

Chapter 7

AmeriCorps Affiliation and Teambuilding

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When there is a positive team identity, liking, respect, and trust among team members and classmates, there is a context within which maximum learning can occur.

-- Spencer Kagan in *Cooperative Learning*

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SCOPE

This chapter helps to develop a sense of affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network among members and discusses icebreakers and ways to include teambuilding in all PST activities.

IMPORTANCE

The Corporation for National Service believes that affiliation with AmeriCorps National Service Network is crucial to the success and survival of AmeriCorps programs. Affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network and teambuilding are two of the main themes that should run throughout your PST. It is important that members and program and service site staff understand that they are all part of both a local service site team and a larger national effort with shared values and philosophy. Members must build a sense of team with their fellow members so they see each other as resources and turn to each other for support.

TARGETED USERS

PST offers an opportunity to build trust and relationships not only among members, but also among program staff, host site supervisors, and members. A strong sense of affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network and team with their fellow members will help prevent problems. For example, most members encounter challenges and difficulties in their service assignments. Members who identify strongly with the AmeriCorps and program missions and feel a sense of team support are most likely to overcome these obstacles and successfully complete their year of service.

This chapter is designed primarily for the individuals responsible for training development and delivery. The contents and discussion will also be useful for anyone supervising consultants or volunteer trainers.

LESSONS LEARNED: TEAMBUILDING

Many AmeriCorps grantees emphasize the value of teambuilding -- especially across host sites and with other AmeriCorps programs in the area -- through activities directly related to their program's missions. For example, if AmeriCorps members will be renovating houses, the grantee does teambuilding through having members work together to plan a specific short-term housing renovation or house-painting job. If members will be working on environmental issues, the teambuilding activity might involve a whirlwind environmental activity such as a weekend clean-up or recycling project. The purpose is to help members develop an affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network and program "ownership" and learn to value each other and work effectively as a group; the method for accomplishing this is doing a project-related activity.

EXPECTED LEARNING

After reading this chapter, training directors should understand how to encourage an affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network and a sense of team, and how to integrate teambuilding components into information-giving and skill development activities. Members should emerge from a training session based on these materials with an understanding of their affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network. They should be able to explain the relationship between the Corporation for National Service, State Commissions, Corporation's State Offices, AmeriCorps programs, and service sites. AmeriCorps Members should understand how they fit into this relationship. They should know all their fellow members by name (unless the program is too big, and then they should at least know their immediate team or crew) and know a little bit about them. They should know how to contact their fellow members and the program and site staff/supervisors. They should know about plans to bring

Hint: Encourage a sense of teamwork among all members, not just those assigned to a particular community or host site. Teamwork among individuals with similar assignments in different sites is especially helpful. When a member encounters problems or needs ideas, a telephone call to a member in another site with a similar assignment can provide valuable support and assistance. Sometimes, it helps a member just to talk to someone with whom s/he felt a special sense of "connection" during the training. To encourage this kind of teambuilding:

- Vary your small groups or teams, so that members have a chance to work with and get to know everyone.
- Where maintaining telephone, e-mail, or other contact is financially feasible and practical, encourage each member to find a peer mentor during the PST and maintain contact throughout the year.
- Try to find opportunities for cross-site in-service training or joint activities.

the full group together again and to meet members from other AmeriCorps programs.

RELATED CHAPTERS

Many activities involving group work also contribute to a sense of team and an affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network. *Chapter 9: Working Effectively in Groups*, page 359, and *Chapter 14: Community Projects*, page 575, are especially complementary to this one.

