Office of Leadership, Development and Training

# Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program

***From Blueprint to Implementation:***
**New Program Start-up Guide**

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

CHP International developed "**Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program**" for the Corporation for National and Community Service, 1201 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20525

**About the Corporation**
For more than a decade, the Corporation for National and Community Service—through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs—has mobilized a new generation of engaged citizens. This year, more than 1.6 million individuals of all ages and backgrounds will serve through those programs to help thousands of national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies meet local needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other critical areas. National and community service programs work closely with traditional volunteer organizations to broaden, deepen, and strengthen the ability of America's volunteers to contribute not only to their communities, but also to our nation.

**SENIOR CORPS**
Each year Senior Corps taps the skills, talents, and experience of more than 500,000 Americans age 55 and older to meet a wide range of community challenges through three main programs: RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program.

**AMERICORPS**
AmeriCorps provides opportunities for more than 70,000 Americans each year to give intensive service to their communities and country through three programs: AmeriCorps*State and National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

**LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA**
Learn and Serve America provides an "on-ramp" to a lifetime of civic engagement for more than a million students each year. The program awards grants to state education agencies, schools, nonprofit groups, and institutions of higher education to engage students in service activities linked to academic achievement.

CHP International, Inc. (CHP), Oak Park IL, provides management, training and consulting expertise to projects in the United States and around the world. CHP collaborates closely with government, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and training providers to assist in developing techniques, skills, knowledge and attitudes required to foster individual, organization and community development.

Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities.

# *Acknowledgments*

The development of this document "Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program" was based on effective practices created and implemented by staff of AmeriCorps programs as they worked to plan, implement, and sustain their programs. A Steering Committee of managers of AmeriCorps programs, most of whom are field-based, also provided input on the content and structure of this guide. Community laypersons, national service experts, and program directors contributed expertise and knowledge of programmatic needs in rural, suburban, and urban program environments. Countless other people participated in many ways such as contributing practical, ready-to-use documents, forms, and tools, and providing informal feedback on the structure and content of the Guide.

We held focus groups with program staff, during various conferences, to identify critical sections, tools, practices, and documents that field based practitioners would need to develop strong AmeriCorps programs. The input from these groups is reflected in the Guide.

AmeriCorps Program Officers from the Corporation for National and Community Service contributed their knowledge of programmatic needs and challenges to this process. Program Officers were instrumental in identifying common challenges faced by new and existing programs. These observations and recommendations were incorporated into the Guide.

In its many draft forms, we asked community members who are not grantees of the Corporation to read and comment on the document's ease of use and readability. Their thoughtful feedback was incorporated in our attempt to ensure that the Guide was practical and accessible to all users.

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# *CORPORATION WELCOME*

The Corporation for National and Community Service is pleased to provide you with this Guide to starting and maintaining a high-quality AmeriCorps program.

For over a decade, the Corporation – through AmeriCorps and two other national service programs, Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America – has forged thousands of partnerships with individuals such as you, and with organizations such as yours, to "get things done" for America. Since 1993, more than 300,000 AmeriCorps members have provided substantial service to communities and community groups across the country, helping to meet critical needs in education, the environment, public safety, and many other areas. We thank you for your interest in joining their ranks, and congratulate you for wanting to create the most effective program that you can.

There are many components to the design and operation of a successful AmeriCorps program. This publication will help you understand those components and take you through the steps needed to initiate, organize, and maintain a well-managed, high-quality AmeriCorps program. Indeed, all the information and suggestions you need to successfully navigate up through the first year of an AmeriCorps program – including dozens of "sample documents" – are contained in this Guide.

The Guide also serves as an introduction to the network of resources provided by the Corporation and its affiliated organizations, including your host or parent organization, your state service commission, your Corporation state office, our numerous training and technical assistance providers, our Web sites, and our many publications. We encourage you to avail yourselves of all these resources. If AmeriCorps*State and National does not suit your needs, we encourage you to look at how our two other AmeriCorps programs—AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*NCCC—might be able to help. More information is available throughout this Guide or by visiting www.nationalservice.org or www.americorps.org.

As you take the next step toward building an effective AmeriCorps program, we are confident that you will find this publication to be a useful and valuable resource. Thanks again for your interest in AmeriCorps, and for your commitment to helping your fellow citizens through service.

David Eisner, Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service

Rosie Mauk, Director, AmeriCorps

# *GUIDE OVERVIEW*

## *Introduction*

The AmeriCorps Program Start-up Guide is designed to assist you in creating and developing your program so that you can join the thousands of communities across the nation that are getting things done for America through AmeriCorps. Since 1993, individuals like you and organizations such as yours have engaged in substantial service to communities through AmeriCorps.

The Program Start-up Guide was conceived and developed with input from a field-based team. The team consisted of representatives from AmeriCorps State Commissions and their subgrantees/programs, National Direct Parent Organizations, education award programs, and tribal programs, including small community and faith-based organizations. These practitioners represented programs from rural, urban, and suburban locales. Team members represented programs across the Corporation's main issue areas: education, environment, public safety, health/human needs, and digital divide. Corporation staff and national training and technical assistance providers rounded out the team. The team used its collective knowledge of high quality programs and effective practices necessary for the first 12 months of program development to set the structure and content of the Guide.

Although every effort was made to ensure that the content of the Guide is the most current, from time to time updates or changes to policy, practices, and regulations are made. To ensure you have the most up-to-date information, be sure to periodically check the website www.nationalservice.org/resources website for updates and additional resources.

At the publication of this document, the Corporation is in the process of upgrading and integrating its technological capabilities. In particular, the Corporation has begun to incorporate the capability of its Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS) – the system that tracks information associated with an enrolled AmeriCorps member—into eGrants, the system through which organizations apply for grants and submit compliance reports. These improvements will allow the Corporation to get a much better snapshot of member enrollments at any given time. As you read and use this Guide, be aware that WBRS and eGrants information is presented separately and does not reflect the integration of the two systems. Therefore, there may be some differences between the information presented here and the use of the integrated system.

There are many facets to conducting a successful AmeriCorps program. From recruiting staff and AmeriCorps members, to establishing community partnerships, to evaluating the impact of your members and their service, the Guide contains information to lead you through the first year of a high quality AmeriCorps program.

## *Audience*

The Guide is designed with four audiences in mind. First, prospective AmeriCorps program applicants can assess their organization's capacity to start an AmeriCorps program. Second, start-up programs with no previous AmeriCorps experience are led through the step-by-step process of program design and implementation. Third, existing AmeriCorps programs can use the Guide to

review, refine, and strengthen their systems and operations. Finally, the Guide is a resource for new staff coming into an AmeriCorps program.

## *AmeriCorps' Required Documents*

There are a number of documents you must understand and follow as you consider applying for the AmeriCorps grant and moving into the program design phase. Below is a list of documents you need to consult to ensure you have the latest information regarding the regulations, provisions, and requirements of becoming an AmeriCorps program.

- Application Guidelines (available on-line)
- Corporation for National and Community Service regulations (available on-line)
- National and Community Service Act of 1990 (available on-line)
- Office of Management and Budget Circulars (available on-line)

Once your organization receives funding your guiding documents will also include:

- AmeriCorps Program Proposal (application) and any modifications (this is your proposal to the Corporation)
- Your AmeriCorps grant, issued by your state commission, your national parent organization, or the Corporation for National and Community Service, which includes all the special conditions applicable to operating your program.
- The budget for your program, which contains the maximum amount of funds the Corporation has provided for your program as well as your obligations to raise matching funds and in-kind contributions.

## *Design*

The experiences of other AmeriCorps programs teach us that the program design phases through the first six months of operations are the most critical phases. To ensure your success, we paid close attention to the tasks relevant to the program design through the first six months of program implementation and operations. However, you will also find program information for months seven through twelve. Frequently there are repeated processes during this time period, so less information is included.

We organized all tasks according to these important time phases.

- Preparing the Ground
- Laying the Foundation
- Framing the Program - Program Design
- Building the Program - 0-3 months
- Sustaining the Program - 4-6 months
- Maintaining the Program - 7-12 months

In each time phase, four major program components are explained.

- Program Development and Management
- Community and Site Partnerships
- Member Development and Support
- Financial and Grants Management

The chart below illustrates the structure and scope of the Guide.

| Program Time Phases | Program Components |
|---|---|
| ***Preparing the Ground*** | • Organizational assessment. |
| ***Laying the Foundation*** | • Program Development & Management<br>• Community & Site Partnerships<br>• Member Development & Support<br>• Financial & Grants Management |
| ***Framing the Program***<br>***Program Design*** | • Designing the program. |
| ***Building the Program***<br>***0 – 3 Months*** | • Program Development & Management<br>• Community & Site Partnerships<br>• Member Development & Support<br>• Financial & Grants Management |
| ***Sustaining the Program***<br>***4 – 6 months*** | |
| ***Maintaining the Program***<br>***7 – 12 months*** | |

## *Organizing Features*

The information in the Guide is organized using a question and answer format.

- **What do you need to know?**
- **Why do you need to know it?**
- **How do you do it?**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Resources:** Includes reference materials, websites, and contact information.
- **Tools for Success:** A section at the end of each chapter with tools, checklists, and forms.

At the end of the Guide, you will find a brief history of national and community service, an explanation of the Corporation's national and community service programs, and specific information on the agency. Collectively, this information will broaden your understanding of the national service network.

## *Using the Guide*

To ensure the highest degree of relevancy, we have gathered information and resources from conversations, focus groups, and from persons who have successfully managed programs from start-up to sustained growth. We are hopeful that the Guide can help you minimize frustrating mistakes or delays by providing clear, useful information.

There are several ways to use the information in the Guide. We recommend that initially you focus on the time phases to ensure that you complete all necessary tasks.

1. You can read the Guide cover-to-cover.
2. You can scan the Table of Contents and choose the topics that can help you right away.
3. You can focus on the specific program time phase in which you are working.
4. You can use the Guide as an overall program-tracking tool.
5. You can pull the Guide up on the web and search the contents by topic at www.nationalservice.org/resources/online_pubs/americorps/startup_guide.php .

### *Note about Tools, Models, and Best Practices*

This manual contains a wealth of information intended to help AmeriCorps grantees effectively manage the federal grants they receive from the Corporation for National and Community Service and establish and operate successful programs. This information comes from the Corporation, our training and technical assistance providers, other federal agencies, and grantees around the country including City Year, United Way of Minneapolis, the Catholic Network of VolunteerService, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Delta Service Corps, Missouri Community Service Commission, MANYCorps, Walker and Co., LLP, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, and the National Readiness & Response Corps. All have graciously agreed to share their policies and what they consider to be their best practices with the entire field. Please feel free touse and modify any document or presentation found in this manual.

While Corporation staff and our outside contractors have reviewed all the documents in this manual, the sample materials in this manual are non-sanctioned policies or best practices for you to use as you deem appropriate. The contents of this manual do not constitute the Corporation for National and Community Service's official definitive interpretation of specific factual or legal questions. Please consult your grant provisions for relevant rules and grant guidance.

The goal of AmeriCorps is to meet pressing, unmet needs through service and to renew the ethic of civic responsibility among our citizens. As AmeriCorps helps to develop more active citizens, communities are strengthened throughout the country. A fundamental purpose of AmeriCorps is to help recruit, support, and manage the vast networks of volunteers and AmeriCorps members assisting nonprofit organizations in meeting community needs. AmeriCorps has been called upon to make volunteer recruitment and management a major focus of its efforts. To achieve these objectives, the Guide is designed to steer your journey to become a performance driven AmeriCorps community program.

The decision to consider starting an AmeriCorps program is a huge one. Becoming part of the National Service movement brings opportunities for both your organization and the community you serve. It also brings significant additional work for your organization.

As with the development of any building project, the first step is to design it, to lay out how things will fit together, to identify where the supporting beams need to go, how large the project will be, who or what else is needed to complete the project and so on. These questions are often answered through discussions and then laid out visibly in a blueprint. This section will help deepen your understanding of AmeriCorps and move you into designing the blueprint of a strong foundation for your AmeriCorps program.

## *Important AmeriCorps Components*

AmeriCorps*State and National
National and community service through AmeriCorps includes full- and part-time opportunities for participants, called members, to serve their communities and build the capacity of nonprofit organizations to meet local environmental, educational, public safety, homeland security or other human needs. Through service with local organizations and agencies, in communities large, small, rural, urban, and suburban across America, AmeriCorps members provide meaningful a services to their nation.

*Interested in considering national service to address your community's needs? Read on!*

**Eligible Applicants**
Now that you are interested and considering becoming a part of this great service network, we need to make sure that you are eligible to be an AmeriCorps legal applicant. Eligible applicants for AmeriCorps*State/National funding are nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, state agencies, Indian Tribes and local governments. This includes faith-based and other community organizations. However, pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible.

If you are looking to operate in two or more states you should apply for AmeriCorps*National funding. This includes applicants also such as national non-profits with locally-based affiliates in two or more states, partnerships or consortia formed across two or more states, consisting of institutions of higher education, Indian tribes, or other nonprofits, including labor and religious organizations. However, if you are interested in serving in one community or state AmeriCorps*State funding would be most appropriate.

____ *My organization is eligible to receive AmeriCorps*State/National funds. And based upon the location of our planned services, I know what funding (AmeriCorps*State or National) to apply for. If applying for State funds, I need to contact my state's service commission. If seeking National funding I can contact the National Direct unit at the Corporation.*

**Types of Programs**

You have great flexibility to design a program that is responsive to the needs in your defined community. Examples of service programs that address CNCS issue areas (education, environment, homeland security, human needs and public safety) include:

- Community-based service programs that tutor and mentor younger children and include opportunities for them to participate in service projects after school, on weekends and during school vacations;
- Programs that recruit, train and support several hundred college volunteers to serve elementary school students in schools to support a conflict resolution curriculum;
- College-based programs in which student AmeriCorps members, including Federal Work Study students, perform substantial service in local schools or other community settings;
- Faith-based programs that provide literacy and English as a Second Language training for low-income adults, reading improvement for homeless elementary school-age children, or teach and model social skills to children;
- Programs initiated by mayors and other local officials to integrate AmeriCorps members into community-wide strategies to meet local needs;
- Immunization programs that target young children and their families;
- A full-time, year round youth corps or summer youth corps program undertaking service projects with visible public benefits, including natural resources projects;
- Programs placing members as service-learning coordinators in schools and youth organizations; and
- Programs using qualified members as teachers, teacher aides and early childhood workers in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals.

Experience shows that it is difficult for a program to demonstrate its community impact when it tries to meet several educational, environmental, public safety, and other human needs at once. However, certain programs such as volunteer generator models, youth service corps or programs that operate in rural areas may operate more effectively by developing activities in more than one issue area. Traditionally AmeriCorps members have provided direct service; however, as the needs of communities change the program has changed. Members are allowed to conduct capacity building services as well. You should develop a service strategy that works for your community and organization and be able to articulate this approach.

____ *I know what services are needed in my community.*

**Program Models**

After identifying your program services (which should involve stakeholders and the overall community) you will need to determine what service model will work best. Examples include:

- **Intermediary** – Your organization would serve as the legal applicant for a Corporation grant, thereby assuming the responsibility for the technical and financial management of the program, while the members are out-sourced to other eligible local organizations to provide services. You may assign members to individual projects or organize them in teams. The intermediary model works well for an organization that has a successful history in managing federal grants and is committed to supporting other local grassroots in enhancing their services and capacity and or think that these other organizations, though structurally unable to manage a federal grant are better suited to provide the services and or address given needs.

- **Multi-site** – Your organization is responsible for the operational and fiscal management of all program matters and places members in multiple sites to conduct service. Intermediary models are also multi-site programs, but the legal applicant role distinguishes the two.

- **Team-based** – Your organization is responsible for the operational and fiscal management of all program matters and places all members at one or multiple sites to work in a team or cadre environment.

- **Residential** – Your organization provides room and board to members during their service term. As a result, you may submit a waiver request for consideration to the Corporation to reduce the living allowance match requirements.

- **Professional Corps –** Your organization recruits and places qualified AmeriCorps members in positions as teachers, nurses, doctors, police officers, lawyers, architects, engineers or other professionals helping to meet critical needs in communities with inadequate numbers of such professionals. Public or private nonprofit employers must sponsor AmeriCorps members and agree to pay 100% of AmeriCorps members' living

allowance and benefits. This excludes the education award which the Corporation pays. For this type of program, the living allowance may exceed the maximum amount allowed in other national service programs.

- **Fixed Amount Awards -** Fixed Amount Awards are an innovative grant-making strategy initiated by the Corporation for its AmeriCorps Education Award programs. The premise of the fixed amount awards is that grantees will spend more of their own resources and are less dependent on the Corporation's grant funding. Additionally, the fixed amount award programs reduce the administrative burden of managing the grant.

*Our selected program model will best address the needs and utilize the resources of our community.*

**AmeriCorps Members**

AmeriCorps members (not referred to as volunteers) are special because they chose to give a substantial amount of their time to serve their community. While this is not without benefit to them, the benefit truly comes from how much effort and heart they put into the service. Because of their commitment, the Corporation believes in providing members with as many opportunities for development and growth as possible. Therefore, the selection of members and their development is a very important component of all AmeriCorps programs.

Member Eligibility

Programs must ascertain and document the eligibility of all of its members. A person who is eligible to enroll as an AmeriCorps member is a person

- Who is a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or lawful permanent resident alien of the United
- States;
- Who is at least 17 years of age at the commencement of service unless the member is
- out of school and enrolled
  - in a full-time, year-round youth corps Program or full-time summer Program as defined in the Act (42 U.S.C. 12572 (a) (2)), in which case he or she must be between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, or
  - in a Program for economically disadvantaged youth as defined in the Act (42 U.S.C. 12572 (a)(9)), in which case he or she must be between the ages of 16 and 24, inclusive; and
- Has a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate (or agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using an education award) and who has not dropped out of elementary or secondary school in order to enroll as an AmeriCorps member (unless enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 484 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1091), or who has been determined through an independent assessment conducted by the Program to be incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Member Terms of Service

Members may serve in a variety of capacities. The number of hours that they commit to serving

should be driven by the needs of the community and the capacity of the organization to manage them. Full-time members must serve at least 1700 hours during a period of not less than nine months and not more than one year. Half-time members must serve at least 900 hours during a period of one or two years as indicated in the approved budget. No member may serve less than 300 hours during a one-year period. Programs may propose at least 300 hours for minimum-time, at least 450 hours for quarter-time, and at least 675 hours for reduced half-time members based on the program design. However, within a program, we generally require all reduced half-time, quarter-time, and minimum-time members to serve the same number of hours. If any less than full-time program has a need for greater flexibility, we will consider a proposal for two different sets of hours within the same program.

Member Benefits

During his or her term of service a member is eligible to receive certain benefits. Benefits include the following:

**Education Award** means an award provided to a member who has successfully completed a required term of service in an approved national service position and who otherwise meets the eligibility criteria in the Act. An education award may be used: (1) to repay qualified student loans, as defined in the Act; (2) toward educational expenses at a Title IV Institution of Higher Education; and (3) toward expenses incurred in participating in school-to-work programs approved by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. The amount of the award is determined by the number of hours completed. See the following chart.

| Position | # of hours | Education Award |
|---|---|---|
| Full-time | at least 1700 | $4,725.00 |
| One Year Half-time | at least 900 | $2,362.50 |
| Two Year Half-time | at least 900 | $2,362.50 |
| Reduced Half-time | at least 675 | $1,800.00 |
| Quarter-time | at least 450 | $1,250.00 |
| Minimum-time | at least 300 | $1,000.00 |

**Living Allowance** – The living allowance is designed to help members meet the necessary living expenses incurred while participating in the AmeriCorps Program. Programs must not pay a living allowance on an hourly basis. It is not a wage and should not fluctuate based on the number of hours members serve in a given time period. Programs should pay the living allowance in increments, such as weekly or biweekly. Programs may use their organization's payroll system to process members' living allowances. However, if a payroll system cannot be altered and must show 40 hours in order to distribute a living allowance, then members' service hours should be documented separately to keep track of their progress towards the Program's total required AmeriCorps service hours.

**Health Care Coverage –** The Grantee must provide a health care policy to those fulltime members not otherwise covered by a health care policy at the time of enrollment into the AmeriCorps program, or to those members who lose coverage during their term of service as a result of participating in the Program or through no deliberate act of their own. The Corporation

will not cover health care costs for family members or for less than full-time members. See AmeriCorps Grant Provisions for additional detail.

**Childcare –** The Grantee must ensure that childcare is made available to those full-time members who need such assistance in order to participate. Members are not eligible to receive childcare from AmeriCorps while they are receiving childcare subsidies from another source for the same period of AmeriCorps Service. See AmeriCorps Grant Provisions for additional detail.

**AmeriCorps Gear** – AmeriCorps members and programs are identified by their common logo and gear. Members should receive service gear (i.e. t-shirts, hat, pin, sweatshirt, buttons and decals) to connect them to the nationwide network of AmeriCorps service providers.

**Reasonable Accommodation -** Programs and activities must be accessible to persons with disabilities, and the Grantee must provide reasonable accommodation to the known mental or physical disabilities of otherwise qualified members, service recipients, applicants, and program staff. All selections and project assignments must be made without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodation.

**Member Training** – Consistent with the approved budget, the Grantee must provide members with the training, skills, knowledge and supervision necessary to perform the tasks required in their assigned project positions, including specific training in a particular field and background information on the community served. The Grantee must conduct an orientation for members and comply with any pre-service orientation or training required by the Corporation. This orientation should be designed to enhance member security and sensitivity to the community. Orientation should cover member rights and responsibilities, including the Program's code of conduct, prohibited activities (including those specified in these grant provisions), requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 *et seq*.), suspension and termination from service, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, other non-discrimination issues, and other topics as necessary.

The Corporation can provide you with training materials on this topic. Go to www.nationalservice.org/resources.

*Members are the central means by which "things get done" in the community. My organization will be committed to their development.*

**Community Involvement**

The community in which the program operates and in which members serve should play an integral part in developing and supporting the program. Partnerships should be developed to improve services and involve larger segments of the community in addressing community problems. In addition, the involvement of community stakeholders helps to promote the sustainability of the program and its services.

**Sustainability**

By building their capacity and achieving sustainability, organizations are able to help communities effectively respond to local needs without substantial reliance on federal funds. Strengthening communities in this way is important for all of the Corporation programs. From

day one, the organization should be thinking about ways to integrate the program services into the community.

____ *My organization will be a catalyst for community partnership.*

**Organizational Capacity**

To foster and sustain effective AmeriCorps programs, organizations must be both financially viable and well-managed. Organizations must ensure that they are able to provide the proper management structure to maintain compliance with program requirements, have the capacity to manage a federal grant and can conduct on-site monitoring of financial and programmatic systems. Programs will be monitored by the Corporation and or State Commission to ensure that they meet program requirements.

____ *My organization has the expertise and systems to successfully manage this federal program.*

**Support for Community-Based Organizations (Faith-Based and Secular)**

The Corporation expects applicants to support the efforts of civic, community, educational, and faith-based organizations to solve local problems and meet critical needs of individuals and communities. Applicants and continuing programs should demonstrate partnerships (such as, sub-grantees, host sites, or volunteer recruitment partnerships) with faith-based or other community organizations.

____ *My organization has considered a diverse set of partnerships.*

**Citizenship**

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, has as one of its basic purposes to "renew the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community throughout the United States." Program applicants should include plans to offer a civics-training program for members that will focus on what it means to be an American citizen, the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, and the obligations of freedom.

____ *My organization incorporates civic responsibility in its program plan.*

**Evaluation**

Evaluation should begin before the program. Ultimately evaluation should compare the observed program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program. Organizations and programs should develop ongoing systems and tools that allow them to assess the success of the program. See the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions for specific and detailed information on Performance Measurement and Evaluation.

**Performance Measures**

Performance measures are indicators that allow a program to clarify its purpose and goals, identify how specific services and program components contribute to the achievement of a desired

result, document the actual results and impacts of program activities, and improve program performance by identifying program successes and areas for improvement. See the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions for specific and detailed information on Performance Measurement and Evaluation.

*Evaluation begins today!*

While coming up with the best service program structure for your community needs, you must also be mindful to integrate the other required components of an AmeriCorps program. The information above was provided to lead you through identifying the best service program structure for your organization and community.

From this point forward, the Guide is targeted toward the audiences we discussed earlier. If you are interested in assessing your organization's capacity to start an AmeriCorps program or identifying the activities necessary before submitting the AmeriCorps Grant Application, the **Preparing the Ground** section is designed to lead you through that process. If you have already submitted your grant application and received notification of award, but have not yet received your grant, the **Laying the Foundation** and **Framing the Program** sections will lead you through a step-by-step program design and implementation process. If you are an existing AmeriCorps program or a staff member new to AmeriCorps you might choose to review the entire Guide or use the table of contents to identify sections of the Guide that can assist you in your review and strengthening of your organization's systems and operations.

# *Preparing the Ground*

The decision to consider starting an AmeriCorps program is a huge one. Becoming part of the National Service movement brings opportunities for both your organization and the community you serve. It also brings significant additional work for your organization. We have provided a list of documents that your organization must be familiar with as it considers applying for an AmeriCorps grant.

The **Preparing the Ground** section begins to identify the various activities you will need to complete prior to submitting the AmeriCorps Grant Application. This section can give you a sense as to whether your organization is ready and willing to proceed in completing the application. We have provided two tools to get you started. The first is an assessment tool *Organization Assessment Checklist*. Use this tool to get an initial snapshot of your organization's strengths and areas of growth. The second tool—*Things To Do Checklist*--identifies some preparatory activities necessary to submit the AmeriCorps grant.

