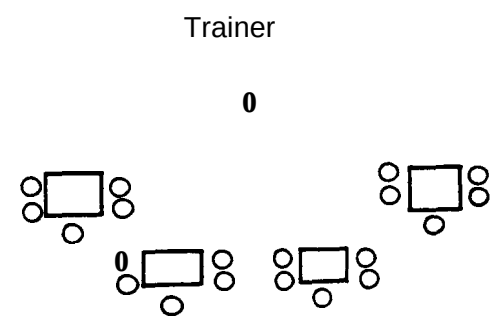


- **Because you will be doing a lot of small-group work, you probably won't want a seating arrangement that doesn't allow small groups to separate themselves and work together comfortably.** For example:




- **You will want an arrangement that enables members to work comfortably both in small groups and as a full group.** For example:



## Sample Logistical Arrangements Checklist

Modify this form to fit your program, and use it to plan for and monitor all logistical arrangements. Be sure someone is responsible for all the major categories of arrangements, and don't underestimate the time required for this aspect of PST planning.

| What Must be Done | Person Responsible | Deadline Date | Completion Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TRAINING MATERIALS** | | | |
| Notebooks purchased | | | |
| Training supplies (easel pads, markers, masking tape, game supplies, pens, paper, etc.) ordered | | | |
| "Graduation" certificates ordered | | | |
| Final training agenda and plan/package revisions | | | |
| Member training notebooks ready for duplication | | | |
| Trainer packages ready for duplication | | | |
| All duplication of materials completed | | | |
| All materials prepared for sending to training site | | | |
| Materials received by training facility | | | |
| Training supplies received and checked | | | |
| Prepared newsprint completed | | | |
| Training supplies transported to site | | | |
| **FACILITY ARRANGEMENTS** | | | |
| Disability needs determined | | | |
| Possible sites identified | | | |
| Visit made to one or more potential facilities to meet staff, tour facility, determine availability of appropriate space, equipment, and services | | | |
| Facility selected | | | |
| Firm costs obtained from facility | | | |
| Contract signed with facility | | | |
| Billing arrangements confirmed with facility | | | |
| Training-room space reserved and confirmed | | | |

| What Must be Done | Person Responsible | Deadline Date | Completion Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Training room arrangements sent to facility | | | |
| Audio-visual equipment needs determined | | | |
| Audio-visual equipment rental arranged | | | |
| Meal arrangements made, including food to meet special dietary needs | | | |
| "Breaks" scheduled and refreshments ordered | | | |
| Room list provided to facility | | | |
| Confirmation of room availability provided by facility | | | |
| Emergency medical arrangements determined | | | |
| Participant check-in/check-out arrangements made | | | |
| Transportation arranged for community activities | | | |
| Office services (copying, computer access) determined | | | |
| **MEMBER ARRANGEMENTS** | | | |
| Members sent first notice of PST | | | |
| Host sites and collaborating agencies sent first notice of PST | | | |
| Trainers, presenters, and guests sent first notice of PST | | | |
| Information for participants prepared, including PST dates, expected arrival time, daily start and end times, agenda with free time, dress code, transportation information, member costs, materials to bring, rules of the facility or your organization (such as no alcohol) | | | |
| Members sent detailed facility information and instructions | | | |
| Host sites and collaborating agencies sent detailed facility information and instructions | | | |
| All trainers, presenters, and guests sent detailed facility information and instructions | | | |

| What Must be Done | Person Responsible | Deadline Date | Completion Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Room requirements obtained from all participants, including trainers | | | |
| Rooming lists prepared for participant arrival | | | |
| **DAILY ARRANGEMENTS** | | | |
| Training room seating arrangements appropriate | | | |
| Materials for day in training rooms | | | |
| Audio-visual equipment available as ordered | | | |
| Coffee/soft drinks available as ordered | | | |
| Easel pads and supplies in training rooms | | | |
| Transportation for community activities available as arranged | | | |
| Room temperatures comfortable | | | |
| Light switches located and functioning | | | |
| Power outlets located and functioning | | | |
| Reference materials in rooms as needed | | | |
| Presenters for day confirmed and present | | | |
| Number of people at meals confirmed | | | |
| Agenda adjustments made as needed and communicated to all | | | |
| Evaluation forms available as needed | | | |
| Completed evaluation materials collected and provided to appropriate person | | | |

| What Must be Done | Person Responsible | Deadline Date | Completion Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LAST DAY** | | | |
| Final walk-through of facility to locate equipment, materials, and personal belongings | | | |
| **POST-PST FOLLOW-UP** | | | |
| Bills for all aspects of PST received and recorded | | | |
| Bills checked | | | |
| Bills paid | | | |
| Thank you notes sent to all presenters, guests, others who helped | | | |
| Debriefing held with key individuals | | | |
| Evaluation materials aggregated | | | |
| Evaluation results shared with members, collaborating partners, host sites, trainers, presenters | | | |
| Follow-up promised to members or host sites done | | | |
| Agenda and materials changes documented for future PST use | | | |

