

TrainingBriefs

Closing Service and Opening New Doors

JULY 1997

NUMBER 1

Member training and development are shared responsibilities between AmeriCorps program staff, site supervisors, training coordinators, and trainers. *TrainingBriefs* are designed to provide these individuals with useful information and innovative ideas for member training and development.

Needed: Input from the Field

MOSAICA is preparing a training module on Close of Service. MOSAICA staff want to hear from programs about successful close of service training sessions and about difficulties they have encountered. Please contact Diane at (202) 887-0620 or mosaica@ix.netcom.com

The transition to life after AmeriCorps service can be challenging and emotional for members. Program staff or site supervisors with responsibility for training members should help them prepare for this transition by providing close of service training. CNS has recently made available a new resource, *Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps*, which—although geared to members—can also help programs plan close of service sessions.

Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps, which was recently mailed to programs, is a workbook designed to help members assess their skills and accomplishments, consider their "next steps," and reflect on and make important decisions about future employment, training, education, and service. The workbook's seven sections contain user-friendly, guided reflection activities focusing on managing the transition, continuing to serve, and pursuing options like finding a job or furthering their education.

***Next Steps* will be useful for program staff (directors, training coordinators, etc.) in planning and designing training sessions for close of service.**

Simply looking through the workbook will provide many ideas for session topics to offer during and at the end of the program year. The worksheets and other information can be used for exercises and handouts at training sessions. The lists of resources suggested to members in Appendix C

will also provide ideas of possible trainers to call on or books that can be used as reference materials.

Using *Next Steps* in training provides an ideal opportunity to introduce the workbook to members and to encourage them to begin thinking about the close of their service year. It won't be possible to cover all the material in the workbook, nor will it be necessary, since members will have the resource of *Next Steps* for reference.

How do programs decide what topics to cover and what sessions to offer?

Survey members! Find out what they are planning to do next and what their concerns are. *Ask members' supervisors!* They know the members on a professional level and will be able to make valuable recommendations.

If members have similar needs such as continuing their education (GED, community college, college, master's, or other education or training), plan a session that specifically addresses these needs.

Possible session topics could be:

- Continuing education and training (*Next Steps*, pp. 48-52, 78-80)—inform and guide members through an assessment of their options
- Benefits of service—review the procedures for applying the educational grant and getting academic credit for service experiences



This is the first in a series of two-page *TrainingBriefs* produced by MOSAICA, under Cooperative Agreement #CA95-15 with CNS. This *TrainingBrief* was written by Marilyn Noguera. This material represents the opinion of MOSAICA, and does not necessarily represent official CNS policy.

To begin or stop receiving MOSAICA's *TrainingBriefs* by fax, or find out about training and other available assistance, contact: Diane Cabrales, Project Director, MOSAICA, 1000 16th Street, N.W., Suite 604, Washington, DC, 20036, telephone (202) 887-0620, fax (202) 887-0812, e-mail mosaica@ix.netcom.com

If most members will be entering the work force, plan sessions like:

- Job fairs (*Next Steps*, pp. 52-57)—invite career counselors and human resource specialists from the community to hold a fair that focuses on employment trends, job search skills, job discovery, and/or resume writing
- How to continue volunteering (*Next Steps*, pp. 12-18)—identify avenues for volunteering while pursuing employment, education, or other options

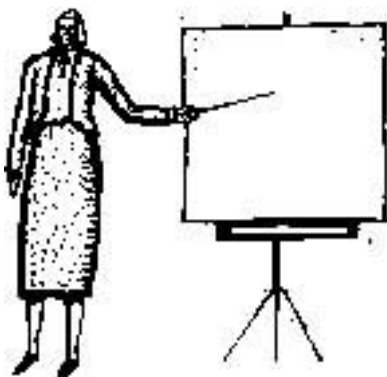
If members have diverse needs, choose a general training session that allows flexibility through individual reflection such as:

- Stages of transitions (*Next Steps*, pp. 4-7)—familiarize members with transition theories and teach them skills for successfully negotiating transitions
- Portfolio development (*Next Steps*, pp. 8-10)—help members examine and document what they have learned and accomplished, so their skills will be more marketable
- Self assessment (*Next Steps*, pp. 20-33)—assist members in identifying their values, skills, and interests, and how they pertain to their future decisions
- Personal plans (*Next Steps*, pp. 40-47)—familiarize members with different decision-making strategies and goal setting techniques

Make Member Training More Effective!

Attend a MOSAICA training seminar.

- July 30-31 Baton Rouge, LA
- September 24-25 Montpelier, VT



Need Help?

MOSAICA provides telephone technical assistance free of charge to all CNS-funded programs on their training concerns. Call Diane Cabrales at: (202) 887-0620.



Transitioning Members Need to:

- Assess how what they have learned during AmeriCorps translates into job skills
- Discuss with other transitioning members the challenges they are facing and ways to overcome them
- Reflect on how to apply their year of service experiences to make volunteering an ongoing part of their lives
- Learn about education and career options
- Make decisions and plans for the future

Activity: Tree Icebreaker

Purpose:

To reflect on why members joined AmeriCorps and what they learned during their service, and begin to consider the opportunities and paths open to them as they leave AmeriCorps.

Instructions:

Give members a blank sheet of paper or newsprint. Give them five minutes to draw the outline of a tree and write words that describe (or draw a representation of) their service experience on the trunk. For roots, have them write words or draw images explaining what influenced them to join AmeriCorps, and for branches, words or images describing the impact their service experience will have on their future or possible paths they can take as a result of their AmeriCorps service.

Celebrate!

The end of the service year provides a perfect opportunity to celebrate program accomplishments! Involve those who helped the program “get things done”—in addition to members, include staff, family, supporters, sponsors, and service partners. Plan a party or a graduation ceremony that recognizes outstanding service by presenting service awards, certificates, or diplomas. Hold a slide show that highlights important moments in the service year. Video tape member testimonials for use in future pre-service training sessions. Invite the press to publicize the positive results the program has generated within the community.



Two Useful Resources

Request copies of *Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps* and MOSAICA'S *Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training* from the NSRC at ETR. Contact Jennifer Ryan by fax (408) 438-3618, or e-mail jennifer@etr-associates.org

Once they have completed their service tree, give them three minutes to find a partner with similar roots or branches. The two partners form a pair and discuss their similarities for five minutes. Once all members have discussed in pairs, the pair then has three minutes to find a pair whose roots or branches different. They then have four minutes to discuss how they learned



AmeriCorps has influenced the options available to them after AmeriCorps service. The small groups then share their findings with the full group.