***Caution*:** Applying for this federal grant is quite comprehensive. Although there is some technical assistance available, we suggest you thoroughly review and understand the requirements of the AmeriCorps Grant Application. While your organization may have had federal awards in the past, AmeriCorps has some specific infrastructure requirements that many federal grants may not require.

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Establish and maintain an active Community Advisory Group.
- ❑ Develop and conduct a community needs assessment.
- ❑ Create and implement the AmeriCorps program work plan.
- ❑ Write and submit the AmeriCorps program grant proposal using eGrants.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Community Advisory Group*

**What is a Community Advisory Group?**
The Community Advisory Group (CAG) advises and informs your efforts to serve the community. It is composed of community members familiar with the community's needs and the people who live there. Additionally, it may include members knowledgeable about your organization's mission, policy and procedures, national service and AmeriCorps.

**Why should you develop a Community Advisory Group?**
Advisory Group members can be the power behind your program's agenda, help to identify potential service site partners, enhance your organization's community visibility, identify community needs, and assist in resource generation.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Identify desirable community members you would like as a part of the advisory group. |
| ✓ | Invite prospective Advisory Group members to your organization for a service experience, roundtable discussion, and to meet community members who might receive services. |
| ✓ | Educate Advisory Group members about your program and its objectives, mission and vision, and national service and AmeriCorps. |
| ✓ | Recruit prospective Advisory Group members, who will support and advance your organization's mission. |
| ✓ | Formalize the Advisory Group structure; establish the goals, agenda, and meeting schedule. |
| ✓ | Involve CAG members in on-going evaluation of program components, organizational sustainability, and community impact. |
| ✓ | Listen! Find out who the respected members of the community are and what they are interested in. |
| ✓ | Communicate! Take the opportunity to begin building a strong, trustful relationship with potential advisory group members. |
| ✓ | Cultivate relationships with these community members. |
| ✓ | Collaboratively establish the expectations of the Group. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Who do we invite to join the Advisory Group**? *Cultivate relationships with respected members of the community that are committed to its improvement; people who are willing to work collaboratively to move things forward. Select your partners carefully. Be sure that prospective Advisory Group members support and buy-in to your mission, that they are actively committed and have the time to carry out their responsibilities with the Group.*

**How do we engage and use the Advisory Group?** *You can involve Advisors in leveraging influence, getting new resources, serving as community ambassadors, and standing up on behalf of your organization. There are many other possibilities for involving community advisors in your AmeriCorps program.*

**Do we have to establish an Advisory Group?** *No. We offer it as an example of bringing stakeholders together.*

## *Community Needs Assessment*

**What is a community needs assessment?**
A community needs assessment is a mechanism created to allow a community to decide its needs and who can best address those needs.

**Why should I conduct a community needs assessment?**
An assessment helps you to build a solid, trusting relationship with the community. First, community members must be collaboratively involved in determining what happens in their community. This can significantly increase buy-in, participation, and cooperativeness. Second, your organization can determine whether a particular community is a good fit for the services the organization has to offer. Third, the needs assessment helps you be more strategic in using scarce resources to address the identified needs.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Determine and develop data collection tools to be used. |
| | ✓ Assign a staff member(s) to collect the assessment data. |
| | ✓ Ask the right questions (use mostly open-ended questions that begin with "what" and "how"). |
| | ✓ Involve the members of your Community Advisory Group and community partners or stakeholders in gathering data for the community needs assessment. |
| | ✓ Review the data collected with the Community Advisory Group and other stakeholders. |
| | ✓ Determine whether your organization's proposed services meet the community's articulated needs. Or, develop proposed program services to address the identified community needs. |
| | ✓ Use the data collected to inform the writing of your program measurements, the selection of community partners, member recruitment activities, and other aspects of your program. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**What are some ways we can collect information?** *There are many ways to find out what the community perceives as its needs. You can hold focus groups, implement a written survey, go door-to-door and talk with community members, or interview people currently receiving services. Be sure to get a good cross section of community members. This will help you really determine what the community identifies as its priorities.*

**What do we do with the information once we collect it?** *A first step might be to hold a community meeting and share your findings with the community. By further engaging community members, they will continue to feel invested in the process of developing a program that meets their needs. Once you and the community have reviewed the data, use it to clarify your program objectives, select your service site partners, and inform your staffing decisions. These are just a few ideas. Think creatively!*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | A training and technical assistance provider to CNCS funded programs. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/nsrc/forms/survey.html<br><br>XVI.B.1.PDF -> Community/Agency Contact Form |

## *Creating the AmeriCorps Program Work Plan*

**What is a work plan?**
A program work plan is a tool that helps you and the community advisory committee set up and prioritize a "to do" list that will guide the organization from the initial concept through the first six to nine months of the start-up phase. The objective of this list is to plan, schedule, and control project activities to meet your program objectives.

**Why should you complete a work plan?**
The work plan is an essential process to accomplish two broad goals. First, the work plan helps your organization to plan and submit the AmeriCorps Grant Application. Second, the work plan is used to organize the development and implementation of your program. For both the preparation and development of the grant application and the implementation of the program, the work plan enables the organization to define:

| | |
|---|---|
| • What specific tasks need to be accomplished?<br>• Who will accomplish each task?<br>• How will each specific task be done?<br>• When must the task be accomplished? | • How much will it cost to accomplish each task?<br>• What resources do you need to achieve each specific task<br>• How will you know when you completed the task? What is the deliverable? |

**Be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-limited)** When planning each task remember to apply the **S.M.A.R.T**. principle.

| | |
|---|---|
| • Is the task **Specific?**<br>• Is the task **Measurable?** How will you measure the task?<br>• Is the task **Attainable?** Can the task be completed within the next 6 months to 1 year? | • Is the task **Realistic?** Do you have the resources to accomplish this task? Are you missing some important steps prior to tackling this task?<br>• Have you specified specific **Time-limitations** for each task? |

***Sample Work Plan Template***

| Task | Assigned to | Due Date | Resources Required - people, time, money | Deliverable/End Product |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identify Advisory Members | Jill | 5/1/2004 | Meet with community Leaders and various stakeholders | 6 advisory members Identified |
| Draft Vision & Mission Statement | Janet | 6/1/2004 | Facilitate a 1-day Meeting with advisory members | Final draft of vision |

**Different Phases of a Work plan**

The following phases are the minimum tasks for creating a work plan for your program. The phase where you begin depends upon whether you are a new or existing organization. This is not an exhaustive list, but is included as a point of reference. Think through the various phases you might encounter while organizing to submit the grant application and the similar or different phases you might encounter developing and implementing the program.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| • Draft a one-page need statement stating why your program is needed in the community.<br>• Meet with community organizations, religious institutions, stakeholders and residents to determine the feasibility and support for your idea. Get their support in writing, if possible.<br>• Recruit a Community Advisory Group to help with Phases 2 and 3.<br>• Advisory group creates an agreement stating its function as a team and their support for the initiative. | • Draft vision and mission statement.<br>• Draft a statement of need that includes quantitative and qualitative reasons why this program is important. *For example, there are seven large abandoned and vacant lots that are used as trash dumpsites and are a place where drugs are sold and used; therefore, by cleaning and maintaining these lots we plan to reduce the number of drug sales and use within this community.*<br>• Advisory group identifies all resources necessary for running the program. This includes building space, transportation, volunteers, technology, training and other relevant resources.<br>• Advisory group creates a budget that adequately reflects the objectives of this program. | • Identify potential Service/Host Sites where your AmeriCorps members could perform service.<br>• Identify potential donors both financial and in-kind that may support your program.<br>• Identify how and where AmeriCorps members will be recruited.<br>• Create strong first year program objectives. |

**<u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>**

**Who should we talk to as we begin this process?** *Begin preliminary discussions with your State Commission or with the Corporation for National and Community Service to understand the process.. Learn how they function, what they do, what they have to offer your program, and identify their community improvement focus areas. Ask questions.*

**What if other organizations have done or are doing the same type of service program we want to do?** *Take the time to find out about their successes and challenges. Learn their best practices. If this is a local AmeriCorps program, see if there might be a duplication of services for the community you anticipate serving.*

## *Writing the AmeriCorps Program Grant Proposal*

**What is a grant proposal?**
A grant proposal is the document you write and submit to the granting authority in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) issued. This is the statement of your organization that describes your intended community service efforts and hoped-for resulting accomplishments.

**Why do I need to write a grant proposal?**
The grant proposal is the formal step to compete for AmeriCorps program funding. The success of your community service idea can be dependent on funding and effective management of the grant. The grant proposal informs the grant maker of your intentions and strategies to reach your desired goals. Additionally, it is important that the senior management of your organization are appropriately involved and have approved the application for the AmeriCorps grant.

**How do I do it?**
Obtain the Request for Proposal (RFP) from the grant maker, typically your state commission or from the Corporation for National and Community Service. This RFP document will provide the information necessary to submit a grant proposal.

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Read the RFP cover-to-cover to understand the big picture of what is required to submit a successful grant proposal. The RFP can be a helpful document filled with checklists and worksheets that provide guidance on developing budgets and program performance measurements. |
| ✓ | Bring all stakeholders together to participate in responding to specific requirements of the proposal. For example, collecting letters of support, identifying matching funds, etc. |
| ✓ | Ensure the program design process has answered any questions or requirements raised in the RFP. |
| ✓ | Write a narrative describing your community service idea that matches the Corporation needs. You may also include executive summary, intermediate and long-term outcomes, certification documents, and copies of your organization's recent fiscal audits. |
| ✓ | Follow the submission requirements of the RFP explicitly. Pay close attention to details about total pages and length of the document, margins, format, deadlines and delivery modes (electronic or paper, US Mail, hand delivery, number of copies, etc.). |
| ✓ | Take advantage of technical assistance offered by the state commission, the Corporation for National and Community Service, or grant makers and funders. Informational meetings or telephone conference calls are frequently beneficial to newcomers trying to grasp the nuances of writing and submitting a grant proposal. |

**What are some other names for RFP?** *The RFP is a commonly used term. Other terms describing the application process are Notice of Funding Opportunity and Notice of Funds Availability.*

## *eGrants: Submitting the AmeriCorps Application*

**What is eGrants?**
eGrants is an integrated, secure, web-based system developed by the Corporation to automate the entire grants management process. It allows applicants to find grant opportunities, apply for grants, and manage their grant reporting over the Internet. The system also allows the Corporation to review applications, award grants and manage those grants electronically.

**Why do you need to use eGrants?**
eGrants is your key to the Corporation. AmeriCorps*State/National program applications are reviewed and managed via the eGrants system. Applicants use eGrants to apply for AmeriCorps program funds and track the progress of their proposals through the review process. The system is also used by Corporation grantees and sub-grantees over the life of their grant to request grant amendments, apply for continuation funds, and update contact information among other uses.

**How do you use the eGrants system?**
Access the eGrant system from the Corporation's website, www.nationalservice.org. The website contains information on readying your computer to access eGrants, setting up a user account, as well as a user manual. Upon creating your account and establishing a username and password, you will be able to log on to the system and access its application and administrative functions. Each person in your organization who will be using eGrants will need an individual eGrants account.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Do I have to use eGrants to submit an AmeriCorps*State/National grant application to the Corporation?** *You are strongly encouraged to submit your application via eGrants, but it is not required. Refer to the AmeriCorps Guidelines and the application instructions for more information. Please note that the Corporation enters into eGrants any paper applications that it receives. Even if an application is received on paper, if funded, the grant will be administered via eGrants.*

**What if I cannot access or connect to *eGrants*?** *The eGrants manual on the website contains a chapter on accessing eGrants. It also contains contact information for the eGrants Help Desk.*

**How do I start a new eGrants application?** *Access eGrants from the Corporation's website, www.nationalservice.org/resources.*

**What if I experience last-minute technical difficulty and am not able to submit my eGrants application by the deadline?** *Refer to the application instructions to learn what to do in the event of last minute submission difficulties. You are strongly encouraged to input your application into eGrants ahead of the deadline. It is also a good idea to compose and save the narrative portion of your application using word processing software and then copy it into eGrants. This will lessen the possibility of losing information in the event of an interruption in your Internet connection or other technical problems.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **eGrants Online User Manual** | This manual will familiarize you with the eGrants system and how it works. You can read it online, print it a chapter at a time, or print the entire manual. | http://www.cns.gov/egrants/manual/aboutegrants.html |
| **Frequently Asked Questions** | More of the most **frequently asked questions** from eGrants applicants and answers. | http://www.cns.gov/egrants/pdf/faq.pdf |
| **Computer Check** | Perform a check on your computer and Internet browser to verify that you have all the components you need to use eGrants. | http://www.cns.gov/egrants/computer.html |
| **eGrants Practice System** | The practice eGrants system mimics the live one. You can log in to practice setting up an account and entering an application. Practicing will greatly reduce the amount of time it will take you to enter your actual application. | http://www.cns.gov/egrants/practice.html |
| **Help** | When you are logged into *eGrants*, you may click on the "Help" menu for access to additional technical support and guidance. | **?** icon found on the tool bar when in eGrants. |
| **Help Desk** | Staff of operators available to provide technical assistance to eGrants users. | 1-888-677-7849 or **egrantshelp@cns.gov** |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Things To Do Checklist*

| INITIAL PROCESS | |
|---|---|
| | Recruit, invite, and train a Community Advisory Group. |
| | Implement a Community Needs Assessment. |
| | Select community members to discuss the program idea. |
| | The potential AmeriCorps program creates the work plan.<br>• Collect letters of support.<br>• Identify resources in the community.<br>• Create a supporter and stakeholder list<br>• Identify potential in-kind and cash donors.<br>• Determine the number of AmeriCorps members needed.<br>• Identify service/host sites if AmeriCorps members will be at sites other than your organization.<br>• Outline a tentative program budget.<br>• Other issues |
| | If you are an existing organization you will need to conduct an preliminary review to identify and/or strengthen current financial systems and controls. If you are a new organization, you will need to develop a plan and begin to establish your financial management system. |
| | Service/Host Sites are engaged in an ongoing dialogue.<br>• Service/Host organization conducts an internal audit to determine their capabilities and resources. Outcomes, issues, and remedies are discussed.<br>• Service/Host sites determined based on available resources, funds, and supervision of members as well as meaningful, quality service projects. |
| | Write Scope of Work draft with Service/Host Site. |
| | The prospective AmeriCorps program creates work group to execute the application process. |
| | AmeriCorps Application sent in via the eGrants on-line application system. |

## *Organization Assessment Checklist*

This checklist is to help you review the systems and programs within your organization. It can help you identify ways to strengthen your organization.

### Planning Regarding the Total Organization

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| E | 1. The organization's purpose and activities meet community needs. | | | |
| R | 2. The organization frequently evaluates, by soliciting community input, whether its mission and activities provide benefit to the community. | | | |
| R | 3. The organization has a value statement that is reflected in the agency's activities and is communicated by its constituents. | | | |
| A | 4. The value statement includes standards of ethical behavior and respect for other's interests. | | | |
| E | 5. The organization has a clear, meaningful written mission statement which reflects its purpose, values and people served. | | | |
| R | 6. The board and staff periodically review the mission statement and modify it to reflect changes in the environment. | | | |
| E | 7. The board and staff developed and adopted a written strategic plan to achieve its mission. | | | |
| A | 8. Board, staff, service recipients, volunteers, key constituents and general members of the community participate in the planning process. | | | |
| E | 9. The plan was developed by researching the internal and external environment. | | | |
| R | 10. The plan identifies the changing community needs including the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. | | | |
| R | 11. The planning process identifies the critical issues facing the organization. | | | |
| R | 12. The plan sets goals and measurable objectives that address these critical issues. | | | |
| E | 13. The plan integrates all the organization's activities around a focused mission. | | | |
| R | 14. The plan prioritizes the agency goals and develops timelines for their accomplishments. | | | |
| A | 15. The plan establishes an evaluation process and performance indicators to measure the progress toward the achievement of goals and objectives. | | | |
| R | 16. Through work plans, human and financial resources are allocated to insure the accomplishment of the goals in a timely fashion. | | | |
| A | 17. The plan is communicated to all stakeholders of the agency -- service recipients, board, staff, volunteers and the general community. | | | |

### Planning Regarding the Organization's Programs

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| E | 1. Programs are congruent with the agency's mission and strategic plan. | | | |
| A | 2. The organization actively informs the public about its programs and services. | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 3. Clients and potential clients have the opportunity to participate in program development. | | | |
| R | 4. Sufficient resources are allocated to ensure each program can achieve the established goals and objectives. | | | |
| R | 5. Staff has sufficient training and skill level to produce the program. | | | |
| A | 6. Programs within the organization are integrated to provide more complete services to clients. | | | |
| R | 7. Each program has performance indicators to insure that the program meets its goals and objectives. | | | |
| R | 8. Performance indicators are reviewed annually. | | | |
| A | 9. The agency networks and/or collaborates with other organizations to produce the most comprehensive and effective services to clients. | | | |

## Planning Regarding the Organization's Evaluations

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| R | 1. Every year, the organization evaluates its activities to determine progress toward goal accomplishment. | | | |
| A | 2. Stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process. | | | |
| R | 3. The evaluation includes a review of organizational programs and systems to insure that they comply with the organization's mission, values and goals. | | | |
| R | 4. The results of the evaluation are reflected in the revised plan. | | | |
| A | 5. Periodically, the organization conducts a comprehensive evaluation of its programs. This evaluation measures program outcomes. | | | |

*Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area*

# *Laying the Foundation*

This section is relevant to organizations that carefully assessed whether AmeriCorps is an effective program structure to serve your community's needs. After your organization determined that it is prepared to meet the requirements of an AmeriCorps grant and has submitted the AmeriCorps Grant Application, there are a number of organizational systems and structures that need to be in place, pending grant award notification.

The next few months of preparation will begin building the foundation for your AmeriCorps program. Laying the Foundation section is designed to help your organization prepare itself by implementing the vision for your AmeriCorps program and developing the necessary systems to ensure your program is successful. The work will be significant. Let's begin laying the foundation for a high quality program. Put your hard hats on and dig in!

***At the end of this section, you will be able to***

- ❑ Create a program design that meets the community's needs.
- ❑ Develop effective performance measures for your program.
- ❑ Develop and implement systems and mechanisms to ensure the program's mission is carried out effectively. These include an annual calendar, staff development plan, and staff position descriptions.
- ❑ Evaluate your organization's risk and implement strategies to decrease risk.
- ❑ Apply knowledge of federal, state rules and regulations, grant provisions, as well as organizational policies to establish policies and procedures for the management of your AmeriCorps program.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

This section includes information on reviewing the Human Resource systems within your organization. Whether are a new or an existing organization, implementing a strong human resource system is important to the overall function and sustainability of your program. In addition to reviewing your human resource systems to ensure a strong and functional staff, a section on assessing and managing your organization's risk tolerance is included. Elements of this section can also be important to include in the overall design of your program.

The Corporation expects that all organizations applying to become an AmeriCorps program will adhere and abide by the Corporation's June 6, 1994 Civil Rights Statement which reads

> *"Recognizing that the fabric of our society is strengthened by the diversity of its citizens, the policy of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to ensure a mutual respect for all difference among us. Participation in the Corporation and its programs and projects will be based on merit and equal opportunity for all, with out regard to factors such as race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, marital or parental status, military service, or religious, community of social affiliations."*

As you review your human resource systems and strengthen your overall program capacity the intention of this statement must be applied to all facets of the work you do within your organization and community.

***Caution*:** Applying for this federal grant is quite comprehensive. Although there is some technical assistance available, we suggest you thoroughly review the requirements of the AmeriCorps Grant application. While your organization may have had federal awards in the past, AmeriCorps has some specific infrastructure requirements that many other federal grants may not have.

Costs incurred prior to receipt of a grant award are to be covered by the organization and cannot be charged to the grant unless circumstances are deemed appropriate, in writing, for the Corporation to approve pre-award expenses.

## *Designing the Program*

**What is program design?**
AmeriCorps program designing is the thoughtful process of creating a performance driven project that addresses the identified needs of a community through service. The design process includes determining the host agency, program budget, staffing, service sites, number of members, member positions, service activities, program type, supervision, and oversight and other issues.

**Why is program design important?**
The program design drives the operation and success of a project. If the design does not adequately support the proposed activities and the need being addressed, the project may not be successful.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Research the need and best practices to address the need. |
| ✓ | Assess the resources in your community. |
| ✓ | Consider needs, resources and accessibility of stakeholders. |
| ✓ | Consider the unique demographics of your community (i.e. rural, urban transportation availability, hours of operation, accessibility, etc.). |
| ✓ | Be creative. |
| ✓ | Let the community need drive the design of the program. |
| ✓ | Review and incorporate the AmeriCorps program requirements into the design of the program. |
| ✓ | Incorporate evaluation and reflection into the design of the program. |
| ✓ | Outline a "big picture" of what the program will look like once it is operational. |
| ✓ | Use the *Blueprint for Designing an AmeriCorps Program* to guide the development of your program design. Review the checklist for steps you will need to take. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**If all of the requirements of the AmeriCorps program are covered, haven't I automatically designed the program?** *No. Designing a program incorporates program requirements, but it is a process that goes to the next level. Once requirements are understood, they must be included in the crafting of a service program. A program should be designed to address a community need while meeting the program requirements, not the other way around.*

**Will the program design remain the same?** *Probably not. That is why reflection and performance measurement should be incorporated into its structure. Successes and failures will determine what components of the program design will remain, be improved upon, or changed.*

**Who should be involved in designing the program?** *Experienced service and issue area practitioners, program managers, community members, and those who will be tasked with operating the program should drive the program concept.*

## *Performance Measurement*

**What are Performance Measures?** Performance measures are indicators that allow you to track both the amount of work done by your program and the impact of this work on your program beneficiaries. Performance measurement is a useful tool for managing your program. It allows you to track the progress of your program towards larger goals, to identify program strengths, and possible areas for improvement.

**Why do you need Performance Measures?** Performance measurement allows you to: Clarify the purpose of your program and the way specific services contribute to achieving desired results; document the actual results of program activities; and improve program performance by identifying program successes and areas for improvement.

**How do you do it?**
Review the Corporation's Guidelines and application instructions in order to understand the performance measurement requirements. While there will be specific information about the number of performance measures, the types of results, and suggested methodology, your performance measures will fall into three categories of program activities:

| Three Categories of AmeriCorps Performance Measures | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Needs and Service Activities*** | ***Participant Development*** | ***Strengthening Communities*** |
| This performance measure addresses the impact of your program activities on community needs. **(What do we accomplish?)** | These performance measures address the impact of your program on the personal and professional development of your AmeriCorps members. **(How does your staff assist the member's personal and professional development?)** | This performance measures should relate to increasing and sustaining resources in the communities you serve. **(How will you improve your community?)** |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Is there a resource I should use to develop my performance measures?** *Yes. Use the Performance Measurement Toolkit at www.nationalservice.org/resources. It is strongly recommended that you use this resource.*

**Can I get support in writing my performance measures?** *Yes. The Corporation has training and technical assistance providers to assist applicants in developing performance measures. If your program is approved for funding, check the website above to identify providers who can assist you in revising your performance measures, if necessary.*

**What other supports are available to me?** *Other AmeriCorps programs can be great help in sharing their experiences. Take advantage of the experience of local programs.*

## *Develop Annual Calendar*

**What is an annual calendar?**
It is a program-based calendar that identifies the major program activities and events for the next 12-months**.**

**Why do you need an annual calendar?**
The calendar helps the organization effectively plan its program cycle and allows every member of your organization to view important events and activities. Additionally, it can decrease the likelihood of scheduling conflicts, serve as a record of events and activities, identify Corps member service hour targets, and operate as an organizational communication tool.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Identify the staff person responsible for updating and maintaining the annual calendar. |
| | ✓ Establish criteria to use for adding items to the annual calendar. |
| | ✓ Determine when the annual calendar process should start and end. |
| | ✓ During staff and AmeriCorps member retreats, review, discuss, and approve the calendar. |
| | ✓ Use a standard calendar making software to create your annual calendar. |
| | ✓ Provide copies to all staff and AmeriCorps members. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What kinds and numbers of events should be noted on an annual calendar?** *Consider limiting entries to activities/events that impact the AmeriCorps program. Some of these events could include State Commission or Corporation reporting deadlines, Corps member service hour targets, national service days, Staff and Corps member orientation and training activities, service partner holidays, breaks, or special events that impact the AmeriCorps program, community service projects, and retreats and staff or Corps member development activities. One caution: if you include too much detail, people may have trouble "reading" the calendar.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Calendars Net** | A free interactive web calendar hosting service, where you and anyone you choose can post events visible and printable by whomever you choose, or everyone. | *www.calsnet.net* |
| **Annual Calendar** | A sample of an AmeriCorps program Annual Calendar. | *AmeriCorps Program Start-up Guide* |

## *Develop Organizational Chart*

**What is an Organizational Chart?** An organizational chart is a visual representation of lines of supervision for all staff. If you have an existing program and are incorporating an AmeriCorps program into your current structure or you are starting a brand new AmeriCorps program, you will need the organizational chart to reflect new lines of supervision.