# EVALUATION MATERIALS
# (Supporting Chapter 4)

## Sample Assessment Forms

There is no single correct format or content for PST assessment forms. You will want to prepare forms which fit the objectives and philosophy of your AmeriCorps program and provide you the information needed to:

- Understand what is "working" and "not working" in your pre-service training,
- Get a sense of what members are learning and how they feel about the process,
- Make immediate PST refinements,
- Improve the PST design and delivery in the future, and
- Determine other training needs for your AmeriCorps members.

Following are two sample assessment forms, one designed for evaluating a particular PST unit -- such as leadership development or planning and evaluation -- and one designed for use as an interim or end-of-PST written evaluation. The forms include types of information many AmeriCorps programs say they have found useful, include both "closed-ended" and "open-ended" questions, and are easy for members to complete in five to ten minutes. Use them as a model or as ideas; modify them to fit your program or design your own forms. Be sure to use written evaluations as just one of several methods for evaluating your PST.

# Sample Unit Assessment Form

Please complete this brief PST unit evaluation form and give it to a trainer before you leave the session. Thank you!

**1. Overall, how would you rate the session on Topic X in terms of its value to you as an AmeriCorps member?**

___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor

**2. Please rate the following aspects of the session:**

| | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a. Session content and focus** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **b. Mix of learning activities** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **c. Group interaction** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **d. Amount learned** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **e. Trainer skills** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **f. Facilities and setting** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

**3. Following the training, can you:**

a. **[List each learning objective]**
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure

b. …

c. …

**4. Will what you learned in this unit directly affect your performance or approaches as an AmeriCorps member?**

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure **If yes, how?**

**5. What was the most useful thing about the session?**

**6. What was the least useful about the session?**

**7. If we were to include this session in our next pre-service training, what, if anything, should be changed?**

**8. Do you feel that additional learning on this topic is needed:** ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, what should be the focus/content?

How should it be provided:

___ Training at my AmeriCorps project site
___ Training at the mid-year session
___ Individualized assistance or learning
___ Other (specify)

**9. Please add any other desired comments.**

[Multi-choice questions should be added to test mastery of any information presented.]

# Sample Interim or End-of-PST Evaluation Form

[This form is designed for use at the end of the pre-service training. An almost identical form can be used for the interim evaluation, just by adding "so far" to questions; suggestions for change might ask what changes should be made "in this session" rather than "in future pre-service training sessions."]

**1. Overall, how would you rate the pre-service training [so far] in terms of its value:**

**a. In preparing you for your AmeriCorps assignment?**

___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor

**b. In encouraging you to remain involved in public service activities?**

___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor

**c. In developing practical skills you can use after you have left AmeriCorps?**

___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor

**2. Please rate the following aspects of the sessions [so far]:**
[Relate these to the overall desired outcomes]

| | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a. Session content and focus** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **b. Mix of learning activities** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **c. Trainer and presenter skills** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **d. Group interaction in sessions** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **e. Amount of new information and skills** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **f. Facilities and setting** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **g. Informal interaction and teambuilding** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **h. Opportunity to work jointly with host site supervisor** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **i. Community activities** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **j. Opportunities for personal growth** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

**3. Following the training [Or at this point in the training], indicate the extent to which each of the following statements is true,** using a five-point scale where:

5 = Fully
4 = Largely
3 = Somewhat
2 = A little
1 = Not at all

**[List major overall desired PST outcomes, such as the following:**

____ a. Do you feel a sense of affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network and with this AmeriCorps program?

____ b. Do you know and understand basic administrative and program requirements of AmeriCorps?

____ c. Do you feel prepared to work successfully in diverse member groups and with diverse organizations and communities?

____ d. Do you have the skills to conduct community needs assessments?

**4. What is the single most important thing you have learned or experienced in the pre-service training [so far] -- positive or negative?**

**5. Will what you learned in the pre-service training [so far] directly affect your performance or approaches as an AmeriCorps member?**

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure If yes, how?

**6. What was the best thing about the pre-service training [so far]?**

**7. What was the worst thing about the pre-service training [so far]?**

**8. If you were involved in designing the next cycle of pre-service training:**

**a. What would you keep the same?**

**b. What would you change?**

**9. What other training would be most useful to you as an AmeriCorps member?**
[List options, including topics under consideration, or topics where training is available from an national AmeriCorps contractor, or leave open-ended.]

**10. [For interim evaluation:] What needs do you have as an AmeriCorps member that have not been addressed thus far in the pre-service training?**

**11. Please add any other desired comments.**