Activity #5: Articulating AmeriCorps

Trainer's Notes

Trainer Skills Needed:	Knowledge of AmeriCorps Facilitation Coaching
Time Required:	About 2 hours (depends upon the number of small groups making presentations)
Materials Needed:	Easel pad, markers, and masking tape -- so each small group can have several pieces of newsprint and several colored markers <i>Member Instructions</i> Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint
Learning Objectives:	At the end of this activity, members should be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● To define what AmeriCorps is● To describe the relationship between the Corporation for National Service, State Commissions, State Corporation Offices, AmeriCorps programs, and service sites.● To specify what legacy they would like to leave behind● To describe what they would like to get out of their AmeriCorps experience
Skills Development:	Communication and public speaking Teambuilding Group problem solving and reaching consensus
Directions:	Divide members into cooperative learning groups of 3-5 members. Give each group three pieces of newsprint and a set of colored markers. Go over the <i>Member Instructions</i> with the full group. Assign each group one scenario, and give them 30 minutes to discuss the scenario. Instruct them to put on newsprint an outline of what they would say in their presentation and why. When the time is up, signal all groups to stop their discussions. Ask each group to report by making their presentation. After each group's presentation, lead the full group in applause.

Listen carefully to each group's presentation. Pay close attention to how they see their service opportunity. Do their remarks indicate that they understand what AmeriCorps is? that AmeriCorps is a service opportunity, not a job? that they understand their role at the service site and the link between the AmeriCorps program or project and the service site?

Also pay careful attention to member expectations being expressed during the presentation. If any expectations are outside the scope of your program and cannot be met, be prepared to discuss this. Let all groups finish their presentations before offering corrections.

After all presentations have been made, address issues of expectations and member understanding of AmeriCorps. Ask the group to **process** the activity. Ask if it was difficult to explain what AmeriCorps is. Why or why not? Did the presentation vary substantially based on the type of audience that would be hearing the presentation?

Now ask them to **generalize**. Ask them what they learned. Do they understand AmeriCorps better now that they had to explain it? Also ask how they can **apply** what they learned in this activity to their AmeriCorps experience.

Hint: The content of this activity is similar to *Activity #2: What is AmeriCorps?*, page 255. Do not use them back-to-back or on the same day. Since they use different approaches, you might use *Activity #2* at the beginning of your PST to introduce information on AmeriCorps and this activity as a review to see how well they can apply what they learned.

Activity #5: Articulating AmeriCorps Member Instructions

Assignment:

To describe AmeriCorps nationally and locally and how they interrelate.

Directions:

Once in cooperative learning groups, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles list posted in the training room.

In your group, discuss one of the following scenarios. Be prepared to present to the full group an outline of what you would say and why.

For each scenario, imagine that it is next year at this time and you have finished your AmeriCorps experience.

1. You are entering graduate school and your university is having a Community Service Day. You have been asked to make a 5-10 minute presentation on AmeriCorps at a gathering of 500 people, mostly students at the university. You have been asked to talk about what AmeriCorps is, its purposes and priorities, how it works, what it has accomplished, and why people should support or join it.
2. You are being interviewed for your local weekly newspaper for a regular column profiling local residents who make a contribution to the community. The reporter has told you that she is interested in hearing about your AmeriCorps experience, and in encouraging others to apply for AmeriCorps. She wants to focus the article on: What legacy you are leaving behind; what you have accomplished; and how your experiences fit with AmeriCorps as a national service program.
3. You have been asked to speak at the pre-service training for the new class of members entering the AmeriCorps program at which you completed your year of service. You have been asked to make a 5-10 minute presentation on what you gained from your AmeriCorps experience, what you did in your service assignment(s), and what impact your service assignment(s) had on the community.
4. Israel is considering adoption of a national service program as an alternative to mandatory military service. You are visiting and are asked to meet with a panel of senior Israeli officials responsible for drafting a national service program. They want you to explain to them how AmeriCorps works and how it relates to local communities.