**Why do you need an Organizational Chart?** A well-conceived and articulated organizational reporting structure will go a long way toward strengthening lines of communication, supervision, accountability, and responsibility. Staff members need to understand their roles and responsibilities particularly with the addition of the AmeriCorps program.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Determine if existing staff will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the AmeriCorps program **or** if new staff must be hired as allowed by the terms of your grant. |
| | ✓ Consult with your community partners to determine how staffing structures might need to be adjusted if you have AmeriCorps members placed at their sites. |
| | ✓ Revise your organizational chart to reflect the inclusion of the AmeriCorps program. See sample *Organizational Chart.* |
| | ✓ Revise or create staff position descriptions to reflect added duties and responsibilities. |
| | ✓ Communicate with existing staff the proposed changes to the organizational chart and how the changes affect them. |
| | ✓ Ensure that the percentage of time staff members work with the AmeriCorps program matches the grant information. |
| | ✓ Establish timesheets to track hours separately for activities paid for by the AmeriCorps grant. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can I hire new staff and bill it to the AmeriCorps grant?** *Yes, so long as your budget and grantee agreement support a new hire. You cannot bill for the position if a staff member is not doing work for the AmeriCorps program. The creation of time sheets with clear explanations of what work was done with which AmeriCorps program is crucial to preventing any inappropriate billing and match figures.*

**Should our organizational chart also show staff members whose services are not billed to the grant?** *Yes. It shows a complete picture of all the staff in your organization dedicated to your AmeriCorps program.*

**Can I charge a position to the AmeriCorps grant if that person is not working on the AmeriCorps program?** *No. When time sheets are created be sure there is clear explanation of what work was done with what program. This is crucial to prevent any inappropriate billing and match figures.*

**How can I "safely" add AmeriCorps management responsibilities to existing staff members' work assignments?** *Make sure that new position responsibilities are compatible with the staff member's capabilities. Not all staff members are ready to tackle the responsibilities of managing AmeriCorps members or handling the administrative reporting necessary. Also, ensure that the roles and lines of responsibility are clear.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Microsoft PowerPoint** | Microsoft Office PowerPoint software includes an organizational chart creation tool | *Microsoft Office software* |

## *Create Staff Development Plan*

**What is a Staff Development Plan?**
A staffing plan is a strategy for ensuring that your organization has adequate staff appropriately trained to administer and support your AmeriCorps program. A staffing plan should address what positions are needed, the number of staff needed, a timeline for recruiting and hiring staff, and how staff will be oriented and trained.

**Why do you need a Staff Development Plan**?
Retaining staff can sometimes be challenging. The multiple tasks, long hours, or shifting goals often leads to frustration and burnout. Investing in staff is smart business. A retention program recognizes, formally acknowledges, and celebrates the contributions and efforts of your whole staff.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Develop a comprehensive timeline that addresses all staffing-related actions through the end of the program year. Indicate who is responsible and the resources needed. |
| | ✓ Determine criteria for selecting staff. How will the application and interview be evaluated? |
| | ✓ Determine the positions needed to adequately staff your AmeriCorps program and develop position descriptions. A position description identifies the responsibilities, tasks, functions, and reporting structure for a position.<br>o What positions need to be filled? How will they be filled? Do we have resumes or applications on file that we can review? |
| | ✓ Consult with your service site partners to determine their staffing needs for AmeriCorps members placed at their sites. |
| | ✓ Determine criteria for the selection committee. Identify members of the selection committee. |
| | ✓ Review your *interviewing skills*. |
| | ✓ Determine staff orientation and training needs. How do we prepare great staff to accomplish our mission? |
| | ✓ Review the *Staff Recruitment Plan*. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Is it permissible for AmeriCorps staff to perform other organizational duties?** *Yes, as long as the time spent on these duties if not charged to the grant. Be sure that staff timesheets allow for the recording of time spent on different activities.*

**Can our AmeriCorps members be involved in staff recruitment?** *No. AmeriCorps members' duties are restricted to activities specified in approved grant application.*

**What can I do if I do not have an HR department in our organization?** *You have several options. You might identify local corporations that could "loan" your organization an HR professional to craft your policies and procedures. You also might try a "job share" with another nonprofit organization. Also consider using retirees with relevant experience who could volunteer in your HR department.*

**Can I hire new staff and claim it on my AmeriCorps grant?** *Yes, so long as your budget and grantee agreement support a new hire. You cannot claim costs for a position if the staff member is not doing work for the AmeriCorps program. The creation of time sheets with clear explanations of what work was done with which AmeriCorps program is crucial to preventing any inappropriate federal charges and match figures.*

**How can I "safely" add AmeriCorps management responsibilities to existing staff members' work assignments?** *Make sure that new position responsibilities are compatible with the staff member's capabilities. Not all staff members are ready to tackle the responsibilities of managing AmeriCorps members or handling the administrative reporting necessary. Most important, establish time sheets to track actual time spent on AmeriCorps activities by each staff member.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Staff Screening Tool Kit: Building a Strong Foundation Through Careful Staffing** | The toolkit was developed by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center for the Corporation for National Service. Staff screening consists of the steps you take before selecting an individual to serve in your organization. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources_online_pubs/program__management/staff_screening_toolkit.php |

## *Develop Staff Position Descriptions*

**What is a Position Description?**
A position description identifies the responsibilities, tasks, functions, and reporting structure for a position.

**Why do you need Position Descriptions?**
A position description helps to focus an organization's work by making explicit the responsibilities of each staff person. Staff uses the position descriptions to guide their day-to-day tasks and duties. Supervisors use position descriptions to evaluate staff performance.

**How do you do it?**
Writing a position description requires three basic steps:

1. **Conduct a job analysis**. Examine the tasks and sequences of tasks necessary to perform the job. The analysis looks at the areas of knowledge and skills needed by the job. (**What activities or functions does this job entail? What special skills are needed to complete the activities or functions? How can staff performance be appraised?)**
2. **Establish a job title and salary.** The title and salary should correspond to the level of responsibility. See Resources below for additional links. (**Does the title reflect the responsibilities? Is the position adequately compensated?**)
3. **Write the position description**. Position descriptions should be written in brief and clear sentences.

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Determine the percentage of time each staff member will be working with the AmeriCorps program. You will use this information in your grant application. |
| ✓ | Complete the job analysis for each position required to operate the AmeriCorps program. |
| ✓ | Write or update all position descriptions to reflect new responsibilities associated with the AmeriCorps program or changes in existing responsibilities. |
| ✓ | Communicate with existing staff the proposed changes to the organizational chart and how the changes might affect them. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Do I have to have a position description for every staff member?** *Yes, at least as it relates to the AmeriCorps program. It is an effective practice to have position descriptions for every staff member of your organization to ensure responsibilities are clear.*

**Are there special considerations in selecting and assigning staff members to supervise AmeriCorps members?** *Yes. Members are not traditional volunteers nor are they regular professional staff. AmeriCorps supervisors must focus on the tasks of the project and the task of developing the program members in their charge. To the extent possible, select staff members with prior supervisory experience and who enjoy dealing with "the unexpected". Build flexibility into the supervisory position description.*

**Can I divide staff time with other organizational duties?** *Yes. Be sure to clearly define where staff time is spent and make sure timesheets reflect the reality of the time and funds allocation. Time spent on duties other than AmeriCorps cannot be charged to the grant.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Writing Effective Job Descriptions** | Provides recommendations for structuring a position description. | http://www.onlinewbc.gov/Docs/manage/descriptions.html |
| **Employee Staffing: Specifying Jobs, Roles and Competencies** | Provides information on determining the staffing needs and other issues related to employee staffing. | http://www.managementhelp.org/<br><br>http://www.mapnp.org/library/staffing/specify/job_desc/job_desc.htm |

## *Human Resource System*

**What is a Human Resource System?**
A Human Resource (HR) system is a critical set of structures that help build and sustain an organization. This system guides everything from how the staff is evaluated to the expected length of the workday to the provision of health benefits, to procedures for how staff are hired, trained, and retained. Here are the four basic components of an HR system. Each component is explained in detail in the pages to follow.

1. **Staff Compensation and Benefit**s – Are our salaries competitive? Do we offer other benefits that make working in our organization appealing? Are the staff compensation and benefits aligned with the grant application guidelines?
2. **Staff Recruitment** – What positions need to be filled? How will they be filled? Do we have resumes or applications on file that we can review?
3. **Staff Orientation and Training** – Now that we have a great staff, how do we prepare them great staff to accomplish our mission?
4. **Staff Retention** – Do we have a performance and recognition system for our staff? Is the work environment conducive to retaining staff?

**Why do you need a Human Resource System?** An HR system ensures the consistent application of policy, procedure, and regulation necessary for a strong, healthy organization. In addition, it enables senior management to identify and respond to staff performance issues, compensation and benefits, and training needs

**How do you do it?**
Whether you are working with an existing or an emerging HR system, you must integrate AmeriCorps policies and procedures.

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. Identify those AmeriCorps specific issues that need to be addressed within your organization. |
| | ✓ Review your organization's existing Employee Handbook to ensure AmeriCorps grant and program requirements are included. |
| | ✓ Review current HR protocols to ensure your organization is proactive in managing risks. |

## Staff Compensation and Benefits

**What are Staff Compensation and Benefits?**
Compensation is the salary staff is paid. Benefits typically refer to retirement plans, health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and vacation.

**Why do you need Staff Compensation and Benefits?**
A solid package of compensation and benefits attracts and keeps an outstanding staff. They can foster high morale and keep up with the competition. Benefits and compensation packages are great ways to motivate employees to take on additional responsibilities within the organization.

**How do I do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Research comparable organizations in your network to determine a competitive salary range. |
| ✓ | Consult with HR professionals to link position responsibilities with competitive compensation. |
| ✓ | Create a booklet or document that outlines/details, at a minimum, your health and dental plan; leave and vacation policies; and professional development opportunities. Policies should be formalized to maintain consistency across all staff and avoid any confusion. |
| ✓ | Update the Emplovee Handbook to reflect the AmeriCorps specific requirements that affect staff. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What can I do if I do not have an HR department in our organization?** *You have several options. You might identify local corporations that could "loan" your organization an HR professional to craft your policies and procedures. You also might try a "job share" with another nonprofit organization. Also consider using retirees with relevant experience who could volunteer in your HR department.*

**Am I permitted to pay staff out of more than one source of money?** *Yes. Make sure that staff timesheets reflect percentages of time on AmeriCorps related activities. Ensure that any time charged to the grant adheres to boundaries of the grant.*

**What is the average salary and benefits of AmeriCorps program staff?** *It depends on many things: the size and geographic location of your organization, age of the organization, just to name a few. To gather this information, check with AmeriCorps programs in your network or contact your State Commission or the Corporation for recommendations on finding salary and benefit information.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Management Assistance Program to Nonprofits** | Broad benefits information | http://www.managementhelp.org/pay_ben/benefits/benefits.htm |
| | Nonprofit benefits information | http://www.managementhelp.org/hr_mgmnt/np_spcf.htm |
| **BenefitsLink** | Everything about current benefit issues | http://www.benefitslink.com/topics.shtml |

## Staff Recruitment Plan

### What is a Staff Recruitment Plan?

A staff recruitment plan is a timeline that outlines and guides the process of creating or updating position descriptions, recruiting and hiring outstanding staff, and orienting and training all staff for new responsibilities.

### Why do you need a Staff Recruitment Plan?

It ensures that staffing vacancies are filled in a timely manner following a standard set of criteria.

### How do you do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Determine the positions responsible for the day-to-day operations of your AmeriCorps program responsibilities. |
| | ✓ Consult with your service site partners to determine how staffing structures adjustments for AmeriCorps members placed at their sites. |
| | ✓ Determine criteria for the selection committee. Identify members of the selection committee. |
| | ✓ Allow adequate time to advertise, review applications, set up and conduct interviews evaluate candidates, and to make a selection and offer. |
| | ✓ Determine criteria for selecting staff. How will the application and interview be evaluated? |
| | ✓ Review the *Basic Interviewing Strategies* and *Staff Recruitment Strategies*. |

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Where do I search to find a diverse pool of candidates?** *Recruit in nontraditional places. Consider diversity of culture, age, persons with disabilities, and sexual orientation. The Internet can be a powerful tool to bring in qualified candidates. Also don't forget nontraditional media sources like the Native American, African American, and Latino/Hispanic press. Local businesses, religious institutions, and community centers are other examples of nontraditional recruitment avenues. Consider the community your program serves. Talk to other organizations that seem to be attracting a diverse audience.*

**Do staff members need to have criminal background checks?** *Yes. Programs with members or employees who have substantial direct contact with children (as defined by state law) or who perform service in the homes of children or individuals considered vulnerable by the program, shall, to the extent permitted by state and local law, conduct criminal record checks on these members or employees as part of the screening process. This documentation must be maintained consistent with state law.*

**Should I maintain a record of how we recruited candidates?** *Yes! Document, in writing, the process used in selection of the new staff member(s) and retain in a file the resume/application and interview sheets of all candidates considered. Include signatures of interviewers or testers or panelists who judged or scored the candidates. Retain these records for a period of time determined by the HR department, the organization, the State Commission, or Parent Organization.*

**Can our AmeriCorps members be involved in staff recruitment?** *No. AmeriCorps members' duties are restricted to activities specified by the activities in the approved grant application.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Staff Screening Tool Kit: Building a Strong Foundation Through Careful Staffing** | The toolkit was developed by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center for the Corporation for National Service. Staff screening consists of the steps you take before selecting an individual to serve in your organization. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/program__management/staff_screening_toolkit.php |
| **Management Assistance Program to Nonprofits** | Contains information on basic interviewing strategies. | http://www.managementhelp.org/staffing/screeng/intrvwng/basics.htm |
| **National Service Entities** | Call your State Office, Commission, or Parent Organization to see if they have information or links related to recruiting staff. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/ |

## Staff Orientation and Training Plan

### What is a Staff Orientation and Training Plan?

A staff orientation and training plan is a comprehensive annual professional development strategy. It begins the moment a staff member is hired. It seems obvious, but this proactive contributor to employee success, morale, and participation is often overlooked.

### Why do you need a Staff Orientation and Training Plan?

Creating a plan for staff orientation and training ensures you have a systematic, consistent, and measurable way to develop your staff. The benefits of a comprehensive orientation and training plan are significant. Consider this: your staff members enjoy increased knowledge of position and organization; increased job satisfaction and morale; increased staff motivation; increased efficiencies in processes which result in better services to the community; increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods; reduction of risk, e.g., training about sexual harassment, diversity training; and reduced employee turnover.

### How do you do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Review *Building an Outstanding Orientation Program* and the *AmeriCorps Program Staff Training Topics* for ideas to incorporate into your orientation and training plan. |
| ✓ | Develop an orientation plan complete with staff roles, goals, tasks, information to be conveyed, performance measurements, and an implementation timeline. |
| ✓ | Review your AmeriCorps Performance Measures, organizational goals, or long-term plans and decide what skills your staff needs to run the AmeriCorps program. |
| ✓ | Create a budget to accomplish annual orientation and training goals. |
| ✓ | Consult, communicate, and include organization's staff and stakeholders in developing orientation and training plans. |
| ✓ | Consider a form of recognition or award for staff that receive high orientation performance measurement marks. |
| ✓ | Consider utilizing outside trainers to execute your training needs. Review the Corporation's T/TA providers, State Commission, and internal or local resources for potential trainers. |

### Frequently Asked Questions

**What does staff orientation and training accomplish?** *When done right, it can accomplish several key things. First, a great welcome and orientation leaves a new employee feeling valued and prepared. Second, continuous professional development can increase staff competence and contributions. Finally, on-going training can improve supervision and leadership techniques, thus increasing and sustaining high morale.*

**Should I hire an external trainer for my orientations and training?** *No and yes. It is best to have an orientation done by an internal staff member, but if you do not have in-house expertise to address all of the training needs, then bring in a specialist to help you provide professional skill development (for example, supervisory skill development).*

**What resources does the Corporation make available to program staff?** *The Corporation recently piloted an assessment tool called "My Resources". This tool contains a series of descriptions that represent characteristics or indicators of an effective program that uses national service participants and/or volunteers. Once the assessment is completed it will provide a listing of and links to specific resources that are available. These resources are targeted to assist in developing and enhancing skills and knowledge that address the areas that have been identified as being in need of improvement. A description of the vast array of training and technical assistance resources available through the Corporation may be found at* http://www.nationalservice.org/resources.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Management Assistance Program to Nonprofits** | Broad overview of Training and Development issues and practical suggestions. | http://www.managementhelp.org/trng_dev/trng_dev.htm |
| | Find ways to strengthen your training and development plan. | http://www.managementhelp.org/trng_dev/gdlns.htm |
| | Basic information on adult learning. | http://www.managementhelp.org/trng_dev/basics/adlt_lrn.htm |
| **Becoming a Better Supervisor** | A resource guide for front-line supervisors in all kinds of service programs. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/ |

## Staff Retention Program

### What is a Staff Retention Program?

A retention program recognizes, formally acknowledges, and celebrates the contributions and efforts of your whole staff. Retaining staff in the nonprofit community can sometimes be challenging. The multiple tasks, long hours, or shifting goals often leads to frustration and burnout. Investing in staff is smart business practice.

### Why do you need a Staff Retention Program?

Simple. You want to keep quality staff members who contribute to the success of the organization.

### How do you do it?

A Staff Retention program can have three components.

| Support | Assess | Recognize |
|---|---|---|
| • Put staff in positions that are right for their skills.<br>• Give staff the resources they need to do a good job.<br>• Implement formal coaching, support, and professional development opportunities.<br>• Create a work environment that is compatible with and reflects the organization's mission. | • Use clear performance goals to help you and the staff member measure successes and identify deficiencies.<br>• Have regular "performance dialogues" to let staff know if they are on track and meeting expectations. Generally, employees want concrete feedback on how they are doing.<br>• Provide on-going support mechanisms to address skill deficiencies. | • Reward employees with small tokens and with work they enjoy. Employees want to feel they are needed and wanted.<br>• Create opportunities for formal recognition celebrations. |

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Who is responsible for a retention program?** *Your HR department should be in close communication with the managers and supervisors of your organization to identify and acknowledge high performing staff and support underachieving staff toward improvement. If you do not have an HR department, ensure that you identify a staff member who would be responsible for managing a staff recognition program.*

### *Resources*

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Becoming a Better Supervisor** | A Resource Guide for National and Community Service Supervisors | www.nationalservice.org/resources/ |

## *Risk Management*

**What is Risk Management?**
Risk management is the strategic process of assessing your organization's vulnerabilities and putting remedies in place**.** Generally, this process involves reviewing the operations of the organization, identifying potential threats to the organization and the likelihood of their occurrence, and then taking appropriate actions to address the possible threats.

**Why do you need to address Risk Management issues?**
It can protect your organization from catastrophic loss or damage. With the recent increase in rules and regulations and employee-related lawsuits, risk management is becoming a management practice that is every bit as important as financial or facilities management.

**How do you do it?**

✓ Review the checklists for Assessing Risk Management. Complete an *Organization Evaluation Checklist* in the following areas:

- Professional management culture and practices. Review the *Checklist of Human Resource Management Indicators*.
- Personnel policies up-to-date and reflective of AmeriCorps rules and regulations.
- Insurance and liability coverage.
- Legal protection.
- Sound financial management systems and procedures.
- Volunteer management policies.
- Fundraising procedures and policies.
- Resource Management (people, computers, records and facilities).
- Use the *Checklist to Evaluate a Nonprofit Board of Directors* to review the practices of the organization's board or advisory group.

Also consider these issues.

| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Staff could complete an anonymous survey to determine any issues related to risk that senior management are unaware of. Identify organization's blind spots. Take concrete steps to address an organization's blind spots. |
| ✓ | If you are a Parent Organization, make sure your sub-grantees are in compliance with all relevant grantee regulations and organizational policy. |
| ✓ | Conduct formal and informal site monitoring visits. Use a Risk Management checklist to determine vulnerable areas. |
| ✓ | Ensure you have a sexual harassment policy and or non-discrimination policy in place and use them actively if/when issues are identified. |
| ✓ | Don't ignore challenges. This will only make them bigger and can lead to legal action or loss of valuable staff. |
| ✓ | Consider Corps member and staff activities that might expose your organization to risk (private use of cars, transporting children, etc.). |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Which systems should I review first for potential liabilities?** *A thorough review of your Employee Handbook, Organizational Policy & Procedures, and sub-grantee policies and procedures should be an important first step in assessing potential areas of liability to ensure the operation of the organization is in compliance with stated policies and procedures.*

**What local resources could I draw on for assistance in conducting a risk management assessment?** *Find out if you have board members with legal backgrounds who can review organizational policies. Additionally, consider local colleges and universities that might have a department that works on identifying risk management issues and would review your organization on a pro bono basis. Also see the Tools for Success below for on-line resources.*

**What Corporation-specific entities can help us identify or address risk management issues?** *The Program Officer can provide guidance or directive to clarify potential problems.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Nonprofit Risk Management Center** | A comprehensive website that includes information directed at nonprofit organizations. Topics include myths about risk, risk management basics, insurance options, legal issues, etc. | http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/ |
| **Management Assistance Program to Nonprofits** | Broad issues related to Risk Management. | http://www.managementhelp.org/legal/rskmgmnt.htm |
| | Self-evaluation checklist for the Board of Directors. | http://www.managementhelp.org/boards/brd_eval.htm |
| | Excellent checklist for organizational planning, readiness, and risk reduction. | http://www.managementhelp.org/org_eval/uw_plng.htm |
| | Excellent checklist of Human Resource and Volunteer Management Issues. | http://www.managementhelp.org/org_eval/uw_hr.htm |
| | Major Topics and Issues in Employee Law. | http://www.managementhelp.org/legal/emp_law/emp_law.htm |

## *Policy, Procedure, and Regulation Compliance*

**What does it mean to comply with policy, procedures, and regulations?**
Basically, your organization must abide by a set of requirements and policies once you accept federal money. These procedures, regulations, or policies flow from federal, state, or local grant-making regulation entities.

**Why do you need to comply with policy, procedures, and regulations?**
Compliance is not optional! You must comply with all regulations to maintain good standing with the Corporation and to continue receiving the support and funding provided for in your grant. Consequences for noncompliance may include reductions or loss of funding, repayment to the U.S. Government of funds that may have been improperly spent, lawsuits, and jail time.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Become intimately knowledgeable with the AmeriCorps grant provisions, OMB Circulars, and related regulations. |
| | ✓ Ensure all staff, but especially your senior management, understands new and existing regulations. |
| | ✓ Your HR representative or someone functioning in that capacity must ensure that new regulations are included in Employee Handbooks and that all staff are trained on relevant regulations. |
| | ✓ Provide focused training on regulation and compliance issues to your staff. Make sure they understand what is needed as part of the AmeriCorps grant. |
| | ✓ Find out if there are State regulations that you need to consider. |

**<u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>**

**How can accepting the AmeriCorps program grant impact our current operations?** *The new policies might require that you make significant changes in the climate and culture of your organization. If a problem arises in the realm of compliance, questions will be asked as to whether the climate of the organization sustained a particular environment of noncompliance.*

**What happens if the program is not in compliance with the grant provisions?** *The consequences of noncompliance will vary according to the nature and severity of the noncompliance. For example, late or deficient reporting may result in a loss of funding. Failure to document costs may result in having to repay the government.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Management Assistance Program to Nonprofits** | General information on Employee Handbooks. | http://www.managementhelp.org/policies/handbook/handbook.htm |
| | Guidance on writing employee handbooks, suggested policies and procedures. | http://www.managementhelp.org/policies/handbook/handbook.htm |
| **AmeriCorps Grant Provisions** | The specific information related to the AmeriCorps grant. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/manuals.html |
| **Organizational Policies and Procedures Handbook Employee Handbook** | Your organization's policy and procedure manuals. | |

## *Senior Management Board Presentation*

**What is a Senior Management Board Presentation?**
A board presentation to senior management is an opportunity to share information and receive input on the AmeriCorps program. Almost every organization has an advisory board, board of directors, or group of senior managers with oversight responsibility for the AmeriCorps program. In your organization, this group might be actively involved in the day-to-day activities or only meet quarterly for organizational updates.

**Why do you need to conduct Senior Management Board Presentations?**
A board presentation keeps everyone in the organization in proactive posture. No surprises! Keep this group updated on the development and implementation of the program, any challenges or snags encountered, or support you might need. Often the group is significantly involved in guiding an organization's activities including long-term planning, programming, community relations, and financial matters. Your AmeriCorps program will also be included in that.

**How do you do it?**

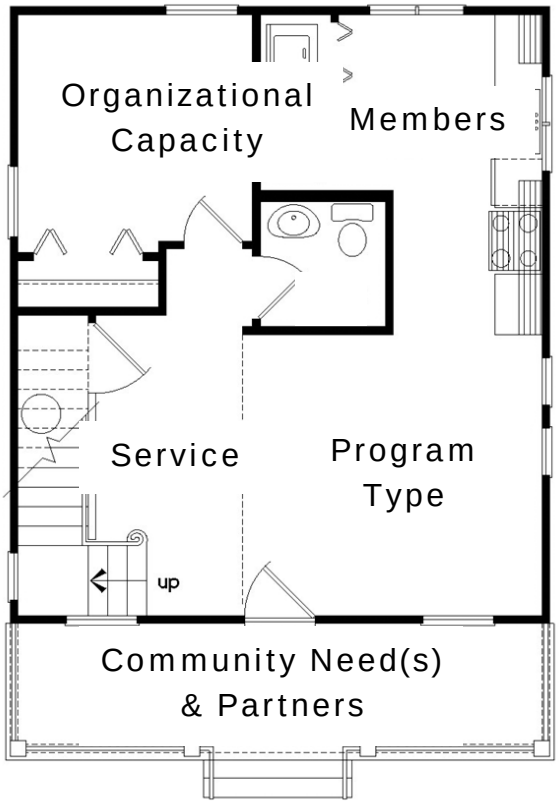
| | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Discuss the timing, structure, and content of a presentation with your organization's Executive Director. |
| ✓ | Create simple, clear handouts that illustrate the important points you want to make. |
| ✓ | Make sure you have accurate information from key stakeholders, including other staff members. |
| ✓ | Update the group on budget changes or other impending financial issues. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**
**What are some simple strategies for a high impact presentation?** *Anticipate questions that group members might have about program implementation and management issues. Create a briefing book that includes clear handouts, budget sheets, performance measures, stakeholder profiles, and any other relevant documents.*

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Blueprint for Designing an AmeriCorps Program*

*Blueprint [n] something intended as a guide for making something else – Kaplan Dictionary*




Use this Blueprint form to layout the design of your program. Use the guidance provided in the Laying the Foundation sections to inform your responses to these questions. The Blueprint will serve as the basis for your AmeriCorps program and application. This should provide a snapshot of your program and serve as the logic for the rest of your planning and future implementation.

