

**AmeriCorps Training and Technical Assistance Planning Group Conference Call Notes**  
**Corporation for National and Community Service**  
**Tuesday, May 3, 2005**

**Present:** Eileen Cackowski and Melissa Newton (KY), Gregg Webb (NM), Jacqui Johnson (CT), Tom Devine (WI), Anne Schink (ME), Charmion Handy (SCA), Rachel Chadderdon (WY), Thenera Bailey (ExperienceCorps), Kristin McSwain (MA)

1. We started with a report out from Charmion about the National Direct Best Practices conference (summarizing the discussion from the debrief that we had with the Best Practices Conference Planning team and CNCS staff). Charmion's comments included:

**What was good about it?**

- Great conference
- Lots of sharing—Rosie and David were very active participants
- Peers led most of the training, and the sessions were well-done and on important topics
- Plenary sessions were well-received
- Complaints were mostly about the hotel and the lack of things to do around the hotel in the evening
- What we can do next time to improve?
- Divide the group into regional/state networks—it would be nice to know the other national directs, Ed Awards, etc. in your region

This led to a discussion of how important it is to know about all the AmeriCorps programs in a state. Tom mentioned that state commissions sometimes have 16-20 EAP programs that they would love to get tied into the Direct network. Rosie promised to follow-up on where the list of AmeriCorps programs by state is (this came up at the ED meeting too). She recommended that we might not want to get it out to everyone until the new grants are announced after June 1. Everyone on the call agreed.

The last thing Charmion reported on was the debate around doing the conference every year or every other year. Direct grantees like to network in the smaller context of their own meeting, but it might be overkill with the National Grantee meeting. We need to get clear about the purpose for each meeting.

2. Jacqui then reported on the ED meeting (summarizing the discussion from the debrief that took place with the EDs and CNCS staff):

- **What was good about it:** We hit all the right topics. David and Rosie were there, as were other CNCS staff, and really engaged. Most importantly, EDs want to get together; they want to hear things together and then talk about them afterwards. The training for new EDs went well.
- **What we could do better next time:** More time to process what we heard—moved too quickly from topic to topic; too many talking heads, more structured dialogue; too much info; good on the technical stuff, i.e., where are your resources, how do you access, but we want more big picture, policy stuff—a broader conversation about service and volunteering beyond AmeriCorps—that's what we're hoping to get at the National Grantee meeting

3. That led to a discussion of the National Grantee meeting. Gretchen had proposed a list of topics that she summarized from both debrief discussions on the EDs Meeting and the Best Practices conference, as well as her summary of the table top questions she asked at both meetings. The list is as follows:

**All AmeriCorps Grantees:**

- National policies that affect non-profits and non-profit capacity building
- Cross-stream Training—policies, practices, and strategies for the future
- WBRs/e-Grants

- T4Ts on new Program Start-up materials
- Implementing Rulemaking
- National policies that affect national service
- AmeriCorps Longitudinal study and AmeriCorps Alums
- Best Practices/Program Models around a few key cross-issue areas, i.e., disaster response/emergency preparedness
- Sustainability strategies—how to
- There would also be a pre-conference day of staff-specific training

**For Commissions specifically:**

- Meeting of EDs and Volunteer Center Directors
- Meeting of EDs and State Directors
- Commissioner Training with the ASC curricula

For the most part, there was GREAT agreement that this was the right list for the Grantee meeting. There was a strong advocacy for not separating out the various programs within AmeriCorps and doing something “just for commissions.” The pre-conference day (Wednesday) will be specific functional, technical training for all staff, and there will be separate training for commissioners sponsored by ASC. Then starting on Thursday, there will be joint sessions on the broader topics listed above. If we do something with Volunteer Centers and State Directors, it will include Direct grantees as well. Tom also suggested that in presenting sessions, we look to include presenters from each of the three AmeriCorps programs. The only other thing that people want included in the Grantee meetings is some type of regional gatherings.

4. Gretchen then asked for some feedback on strategic direction and how we want to get to a plan for T/TA for AmeriCorps in FY06. The Working Group debated the purpose of the National Grantee meeting in the overall T/TA strategy vs. the ED meeting and the National Direct Best Practices conference. We also talked about there being confusion over who the audience is for each type of training and where the subgrantees’ sites fit into the strategy. When are we doing skill building sessions versus information sharing and dialogue? We need to be clear on when we’re doing what, what the learning outcomes/goals are, and who we want the audience to be. Gretchen proposed that she put together an “AmeriCorps TTA Concept Paper” for discussion **on our next conference call on June 8 at 3:00 EST**. Everyone agreed that that was the way to go. Gretchen proposed developing an annual survey of how AmeriCorps programs are using T/TA that we could take to OMB and get clearance and administer every year and use the data for information management and strategic purposes. The group on the call agreed that was a good idea, and we should move it forward.

5. Gretchen then asked for volunteers to help with the various “next steps.” Here’s how it looks now:

**Planning the National Grantee meeting:** Jacqui, Gregg, Tom, Charmion, Mary Rose (She e-mailed me later and said she couldn’t be on the call but wants to help plan the Grantee meeting.)

**Planning the Staff Training Pre-conference:** Anne, Melissa, Lynette (we volunteered Lynette even though she wasn’t on the call), Program Officer from MA, Program Officer from WI

**Help with the survey and future strategic planning for AmeriCorps TTA:** Thenera, Kristin, Rachel, Tom, Tom’s PDAT Coordinator—Gloria; Jewel will be contacting the people on the staff training group next week (week of May 16); Susan and Charles (or someone from TASC) will be contacting the National Grantee meeting folks (week of May 16); Gretchen will be contacting the Survey/Strategic Plan group (week of May 16)

Then we hope to get a draft agenda out to all AmeriCorps grantees in the next two weeks and then do some conference calls to assess people’s reactions led by the planning committees. What do you think? Is that a good strategy?

We’ll be in touch as per above, but **make sure the next call for the larger AmeriCorps T/TA Planning Working Group is on your calendar for Tuesday, June 8 at 3:00**. Thanks everyone for your great involvement and help! If you have any questions or comments please call me at x441.