Activity #6: Personal Service Experience Panel

Trainer's Notes

Trainer Skills Needed:	Familiarity with all forms of national service Facilitation Moderating a panel
Time Required:	2 hours
Materials Needed:	<i>Member Instructions</i> You will also need one to three panelists who have had a personal service experience
Learning Objectives:	At the end of this activity, members should be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● To describe at least three other service experiences● To describe how the experiences of another person's service experience relate to their own project expectations
Skills Development:	Listening comprehension Interviewing Public speaking
Directions:	<p>Several weeks before the PST, arrange for one to three panelists who have successfully completed similar periods of community service and are willing to share their experiences with your members. Possible panelists include former members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, Youth Conservation Corps, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Peace Corps, or a past AmeriCorps member. Having at least one person who served in or near the same communities where your members will be working is particularly advantageous. Look for articulate panelists who will speak with passion.</p> <p>Give the panelists information about your program and about your members. Also tell them who else will be on the panel. Inform them that they will have 10 minutes to give a summary of past service experiences, including the impact the experience has had on their lives and on the community or area where they provided service. Encourage the use of specific examples and experiences.</p>

**RESOURCES:
CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS**

To find a speaker who was part of the Civilian Conservation Corps, contact:

National Association of
Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni
P.O. Box 17148
Tucson, AZ 85731-7148
Telephone: (520) 298-2467
Fax: (520) 298-4518
E-mail: CWilie@aol.com

At the beginning of the PST, when you go over the agenda with your members, make sure to mention the panelists. Let the members know that after short panel presentations, they will be able to ask questions. Get them to start thinking about interesting questions such as what they would like to ask a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s.

Hint: Look at *Hints for Preparing Outside Presenters*, page 207, in *Chapter 5: Supporting Materials*.

At the beginning of this activity, give out the *Member Instructions* and call attention to the three tasks for members. Then introduce all the panelists, and have each tell his/her story. Make sure to keep presentations to 10 minutes so members have ample time to ask questions.

After all panelists have made their presentations, provide a one-hour question-and-answer period. Ask the members to present their questions. Have members identify themselves before asking their questions, stating their names and service assignments. Have some key questions pre-determined, and encourage discussion among the panelists.

After ending the question-and-answer period, thank the panelists and invite them to stay for the rest of the discussion. Refer members to the *Member Instructions* and ask them to work individually for 5 minutes on tasks 2 and 3. Then have them share their task 3 responses in pairs for 10 minutes.

Have the full group **process** the experience and **generalize** about what they learned from the panelists. Focusing on their responses to tasks 2 and 3, have them discuss how they feel the panelists' experiences **apply** to what they are going to do at their service assignments.

**LESSONS LEARNED:
OTHER SERVICE EXPERIENCES**

AmeriCorps grantees report that learning about other service experiences energizes members and helps them feel a sense of purpose and a connection with the AmeriCorps National Service Network.

Variations:

- After each panelist's 10 minute presentation, have the members ask questions for 20 minutes. Then at the end take a half hour for members to ask other questions.
- Instead of having panel presentations, give all the panelists a list of 5-10 key questions. Encourage members to provide questions before the activity. After introducing all the panelists, ask the first question, and let any or all of the participants respond. Then ask the next question. This avoids doing monologues and encourages interaction among panelists -- which can provide lively discussion. Allow time for questions from members halfway through and at the end.

Activity #6: Personal Service Experience Panel
Member Instructions

Assignment:

To learn about the varied opportunities for national service and how other individuals' service experiences affected their lives.

Directions:

1. Working individually, identify at least one question you would like ask the panelists.
2. During the panel discussion, think about and write some notes concerning what aspects of the panelists' experiences seem most similar to what you expect to experience in your service assignment and what aspects seem most different.
3. Consider the most important lessons you have learned from this panel discussion. Pair up with one other member sitting near you and discuss the lessons each of you found important.

Activity #7: Team and Tent Building*

Trainer's Notes

Trainer Skills Needed:

Facilitation
Moderating a panel

Time Required:

1 1/2 hours

Materials Needed:

Member Instructions
Lots of newspapers and tape
Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint

Learning Objectives

At the end of this activity, members should be able:

- To have members identify each other by name and know something about each other
- To have members feel a sense of team identity

Skills Development:

Group problem solving

Directions:

Divide members into cooperative learning groups of 3-5 members. Go over the *Member Instructions* with the full group. Tell the members they have 20 minutes to discuss their names.