Ensure that your program design adequately responds to the needs of your community, uses service, as defined by CNCS, as a qualified means of addressing the problems and adheres to prescribed instructions.

**Community Needs**

- What need or needs my program will address? Describe need with data collected from community input, research and supporting examples.

**Service**

- What best practices and or approaches are being used to address the identified need? Use professional knowledge and research.

- How can a service program be used to adequately address this need? Specifically, identify activities that program participants will be involved in.

- Develop preliminary service position descriptions. List essential duties for identified services.

### Community Partners

- What other community organizations and people need to be involved to ensure the success of this project? List specific names and contact information.

### Organizational Capacity

- Why is the your organization the right organization to host this effort? Describe experience, management systems, resources, etc.

### Program Type

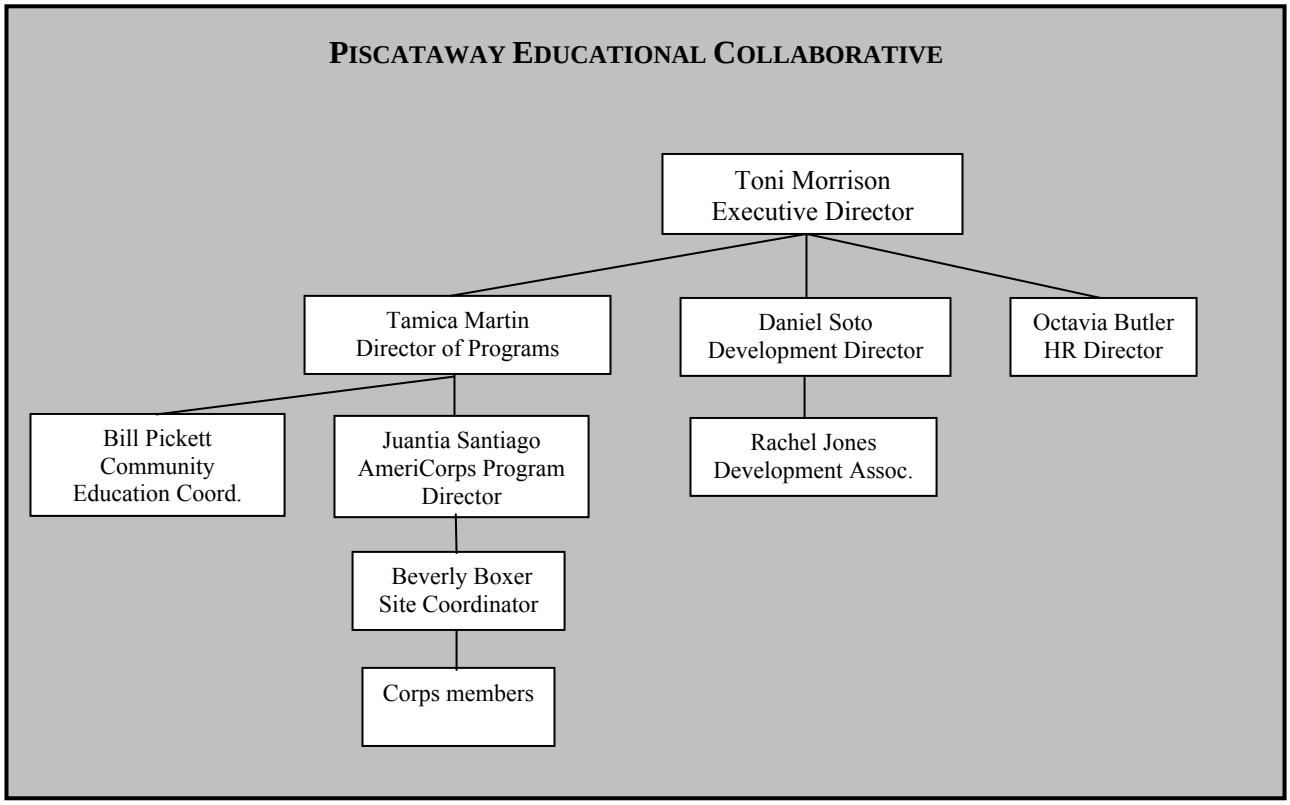
- What Corporation program type are you developing, AmeriCorps*State or National? How does your organization meet the appropriate criteria for this program type.
- Will this be an Education Award Only program? If so, why is this the best option for your program. What is the value added by AmeriCorps to your existing volunteer program?
- What type of program will this be (single site, multi-site, or intermediary)? Explain logic behind selecting this type of program given the needs, partners and organizational capacity.

### Members

- Who are the members? Describe characteristics needed to provide service.
- Where will the members be recruited?
- What will they be trained in, in order to ensure quality services? List potential training sessions that include required AmeriCorps topics (see CNCS AmeriCorps Guidance).
- Who will supervise members?

***You have hit the nail on the head if …*** each of the above components and responses are logically linked: The community need determined your service; the program design provides a means to address that community need; members are trained and supported by an organization with the capacity and community partners to successfully administer a strong program that provides service and addresses federal requirements.

## *Sample Organizational Chart*



## *Staff Recruitment Plan*

| Action Issue | Point of Contact | Deadline |
|---|---|---|
| Staff member identified to be responsible for recruitment process. | | |
| Develop position descriptions. | | |
| Position description approved by HR or Executive Director. | | |
| Position application completed. (If used by your organization.) | | |
| Publicize position description. *(Include print, radio, and internet deadlines)* | | |
| Last day to accept candidates' resumes and applications. | | |
| Interview committee members identified. | | |
| Interview committee members screen qualified resumes and applications. | | |
| Begin and end 1st phase of interviews. | | |
| Begin and end 2nd phase of interviews. | | |
| Begin and end 3rd phase of interviews. | | |
| Check references and background of top five prospective candidates. | | |
| Select final candidate. | | |
| Date offer of employment is made. | | |
| Date by which offer of employment must be accepted or rejected by final candidate. | | |
| Date by which confirmation letter of employment and other materials are sent to candidate. | | |
| Start date of employee. | | |

## *Basic Interviewing Strategies*

1. Consider having multiple people at the interview to get a more objective and fair presentation of the candidate. Have all interviewers record and share their impressions of the candidate right after the interview meeting.

2. Ask the candidate about compensation needs and expected or needed benefits.

3. While interviewing candidates, always apply the same questions to all candidates to ensure fairness. All questions should be in regard to performing the duties of the job.

4. Don't ask questions about race, nationality, age, gender, disabilities (current or previous), marital status, spouses, children and their care, criminal records or credit records.

5. Talk for, at most, 25% of the time. For the rest of the time, listen.

6. Consider asking some challenging, open-ended questions, such as what skills do you bring to this job? What concerns do you have about filling this role?, What was your biggest challenge in a past job and how did you meet it? Avoid "yes-no" questions.

7. Be sure to tell candidates of any relevant personnel policy terms, such as probationary periods.

8. Ask if you can get and check any references. Always check references and share them with the interviewers.

9. Find out when she or he can start if offered the job.

10. Explain to the candidate the next steps in the process and when she or he can expect to hear about the status of her or his application.

## *Staff Recruitment Strategies*

1. **Craft** outreach plan –
   - Consider classified ads in traditional and alternative media and publications.
   - Register with state job placement/search system. (In some states it is required if the position is federally funded.)
   - Register the position with free and/or pay Internet job search sites.
   - Register position with non-profit association (if your state or community has one.)
   - Conduct targeted outreach to populations from which you wish to attract candidates. (Use word-of-mouth, ask for "nominations", print flyers, or newsletter announcements to include in worship bulletins, school, or business/professional publications.
   - Contact placement offices of educational institutions with announcement.
   - Post announcement on list-servs or other appropriate Internet sites.

2. **Plan** how to accept applications and how to schedule interviews. (Accepting applications or resumes by fax, e-mail, or U.S. Mail is typically preferred.)

3. **Assess** resumes and applications in a triage manner. Typically placing resumes or applications in stacks of "A', "B", or "C". If more than one person is assessing the applications or resumes agree beforehand on qualifying criteria that all can live with.

4. **Prepare** interview format (questions and, if desirable, alternative assessments – testing, essay, presentation, etc.) Ask the SAME questions of ALL candidates and have ALL candidates perform the SAME alternative assessments and assess ALL candidates using the same criteria.

5. **Schedule** interviews with adequate time to assess the candidate AND record your impressions.

6. **Check** references of the candidate or candidates. Get the best picture possible of the potential new staff member's ability to perform the tasks outlined in the position

## *AmeriCorps Program Staff Training Topics*

*The six topics below represent some skills and knowledge staff needs to execute the AmeriCorps program. These topics cannot be covered in one day—in fact, they will need several days. Develop an annual training plan complete with goals, tasks, staff retreats, roles, performance measurement, materials, budget, and an implementation timeline*

1. **Communications**: Addresses staff, Corps member, and community language and custom diversity.

2. **Computer skills:** Computer skills are a necessity for today's organizations.

3. **Customer service:** Ensure the staff understands and meets the needs with in the AmeriCorps guidelines of stakeholders – members, staff, community partners, and community members.

4. **Diversity:** Diversity training focuses on increasing awareness about how people have different perspectives and views, and includes techniques to value diversity.

5. **Human relations:** The increased stresses of today's workplace can include misunderstandings and conflict. Training can help people to get along in the workplace.

6. **AmeriCorps 101**: History of National Service, Prohibited activities, deadlines, Corps member requirements, AmeriCorps program requirements, forms and reports, new policies and procedures.

## *Building an Outstanding Orientation Program*

*A great orientation reduces turnover.*
*First impressions are critical!*

1. **Prior Prep**: Orientation begins before the first day. Send a copy of the organization's mission, vision statements, short-term and long-term goals, e-mail address, telephone number, and an organizational chart.

2. **Workspace**: Ensure that new staff member's workspace is prepared and ready. This includes computer, telephone, office supplies, telephone directory, organizational chart, business cards, ID card, telephone and email passwords.

3. **Goals**: Orientations should have targeted goals and meet each of them. No orientation should be boring, rushed, or ineffective. Stay focused on the goals.

4. **Staff**: A senior person should orient new staff. Don't delegate this important task to an intern!

5. **Personal touch:** Consider a personal phone call, visit or letter from the Executive Director (ED) welcoming new staff to the organization.

6. **Staff Buddy**: Make sure there is a new staff "buddy" who has specific responsibilities in showing and the new staff member around.

7. **Success**: Prepare new staff for success! Don't overwhelm them with too much information!

8. **Celebrate**: Make the first day a celebration. A luncheon or welcome party makes new folks feel part of the team. Increase the enthusiasm!

# Risk Management

## *Checklist of Human Resource Management Indicators*

### General Human Resources

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| E | 1. The organization has a written personnel handbook/policy that is regularly reviewed and updated: a) to describe the recruitment, hiring, termination and standard work rules for all staff; b) to maintain compliance with government regulations including Fair Labor Standards Act, Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Family Leave Act, Affirmative Action Plan (if required), etc. | | | |
| R | 2. The organization follows nondiscriminatory hiring practices. | | | |
| R | 3. The organization provides a copy of or access to the written personnel policy to all members of the board, the Executive Director and all staff members. All staff members acknowledge in writing that they have read and have access to the personnel handbook/policies. | | | |
| R | 4. The organization has job descriptions including qualifications, duties, reporting relationships and key indicators. | | | |
| R | 5. The organization's Board of Directors conducts an annual review/evaluation of its Executive Director in relationship to a previously determined set of expectations. | | | |
| R | 6. The Executive Director's salary is set by the Board of Directors in a reasonable process and is in compliance with the organization's compensation plan. | | | |
| R | 7. The organization requires employee performance appraisals to be conducted and documented at least annually. | | | |
| A | 8. The organization has a compensation plan, and a periodic review of salary ranges and benefits is conducted. | | | |
| A | 9. The organization has a timely process for filling vacant positions to prevent an interruption of program services or disruption to organization operations. | | | |
| A | 10. The organization has a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, comments and perceptions from all staff members. | | | |
| A | 11. The organization provides opportunities for employees' professional development and training with their job skill area and also in such areas as cultural sensitivity and personal development. | | | |
| A | 12. The organization maintains contemporaneous records documenting staff time in program allocations. | | | |

*Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area.*

# Risk Management

## *Checklist to Evaluate a Nonprofit Board of Directors*

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| E | 1. The roles of the Board and the Executive Director are defined and respected, with the Executive Director delegated as the manager of the organization's operations and the board focused on policy and planning | | | |
| R | 2. The Executive Director is recruited, selected, and employed by the Board of Directors. The board provides clearly written expectations and qualifications for the position, as well as reasonable compensation. | | | |
| R | 3. The Board of Directors acts as governing trustees of the organization on behalf of the community at large and contributors while carrying out the organization's mission and goals. To fully meet this goal, the Board of Directors must actively participate in the planning process as outlined in planning sections of this checklist. | | | |
| R | 4. The board's nominating process ensures that the board remains appropriately diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, culture, economic status, disabilities, and skills and/or expertise. | | | |
| E | 5. The board members receive regular training and information about their responsibilities. | | | |
| E | 6. New board members are oriented to the organization, including the organization's mission, bylaws, policies, and programs, as well as their roles and responsibilities as board members. | | | |
| A | 7. Board organization is documented with a description of the board and board committee responsibilities. | | | |
| A | 8. Each board has a board operations manual. | | | |
| E | 9. If the organization has any related party transactions between board members or their family, they are disclosed to the board of directors, the Internal Revenue Service and the auditor. | | | |
| E | 10. The organization has at least the minimum number of members on the Board of Directors as required by their bylaws or state statute. | | | |
| R | 11. If the organization has adopted bylaws, they conform to state statute and have been reviewed by legal counsel. | | | |
| R | 12. The bylaws should include: a) how and when notices for board meetings are made; b) how members are elected/appointed by the board; c) what the terms of office are for officers/members; d) how board members are rotated; e) how ineffective board members are removed from the board; f) a stated number of board members to make up a quorum which is required for all policy decisions. | | | |
| R | 13. The board of directors reviews the bylaws. | | | |
| A | 14. The board has a process for handling urgent matters between meetings. | | | |
| E | 15. Board members serve without payment unless the agency has a policy identifying reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses. | | | |
| R | 16. The organization maintains a conflict-of-interest policy and all board members and executive staff review and/or sign to acknowledge and comply with the policy. | | | |
| R | 17. The board has an annual calendar of meetings. The board also has an attendance policy such that a quorum of the organization's board meets at least quarterly. | | | |
| A | 18. Meetings have written agendas and materials relating to significant decisions are given to the board in advance of the meeting. | | | |
| A | 19. The board has a written policy prohibiting employees and members of employees' immediate families from serving as board chair or treasurer. | | | |

# COMMUNITY & SITE PARTNERSHIPS

Community service will require the development of relationships. These relationships might be between your organization and the service sites (places where AmeriCorps members will perform service) or with other community agencies in your area. Keys to having successful, productive relationships are strong communication, clarification, and agreement around responsibilities, requirements, and outcomes.

This section provides the guidance to assist you in identifying organizations that share and support your organization's service vision. It will also provide concrete steps to initiate the creation of successful partnerships.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Build or strengthen community partnerships.
- ❑ Create formalized agreements between your organization and community partners.
- ❑ Develop a request for proposal tool and effectively use it to identify service sites and partners.
- ❑ Evaluate your organization's risk and implement strategies to decrease risk.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Building Community Partnerships*

**What is a Community Partnership?**
A community partnership is a relationship with other community organizations that serve as sub-grantees, host sites, member placement sites, provide facilities, transportation, materials, or other resources, with the common goal of addressing community needs. A community partnership creates synergy among two or more organizations to better address the unmet needs of a community.

**Why should you develop Community Partnership?**
Community partnerships can strengthen service by providing and identifying resources, leveraging community assets, avoiding duplication of services, serve as a site placement, or serve in an advisory capacity. AmeriCorps programs are encouraged to support the efforts of civic, community, education, and faith-based organizations to solve local problems.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Identify potential partners. Discuss mutual interests and opportunities to enhance services. Review the *Keys to Building Successful Partnerships* worksheet. |
| | ✓ Clearly understand the organizational mission and culture of potential partners. Are they a good fit with your organization's mission? |
| | ✓ Identify the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of your community partners. |
| | ✓ Communicate! Make and take the opportunity to begin building a strong, trusting relationship with potential partners. |
| | ✓ Educate your community partners about AmeriCorps and National Service philosophy. |
| | ✓ Monitor your work together in an effort to sustain the partnership and identify and build new ones. |
| | ✓ Identify other local National Service programs/projects and discuss their experiences related to building partnerships. |
| | ✓ Make sure each organization is clear about their respective mission, goals, and approach to service in the community. |
| | ✓ Ensure your program goals are congruent with the missions of partnering organizations. |
| | ✓ Make sure there is a shared goal towards service in the community. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**How important are these community partners**? *Very important! Community partners can broaden or extend the reach of your program's capacity by identifying needs and resources. If you are new to the community, community partnerships can help open doors and navigate the local environment. Community partnerships also support the program sustainability.*

**What organizations should I choose as partners?** *Cultivate relationships with education, religious, public safety, and business organizations and leaders. Identify other potential community partnerships through these relationships. Determine whether prospective community partners are known and respected in the local community.*

**Are community partnerships more trouble than they are worth?** *No, but when they do become trouble it is typically because of the lack of clarity around roles and expectations. Select your partners carefully. Be sure that prospective community partners support and buy-in to your mission and vision. Avoid situations in which the partner could change your program's mission and AmeriCorps performance measures.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps Guidance** | Website includes information on the AmeriCorps guidelines. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html |
| **The Continuous Improvement Book** | Contains an excellent section on partnerships. | Corporation for Community and National Service |
| **Faith-Based Toolkit** | The Applicant Toolkit is designed to help AmeriCorps*State/ National applicants comply with the requirement to demonstrate partnerships with secular and faith-based community organizations. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/tta/national_crime_prevention.php |
| **Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey** | Resource for developing and maintaining community collaborations. | Michael Winer and Karen Ray. St. Paul, Minn., Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1994. |
| **Collaboration: What Makes it Work (2nd Edition)** | A review of Research and Literature on Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration. | Paul W. Marressich and Barbara R. Monsey. St. Paul, Minn.: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992. From the National Service Resource Center lending library. Phone:1-800-860-2684 Ext.260 |

## *Partnership Roles and Responsibilities*

**What are Partnership Roles and Responsibilities?**
The formal understanding between your organization and other organizations of the activities, leadership, and management role each organization will assume is the context for identifying the partnership roles and responsibilities. For example, an organization that has the role of handling all Corps member benefits will likely incur the specific responsibility for filing and maintaining all financial reports for the partnership. These roles and responsibilities may be identified and agreed upon in a Memorandum of Understanding.

**Why do you need to specify Partnership Roles and Responsibilities?**
In any great partnership, it is helpful to understand and discuss what each partner's role and relevant responsibilities will be in the relationship. This is an opportunity for you to explicitly identify the role **each** organization performs to accomplish the AmeriCorps performance measures and what resources they bring to the table. The key point here is to be as explicit as possible in identifying the specific roles each organization will play.

**How do we do it?**

- ✓ Review the *Service Site Eligibility Requirements* for the Delta Service Corps for a sample of specific roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Once roles are outlined, it is crucial that key staff from both organizations sit down, discuss, and clarify their understanding of those roles. By being explicit now about each organization's commitments, you will avoid misunderstandings down the road.
- ✓ Develop written documents. Suggestions include a Memorandum of Understanding (outlines role, responsibilities, expectations, important dates), and an annual calendar of events and activities.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Collaboration: What Makes it Work (2nd Edition)** | A review of Research and Literature on Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration. | Paul W. Mattessich et al. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2001) from the National Service Resource Center lending library. Phone:1-800-860-2684 Ext.260 |

## *Creating a Memorandum of Understanding*

**What is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?**
The Memorandum of Understanding or other written document explicitly outlines the roles, responsibilities, requirements, expectations, and functions between your organization and the partnering organization. This document has many names including Host Site Agreement, Letter of Understanding, or Statement of Agreement. The basic purpose, however, remains the same.

**Why do you need a Memorandum of Understanding?**
The MOU basically ensures that each organization understands what it is committing itself to over the life of the service year. Its purpose is to protect your organization, the AmeriCorps members, and the service site from any miscommunication or misunderstanding of requirements and expectations.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the *Memorandum of Understanding Organization Responsibilities* (MOU) template. This can be used to create your MOU. |
| | ✓ Conduct a site visit using the *Service Site Selection Criteria* tool. Review your findings with staff. |
| | ✓ Once you've clearly identified the roles, it is crucial that key staff from both organizations sit down, discuss, and clarify their understanding of those roles. Being clear about what each organization is committing to will reduce potential stress down the road. |
| | ✓ Write your MOU. Review the *Basic Elements of a Memorandum of Understanding* checklist. Review the *MANYCorps Booster Host Site Agreement* and use as a guide. |
| | ✓ Once the MOU is signed, check out the *Plan for New Programs* used by MANYCorps to guide the development of their new programs. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How detailed should we write our Memorandum of Understanding/Statement of Agreement?**
*Provide sufficient detail in the following areas: Human Resources Support, Training and Investment, Site Monitoring, Financial Support, Material Support, Performance Measurement Support. It is important that crucial things that could negatively impact any of these five areas be clearly addressed.*

## *Selecting Service and Operating Sites: Request for Proposal*

**What is a Request for Proposal Review and Selection Process?**
A Service Site Request for Proposal (RFP) is a formal document that invites prospective Service Site Partners to submit a proposal describing how AmeriCorps members would serve at the service site. A service site is the day-to-day host of your AmeriCorps members during their term of service. AmeriCorps members are placed at the service site to provide service to the community. Your organization and the service site form a partnership, with each accepting responsibility for specific aspects of the AmeriCorps member's experience and the service projects.

**Why do I need a Request for Proposal Review and Selection Process?**
An effective way to proceed in identifying, reviewing, and selecting Service Site Partners is to institute a competitive selection process. The submitted proposals are then reviewed and rated according to pre-determined criteria and an objectively run process. The organizations with the highest-rated proposals are selected to become partners.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the *Service Site Selection Review List* to identify components of a strong service site relationship. |
| | ✓ Review the *LISC Operating Site Selection Process* to identify elements of an effective service site. |
| | ✓ Create a *Request for Proposal* (RFP) and proposal evaluation tools to identify and select qualified Service Sites; identify the elements important to your organization and incorporate those into your RFP template. This can go a long way to ensuring you have good working relationships with your sites and a quality service experience for your Corps members. |
| | ✓ Inform local organizations of the RFP opportunity. |
| | ✓ Create a Memorandum of Understanding/Service Site Partnering Agreement in preparation for the completion of the RFP process. See *MANYCorps Booster Host Site Agreement* sample and visit the National Service Resource Center for samples. |
| | ✓ Determine how many Service Site partners your organization wants to partner with over the service year. Start with fewer versus many Sites; each partner is a relationship that will need development and ongoing support. |
| | ✓ Establish an RFP release, submission, and review process timeline. |
| | ✓ Recruit and train a committee of stakeholders (could be staff, advisory group, or community members) to assist with the selection and scoring process. Decide how to address conflicts of interest that might arise. |
| | ✓ For the actual review step, determine critical components as "must haves" in submitted proposals, use the *Request for Proposals Rating Sheet* to identify the best organizations, create a scoring rubric and form to guide a reviewer in scoring each proposal. |
| | ✓ Follow the timeline established to review and select partner organizations; provide timely written responses to organizations selected or rejected. |

- ✓ Review the *Four Phases of the Service Site Selection Process*.
- ✓ Review your grant provisions. Determine what things your organization must do. Decide how the provisions apply to a potential partnering organization.
- ✓ Set a timeline to guide the prospective partner phases. Phases could include partner identification, site review using criteria, and finalizing partnership; meet with a potential partner during the Program Design phase to discuss the criteria.
- ✓ Communicate! Make and take the opportunity to begin building a strong, trusting relationship with partners.
- ✓ Partnerships work well if they include the following:
  - A clear definition of the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of partners.
  - Active partner participation and frequent communication.
  - A diverse knowledge base among partners.
  - A plan for sustainability and capacity building.
  - An effective advisory group committee.
  - A proactive, well-qualified program director.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**I have a great friendship with the Executive Director of another organization. Can't I just bypass the service site selection process and partner with them?** *Don't enter into a partnership without conducting a thorough review process first. This should include interviewing staff, on-site visits, review record keeping processes, etc. Make sure that all parties are clear on the expectations and responsibilities.*

**How often should we communicate with our service site partners?** *Interact with your partners as often as needed to ensure the program's progress and compliance, and to nurture the partnership. Invite service partners to program meetings, consider holding joint staff meetings or meetings with service site supervisors. Keep open and consistent lines of communication.*

**In a competitive process, are we allowed to select organizations we already know and are comfortable with?** *Yes, you may select such organizations. Just be sure they are well suited to the AmeriCorps performance measures and outcomes and that they rate the highest among other organizations. In other words, don't "force-fit" them into your program just because you have enjoyed collaborating with them in the past.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Samples of Host Site and Memorandum of Understanding Agreements | www.nationalserviceresources.org |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Sample Host/Service Site Selection Review List*

This is a sample document that can be tailored to your organization's needs. Below are suggested questions and organizing themes to assist in the identification, review, and selection of a prospective partner.

### *General Service Site Information*

- Organization's Mission Statement
- Organization Type
- Organization's partnerships or affiliations

### *Service Site's Proposed Project or Service Activities*

- What are the service project activities AmeriCorps members will perform?
- How often will AmeriCorps members perform the service activities?
- What community need is being addressed?
- Describe the community and the people who will be impacted by the service.
- What skills do AmeriCorps members need to be successful on this project?
- Who will supervise the AmeriCorps members?
- Will the AmeriCorps members serve full-time or part-time?

### *Service Site Roles & Responsibilities*

- Draw a sample organizational chart showing the Host Site AmeriCorps Supervisor, AmeriCorps member roles, and relevant supervisory structures.
- Describe the AmeriCorps member Host Site orientation and on-going training process.
- Identify a timeline for orientation and on-going training.
- Does the organization have appropriate office space (computer, telephone, etc.) and materials for AmeriCorps members?
- Does the Host Site agree to complete and return performance measurement materials in a timely manner?

### *Host Site Environment*

- Is the Host Site building accessible to people with disabilities?
- Is this a safe working environment for AmeriCorps members?
- What skills do AmeriCorps members need to be successful on this project?
- Who will supervise the AmeriCorps members?

### *Sample Host/Service Site Selection Criteria*

- Sites must offer service activities that meet the service performance measures of the program.
- Sites must be able to provide enough service activities to keep members occupied, but not over-burdened.
- Sites must be accessible to members.
- Sites must provide a safe working environment for members and service recipients.
- Sites must appoint a staff person to supervise your AmeriCorps members at each site where they serve (AmeriCorps Site Supervisor).
- Sites must provide orientation and training for AmeriCorps members on-site.
- Sites must have site supervisors willing to meet the AmeriCorps program requirements and have the time and ability to manage the AmeriCorps members at their site.
- Sites must have the capability and capacity to meet administrative obligations.
- Sites must have the capability and capacity to meet any financial obligations.

*Adapted from the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service website.*

## *Keys to Building Successful Partnerships*

*By Andrew Huff*
*AmeriCorps*VISTA Source.* Summer, 1998, Issue 4.

Collaboration is vital to any successful project or initiative. The more organizations work together and combine efforts, the more productive and effective they can be. While overlap of services is one of the most common problems facing community-based organizations and nonprofits, it can be resolved quite easily. Here are some of they keys to successful collaborations.

- **Formulate a vision early in the process and remind people of it constantly.**
  If people aren't clear about why they are sitting through a three-hour meeting, you have already lost them. Having a clear vision allows participants to see the long-term goal, as well as how their particular organization fits into that goal.
- **Develop a common understanding of the issues and the partners.**
  If everyone is on the same page from the beginning, the process will move more smoothly. It is important to have everyone clear on the issues at hand, as well as which organizations are represented and how they plan to contribute to the collaboration. Brief presentations from each organization may also help the group understand the project and available resources.
- **Create ownership among partners.**
  Before the group moves forward, develop a consensus around common beliefs and ground rules. Creating ownership is a way to bring the collaborating organizations together and see themselves as one, as opposed to many. Getting everyone involved in projects and events and delegating specific tasks to people can help create this feeling of ownership.
- **Seek common ground and act.**
  Finding areas of agreement is not always easy, especially when collaborating with a variety of organizations, all of whom have their own ideas and agendas. Start by identifying mutual interests in the project at hand. Ask everyone to focus on a mutually desired result. Not only will this make action quicker and easier, but it will also build trust, reduce anxiety, and encourage open communication among participants. Creating short-term, measurable goals is a way to ensure that the group is able to seek common ground, take quick action, and remain focused.
- **Stop occasionally and evaluate the process.**
  Don't be afraid to stop and ask, " How are we doing?" Evaluating the process gives participants a chance to openly voice opinions about the direction of a project. Not only does this put a magnifying glass on the process you are using and how successful it is, but it also gives the opportunity to check in with participants to determine how they are feeling about what is taking place. Let participants know from the beginning that a performance measurement plan will be a part of the process.
- **Be patient and have some fun.**
  There is no single way to create a successful collaboration. Remember to be patient and flexible. Also, don't be afraid to have fun and enjoy the people with whom you are working. We can all learn so much from each other if we remain open and positive. If you have fun and enjoy the people involved in the collaboration, it won't seem like work at all.

Successful collaborations require work on the part of all those involved. Like any process, change is likely to create some measure of chaos. The most important thing to remember is to learn to live with this tension and go with the flow. The group and the cause will thank you for it. A strong collaboration can create a network of participants that can reach quicker and further than any single organization and enable you to get things done in half the time. So make some calls. Set up some meetings. Get the community involved. And have a good time. You will soon be on your way to creating successful collaborations.

## *Host/Operating Site Selection Process*

### SAMPLE

Each year in late January or early February the National Office of the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) AmeriCorps program solicits expressions of interests to participate in the AmeriCorps program from our field offices. This invitation is extended to those who are currently a part of the program, and to field offices who may be interested in hosting an AmeriCorps program in their city.

The request for proposals from the field allows the National Office to prepare an application to the Corporation for National and Community Service that reflects what LISC and its CDC partners hope to accomplish by sponsoring AmeriCorps members. The AmeriCorps grant is funded in three-year cycles. The first and fourth year of the grant are considered new competitive application periods, while the intervening years are considered as continuation periods. The application addresses community need, who defined the need and how that need will be addressed by member activity. The proposal should also include some general description of member duties, how the program will be managed at the parent, operating and site levels; and discuss member selection criteria, evaluation plans, plans for sustainability and collaboration with other partners be they private, public, or non-profit including other AmeriCorps programs. Objectives are typically designed to address three areas: Getting Things Done, Community Strengthening (including volunteer recruitment) and Member Development.

In general LISC members have been involved in activities that address the Corporation's Human Needs Issue area. This includes direct service activities as follows:

### Getting Things Done

- homeownership (counseling and the physical development of housing units),
- neighborhood revitalization (green space/public space improvement, clean-ups, community gardening and planning other neighborhood events)
- work with children (leadership development, improving self-esteem, after school and summer enrichment programs and establishing sports and other recreational leagues)
- increasing economic opportunities for communities (outreach & assistance for federal and state earned income tax programs, job training, job placement and job referral)

### Community Strengthening

- volunteer recruitment
- work to form and strengthen neighborhood and tenant associations and groups (including crime watches and other neighborhood safety initiatives)
- improving awareness of available services to communities

### Member Development

- provide pre-service orientation ( nationally & locally)
- provide skill development opportunities that insure member success ( local training, monthly meetings)
- provide leadership development training and opportunities
- provide training & mentoring to improve chances of member retention in the community development field

### Site Selection Criteria

**Existing** sites are considered for renewal based, in part, on the thoroughness of their application. Consideration is also given to :

- Responsiveness to providing reports and other requested information on a timely basis;
- Attendance at regional and national trainings; and Corporation sponsored events
- Member retention;
- The degree to which CDCs have honored their match commitment; and
- The willingness to continuously improve the management of the local program.

**New** sites are considered based on:

- the geographic distribution of sites in order to maximize impact on communities and facilitate regional training and on the potential for picking up sites previously served by another AmeriCorps program (Enterprise or other National Direct Sponsor)
- an application that thoroughly addresses issues of need, clearly articulates a plan to address those needs and provides a program structure that includes the required elements of supervision and management.
- strong indication of how the LISC office and proposed sites plan to meet match commitment

## *Host/Service Site Eligibility Requirements*

**SAMPLE**
**Delta Service Corps Host/Service Site**

**Host sites must:**

- Be non-profit 501 (c)3 or public agencies.
- Provide opportunities for corps members to perform direct service that addresses either education and/or human needs in communities within the Delta regions of Arkansas, Louisiana, or Mississippi.
- Work in coalition with at least one other public or private agency, preferably both.
- Demonstrate an ability to achieve measurable outcomes.
- Not use a Delta Service Corps member to displace any paid employee providing the same or similar service at the site, including any position for which a salary was paid within the last six months.
- Not use a Delta Service Corps member to displace any current volunteers providing the same or similar services at the site.
- Not offer Delta Service Corps members a salary or wage.
- Certify that the agency is a Drug-Free workplace and in compliance with the requirements for federal grant recipients under Section 5153 through 5158 of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988.
- Offer services without regard to age, religion, disability, political affiliation, veteran status, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or national origin.

***RESPONSIBILITIES***

**Host sites must:**

- Provide a non-federal cash match of $2,600 to cover costs associated with the corps member's living stipend. (Note: This match is reimbursable on a pro-rated basis should the corps member not complete the scheduled term of service and not be replaced by another corps member.)
- Have liability insurance that covers the Delta Service Corps member while performing service on behalf of the agency.
- Provide corps members with an orientation and any agency-specific training they will need to carry out their assigned tasks. Orient agency staff about the Delta Service Corps and AmeriCorps and the roles and responsibilities of any corps members assigned to the agency.
- Designate an appropriate supervisor to supervise the corps member's day-to-day performance, as well as to evaluate the corps member quarterly and to approve the corps member's time sheets, service plans, and progress reports.
- Allow corps members to attend scheduled Delta Service Corps sponsored events, trainings, and service projects.
- Provide the corps member with any resources and tools needed to perform effectively.
- Provide corps members with appropriate mentoring and leadership opportunities that will enhance their professional development, including encouraging the corps member to participate on agency committees, working groups, or boards.
- Notify the Delta Service Corps in a timely manner of any problems with the corps member's performance, including failure to report to the site, unprofessional behavior, etc.

## *Four Phases of the Service Site Selection Process*

**Phase 1: Outreach and Review of Current Partners.**

- If your organization has existing partners, bring them together and review the service activities over the year, performance measurement data, and other relevant issues. This can be a time to determine whether your relationship will continue another year.
- Mail new applicants the RFP packet including any relevant material about your organization. Be sure your materials identify submission dates and general timeline.

**Phase 2: Letter of Intent due from potential partners (date).**

- If your organization chooses, have potential partners submit a letter of intent to apply. This can assist your organization in determining interested organizations and whether a sufficient number of organizations will be applying.

**Phase 3: Proposal review and selection process (date).**

- A committee reviews the proposals and makes selections using a fair and equitable process. If necessary, site visits might be utilized to gain a clearer understanding of the potential partner's activities.

**Phase 4: Memorandum of Understanding signed (date).**

- In this final phase, any negotiations, revisions, or clarifications to the original proposal are made. Once all details are satisfactory, a Memorandum of Understanding identifying the expectations, responsibilities, etc. is signed between your organization and the new partner.

## *City Year Request for Proposal*

### City Year Service Project Request for Proposal Cover Letter

Dear (  : )

City Year is a national service organization, which unites young adults, ages 17 to 23, from diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds for a demanding year full-time community service, leadership development and civic engagement.

City Year partners with non-profit organizations or individuals to create a shared vision of social change, which address critical needs and solve problems in communities. City Year provides teams of young people from 4 to 20 as a unique resource that will help a social change organization accomplish both day-to-day and far-reaching goals in communities. The youthful energy, many talents, and dynamic commitment of City Year Corps members can be leveraged to improve lives and create programs that will have a transformative impact.

Partnering with other non-profits, Corps members lead communities in service and citizenship. Projects include but are not limited to:

- Working with homeless shelters to expand their volunteers base
- Building playgrounds and gardens with local community members
- Designing and implementing violence prevention curriculums in schools
- Running a middle school service program called Young Heroes
- And much, much, more

If you are interested in working with City Year, please complete a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a service project that you would like to implement. We select our projects using the following process:

- **Complete RFP :** We recommend that this RFP is filled out in partnership with City Year and that the partners start by working on the project concept paper.

- **Submit RFP to Project Review Committee**
  Once the RFP is complete the committee will review the project. The committee will either: a) turn down the RFP or b) approve it and give suggestions for improvement.

- **Upon project selection, City Year and partner sign contact**.
  Once the review committee, City Year, has approved the project and the partner will draw up and sign an agreement that lays out the expectations and responsibilities of each organization involved.

Thank you for your support. We hope to work with you!

Sincerely,

## *City Year Request for Proposal Rating Sheet*

Focus Questions

- Quality of outcomes: Are they in-line with City Year's program goals and mission?
- Do the activities listed support the outcomes? Are they valuable?
- Are the outcomes and activities measurable in terms of being transformative—from point A to point B? Are the measurables well thought through?
- Why City Year? Does the project take advantage of the unique skill sets, diversity, and team model of CY Corps members?
- Quality of job descriptions: Do they match outcomes?
- Is there an investment in resources that reflects valuing the team?
- What are the capacity building/direct service break downs?
- Vision for collaboration: How is the organization engaging other community organizations and team sponsors?
- For schools and after school programs: How are children led in service activities?
- What is the quality of the daily schedule?

**City Year Service Project Request for Proposal**

**Contact Information Page**

1. For the point person submitting this proposal, please complete section 1:

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Organization _____ Title _____

Address _____ Day Phone _____

City/State/Zip _____ FAX _____

Email address _____

2. The following people participated in completing this proposal:

Name _____ Title_____

Organization _____ Day Phone _____

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____ Day Phone _____

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____ Day Phone _____

3. If you are a service partner or private sector sponsor please provide a brief description of your history with City Year.

4. If you are a service partner or private sector sponsor please submit the mission statement of your organization.

5. What length of time is needed to complete this project? ____months, _____weeks

6. This project needs to start on _____ and end by _____.

7. How many Corps members will you need to implement this project?

8. Please identify potential funding sources.

## City Year Service Project

**Request for Proposal Concept Paper**

***City Year's mission is to put idealism to work by tapping the civic power of young people for an annual campaign of idealism that generates transformative community service, breaks down social barriers, inspires citizens to civic action, develops new leaders for the common good, and improves and promotes the concept of voluntary national service. City Year's vision is that one day the question most commonly asked of an eighteen year old is: " Where are you going t do your service year?"***

9. Please provide a one-page concept paper of your proposal, including how this project fulfills City Year's mission and what will be the major impact of the project (short and long term).

**City Year Service Project Request for Proposal**

**Major Outcomes**

10. Complete the following chart on the project's planned outcomes, measure of effectiveness and project activities. In describing how to measure outcomes,[1] you may refer to existing City Year instruments, measures, and tools; cite instruments, measures and tools from other sources; or state what new information you will obtain and how you will obtain it.

| | **What is (are) the activity (ies) that will generate this outcome?** | **How will you measure the effectiveness of the activity (ies) in reaching this outcome?** |
|---|---|---|
| **Example of a Major outcome**<br><br>*Young Heroes will believe that they will make a difference in the world* | *Weekly service activity*<br><br>*Debriefs about service at the end of the day* | *Pre-post surveys of Young Heroes: measures about making a difference* |
| **Major Outcome #1** | | |
| **Major Outcome #2** | | |
| **Major Outcome #3** | | |

*[See AmeriCorps Performance Measurement Toolkit regarding outputs and outcomes.]*

**Roles and Responsibilities**

11. Why are City Year Corps members the best resource for this project?

12. Complete the following information regarding the position(s) needed to implement the project:

| **Position Name** | **Brief Job Description** | **Hours/week needed in this position** | **# of people needed in this position** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
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| | | | |
| | | | |

13. How will these human resources be recruited and selected?

14. Who will be the City Year leadership on this project and why?

**Training and Investment**

15. The team on this project must represent what skills when it begins? Please be specific, such as: proficiency in Microsoft Windows, three people with basic construction skills, one person who is a resident of the neighborhood, etc.

16. What skills, necessary for the completion of the project, will be taught and by whom?

17. What are other organizations or individuals that will support this project and how?

18. Who from your organization will be the on-going liaison and advisor to the service project?

19. What other staff from your organization will be involved in the project?

20. What resources will your organization provide for the project?

- ❑ Office Space
- ❑ Computers
  - ❑ One
  - ❑ Two
  - ❑ Three
  - ❑ Other (please specify) _____
- ❑ Printer
- ❑ Fax Machine
- ❑ Phone
- ❑ Funding
- ❑ Orientation to your organization
- ❑ Training
  - ❑ Weekly
  - ❑ Monthly
  - ❑ other (please specify) _____
- ❑ Advisory meetings
  - ❑ Weekly
  - ❑ Monthly
  - ❑ other (please specify) _____
- ❑ Other (please specify)_____

**Training and Investment**

21. Please identify potential funding sources.

22. City Year involves many private sector institutions in the sponsorship of a team or a service project. What role do you see employees from the sponsor institution playing in the service project?

Application Submitted by:

Name of point person _____

Signature_____ Date _____

## *Basic Elements of a Memorandum of Understanding*

1. Identify who the partners are and the beginning and ending date for the agreement.
2. Identify who is the lead agency. It is appropriate to include a contingency phrase such as "If the application for funding is approved…"
3. Describe the nature of the shared project. You may wish to add a brief statement about why the parties are collaborating—shared mission, applicable elements of capacity, history of working together, etc.
4. Outline the roles and responsibilities of the partners. Be brief, clear, concise, and concrete. Include information on how each partner will acquire and track measurements/data relevant to the service activities.
5. Financial arrangements: How much, when, how, who, etc.
6. If no funds are exchanged, is there any in-kind value? How much? Justify as in a budget narrative.
7. Accountability and performance measurement expectations. Be brief, clear, and concrete.
8. Process for parting ways if there are problems: notice, obligations, etc.
9. The MOU must be signed and dated by both organizations participating in the agreement.

Adapted from the Missouri Community Service Commission: Getting Started Guide

## *Memorandum of Understanding: Organizational Responsibilities*

*Below are some suggested items to include in the Memorandum of Understanding.*

### *Human Resources Support*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- recruit and prepare qualified Corps members.
- hold AmeriCorps members accountable for the desired service results and will work with members on their professional development and behavior.
- Regular communication with the Host Site via phone, facsimile, email, and face-to-face. __(Name)_____ will meet on __(day of the week)__ with members for supervision, training, feedback, guidance and other support.

### *Orientation and On-going Training*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- conduct a National Service orientation.
- hold an orientation for Host Site supervisors.
- provide leadership, professional development, and skills training for members.
- Conduct member retreats during the months of _____, _____, _____.
- AmeriCorps members will receive an orientation to your organization __(date)____ to prepare them for a successful service year.
    - The orientation will include an understanding of organizational structure, organization's mission, service activities, prohibited activities, service timeline, staff meeting schedule, and all other appropriate topics.
- AmeriCorps member will participate in all Host Site training relevant to the accomplishment of service activities.
- *Other information as required.*

### *Site Monitoring*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- conduct four formal site visits during the service year. A formal evaluation tool will be used to assess partnership functions. (*Identify the dates of formal site visits).*
- conduct informal site visits on an on-going basis.

### *Financial Support*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- *Indicate what type of financial obligation the Organization incurs.*

### *Material Support*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- The Host Site agrees to provide the following
    - AmeriCorps member uniforms
    - Secure storage space for personal belongs.
    - Office space – including access to bathrooms, tables or desks, meeting space, etc.
    - Secure storage space for personal belongs.
    - Telephone, computer, and copier access.
    - Transportation access (public accessibility)
    - *Other information as required.*

### *Evaluation/Performance Measurement Administration*

__(Organization Name)_____ will

- Complete all entries into WBRS
- Complete all required performance measurements with the timely input from Host Sites.
- Collect and share data on members' activities, accomplishments, and number of hours served.
- *Add other information as required.*

## *MANYCorps Booster Host/Service Site Agreement*

**Mid Atlantic Network of Youth & Family Services**

This is formally recognizing the agreement between the Mid-Atlantic Network of Youth & Family Services (MANY) and __(name of program)_____ to host AmeriCorps Education Award Program members as MANYCorps Boosters in service at your program.

____name of program_____, as the Host Program, has requested and been granted the following member slots for the 2001-02 program year:

- ☐ _____ Part-time (900 hours)
- ☐ _____ Reduced Part time (450 hours)
- ☐ _____ summer - Reduced Part-time (381 hours)
- ☐ _____ other (please specify)

The Host Program agrees to implement the AmeriCorps program in accordance with the AmeriCorps 2001-2002 Program Provisions. Specifically, the Host Program agrees to:

- Submit two program reports on member activities and accomplishments according to report format on the following dates:
  April 15, 2002 and October 15, 2002.
- Conduct best efforts to recruit the number of AmeriCorps members awarded to this Host Program in a timely manner.
- Provide members with an AmeriCorps uniform and assure members are appropriately identified as AmeriCorps members when in service.
- Ensure orientation, training, and supervision of MANYCorps members to prepare them for their service assignment. Include full-corps events and training sponsored by MANY specifically for the AmeriCorps program
- Submission of accurate documentation of member service hour and activity logs within 30 days of the close of each month.
- Implement programming to address the program objectives indicated and evaluate progress towards accomplishing those objectives.
- Identify Program staff to oversee the member supervision and support as act as point of contact for MANY's program monitoring.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| MANY Program Director | Host Program Signature |
| _____ | _____ |
| Signature | Signature |
| _____ | _____ |
| Date | Date |

# *Plan for Training and Monitoring New Program Sites*

MANYCorps operates at eight unique program sites delivering support service to youth and families in high-risk situations. The following process will be implemented in the first year of each new MANYCorps program to assure a successful start-up of a quality community service program.

**Program Start-up (summer)**

- ✓ Identify/Hire Program Coordinator who will assume responsibility for program implementation and any other key staff.
- ✓ Meet with key staff to review project implementation and develop joint workplan, including:
  - Host site agreements with service sites
  - Operating site agreement between program and MANY
  - Develop plan for Member recruitment
  - Plan for integrating AmeriCorps into agency structure
  - Develop plan to address Member development, support and supervision
  - Develop plan to address Community Strengthening objectives
  - Develop plan to address Community Service objectives
  - Develop evaluation plan
  - Develop plan for training and technical assistance support
  - Review program workplan - share feedback and revise as indicated
  - Plan member orientation training
  - Plan staff orientation training
  - Review and approve staff and member position descriptions
  - Review and approve member agreement
- ✓ Deliver/order Program Start-up materials, including:
  - Program Director's Handbook
  - Member Handbooks
  - Member AmeriCorps gear
  - Recruitment materials (brochures, applications, posters)
  - MANYCorps Policies and Procedures Handbook
- ✓ Meet with financial staff to develop plan for funds distribution and train on WBRS
- ✓ Facilitate Program Coordinator attendance at New Program Director training sponsored by CNCS
- ✓ Train program staff in WBRS
- ✓ Develop APR map with site
- ✓ Conduct Staff Orientation Training (see Site Director Training and Orientation, attached)

**First Quarter**

- ✓ Plan and implement member orientation training
- ✓ Identify staff and members to attend MANYCorps Member Orientation Training and MANY's Annual Conference
- ✓ Review member MIP and enrollment forms on WBRS - give feedback and approve as indicated
- ✓ Facilitate participation in local Launch Day activities and other national service days through the year.
- ✓ Site visit to program sites and member focus group (Nov.)
- ✓ Review Time Logs entered in WBRS - give feedback

**Second and Third Quarters**

- ✓ Site visit(s) to program sites/cluster leadership** and member focus group
- ✓ Review and update plan for continuing training and technical assistance support (to be done as needed but formally at site visits)
- ✓ Review Time Logs entered in WBRS (monthly for new program sites)
- ✓ Review data collected to date and identify challenges and develop action plans to address challenges identified (January).
- ✓ Review data collected and entered in APR - give feedback as indicated (April)

**Final Quarter**

- ✓ Develop plan for service closure for members
- ✓ Review program site accomplishments and challenges
- ✓ Review program progress report and give feedback

# Member Development & Support

You are well on your way in the process of identifying and implementing the systems necessary to operate your program. A significant component of your program will be the AmeriCorps members you recruit and train to serve your local community.

Recruiting great AmeriCorps members whose personal values reflect the ethic of service can make the difference between a strong, productive service to the community and a program struggling with the challenges of attrition and ineffective service. The results of your recruitment process will directly impact several areas, including morale, motivation, respect, retention, quality of service projects, relationships with service partners and community members, funding, and your ability to focus on the program rather than spend the majority of your time addressing problems. This section and the ones to follow on Member Development and Support will guide you in recruiting and training a strong Corps.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Create and implement an AmeriCorps member recruitment plan.
- ❑ Register your organization in the WBRS system.
- ❑ Establish an annual member training and support plan.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Member Recruitment Plan*

**What is a Member Recruitment Plan?**
A Corps member recruitment plan is a strategic and purposeful roadmap to identify and recruit people best suited for your program.