When the time is up, signal all groups to stop their discussions. Ask each reporter to **report** one or two interesting things the group learned about each person's name.

Now instruct the groups that they must build a tent out of newspaper and masking tape. The tent should be "life size" --big enough to keep all group members dry in an imaginary rain storm.

Hint: Rolling up newspaper to make tent poles will make the task much easier, but let the members figure that out on their own.

* Adapted with permission from an exercise by Dr. Spencer Kagan in *Cooperative Learning*. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1994.

Ask that only the recorder of each group come up to get supplies. (This will avoid the general pandemonium of having all your members crowd around the supplies, and will take less time.) Give them 30 minutes to build their tents. Give them 5 minutes to look at the tents the other groups built and compare construction methods.

Hint: For programs that involve construction or repairs to buildings, this activity is a fun introduction to any specific construction-related skills you will teach the members.

Lead the group in processing the activity. Talk about what happened during the activity. Were they able to build the tent?

Ask the observer to report on the approach the group chose to build the tent, and how they reached that decision. Then ask how well the group interacted. Was everyone given a chance to participate? Did one person step back and take on the role of the foreman, directing action?

Generalize and apply: Ask members what they learned from this activity. How will they apply what they learned during this activity to their service assignments?

Hint: This is a good activity to do right before a break. Then any groups that need a little more time to build their tents can continue into the break. During the break, members should go around the room and look at other teams' tents.

Variations:

Tell members that each individual can either be a paper-placer or taper-upper; i.e., a member can either use the newspaper or the tape, not both. This encourages participation of all group members and reliance on one another. Group members will also need to

communicate clearly with each other and cooperate and coordinate to successfully complete the tent. This is a good variation to use when you know you have several members that tend to dominate or to just sit back and watch.

Activity #7: Team and Tent Building

Member Instructions

Assignment:

To learn more about the other members of your group, and to complete a group construction project.

Directions:

1. Once in cooperative learning groups, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles posted in the training room.
2. For 20 minutes, discuss your names. Share the following information:
 - How did you get your name? Is there an interesting family history associated with your name? Are you named after someone in your family?
 - Do you like your name? If you could change your name right now, what name would you pick?
 - Do you have any nicknames, either that people call you now or that people called you in the past?
 - What interesting experiences have you had that were associated with your name?
3. When the facilitator calls on your group, be prepared to tell one or two interesting things about each person's name and related experience. Pick things that will help other members get to know that person.
4. Have one person in your group get some newspapers and a roll of masking tape. Using these materials, build a tent. The tent should be "life size" -- big enough to keep all group members dry in an imaginary rainstorm. You have 30 minutes to complete this task.
5. When time is up have the observer tell what approach you used to tent building and how well the group interacted.

Supporting Information

Using Icebreakers

Icebreakers are activities that are used to "break the ice" -- to help people get to know each other better. They are essential when providing training for a group of people who do not know each other, or making it easier for new members to join an existing group. Icebreakers help training participants feel comfortable in the group, which makes it easier for them (especially those who are shy or new to the group) to ask questions and participate actively.

Icebreakers are useful even when training participants already know each other. They help members to get to know each other better, which often enhances group work. Icebreakers can be used to set the stage for an upcoming group activity, and to give groups a chance to get used to working together on an easy and fun activity before the "real" assignment begins.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD ICEBREAKERS

- Don't take much time -- optimum length is 15-30 minutes.
- Involve everyone.
- Encourage trust and cooperation within a small group or the entire group of members -- some icebreakers should be cooperative rather than competitive.
- Encourage us to reveal ourselves.
- Make us feel a little bit challenged, but not uncomfortable.
- Result in our feeling more a part of the group.
- Start conversations and interactions.
- Increase our respect and liking of other group members, especially those who seem on the surface to be different from ourselves.
- Show us interesting new things about people we have known for some time.

WHEN TO USE ICEBREAKERS

- **At the beginning of your PST** to help members get acquainted and start off with a fun activity.
- **After lunch** to chase off the sleepy after-lunch feeling.
- **After a difficult or intense session** to release tension.

- **After assigning members to work in groups** with people they do not know well, to facilitate group interaction.

USING ICEBREAKERS EFFECTIVELY

- **Be sure everyone participates.** To accomplish this:
 - ◆ **Choose icebreakers appropriate for the number of members in your training session.** One program uses an icebreaker in which half a dozen members have to balance together on a 2-by-4 (a piece of lumber); members must help each other, and the experience helps members get comfortable with each other. However, at a recent session, the group was large, and the program had only one piece of wood, so six members participated, while the others watched. The program needed more pieces of wood so everyone could participate.
 - ◆ **Be sure everyone has a role.** The icebreaker should involve everyone -- every member gets a worksheet to be completed, every member is assigned to a team, every member is part of the circle, etc.
 - ◆ **Be sure no one is excluded due to physical disabilities.** Don't pick icebreakers that require people to run upstairs or carry out physical tasks that exclude people with limited mobility. Groups can usually be quite creative about involving someone in a wheelchair or with limited mobility, even in icebreakers involving human sculptures. Just be sure that the process is inclusive and keep an eye out to see that appropriate adjustments, with their input, are made for anyone needing them.
- **Use icebreakers for teambuilding across sites and program areas.** If you put members into smaller groups, vary assignments, to create groups by priority area or type of assignment, by site, and without regard to either of these factors.
- **Don't over-use icebreakers.** As a former AmeriCorps member, puts it: "Don't use an icebreaker to death; once the group gets the point, stop." Avoid the tendency to continue the activity too long, use the same or a similar approach more than once, or do several icebreakers in a row.
- **Don't use icebreakers that require a great deal of trust until members have had time to establish trust.** Early in the session, icebreakers are designed to build trust. You may ask members to engage in physical tasks that require some mutual support, but should not expect a high level of trust. For example, some members have been very uncomfortable with activities like the "trust falls," where they must count on other members to catch them as they fall over backwards.

Such an activity may be very valuable, but should not be required of members on their first day of pre-service training. Similarly, icebreakers used at the beginning of PST should not expect members to reveal very personal information or count on individual discretion. Several days into the session, icebreakers may be used as a relief from tension or a physical break from hard mental work. By then, you can safely use activities which require a higher level of trust and mutual confidence.

SAMPLE ICEBREAKERS

1. Guess Who? [This icebreaker is good for small groups of less than 20]

At the beginning of the PST, have all the members write three important facts about themselves on one side of a blank sheet of paper, and their name in pencil on the back. Have them turn in the sheets. Then have a trainer number each sheet, make a list of what number corresponds to what name, and erase the names from the sheets. Post the sheets around the main training room or some other room that members will spend a lot of time in during the next day. Tell the members they have until after lunch (or some other convenient time) to read all the sheets and try to figure out who is described on each sheet. Give all members a sheet of paper which lists all the numbers so they can record their guesses. Whoever gets the most right wins a prize.

2. Human Sculptures [This icebreaker is best with groups of about 10-20; if there are more than 20 members, split them into two subgroups]

In this non-competitive activity, members serve as the human "clay" to be formed by the member serving as sculptor. The sculptors should be asked to provide an interpretation or depiction of some category of events or other focus topics, to be chosen by the trainers. For example, you might ask for interpretations in "human clay" of any of the following:

- An important event in the life of a member
- An anticipated AmeriCorps experience
- An important "public" event
- A movie scene
- An event from a book
- A scene or line from a song

The trainer or another staff member may want to serve as the sculptor first, to demonstrate the process and reduce member inhibitions. Then ask for volunteers. The sculptor should move members around without speaking, until the human sculpture is complete, then explain it to the group while they maintain their poses.

If public events or anticipated AmeriCorps events are used, it is easy to have two sculptors simultaneously interpret the event and then compare their sculptures. The human

sculptures can also be done with several individuals or the whole group serving as a team of sculptors, in which case talking is permitted.