**Why do you need a Member Recruitment Plan?** AmeriCorps members are a key component of an effective and successful program. Member recruitment is a very involved process that requires organizational resources, creative ideas, footwork, monitoring, and follow-up. Some recruitment strategies will work, others will not. The more time and effort you put into your recruitment plan, the more likely you are to find and retain great members.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Develop a set of recruitment criteria with your service sites. What skills, qualities, attributes, etc. does a person need? When will members start? Where will they be placed? |
| | ✓ Engage your Service Site partners and other stakeholders in recruiting and recommending potential AmeriCorps members. |
| | ✓ Actively involve your Service Site partners in the Corps member interview and selection process. |
| | ✓ In addition to keeping each original signed member enrollment form on file, you must enroll each member in the Corporation's Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS) shortly after they begin service. Identify the person(s) responsible for maintaining and entering all member information. This is particularly important if you do not have a Human Resources department. |
| | ✓ Consider these questions when developing your recruitment plan. Also checkout the *Recruitment Start up Checklist*.<br>• **What** are the specific activities AmeriCorps members may be doing?<br>• **What** are the "essential functions" (see Creating an Inclusive Environment at http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/index.php#disability) of each member position?<br>• **Why** would anyone, regardless of background, (dis)ability, race ethnicity, gender, etc. want to join our AmeriCorps program? *(Consider the intangible or experiential benefits of the program. Then consider tangible benefits including stipend, education award, training, and life preparation.)*<br>• **Where** (or at what kinds of events, establishments, institutions, civic and social societies etc.) can we reach out to potential AmeriCorps members to join our program? |
| | ✓ Identify potential recruitment opportunities, activities, and events. See *Recruitment Ideas*. |
| | ✓ Ensure that your recruitment materials, efforts and activities reflect your fully inclusive program environment. Not only because it is the law but also because as a national service program you are committed to providing opportunities for *all* Americans to serve, including Americans with disabilities. |
| | ✓ Calculate the budget costs for publications, recruitment events, or other needs. |
| | ✓ Engage your Service Site partners in the process of developing the recruitment plan and assisting or recommending potential AmeriCorps members. |
| | ✓ Actively involve your Service Site partners in the Corps member interview and selection process. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Use the AmeriCorps online Recruitment and Placement System (AC*RPS) to promote your program, identify prospective members, and offer them the opportunity to apply online. |
| | ✓ Create a member position description including the, skills, essential functions, duties and responsibilities for the term of service. |
| | ✓ Prepare every staff member with a recruitment packet. Encourage staff to be "roving" recruiters. Everyone in your organization should be "on message." That is everyone should be able to succinctly say what your organization does, how it has been successful, and what members will do to serve their community and articulate your inclusion policy. |
| | ✓ Take into consideration the demographics of the community you serve. How will those demographics be represented in your group of Corps members? |
| | ✓ Cast your net wide. Think outside the box. Research traditional and nontraditional recruitment resources. Be mindful of where you recruit. Not every recruitment option will gain you the best people for your program. |
| | ✓ Consider nontraditional recruitment sources: *Fraternities and sororities, religious institutions, community celebrations, musical events, ethnic festivals, community businesses, small businesses, recreation centers, sporting events, civic organizations (Elks, Masons, Eastern Stars, Junior League, Jaycees), and education and technical institutes* |
| | ✓ Consider the needs or motivations of potential members. Is your organization prepared to support those needs? |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)** | An internet based database used to input and track information among AmeriCorps sites, programs, State Commissions, National Directs, and the Corporation. ***All Corps member paper forms, FSRs, PERs, and Progress Report information are entered into the WBRS.* | State Commission<br>CNCS Program Officer |
| **National Service Resource Center** | Great source for diverse resources and ideas. Check out the section on Program Management and Recruitment. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org |
| **AmeriCorps Member Recruitment Manual** | Provides hands-on, real-life advice on how to run a successful recruitment campaign. | http://www.americorps.org/pdf/resources/recruitment.pdf |
| **AmeriCorps website** | The website contains localizable recruitment ads, AmeriCorps member applications, information on obtaining AmeriCorps | http://www.americorps.org/resources/recruitment.html |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | promotional materials, and other helpful information. | |
| **Catholic Volunteer Services of America** | Develop a member recruitment checklist. | http://www.cnvs.org/am-tr3b1.htm |
| **Planning your Recruitment Process** | The abbreviated version of this article is included in Tools for Success. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/epicenter/index.php |
| **AmeriCorps online Recruitment and Placement System (AC*RPS)** | Allows prospective members to search for AmeriCorps programs nationwide and apply directly online. | https://recruit.cns.gov |
| **AmeriCorps online Recruitment and Placement System Users Manual** | A step-by-step manual for getting your program listed and using the online Recruitment and Placement System. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/ |
| **Talking about AmeriCorps** | Provides information on how to talk about AmeriCorps. | www.americorps.org/p /resources/talking2.pdf |
| **Creating an Inclusive Environment: A Handbook for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in National and Community Service Programs** | A comprehensive handbook designed to assist national service programs fully and meaningfully include individuals with disabilities. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/index.php#disability |

## *Member Administration Plan*

**What is a Member Administration Plan?**
A Member Administration plan is the systematic preparation for enrolling members and maintaining their individual records**.** As the recruitment process for AmeriCorps candidates gets underway, your organization needs to implement this plan to accurately enroll members.

**Why do you need a Member Administration Plan?**
It is all about the paperwork! There is a significant amount of documentation and paperwork needed for each Corps member. Along with the paperwork, the WBRS system (on-line database to track AmeriCorps program information) needs to be updated. Outlining a list of tasks that need to be accomplished, adding a timeline, and identifying responsible persons to complete tasks are necessary elements of your plan.

**How do you do it?**

- ✓ Identify the person(s) responsible for completing and entering all member information. This is particularly important if you do not have a Human Resources department.
- ✓ Contact your State Commission or Corporation Program Officer for information on training and WBRS access.
- ✓ Ensure that you have sufficient quantities of forms in case of mistakes or misplaced documents.
- ✓ Set up individual member file folders. Include all forms needed for each member and a *Member File Checklist* and *Member Timesheet* that identifies completed forms and other documents in member's file.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)** | An internet based database used to input and track information among AmeriCorps sites, programs, State Commissions, National Directs, and the Corporation. ***All Corps member paper forms, FSRs, PERs, and Progress Report information are entered into the WBRS.* | State Commission<br>CNCS Program Officer |
| **EpiCenter – Effective Practices** | Great source for diverse resources and ideas. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/epicenter/ |

## *Member Training and Support Plan*

**What is a Member Training and Support Plan?**
A member training and support plan is a detailed strategy for how you will orient, train, supervise and contribute to the development of your members throughout the program year.

**Why do you need a Member Training and Support Plan?**
The three pillars of your AmeriCorps program are community service, community strengthening, and member development. Each of these is equally important. A member training and support plan is instrumental in meeting all of the objectives of your program, developing esprit de corps among members, enhancing the personal development of each member, improving retention, and contributing to the eventual successful outcome of your program year.

**How do you do it?**
According to Mosaica (www.mosaica.org) -The Center for Non-profit Development and Pluralism's "Planning for a Year of Training and Development" there are seven steps to consider when planning your member training and support plan:

1. **Assess the training needs of your members** – Conduct a needs assessment of your members. Gather information from the members, their service sites, and other programs such as yours. Assess the members' knowledge and skill levels, ask them what they would like to get out of their term of service. Consider questionnaires and surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews that can prove helpful.

2. **Determine desired training outcomes and topics** - Based on your needs assessment results, decide what types of training sessions and other formats would help you achieve the desired outcomes identified for each member and the team as a whole. Include skills building training (general and service specific) and teambuilding and interpersonal skills. Consider group processing skills, consensus building, conflict resolution, and other problem solving strategies. Training related to community relations, disaster response, advocacy, leadership, and citizenship can supplement other post-service skills such as resume writing and job-seeking skills.

3. **Decide the number and frequency of your training sessions** – The make-up of your program will influence the number and frequency of your training session. How often are my members in the same place? What training schedule will least interfere with the needs of the program and the service sites? What training topics make sense at what time of the service year? What additional opportunities and availability will influence the schedule? The care taken in planning and the tone set by program management will go a long way in determining the importance and value that the members hold for your training schedule.

4. **Program your training sessions and outline content** – Decide on the logical order for presenting topics. Are there topics that members will need early in their service? Gain input from key individuals including members, partners, and organization staff when devising content. Assign responsibility for developing training sessions; agree on a process and timeline for preparation and review. Be certain to consider concepts such as individual learning styles, training objectives and outcomes. Plan carefully, but be aware

that you may have to modify your plan at some point.

5. **Identify trainers and presenters and work with them to develop each session**- It is essential to determine whether trainers (internal or external) will be good fits for the topics, the learners, and the outcomes you desire. Involve the trainers in the planning process and provide them with enough background so they are familiar with national service, the audience, and your goals. When seeking trainers consider associates in your agency, existing and former staff, AmeriCorps alumni, your service partners and their agencies, educational institutions, community service organizations, and the business community. Your current corps of members may also have individuals who possess the skills and knowledge needed to address training needs identified in your plan.

6. **Identify needed materials, training facilities, and other resources** – Your program training needs are probably familiar needs that have been previously addressed elsewhere in the national service family. Utilize the already developed resources available to AmeriCorps programs and adapt and modify where needed. Sources for such materials could include other AmeriCorps programs, State Commissions and parent organizations, program partners, information clearing houses dedicated to national service, libraries, the Internet, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and public and private agencies related to your issue areas or training topics. For training facilities consider partner organizations, houses of worship facilities, national and state parks, business partners, local libraries, community centers, non-profit organizations, and other low cost or no cost alternatives. Providing food or snacks for your members can make the training sessions positive experiences. Remember, "An army moves on its stomach!" Build the cost of such expenses into your training plan. In-kind donations from your organization or another organization can be "win-win" for all parties involved. Attention to detail in the area of logistics can pay off in effective training for your members.

7. **Document and evaluate your training efforts** - Evaluate all training sessions immediately after and again, later, when members are able to put a training session in perspective with the entirety of their service experience. Keep careful notes of your planning process and keep files of all materials and pertinent information to help when planning next. Meet with your planning team and provide feedback to them and the trainers you used. This continuous improvement effort will benefit your program.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Training Briefs** | A series of briefs on a variety of topics related to the design and delivery of training for members. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |
| **The Resource Connection, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall 2001** | A newsletter that focuses on training of members. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |
| **Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training** | A detailed guide of information regarding the design and delivery of training for members with actual training modules. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Recruitment Start-up Checklist*

- ✓ Consider how much time you have before you need AmeriCorps members in place.
  - Do you need members in 6 weeks, or 6 months?
  - Your plan needs to reflect your timeline.
- ✓ Who is available to work on your recruitment campaign with you?
- ✓ How much is your recruitment budget?
- ✓ How many positions are you recruiting for?
- ✓ What are the positions?
  - Do you have job descriptions?
- ✓ What materials do you have to use for recruitment?
  - Do you need to develop new materials?
  - Do you need them in different languages and formats?
- ✓ What is your target number of applications that you will need to fill your positions?
  - Many programs need at least 2 completed applications for each position.
- ✓ Is a support framework in place for members, including a supervisor and member policies?
- ✓ Does your staff understand the role of your members?
  - Do they understand their role in relation to the members?
- ✓ Do you have adequate space and resources for your members?
- ✓ Do you have an orientation and training plan in place for your members?

*Source: Catholic Volunteer Services www.cnvs.org/am-tr3b1.htm*

## *Recruitment Ideas*

*Include pictures of members doing community service activities in your recruitment brochures. If possible, make a video that shows members in service; these videos can be shown at local churches and educational institutions.*

1. Network your program - when you speak to a group or attend meetings, mention your program, if appropriate, and share publicity and recruitment materials with individuals. Be sure to follow up with interested individuals within ten days.
2. Publicity can be beneficial - identify businesses/organizations that buy ad space and ask them to help promote your cause.
3. Always provide a job description. By doing this, both you and potential applicants are more likely to understand an assignment.
4. Utilize your web site to full advantage. Provide information about becoming a member in your program; advertise the benefits and rewards of serving in your program; promote the benefits to the community.
5. Contact the local newspaper to see if they will donate space in the classifieds for member positions. If necessary, pay for an advertisement in the Help Wanted section, built around enhancing professional skills and providing employment contacts and networks.
6. Sponsor a Volunteer Opportunity Fair with other groups- possible locations for a fair include schools, churches, community centers, shopping malls.
7. Contact your local TV/Cable stations to get airtime to present on your services.
8. When giving a presentation to a large group, include AmeriCorps members. Hearing members talk about their experiences can be exciting and inspirational. Also, members are a great source of information for interested individuals.
9. Talk to personnel directors of large corporations, explaining member opportunities and ask if they can refer retirees and current employees to you.
10. Speak their language - what do you do that is of interest to prospective members? Highlight this in your presentation.
11. Level with potential members - tell them what they will do, how long they will be expected to do it, and who will benefit.
12. When trying to increase the diversity of members, reach out to leaders of different ethnic and racial groups to request their assistance with recruitment.
13. Remember to involve other community groups with your recruitment. Reach out to groups such as the Toastmasters Club, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, and the Kiwanis Club for help with special service events.
14. Do not use guilt when trying to recruit.
15. Be honest and direct with people when recruiting. Do not minimize the work or the time needed.
16. Do not settle - avoid the concept of "a warm body through the door will do"; if you cannot get the right person, do not take just anyone.
17. Illustrate with diagrams or pictures where people fit into the overall structure of your organization. An organizational chart helps people to visualize their role in relation to others and will create a better understanding of how AmeriCorps members function in your organization.

*Source: Catholic Volunteers Services of America* http://www.cnvs.org/am-tr3b4.htm

## *Sample Member File Checklist*

*Adapted From*
*Mid-Atlantic Network of Youth and Family Services*
**MANYCorps Site Visit**

Program Name/Location: _____

Member Name: _____

Grant #: _____

Program Year: _____

Service Hours Term: _____

Date Enrolled: _____

Date Exited: _____

| Are the following items in the member's file? | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **Member application** | ___ | ___ |
| ***Member enrollment form** | ___ | ___ |
| Is the member enrollment form signed and dated by the member?<br>➢ Approved by site supervisor via WBRS<br>➢ WBRS will check if the form was submitted within 30 days | ___ | ___ |
| **Proof of age** | ___ | ___ |
| **High School or GED Diploma** | ___ | ___ |
| **Parental consent form** (if member is under the age of 18) | ___ | ___ |
| **Member contract** that stipulates the following: | | |
| • minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the educational award; | ___ | ___ |
| • acceptable conduct; | ___ | ___ |
| • prohibited activities; | ___ | ___ |
| • requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act; | ___ | ___ |
| • suspension and termination rules; | ___ | ___ |
| • the specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause; | ___ | ___ |
| • the position description; | ___ | ___ |
| • grievance procedures; | ___ | ___ |
| • other requirements as established by the program; | ___ | ___ |
| • is the contract signed and dated by the member? | ___ | ___ |
| **Criminal background** check if the member works with children or other vulnerable population. | ___ | ___ |

| Are the following items in the member's file? | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| ***Time sheets**: | | |
| • are they signed by both the member and the site supervisor in a timely manner? | ___ | ___ |
| • are they up to date? | ___ | ___ |
| • do the time sheets segregate/track separately hours for service v. hours for training? | ___ | ___ |
| **WBRS** checks the following: | | |
| • is the addition on each sheet correct? | ___ | ___ |
| • do the total hours from each time sheet add up to the number of hours claimed on the exit form? | ___ | ___ |

**Documentation of citizenship/naturalization/resident alien status**

**Primary documentation of status as a US citizen or national**: one of the following forms of documentation is acceptable:

- a birth certificate showing that the individual was born in the one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands
- a United States passport
- a report of birth abroad of a US Citizen (FS-240) issued by the State Dept.
- a certificate of birth-foreign service (FS-545) issued by the State Dept.
- a certificate of naturalization (Form N-550 or N-570) issued by the INS
- a certificate of citizenship (Form N-560 or N-561) issued by the INS

**-OR-**

Primary documentation of status as a lawful permanent resident of the US: one of the following forms of documentation is acceptable:

- Permanent resident card, INS form I-551
- Alien Registration Receipt Card, INS form I-551
- A passport indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Is one of the ten types of documentation listed available? | ___ | ___ |
| If no, has the program obtained written approval from the Corporation that the other documentation is sufficient to demonstrate the individual's status as US citizen, US national, or lawful permanent resident alien? | ___ | ___ |

| Are the following items in the member's file? | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **Documentation of Health Care Enrollment (if eligible)** | ___ | ___ |

➢ Who's eligible?

- All full-time members (except Promise Fellows and EAO members) are eligible for health benefits.
  - Part-time members serving in a full-time capacity (except Promise Fellows and EAO).
  - If there are any questions on healthcare coverage, please check the provisions.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Documentation of Child-care Enrollment (if eligible)** | ___ | ___ |

➢ Who's eligible?

- member is the parent/legal guardian (or acting in loco parentis) for a child under the age of 13 who resides with the member;
- member has a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines for a family of the same size. At a maximum, family income can be no more than 75% of the state's median income; and
- at the time of acceptance into the program, member is not receiving childcare from another available source.
- Part-time members serving in a full-time capacity who meet the above requirements may be eligible for child-care benefits.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Tax documents** | | |
| • Is there a W-4 form to document tax withholdings? | ___ | ___ |
| • If the program year is over, is there a W2 form? | ___ | ___ |
| **Loan Forbearance request form (if applicable)** | ___ | ___ |
| **Publicity release form** | ___ | ___ |
| ➢ If member is under 18, is the form signed by the parent/guardian? | ___ | ___ |
| **Member discipline documentation** | ___ | ___ |
| **Mid-term performance evaluation** | __ | __ |
| **End-of-term performance evaluation** | ___ | ___ |

| Are the following items in the member's file? | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| ***Member End-of-Term/Exit Form** (if member has exited) | ___ | ___ |
| Is the form signed by the member in the two places indicated? | ___ | ___ |
| WBRS checks the following: | | |
| • Is the form approved by the site supervisor? | ___ | ___ |
| • Is the supervisor signature concurrent with or after the member's? | ___ | ___ |
| • Was the form submitted within 15 days? | ___ | ___ |
| • Was the member's term in compliance with the program requirements explained in section 9a? (This can be ascertained by looking at the enrollment and exit dates and comparing the number of months served to the type of service term. If the member was suspended that should also be taken into consideration.) | ___ | ___ |
| • Is the date on the exit form concurrent with or after the date the member exited? | ___ | ___ |
| • Do enrollment form and exit form for each individual reflect the same term of service? If no, go to change of status section? | ___ | ___ |

***Documentation of Compelling Personal Circumstances** (if applicable) ___ ___

- If the member received a pro-rated ed-award (check the exit form), is there documentation of compelling personal circumstances that falls within the parameters identified in the AmeriCorps provisions for the relevant program year? ___ ___

**Change of Status Form** (if applicable) ___ ___

- Do enrollment form and exit form for each individual reflect the same term of service ? ___ ___
- If not, is there an approved change of status form in the file that reflects the appropriate conversion? ___ ___
- Was the conversion made within the first three months of the member's term? If not, is there evidence of grantee and CNS approval? ___ ___
- Was the form submitted to the Corporation within 30 days? (Needs to be verified at CNS) ___ ___

*Items with asterisk are files for which WBRS is the document of record. You should still keep paper copies of these items as a primary source. However, since WBRS automatically makes corrections, you should recognize that there might be some discrepancies between the paper and WBRS copy. This is acceptable since WBRS is the official record.

**This checklist is based on the '99-'00 provisions. Be aware when you are looking at files from other program years that there are differences in the provisions from year to year. This checklist should not be construed as a substitute for either the provisions or common sense.**

Signature of MANYCorps Staff member: _____
Signature of Site Supervisor: _____
Date of Site Visit: _____

*NetDay AmeriCorps Bridge*

# Member Service Log

**For program administration use only**

Entered into WBRS on

***Name*** _____ ***Service for the week of*** _____

| Date | School Site Supervisor Initials | Activity Code (see service log instructions for codes)/Location | Morning Hours | | | Afternoon Hours | | | **Total Hours** | Activity Hours | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Time In | Time Out | # of Hours | Time In | Time Out | # of Hours | | Direct Service | Training & Other |
| M | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Th | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Su | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ***Total Hours*** | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Member Signature** _____ **Date**

**Project Coordinator Signature** _____ **Date**

**Service Log Instructions:**

1. Complete service log daily using the activity codes below.

**Acceptable NetDay AmeriCorps Bridge Activity Codes**

1 = Refurbishing computers in classroom and computer labs
2 = Troubleshooting software problems, installing hardware and software
3 = Technology Instruction with teachers
4 = Technology Instruction with students
5 = Assisting students, teaching skills, and other responsibilities in PowerUp labs
6= Service project planning, service preparation, additional service activities (as approved by Project Coordinator)
7 = Member Training/Meetings
8= Service Project
9 = Community Outreach (volunteer recruitment, newsletters, presentations, distribution of literacy materials)

2. Use the fractions below for tracking hours:

| | |
|---|---|
| 15 minutes = .25 | 45 minutes = .75 |
| 30 minutes = .50 | on the hour = .00 |

3. Lunch breaks should not count as service hours so complete the form accordingly.

4. Add your morning hours and afternoon hours and place the total in the total hours column.

5. Divide your total hours according to the activities you performed (direct service or training). Record these activity hours in the appropriate columns. **Please note that adding the hours listed in the activity columns should equal the number in the total hours column.**

   *Direct Service*: activity codes 1 – 6 and 8

   *Training* & Other: activity codes 7 and 9
   ***Training includes all activities that pertain to your individual development as an AmeriCorps member.

6. Check math to make sure hours are added properly.

7. All service logs must be signed and dated by member and site supervisor. Your service log will be sent back to you for completion if this information is missing.

8. Each site can enter information here, as to when and where members should complete and return service logs. (Be sure to give schedule to National Director of AmeriCorps Programs and Director of Finance and Administration.)

# Finance & Grants Management

Whether you are in the process of deciding to apply for an AmeriCorps grant or you have one and simply want to review your systems, this section helps you identify the strengths and areas of improvement necessary to execute the financial compliance requirements of operating the AmeriCorps program effectively.

Successful operation of your program will depend on your understanding and adherence to the AmeriCorps grant requirements. Compliance requirements are contained in several documents: Corporation regulations, your grant provisions, your notice of grant award and OMB circulars. In addition, individual state rules and regulations may apply. Review the *Things To Do Checklist* to guide your work.

As a recipient of federal funds through AmeriCorps, you must comply with all requirements set forth by each source of federal authority. The information provided here will help you enhance your administrative and fiscal operations. Be sure, however, to refer to each source of authority for more details about program requirements.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Establish and maintain a financial management system in accordance with Generally Acceptable Accounting Practices (GAAP), federal OMB circulars, grant provisions, and organizational policies and procedures.
- ❑ Complete an initial review of your organization's financial management system.
- ❑ Construct and monitor your program's budget.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Solid Financial Management*

**What is solid financial management?**
Solid financial management in your organization means that all the required financial systems, policies, procedures, and separation of duties are in place and followed. Additionally, consistent checks and balances are established and followed.

**How can you avoid common financial problems?**
The organization's accounting system should record financial transactions by budget line item and program year and should distinguish between federal and non-federal funds. You should also regularly reconcile the budget to actual expenditures. You must retain thorough documentation that supports all expenditures and in-kind matching funds including time and activity reports that support staff time spent on the grant. Every organization should segregate financial responsibilities and should maintain written policies and procedures.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review *Financial System* Necessities and the *Financial Aspects of Grant Management*. |
| | ✓ Establish good financial practices prior to receiving federal funds. Review *Potential Problems to Avoid*. |
| | ✓ Follow all rules and regulatory requirements. |
| | ✓ Use standard accounting practices with ledgers and charts of accounts that are supported by source documentation and have a clear audit trail. |
| | ✓ Have up-to-date written policies and procedures. |
| | ✓ Document all staff and AmeriCorps member time through time and attendance records. |
| | ✓ Be sure to stay within the 5% limitation on administrative costs for the CNCS federal funds. |
| | ✓ Only process financial transactions with supporting documentation. |
| | ✓ Establish good internal controls and segregation of duties. |
| | ✓ Attend appropriate financial management training. |
| | ✓ Hire an accountant or financial staff member to manage finances or contract for accounting services. |
| | ✓ Ask an independent auditor for continuous improvement feedback when they are conducting an audit. |
| | ✓ Reconcile bank statements on a monthly basis. |
| | ✓ Create a Finance Committee of your Board of Directors and charge them with reviewing monthly financial reports. |
| | ✓ Have an audit completed annually. |

## *Understanding Federal Financial Policy*

**What are the federal financial policies governing the AmeriCorps grant?**
The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars and the Uniform Administrative requirements published with the Corporation's regulations (45 CFR 2541 through 2543) are the policies that govern and guide you through the successful implementation of the grant and all necessary management systems.

**Why do you need to understand federal financial policies?**
Federal funds are subject to certain requirements; it is important to be aware of these requirements and follow them. As the Program Director or the Executive Director charged with executing the AmeriCorps program, you must have an adequate understanding of the grant provisions, the OMB Circulars and the Uniform Administrative Requirements to ensure that your program is in compliance.

**How do you do it?**

- ✓ Gain a thorough understanding of the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions, and the applicable Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars. Implement all requirements of the Corporation's regulations. See *Summary of OMB Circulars and Code of Federal Regulations*.
- ✓ Follow applicable regulations, grant provisions, and OMB Circulars by organization type. See Tools for Success section for applicable circulars. See *Description of OMB Circulars*.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **OMB Circulars** | Each of the specific OMB Circulars can be downloaded from the Internet. | www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html |
| **Code of Federal Regulations** | The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) can be found on the website of the Corporation for National and Community Service. | www.nationalservice.org/resources/about/ogc/index.html |

## *OMB Circulars and Code of Federal Regulations*

| | **Educational Institutions** | **Non-Profit Organizations** | **State & Local Governments** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Uniform Administrative Requirements** | 45 CFR 2543 | 45 CFR 2543 | 45 CFR 2541 |
| **Cost Principles** | Circular No. A-21 | Circular No. A-122 | Circular No. A-102 |
| **Audits** | Circular No. A-133 | Circular No. A-133 | Circular No. A-133 |

## *AmeriCorps Grant Provisions*

**What are AmeriCorps Grant Provisions?**
The grant provisions contain operating requirements for AmeriCorps programs that grantees must follow. They are not inclusive of all the federal requirements. Therefore, you must also refer to the circulars and regulations. The grant provisions are located on the Corporation's website.