Be sure the room is big and open enough for the groups to move around. You may want to provide some furniture or other items such as chairs, tables, or books to be incorporated into the sculptures. Allow time for 3-4 human sculptures.

3. We Are Alike [This icebreaker is good for large groups]

Have everyone stand in the center of the room. Explain that this exercise will show that we all belong to many groups. Tell the members that you will start by saying, "We are alike -- we all _____" and you will list a characteristic. All the people who share that characteristic are to stay in the center of the room, and those who don't share that characteristic should go to the edges of the room. Then you will call a member's name and it will be that person's turn to list a characteristic s/he has. The member you select will state a characteristic, people will move, and then that member will call another member's name to take over. Do this for approximately 10 minutes. Characteristics should include family, personal background, interests, and values. Some suggestions: ...have volunteered for a community-based organization, ...were born in this city, ...have Italian ancestry, ...have successfully cooked a quiche, ...have eaten beef tongue, ...have more than five brothers and sisters. Encourage creativity.

4. Find Someone Who... [This icebreaker is especially good for groups over 20]

Develop a list of statements that are likely to be true for at least several of the members in your group. Then give members 10 minutes to find someone, other than themselves, for whom that statement is true and have that person initial the sheet. Whoever completes all the statements first wins a prize.

Your statements can be general -- for example, find someone who:

- _____ Was born in March
- _____ Lives in a co-op building
- _____ Has seen the Grateful Dead, live in concert
- _____ Has a daughter under two years old
- _____ Owns a Nat King Cole album
- _____ Has eaten grits

Your statements can be AmeriCorps-focused -- for example, find someone who:

- _____ Called the national 1-800 recruitment line
- _____ Plans to use the educational stipend to become a lawyer
- _____ Expects to work for a nonprofit organization
- _____ Will be the only member at the host site

Hopes to stay in AmeriCorps for a second year
Will be assigned to a town of less than 10,000 people

5. **Art Charades** [This icebreaker can be done with any group above 10]

Develop lists of popular movie titles, song titles, proverbs, AmeriCorps terms, or any other categories of phrases that seem interesting. Divide the members into at least two groups; add more groups if needed to keep group size to about 5-8 people. The purpose of the game is for each team to try to guess the title or proverb first. The method used is similar to charades, except instead of using pantomime, a representative of each group must use drawings to represent the words in the title or proverb. This icebreaker needs a large room, so groups can work with some privacy. Each team gets newsprint and a set of markers of several different colors.

A representative from the team goes to the facilitator in the center of the room. The facilitator announces to the entire group the category of the phrase (movie title, proverb, etc.), and then tells the representatives the phrase to be used. The representative goes back to the group and draws sketches on newsprint depicting the entire phrase or title or each word separately. (For example, for the song *Blue Moon*, the representative might draw a moon in blue marker. For the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the representative might draw a picture of a plate of bacon and eggs and a picture of a jewelry store window.) The representative may not speak, and the drawing must not include any words or letters that appear in the title or proverb. The team which identifies the phrase first receives one point. Each team then sends a different representative to the center of the room for the next phrase. The game continues until one team gets a pre-determined number of points or a specified amount of time (10-15 minutes) has passed. The team with the largest number of points wins.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND ICEBREAKERS?

Many books of icebreakers are available to trainers. For example:

- From Pfeiffer & Company, telephone (800) 274-4434

Ice Breakers: A Sourcebook of Games, Exercises and Simulations
Includes 50 icebreakers and how to use and adapt them

The Encyclopedia of Icebreakers: Structured Activities that Warm-up, Motivate, Challenge, Acquaint and Energize
Includes 150 icebreakers categorized by the purpose of the activity

- From HR Press, telephone (716) 672-4254

Diversity Icebreakers: A Trainer's Guide

Includes 50 icebreakers, categorized by the purpose of the activity

- From Human Resource Development Press, phone (800) 822-2801

A Compendium of Icebreakers, Energizers, and Introductions

Includes 75 activities