**Why do you need to adhere to the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions?**
The grant provisions lay out many of the statutory and program management requirements for AmeriCorps. They are one of several federal instructions and requirements that must be followed.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Where can I find the AmeriCorps rules and regulations?** *The AmeriCorps grant provisions, and AmeriCorps regulations are the basic sources of information for the management of your grant. Additionally, they are posted at www.nationalservice.org*

**Where do I find them?** *The OMB Circulars are the federal rules that govern appropriate use of federal funding. Your Notice of Grant Award will cite the circulars you must follow. Additionally, you can consult the regulations listed in the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR Chapter 25); the regulations dictate use of AmeriCorps funding, as stipulated in the law.*

**What are the most common financial problems in AmeriCorps programs?** *The most common financial management problems with AmeriCorps programs are related to inadequate accounting practices, poor systems for recording actual time and attendance related to specific grant activities, insufficient internal controls, and inadequate documentation and record keeping. Programs with these problems often produce inaccurate financial reports.*

**If I have sub-grantees am I required to do anything specific?** *Yes. If your organization is sub-granting part or all of the funding you are receiving, you must establish a monitoring system to ensure subgrantees have sound financial management systems. Your organization will also need to establish contractual documents to outline the agreement between the organizations. Your organization is responsible for ensuring the sub-grantees are adhering to the regulations and provisions in the same manner your organization is required.*

**Are we required to maintain records of our expenditures?** *Yes. All expenditures must contain documentation that supports why a transaction is allowable for AmeriCorps purposes (i.e., brief descriptions, agendas, reports etc.). Accounting records must trace back to source documentation. Documentation must support expenditures and clearly identify: reasonableness, necessity, allowability, and adherence to grant guidelines.*

**Are we required to maintain match documentation? Are there specific requirements related to match documentation?** *Yes and Yes. All match not only must be documented in the general ledger, but also must be supported with actual documentation. For cash match, copies of checks, bank receipts and grant awards are acceptable documentation. For in-kind contributions with a fair market value over $25.00, the organization should create a standard*

*form for donors to complete, following the organization's receipt of the donation. The form must be signed by the donor and include the following information: name of donor; date of donation; description of the donated item/service; and, estimated value of the donation.*

**What kinds of things should we consider as we bring sub-grantees aboard**? *You should ensure that standard accounting practices, written policies and procedures, a sound management and organizational structure, and reporting and monitoring mechanisms are established with your sub-grantees. Consider developing or revising written policies and procedures for reimbursements, financial reporting, budget amendments and other program requirements. You should review their annual audit to learn about their internal controls, their financial position and any problems or difficulties they may have. As you bring on sub-grantees, you should consider a risk-based monitoring approach that will allow you to monitor potentially higher risk sub-grantees more closely and on an as-needed basis.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps Grant Provisions** | Contains specific requirements for the management of your grant. | Corporation for National and Community Service- Grants Office or www.nationalservice.org |
| **See the Managing Your Fiscal Responsibilities section.** | | Corporation for National and Community Service or www.nationalservice.org |
| **Office of Management and Budget Circulars** | Documents describing the financial management requirements for recipients of federal funds. | www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars/index.html – OMB Circulars<br><br>http://www.nationalservice.org/about/ogc/index.html |
| **A Basic Guide to Non-Profit Financial Management** | This website has a wide variety of helpful information regarding establishing and maintaining financial management systems | http://www.mapnp.org/library/finance/np_fnce/np_fnce.htm |

## *Internal Review*

**What is an internal review?**
A review typically involves the inventory of an organization's financial management processes, fiscal accountability practices, and financial systems. Based on the results of these reviews, an organization can implement written policies, procedures, and systems to ensure financial accountability and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse. Conducting an internal review prior to applying for an AmeriCorps grant is especially important to ensure you have a clear picture of your organization's financial accountability systems.

**Why should you conduct an internal review?**
Organizations aware of common financial management problems manage their finances more effectively. Understanding common issues that arise during a financial audit now can help you institute proper checks and balances, sound financial management systems, and practices to avoid future audit findings. Additionally, effective monitoring of sub-grantees and reviewing sub-grantee audits reduces the potential for audit findings.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Carefully review the issues identified in the audit and ensure that your organization has developed policies and procedures to address each one. Routine monitoring of your organization to ensure compliance with those policies and procedures should be done. See the *Internal Review Checklist* for additional information. |
| | ✓ Consult the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions, examine the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and review the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). |
| | ✓ Maintain accurate and timely financial records from the start of your program. Your organization needs to report timely and accurate financial information to either the State Commission, or to CNCS. Financial reports should be clear, concise, all-inclusive (expenditures and revenues), and comparable (show financial activities over a period of time). |

## *Developing an AmeriCorps Budget*

**What is an AmeriCorps budget?**
An AmeriCorps budget is the financial blueprint that allows your AmeriCorps program to operate. It outlines the dollars necessary to address the community's identified needs using community service by AmeriCorps members. You must include your program budget in your grant application.

**Why do we need an AmeriCorps budget?**
There are three reasons you will develop a budget. First, the prospect of adding or starting an AmeriCorps program involves many financial considerations, decisions, and choices. Second, a budget developed specifically for an AmeriCorps program as part of the program design process can guide you in the overall development of your program. Finally, a budget must be included with your application that addresses your organization's proposed AmeriCorps program grant request.

**How do we do it?**
There are many considerations when it comes to developing a budget. All the steps you might need to take to develop a budget for an AmeriCorps program are not discussed here. Each organization is unique with established policies and procedures that guide operations. Follow your organizational policies, procedures, and processes when developing the AmeriCorps program budget. The information below is intended to be a tool to help guide you through the budget development process and provide useful information to help familiarize you with the inputs and considerations.

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Complete the **Program Design s**ection in this Guide. This information is crucial to budget development. |
| | ✓ Review the AmeriCorps Grant Application instructions for specific budget information. |
| | ✓ List all the costs necessary to carry out the programmatic activities from the program staff, AmeriCorps member, and service site partner training, orientation, and supervision, community partnerships and outreach, and service activities. Identify other costs relating to the operational side of your program including occupancy expenses, program and office supplies, travel, and specific costs related to service activities. |
| | ✓ Involve relevant staff and community partners in the process of determining the costs of program and service activities. |
| | ✓ Separately identify direct costs (costs related to the operation of the program) and indirect costs (overall organizational administrative costs). The Corporation limits the amount of administrative costs charged to an AmeriCorps grant to 5%. |
| | ✓ See *Constructing the Budget* pyramid to identify elements that impact the development of the budget. |

- ✓ Once you have gathered all necessary information, you can calculate the maximum grant award you will be eligible to apply for. Once you have completed this calculation, you will have determined the maximum amount of federal funds allowable for an AmeriCorps program of your size.

## *Developing Policies and Procedures*

**What are policies and procedures?**
Policies and procedures are written guidelines that you must develop to guide how your AmeriCorps program operates. They are based on the fiscal and programmatic requirements that your organization must abide by once it accepts federal money. These requirements and policies flow from federal, state, and local rules and regulations.

**Why do you need policies and procedures?**
Policies and procedures are necessary to ensure that every staff member understands the requirements of the AmeriCorps grant and your organization will always be in compliance. Compliance is not optional! You must comply with all regulations to continue receiving the support and funding provided for in your grant. Consequences for noncompliance may include reductions or loss of funding, repayment to the US Government of funds that may have been improperly spent, and lawsuits.

**How do you do it?**
Policies and procedures should address all facets of your program's operations, including member selection, document retention, program monitoring and fiscal management, recording service hours, progress reporting.

- ✓ Become intimately knowledgeable with the AmeriCorps grant provisions, the program guidelines, OMB Circulars, and related regulations.
- ✓ Ensure all staff, but especially your senior management, understands the rules and regulations and enlist someone(s) to draft your program's policies and procedures.
- ✓ Review your organization's existing policies to determine how they need to be adapted to conform to AmeriCorps rules and regulations.
- ✓ Provide focused training to your staff and AmeriCorps members on your program's policies and procedures.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps Grant Provisions** | The specific requirements related to the AmeriCorps grant. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/manuals.html |
| **A sample procedure manual** | The sample manual is for a volunteer program, but is still a helpful resource. | http://www.delawarenonprofit.org/volfaq5.html |

## *Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities*

**What are general legal and fiduciary responsibilities for nonprofits?**
Organizations have a set of rules and regulations that govern the receipt and use of public funds. Some organizations are exempted by the IRS from paying federal income tax and the income they receive is tax deductible. These benefits do not come without responsibility, however. Be sure you know legal and fiduciary responsibilities that govern your organization before you proceed. The government can place restrictions on public funds. In accepting the funds, your organization agrees to follow established fiscal regulations.

**How do you do it?**

- ✓ Organization must thoroughly understand all contractual documents and seek clarification prior to authorization. Do not sign documents that the organization's senior management has not read or reviewed.
- ✓ Ensure a strong communication system is in place between the senior management and the Board of Directors. Both bodies are held accountable if funds are misused.
- ✓ It is critical that senior management and the Board is well informed about the organization's financial status and the regulatory obligations incurred by the AmeriCorps award.
- ✓ Confirm that **all** staff members from service sites and the Parent Organization are thoroughly aware of legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- ✓ All staff (at the Parent Organization and service sites) must know and understand the prohibited activities associated with AmeriCorps.
- ✓ Familiarize the staff with the federal regulations to ensure that regulations are being followed.
- ✓ Contract with an external, informed auditor to ensure that funding and accounting systems are comprehensive and in compliance with federal guidelines. See the **Program Development and Management Risk Management Section.**

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| National Charities Information | Standards in Philanthropy | www.give.org |
| The Nonprofit Resource Center | A web-based resource center for nonprofit organizations. | www.not-for-profit.org |
| IRS Publication 557 | Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization | (800) TAX-FORM or www.irs.gov |
| Training and Technical Assistance Providers | An organization that provides technical assistance for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Contact CNCS for list of providers. | www.nationalservice.org |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Things To Do Checklist*

| | YOU HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED BY CNCS, WHAT NOW? |
|---|---|
| | Review the letter, e-mail or notes from phone call carefully.<br>• Ask questions—many questions—if you don't get answers or you don't understand answers…ask again.<br>• Get answers in writing to ensure that all parties have the same information. |
| | Find out from your Program Officer:<br>• What does it mean to be in negotiation?<br>• Is there a plan?<br>• Who manages it? |
| | Find out what the timeline is from CNCS to get your grant, to receive funding. That means the ability to draw down funds to your account. |
| | Continue checking with your stakeholders or people involved with the planning committee/work group. |
| | Make sure your financial department is on point with carrying out the grant responsibilities. Read the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. |
| | If you are an independent AmeriCorps program inform all stakeholders that you have received the AmeriCorps grant. If you are a parent organization/or multi-site, inform them of the process. Set in measures to ensure everyone is informed. |
| | Confirm that your program has an established *Grants Information Profile* in the Web Based Reporting System (WBRS) to that you can begin to enroll members in the Trust (be aware of your internal policy regarding enrollment of participants). You will also need to request WBRS access from your direct Grantor (i.e. State Commission, Parent Organization, or CNCS). |
| | Begin to put together a 3-6 month work plan to execute starting your program.<br>• Use the AmeriCorps Program Start up Guide to assist you through the first six-months of program development.<br>• Put together a recruitment plan.<br>• Secure enough funding to start your program—this funding should not include CNCS money—to be blunt this should be money in hand.<br>• Hire your staff/or train staff members about the initial start-up plan. |
| | What are the benchmarks? Identify them—make sure everyone responsible for executing them agrees on what they mean. |
| | Use WBRS to track progress on performance measures. |
| | Begin to create a training plan for the site supervisors. Bring them together for a preliminary meeting. Use the AmeriCorps Program Start Up Guide as a resource to prepare for the meeting.<br>• In that meeting discussion working relationships, roles, and responsibilities.<br>• Discuss expectations.<br>• Discuss preliminary service description (job descriptions for AmeriCorps members.<br>• Paperwork<br>• Management systems<br>• Design preliminary Service Site Agreement. |
| | Email, call to check-in with your assigned program officer. Share concerns, improvements, and progress. Make sure you know the timeline and the expectations. |
| | Start planning your pre-service orientation for AmeriCorps members. |
| | Identify recruitment areas and start recruiting make sure interviewees are aware of the timeline. |

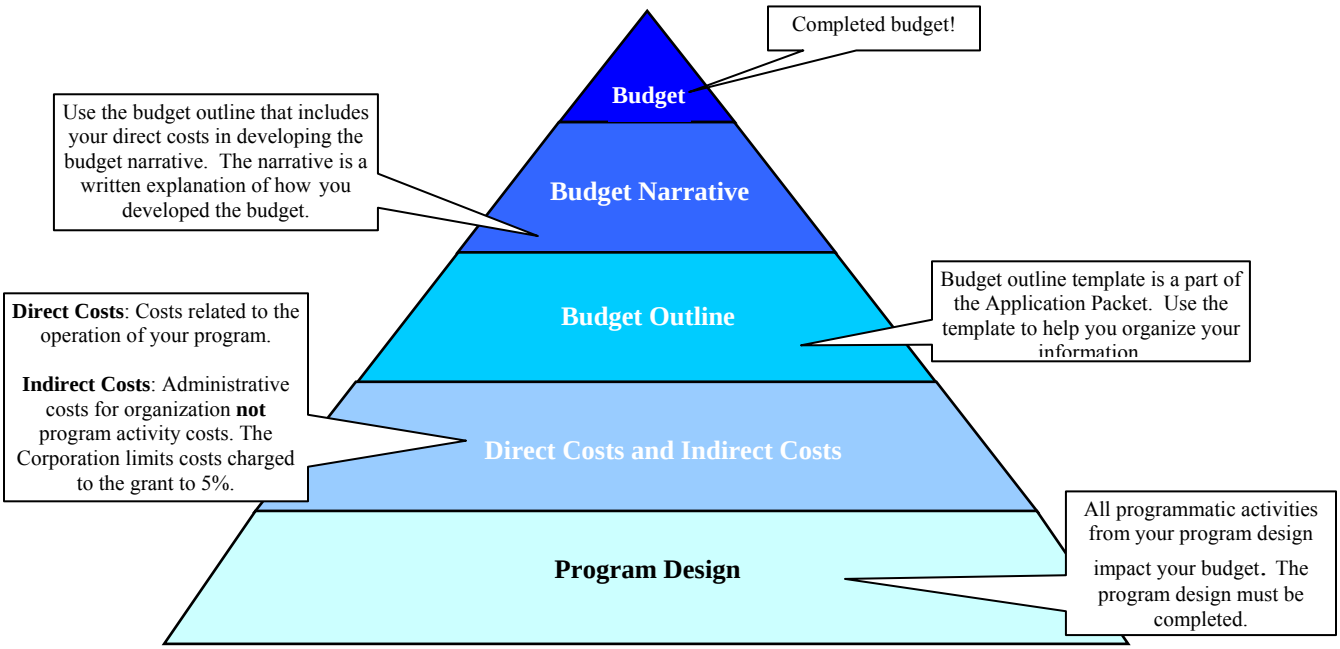
## *Financial Aspects of Grant Management*

| Essential Practice | Recommended Practice | Suggested Practice |
|---|---|---|
| • Create a general ledger that clearly shows expenditures allocable to the grant.<br>• Familiarize the organization with applicable OMB circulars and grant provisions.<br>• Conduct a training to familiarize programmatic and fiscal staff with the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions, regulations, program performance measures, and fiscal reporting requirements.<br>• Setup the chart of accounts to record matching funds and federal funds separately.<br>• Establish a chart of accounts and general ledger to track federal and nonfederal funds separately.<br>• Keep a clear audit trail that properly documents and records expenses.<br>• Review the *Financial System Description List* to ensure you have the appropriate systems in place.<br>• Develop a plan for sub-grantee monitoring, oversight, and training.<br>• Implement a plan for sub-grantee monitoring, oversight, and training. | • Set up specific accounts to track Corps member expenses like member stipends, health insurance, and member training.<br>• Set up a financial system that tracks actual costs versus original budget.<br>• Establish a financial system that differentiates between direct and indirect administrative costs.<br>• Consult CNCS Grants Office for instruction and clarification of fiscal requirements. | • Create a summary sheet for each funding source. |

## *Description of Applicable OMB Circulars*

| | |
|---|---|
| **OMB Circular A-21 Cost Principles** | ***Applicable to educational institutions***.<br>Sets requirements for allowable costs for grants, contracts and other agreements with educational institutions, and describes how to document them. |
| **OMB Circular A-122 Cost Principles** | ***Applicable to non-profit organizations*.**<br>Establishes cost principles applicable to grants, contracts and other agreements with non-profit organizations. Establishes principles to determine the costs of work performed by non-profit organizations under grants, cooperative agreements, cost reimbursement contracts, and other contracts in which costs are used in pricing, administration, or settlement. |
| **OMB Circular A-87 Cost Principles** | ***Applicable to state and local governments***.<br>Establishes principles and standards for determining costs for Federal awards carried out through grants, cost reimbursements contracts, and other agreements with State and local governments and federally recognized Indian tribal governments (governmental units). |
| **OMB Circular A-102 Grants and Cooperative Agreements With State and Local Governments** | Establishes consistency and uniformity among Federal agencies in the management of grants and cooperative agreements with State, local, and federally- recognized Indian tribal governments. |
| **OMB Circular A-133 Audits** | ***Applicable to educational institutions and non-profit organizations.***<br>This Circular sets standards for obtaining consistency and uniformity among Federal agencies for the auditing of States, local governments, and non-profit organizations expending Federal funds. All A-133 audits shall be performed annually. The A-133 audit is applicable to nonprofit organizations and state and local governments that expend $500,000 or more in a year in federal awards. Exemption applies when federal expenditures are less than $500,000 and the federal award is not identified as specific program audit. The audit must be performed by an independent certified public accountant. |

## *Constructing the Budget*



## *Potential Problems to Avoid*

**This Potential Problem List can be used to identify gaps or areas of improvement needed in financial systems.**

***Time cards/sheets***

- No time cards or documentation for staff hours charged to the grant.
- Unsigned time cards for staff and members.
- Time cards are signed weeks later by the supervisor.
- No designation of time/allocation on staff member's time card.
    - a.) Estimated time as opposed to actual time.
    - b.) Allocation of time is based on budget and is not reflective of actual activity.
    - c.) Time allocation is indicated at 100% even though staff member is an officer of the organization who performs other functions not solely related to the grant.
- Lack of activity reports for staff member(s) if time is charged to more than one grant.

***Member Records***

- No timesheets or documentation of member hours.
- Incomplete member records.
- Missing Member Eligibility Documentation.
- No member contracts on file.
- No supervisory signature on timesheets.
- Member timesheets not entered into WBRS in a timely manner.

***Lack of Written Policies and Procedures***

- Written policies and procedures are required by A-110, Subpart C, b.6 (45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 253).

***Lack of Appropriate Documentation***

- **Expenditures**
    - a.) Original invoices are missing.
    - b.) Receiving signature is missing.
    - c.) Approval for the expenditure is not available.
    - d.) Supervisor's authorization on invoice/check is missing.
    - e.) Required documentation and invoices are not stamped or marked paid to reduce the risk of double payment.
    - f.) Documentation is not maintained and accessible for purposes of management, CNCS review, or the required annual or semi-annual audits.
- **Match**
    - a.) Match is not verifiable by grantee's records.
    - b.) *Match documentation is missing the following information*: What was donated, signature of donor, amount donated, date of service, and how the donation was valued. (For example, if the donation was for a painter spending 5 hours painting a house and painters in the area get $20 per hour, the documentation should include the calculation of hours and the hourly rate.)
    - c.) The grantee has not maintained adequate documentation of in-kind match. The grantee should not record an in-kind donation as match until it is satisfied that the documentation is sufficient.
    - d.) The grantee is responsible for ensuring sub-grantees have adequate documentation on file.
- **Grantee's Accounting Records**
    - a.) Financial records don't identify costs by programmatic year, by budget line item, or don't differentiate between direct and indirect costs.
- **Sub-grants**
    - a.) No written agreements with program sub-grantees.
- **Sub-grantees**
    - a.) Lack of oversight of sub-grantees by grantee organization.

*Source: http://epicenter.etr.org/ Contributed by Kristina Tecce, Walker & Company, LLP www.walkerllp.com*

## *Internal Controls Checklist*

| ***ACCOUNTING*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you maintain separate files for each contract you have? | | | |
| 2. Do you have a copy of all approved contracts in a file? | | | |
| 3. Does your contract file contain a request for payment or request for funds form? | | | |
| 4. Does your contract file contain forms for budget revision requests or changes? | | | |
| 5. Does your contract file contain approved budget revisions between you and CNCS? | | | |
| 6. Does your contract file contain applicable correspondence? | | | |
| 7. Does your accounting system provide for identifying receipts and expenditures of program funds for each contract? | | | |
| 8. Does your accounting system have controls that prevent expenditures in excess of approved and budgeted amounts? | | | |
| 9. Does only one individual have responsibility for and complete authority over financial transactions? (Explain your answer in the comments section.) | | | |
| 10. Have you received a audit report within the past year? | | | |
| 11. Does the audit comply with OMB circular A-133? (For federal expenditures over $500,00) | | | |
| 12. Have you submitted a copy of the audit report to your funder? (CNCS or Parent Organization if applicable) | | | |
| 13. Does your organization have a correction action plan in place for each finding? | | | |
| 14. Does your organization have a chart showing lines of responsibilities and duties of key personnel? | | | |
| 15. Does your accounting system have procedures that govern the maintenance of accounts? | | | |
| 16. Do you have an accounting manual or written financial policies and procedures manual? | | | |
| 17. Has a chart of accounts been established which includes all accounts in the accounting system? | | | |
| 18. Are accounting entries adequately explained or supported and approved by responsible personnel? | | | |
| 19. Do you maintain approval authority for financial and accounting transactions? | | | |
| 20. Do you have written guidelines for purchasing that meet OMB circular requirements? (If no, please explain below.) | | | |
| 21. Are your accounting system and records secured? | | | |
| 22. Is your backup documentation secured in limited access areas? | | | |
| 23. Do you maintain source documentation to show the nature of each receipt and expenditure? | | | |
| 24. Is record keeping separated from operations or handling and custody of assets? | | | |
| 25. Are your funds deposited in a bank with FDIC protection? | | | |
| 26. Are balances exceeding the FDIC collaterally secured? | | | |
| 27. Are safeguards in place that will assure your organization's share of funding does not exceed legal or grant requirements? | | | |
| 28. Are all reports reconcilable with the accounting records and system? | | | |
| 29. Do you use a double entry bookkeeping system? | | | |
| 30. Do you have written cash control policies and procedures? | | | |
| 31. Are paid checks verified for date, name, and proper endorsements at reconciliation? | | | |
| 32. Do you maintain effective control over accountability for all funds, property, and other assets? | | | |
| 33. Do you have procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of funds to your organization and disbursement? | | | |
| 34. Do you have procedures for determining that costs are reasonable and allowable? | | | |
| 35. Does your general ledger account for expenditures and revenue? | | | |
| 36. Do expenditures meet OMB cost principle requirements? (If no, explain below.) | | | |
| 37. Has a chart of accounts been established which includes all accounts in the accounting system? | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38. Are transactions in the accounting records properly authorized, as evidenced by supporting documentation containing the signature of appropriate approving officials? | | | |
| 39. Are employees and officers who handle assets or perform significant financial duties bonded? | | | |
| 40. Has a general policy with respect to insurance coverage been defined and procedures instituted to insure that all significant business risks have been covered? | | | |
| 41. Is insurance coverage periodically reviewed with a competent insurance agent? | | | |
| 42. Does the recipient have an accounting and finance manual that stipulates the duties of employees with accounting and finance functions? | | | |
| 43. Are the accounting policies followed by the organization in agreement with those stipulated in the organization's accounting and finance manual? | | | |
| 44. Have bank statements been reconciled monthly to the general ledger? | | | |
| 45. Are employees required to take annual vacations, and are duties assigned to others in the absence of an employee on vacation or otherwise absent? | | | |
| ***BOARD OF DIRECTORS/AUDIT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
| 1. Does the Board of Directors have an Audit Committee? | | | |
| 2. Does the Audit Committee have defined duties and responsibilities that are documented in a Board of Director's resolution, or elsewhere? | | | |
| 3. Is each bank account authorized by the Board of Directors or by the person delegated by the Board?<br>• Is delegation of this authority documented in the Board of Directors' minutes? | | | |
| 4. Is there evidence in the minutes that the Board of Directors or designated committee approved the operating budget? | | | |
| ***SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROLS*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
| 1. Are clear lines of authority and responsibility documented in an organization chart? | | | |
| 2. Are there written policies establishing responsibilities for management of personnel? | | | |
| 3. Is there a written personnel manual? | | | |
| 4. Has an in-kind document form been established? | | | |
| 5. Are copies of match on file? | | | |
| 6. Is match recorded in the general ledger, only after the donation is proven to be acceptable? | | | |
| 7. Is there a written policy and procedure for sub-contracts? | | | |
| 8. Are there written monitoring strategies, plans, and timelines? | | | |
| 9. Is there a risk management tool in place for your organization and sub-grantees? | | | |
| 10. Where applicable, is a copy of the approved indirect cost allocation rate and plan on file? | | | |
| 11. Are written accounting policies and procedures established to describe the accounting system and ensure that similar transactions are processed consistently? | | | |
| 12. Are the duties and responsibilities as outlined in written policies communicated to employees? | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Has the Executive Director responded to internal control deficiencies pointed out through the most recent audit, if any? | | | |
| 14. Does the program keep on hand a current copy of applicable financial regulations, guidelines and/or provisions? | | | |
| 15. Do the bookkeeper's duties exclude the following functions:<br>• Receiving cash or checks<br>• Opening the incoming mail<br>• Preparing bank deposits<br>• Signing checks | | | |
| 16. Does an individual other than the person who prepares the bank deposit slip actually deposit it in the bank? | | | |
| 17. Do the duties of the person preparing the bank reconciliation exclude:<br>• Posting to the general ledger<br>• Handling cash<br>• Preparing bank deposits<br>• Signing checks | | | |
| 18. Are checks, after being signed, controlled and mailed out by an individual who does not have any other accounting duties? | | | |

| ***BUDGETING AND MANAGEMENT REPORTING*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Are actual expenses compared with budgeted expenses on a monthly basis? | | | |
| 2. Is there a policy requiring internal reporting be prepared within a prescribed number of days after month-end? | | | |
| 3. Do the reports display variances for each expense? | | | |
| 4. Does the recipient prepare and use an annual overall financial plan or operating budget to allocate its resources and provide a system of evaluating control? | | | |
| 5. Is there an organized process for ensuring the development of budget information? | | | |
| 6. Where feasible, are common or indirect costs accumulated into cost pools for allocation to projects, contracts and grants? | | | |
| 7. Are bases used to allocate cost pools equitable and approved by management? | | | |
| 8. Does the program allocate common costs on a rational basis? | | | |
| 9. Have reports been prepared and submitted in accordance with management's policies? | | | |
| ***PAYROLL*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
| 1. Does the payroll register list employees paid by:<br>• Name<br>• Check number<br>• Gross pay<br>• Withholdings<br>• Net pay | | | |
| 2. Are attendance records maintained for employees? | | | |
| 3. Are attendance records approved by the employee's supervisor? | | | |
| 4. Are records of vacation, sick leave and compensatory time (if applicable) maintained for employees? | | | |
| 5. Does the employee's record include time accrued, taken, and the available balance? | | | |
| 6. Do employees have personnel files which include documentation concerning:<br>• Position reclassifications<br>• Salary rates<br>• Withholding authorizations<br>• Terminations | | | |
| 7. Are personnel policies established in writing? | | | |
| 8. Do the written personnel and/or payroll records include the following or similar records:<br>• An attendance record<br>• Vacation, sick and other excused leave records<br>• Individual payroll record form<br>• Payroll register<br>• Notification concerning appointments, terminations, position classifications and | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| salary rates | | | |
| ***TIMESHEETS*** | ***Yes*** | ***No*** | ***N/A*** |
| 1. Does the program have separate timesheets for employees and Members? | | | |
| 2. Is the time sheet a pre-printed form? | | | |
| 3. Are timesheets signed and dated by the employee or Member? | | | |
| 4. Are timesheets approved by an employee authorized to approve timesheets? | | | |
| 5. Does the timesheet show the length of time covered by that timesheet? | | | |
| 6. Are member timesheets maintained in the member file by program year? | | | |
| 7. Are timesheets completed and signed after the fact? | | | |
| 8. Do timesheets allow members and/or employees to complete based on time spent on activities? | | | |
| 9. Is actual time spent on an activity compared to budgeted amounts at least quarterly? | | | |

## *Financial System Necessities*

| FINANCIAL SYSTEM | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| ***Chart of Accounts*** | The ***Chart of Accounts*** (COA) must have the ability to distinguish federal funds from all other organizational funding and must include matching funds. The COA should be representative of the agencies general ledger. |
| ***Internal Controls*** | ***Internal controls*** are an integral part of a sound financial management system. They include various methods to safeguard assets, ensure reliability of accounting data, ensure efficiency and confirm compliance with management policies and grant regulations. Internal controls are a set of procedures and cross checks that minimize misappropriation or misstatement of assets. Properly established internal controls leads to reliable financial reporting and compliance with laws and regulations.<br>• *Examples of good internal controls include: Documented policies and procedures, adequate review process for financial reports and budgets, adequate cash management procedures, monthly bank reconciliations, an asset tracking system, an established financial system to track members' and employees' time and activities, and a system to follow-up on problems identified to ensure resolution.* |
| ***Written policies and procedures*** | An established and comprehensive set of ***written policies and procedures*** should be reviewed annually to ensure they are up-to-date. Policies should detail appropriate segregation of duties to ensure no one individual is responsible for the entire financial management and accounting system. Policies and procedures should include detailed information on all financial management and accounting practices. |
| ***Contractual Agreement Procedures*** | Additionally, written ***contractual agreement procedures*** should be established to assist the organization when it enters into agreements with outside entities. Information relating to an award should be collected and summarized to ensure reporting requirements, grant compliance, and deliverables are clearly understood. The budget for the program should be entered into a tracking system and a review of the chart of accounts should be done to ensure that all necessary accounts are in place. This procedure must be written and reviewed annually. |
| ***Requirements of Documentation for Activity Reporting*** | OMB A-87 State, Local and Indian Tribal governments & A-110 ***Requirements of Documentation for Activity Reporting*** states there must be an after-the-fact distribution of each employee's actual activity. This report must account for the total activity of each employee and cannot only account for the time spent on AmeriCorps. Timesheets must be prepared at least monthly, should coincide with one or more pay periods, must be signed by the employee, and the employee's supervisor. Organizations must show they are then charging appropriate grants based on that time and activity data, as opposed to charging grants based on budgeted time. **All salaries and wages charged to AmeriCorps grants must be supported by signed Time & Attendance records** except for educational Institutions which must comply with OMB A-21. |

# *Framing the Program*

Much work has been accomplished to this point. After reviewing the **Surveying AmeriCorps** section, your organization has decided that an AmeriCorps program will meet the community's needs. You then worked at **Preparing the Ground** by bringing together community members, developing the AmeriCorps work plan, and submitting your grant proposal. As you waited to hear the outcome of your grant proposal, you have been **Laying the Foundation,** completing significant work, to create an optimal environment for an AmeriCorps program.

You have just received notification that your organization is awarded the AmeriCorps grant and will move into grant negotiation. Congratulations! The **Framing the Program** section is designed to lead you through the many aspects of designing your program into the implementation of your program. Review the *Things To Do Checklist*

***Caution*:** Make sure you completely understand the requirements of the grant. Be sure to be in consistent communication with your Program Officer about what your organization needs to complete before you can draw down funds for your program. It is critical that you have clarity on what your next steps need to be.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Identify the next steps upon receiving notification of grant award.
- ❑ Learn to incorporate organization capacity building and sustainability into the operations of your program.
- ❑ Implement a volunteer recruitment and management plan.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Notification and Grant Negotiation*

**What is notification and grant negotiation?**
Notification refers to the official announcement that the Corporation makes to applicants informing them of the funding decision that has been made. If the Corporation approves your AmeriCorps grant application for funding, you will enter into the grant negotiation period. You will not immediately receive the grant funds. Funding will depend upon the results of negotiations. If your application is not approved for funding, your notification letter will explain how to request feedback on your grant application.

**Why do you need to negotiate for your grant?**
For a grant to be awarded to your organization, you must first resolve issues that were identified during the review process. Even though an application is approved to negotiate, a grant award is not guaranteed. Occasionally the negotiation process ends without a grant being awarded.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ You negotiate your grant with your program officer. A Negotiation Memo from your program officer will outline the negotiation requirements. |
| | ✓ Make sure you understand what is required of you. Find out from your program officer what assistance is available |
| | ✓ Establish and agree on a timeline to resolve any items that impact the Corporation awarding your grant. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Does every grant applicant have to participate in a negotiation process?** *Yes. Almost every application that the Corporation determines to be worthy of funding will have questions and/or concerns that were identified during peer review and/or staff review and need to be resolved. These questions/concerns are often categorized as either "**Compliance**" or "**Continuous Improvement**." **Compliance** issues might include the need to correct budget errors, to submit a budget revision due to being approved for less than requested or clarification regarding a particular program requirement, for instance, a monitoring plan. **Continuous improvement** concerns are less serious and may not need to be resolved prior to the award of a grant.*

**When will I receive my grant?** *You will receive your grant when negotiations have successfully concluded. There is no set length of time for the negotiation period. How long it lasts depends largely on the number and complexity of the issues that need to be resolved. Organizations applying for AmeriCorps funds through a State Commission have a lengthier process due to the need to complete state contractual processes, in addition to, CNCS awarding.*

**When may I begin expending grant funds?** *Before you plan a start date for your AmeriCorps members or consider expending funds that you would like to charge to the grant, have a discussion with your program officer. In most cases, you will not be able to charge to the grant any funds expended prior to the date that your grant is awarded.*

**When can my members begin service?** *AmeriCorps members cannot begin service prior to the award of your grant. Additionally, your program officer might want you to delay the start-date of your program beyond the award of your grant to ensure that certain program structures are in place.*

## *Capacity Building and Sustainability*

**What is capacity building and sustainability?**
The AmeriCorps Guidelines of 2003 defines the sustainability and capacity building of its programs in the following way: *Capacity Building* is a process that helps a program or organization enhance its mission, strategy, skills, systems, infrastructure, and human resources to better serve local needs. Capacity building is essential to the sustainability of programs so they can continue to meet community needs efficiently and effectively, without sole reliance on federal funding. *Program Sustainability* is the ability of an AmeriCorps program to continue to engage a community's citizens in meeting the needs of the community, either beyond the life of a Corporation grant or with diminishing Corporation support. As a result of the process of rulemaking for AmeriCorps, these definitions may be refined. Refer to the Corporation's web site www.nationalservice.org for the most current information.

**Why do I need to need to engage in capacity building and sustainability planning?**
Enhancing organizational capacity and achieving sustainability enables an AmeriCorps program to continue its community service activities beyond the life of its grant from the Corporation.

**How do I do it?**
It's important to incorporate capacity building and sustainability planning into the design of your program. You need to begin developing strategies early to address how services will be carried on after Corporation funding ends. This planning will avoid critical gaps in the services provided to your community.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can AmeriCorps members assist grantee organizations in capacity building activities?** *Yes. The Corporation encourages AmeriCorps members to engage in certain capacity building activities. For example, AmeriCorps members may recruit and manage other volunteers. They can write training materials that will be used to instruct the public about disaster preparedness. AmeriCorps members may assist in raising funds and securing resources to support service activities. They may conduct outreach to expand the number of individuals served by the nonprofit organization. AmeriCorps members may develop community partnerships that are intended to strengthen communities.*

**What are examples of sustainability?** *Examples of sustainability include getting your funding from various sources, earning income from your organization's services, improving the quality and efficiency of your program's services, and recruiting volunteers to help you deliver your services.*

**Is there a resource that is highly recommended?** *Yes! The Corporation's Sustainability and Capacity Building Toolkit is filled with useful information important to your program design process.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | **Contact** |
|---|---|---|
| Sustainability and Capacity Building Toolkit | A Corporation resource for applicants and grantees that explains the Corporation's expectations and includes strategies for capacity building, steps to develop a program sustainability plan, sample sustainability plans, and listings of additional resources | http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (This link is year-specific. Change the year in the link to reflect the current year.) |
| CNCS' Website | A Corporation-sponsored source of information on sustainability. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |
| AmeriCorps Guidelines | This document outlines the Corporation's requirements of organizations applying for funding. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (This link is year-specific. Change the year in the link to reflect the current year.)<br><br>*If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link.* |

## *Volunteer Recruitment and Management Plan*

**What is a volunteer recruitment and management plan?**
A volunteer recruitment and management plan outlines how you will utilize volunteers in your AmeriCorps program. The involvement of volunteers in your organization should not be a burden, but should help you to achieve your mission and goals. The plan should address finding, training and supervising the volunteers. Volunteers are not AmeriCorps members. Instead, they are community members who choose to help your organization without receiving payment. They may volunteer just once, or they may volunteer regularly for an extended period of time.

**Why do I need to recruit and manage volunteers?**
Volunteers will allow your organization to increase the impact of its programs on the community without necessarily having to increase the size of its staff. If properly trained and managed, volunteers can commit to your organization for an extended period of time. They can help you to expand your organization's capacity, maintain its programs over time, and to serve the community.

**How do you develop a volunteer recruitment and management plan?**
Your plan for recruiting and managing volunteers should be incorporated into the program design and into your AmeriCorps member position descriptions.

Many organizations make the mistake of not putting much thought into the recruitment, selection and support of their volunteers. This will often lead to the selection of inappropriate volunteers and high volunteer turnover. Below are some helpful tips.

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the *Checklist for Volunteer Management*. |
| | ✓ Develop volunteer position descriptions. |
| | ✓ Screen volunteers to ensure that the volunteers you select are a good fit for your organization and the project. |
| | ✓ Place volunteers in positions that match their skills and interests. |
| | ✓ Assign a supervisor to the volunteers. |
| | ✓ Orient your volunteers to the organization and project. |
| | ✓ Train your volunteers and recognize and express appreciation for their contributions. |
| | ✓ Review the guiding questions for the *Volunteer Management Plan*. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**
**I heard that AmeriCorps members had to be engaged in direct service. Is it okay for them to coordinate volunteers?** *Yes. While AmeriCorps members on the whole are still primarily engaged in direct service (such as tutoring or construction), the Corporation recognizes their potential value to your organization if they also engage in less direct, capacity building types of activities such as coordinating volunteers. You should be clear about the roles of your members in you application.*

**Does my AmeriCorps program have to include a volunteer recruitment and management component?** *Refer to your application instructions to determine if this is the case.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **State Commission RFP or application instructions** | If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, the relevant commission, rather than the Corporation, issues the RFP or instructions you should use as a guide when applying for funding. | *http://www.nationalservice.org/about/family/commissions_pick.html* |
| **Volunteer Recruitment and Management Toolkit** | | *www.nationalserviceresources.org* |
| **AmeriCorps Guidelines** | This document outlines the Corporation's requirements of organizations applying for funding. | *http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (unfortunately this link dates the document because it is year-specific)*<br>If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link. |
| **Application Instructions** | The application instructions give very specific guidance of what to include in your application. | *http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html*<br>Select the appropriate instructions for the grant for which you are applying. If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link. |
| **Charity Channel** | The Charity Channel's Volunteer Management Review contains useful articles on managing volunteers. | http://www.charitychannel.com/enewsletters/vmr/ |
| **Creating an Inclusive Environment: A Handbook for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in National and Community Service Programs** | A comprehensive handbook designed to assist national service programs fully and meaningfully include individuals with disabilities. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/index.php#disability |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Things To Do Checklist*

| YOU HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED BY CNCS, WHAT NOW? | |
|---|---|
| | Review the letter, e-mail or notes from phone call carefully.<br>• Ask questions—many questions—if you don't get answers or you don't understand answers…ask again.<br>• Get answers in writing to ensure that all parties have the same information. |
| | Find out from your Program Officer:<br>• What does it mean to be in negotiation?<br>• Is there a plan?<br>• Who manages it? |
| | Find out what the timeline is from CNCS to get your grant, to receive funding. That means the ability to draw down funds to your account. |
| | Continue checking or keeping informed with your stakeholders or people involved with the planning committee/work group. |
| | Make sure your financial department is on point with carrying out the grant responsibilities. Read the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. |
| | If you are an independent AmeriCorps program inform all stakeholders that you have received the AmeriCorps grant. If you are a parent organization/or multi-site, inform them of the process. Set in measures to ensure everyone is informed. |
| | Begin to put together a 3-6 month work plan to execute starting your program.<br>• Put together a recruitment plan.<br>• Secure enough funding to start your program—this funding should not include CNCS money—to be blunt this should be money in hand.<br>• Hire your staff/or train staff members about the initial start-up plan. |
| | What are the benchmarks? Identify them—make sure everyone responsible for executing them is on the same page. |
| | Begin to create a training plan for the site supervisors. Bring them together for a preliminary meeting.<br>In that meeting discussion working relationships, roles, and responsibilities.<br>• Discuss expectations.<br>• Discuss preliminary service description (job descriptions for AmeriCorps members.<br>• Required paperwork, deadlines, and expectations for submission.<br>• Management systems<br>• Design preliminary Service Site Agreement. |
| | Email, call to check-in with your assigned program officer. Share concerns, improvements, and progress. Make sure you know the timeline and the expectations. |
| | Start planning your pre-service orientation for AmeriCorps members. |
| | Identify recruitment areas and start recruiting make sure interviewees are aware of the timeline. |

## *Checklist for Volunteer Management*

| Rating * | Indicator | Met | Needs Work | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities | | | | |
| E | 1. The organization has a clearly defined purpose of the role that volunteers have within the organization. | | | |
| E | 2. Job descriptions exist for all volunteer positions in the organization. | | | |
| R | 3. The organization has a well-defined and communicated volunteer management plan that includes a recruitment policy, description of all volunteer jobs, an application and interview process, possible stipend and reimbursement policies, statement of which staff has supervisory responsibilities over what volunteers, and any other volunteer personnel policy information. | | | |
| E | 4. The organization follows a recruitment policy that does not discriminate, but respects, encourages and represents the diversity of the community. | | | |
| E | 5. The organization provides appropriate training and orientation to the agency to assist the volunteer in the performance of their volunteer activities. Volunteers are offered training with staff in such areas as cultural sensitivity. | | | |
| R | 6. The organization is respectful of the volunteer's abilities and time commitment and has various job duties to meet these needs. Jobs should not be given to volunteers simply because the jobs are considered inferior for paid staff. | | | |
| R | 7. The organization does volunteer performance appraisals periodically and communicates to the volunteers how well they are doing, or where additional attention is needed. At the same time, volunteers are requested to review and evaluate their involvement in the organization and the people they work with and suggest areas for improvement. | | | |
| R | 8. The organization does some type of volunteer recognition or commendation periodically and staff continuously demonstrates their appreciation towards the volunteers and their efforts. | | | |
| A | 9. The organization has a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, comments and perceptions from volunteers. | | | |
| A | 10. The organization provides opportunities for program participants to volunteer. | | | |
| A | 11. The organization maintains contemporaneous records documenting volunteer time in program allocations. Financial records can be maintained for the volunteer time spent on programs and recorded as in-kind contributions. | | | |

*Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area.*

## *Volunteer Management Plan*

*Many elements of your planning for members can be applied to your planning for volunteers. Ask yourself the following questions. Your answers to these questions will determine the role volunteers will play in your organization and form the basis for your plan.*

- What types of skills do you want your volunteers to have? (Tutoring, construction, nursing, marketing, etc.)
- What types of volunteers do you need? One-time (for a one-day service project), episodic (every once in a while), long-term, professional (skilled nurses, engineers, etc.), or a combination of these types?
- How and where will you recruit to ensure you get the volunteers that you need?
- What criteria and process will you use for screening and selecting volunteers?
- What training will the volunteers need and who will conduct it?
- What level of support is needed?
- Given the tasks you plan to assign to the volunteers, what level of supervision will be needed?
- What staff member will be responsible for the volunteers? What percentage of his/her time will be dedicated to managing the volunteers?
- What role will your AmeriCorps members play in the recruitment and management of volunteers? Some or all of your AmeriCorps members can take much of the responsibility from staff regarding volunteers, assuming this responsibility is reflected in the members' position descriptions. AmeriCorps members may:
    - Recruit, train and coordinate volunteers;
    - Develop an effective volunteer management system (volunteer position descriptions, screening techniques, volunteer policy and procedure manuals); and
    - Provide ongoing support to volunteers to ensure that they have a high quality experience and continue to serve.
- Given your answers to the questions above, how many volunteers can your organization manage?

# 0 ~ 3 Months: Building the Program

No time period is as intensive as the first three months of your AmeriCorps program. During the next three months, you will hire and orient new staff; recruit, enroll and train your AmeriCorps members; establish relationships with community organizations; and conduct other tasks to build your program. Establishing effective management systems will go a long way to ensuring your program's success.

If you have an existing organization, you may need to adjust some of your current systems and processes or create new ones to accommodate AmeriCorps program requirements. This preparatory work may seem burdensome, but in the end, the resulting systems will keep your program running smoothly and should even strengthen your overall organization.

If you are beginning a program from scratch, you might be feeling overwhelmed by the many requirements related to AmeriCorps program "start-up" and wondering where to start. Based on the lessons learned by other AmeriCorps programs before you, this section will help you anticipate and develop the "good start" systems you need as a foundation.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Develop partnership and subgrantee agreements.
- ❑ Set up the WBRS system.
- ❑ Design and deliver a pre-service orientation for your AmeriCorps members.
- ❑ Design and deliver a pre-service training for your AmeriCorps members.
- ❑ Develop and implement a marketing and public relations strategy.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Develop Partnership or Subgrantee Agreements*

**What is a Partnership or Subgrantee Agreement?** This document specifically identifies the role, responsibilities, and obligations between your organization and your service site partners or partnering organizations. Whether you are a grantee or subgrantee with multiple sites seeking to build partnerships with local community organizations where Corps members perform service, it is important to spell out the roles, products and/or services each organization is responsible for accomplishing.

**Why do you need a Partnership or Subgrantee Agreement?**
Both parties need a written document that **clearly** describes how the two organizations will work together, what service(s) will be performed, when that service will be performed, what the financial and resource investments will be, who has supervisory responsibilities, and how the success of the service activities and the partnership relationship will be measured. Whew! Quite a list! In short, don't enter into a partnership without an agreement. Otherwise, headaches may follow.

**How do you do it?**

- ✓ Conduct a site visit with key personnel from your prospective partnering organizations to identify site supervisors, task responsibilities, site-specific training requirements, working environment, on-site monitors, and required AmeriCorps systems.
- ✓ Determine the financial and resource obligations.
- ✓ Orient the partnering organizations to the AmeriCorps and National Service philosophy
- ✓ Train site supervisors on grant provisions, prohibited activities, working with members, reporting, performance measurement, etc.
- ✓ Create a communication schedule or system with your partnering organizations.
- ✓ Identify mutual goals and objectives and the possible tasks to be performed.
- ✓ Look for strategic or unique alliances. This can strengthen and broaden the service experience.
- ✓ Institute a performance measurement plan to assess the service activities and the partnering relationship.
- ✓ Review the *Partner Agreement Document*. Also review the **Community Site Partnerships** section for more information on establishing partnerships.

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **The AmeriCorps Program Blueprint, The Resource Connection, Spring 2001:** | An overview of beginning a new AmeriCorps program. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/303/startups.pdf |

## *Set-up Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)*

**What is the Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)?**
The WBRS is an Internet-based tool to enroll and exit members, track member service hours, and submit financial and progress reports. Creating a WBRS account is one of the first things you will want to do after grant notification. Your program will use WBRS to inform the Corporation of the members it has enrolled and whether or not members earn an Education Award.

**Why do you need to set up the WBRS?**
Using WBRS is a requirement of the AmeriCorps grant. Through the Progress Reporting Forms section you will keep the Corporation informed of the progress your program and member enrollments.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Complete the training for WBRS through your state commission. *(Since this training is so specialized, we do not attempt to explain it here in this section.)* |
| | ✓ Create and maintain an information gathering system to use in updating WBRS. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Web Based Reporting System** | The website to input program data. | http:\\wbrs.net? |

## *Implement Pre-service Orientation*

**What is a Pre-service Orientation?**
A Pre-service Orientation (PSO) is an introduction to National Service, the AmeriCorps philosophy and values, and the partner organization. The orientation has two essential components. The first is an important introductory event to familiarize your Corps members with National Service history, terminology, responsibilities, regulations and rules, benefits, prohibited activities, and service activities. The second component provides to members a context and overview of the host and/or partner organization where they will perform their service.

**Why do you need a Pre-service Orientation?**
The PSO provides a framework for the service your members will contribute and the community context in which they will work. An effective PSO is a must to get everyone off to a solid start.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training for pre-service orientation topics. |
| | ✓ Involve your staff in developing various aspects of the orientation component. |
| | ✓ Create an orientation agenda, adapt and/or collect support materials. |
| | ✓ Identify and solicit help from external trainers if appropriate. |
| | ✓ Create fun, interesting hands-on activities appropriate to adult learners. |
| | ✓ Take the opportunity to build esprit de corps (a sense of connection and community among your members and staff). |
| | ✓ Create an evaluation mechanism to assess if the PSO has been effective. Use results to continuously improve the orientation. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**What percentage of service hours are allowed for training and orientation activities?** *Great question! Programs can allocate only 20 percent of member service hours to orientation and training activities.*

**How long is a PSO?** *A PSO can be as long or as short as needed. It depends on your program and the service activities that members need to be prepared for. We've heard about PSO's as short as 1-day and as long as 4-days. You decide what's best for your particular needs.*

**Do we really need a PSO?** *Do you ever! This is your first opportunity to set a good tone for your program, begin building a strong, cohesive team, and clarify the rules, regulations, and expectations to members. Hint: Don't call it a retreat or get-away--this is work!*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training** | An excellent resource. The Guide was developed specifically to address the needs of AmeriCorps*State, National, and Tribes and Territories programs in designing and delivering pre-service training to AmeriCorps members. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/nsrc_library/index.php |
| **National Service Resource Center** | **Great sample forms to tailor to your program.*<br><br>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service -- promoting volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/nsrc/forms/evaluation.html<br><br>VIC9.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment<br><br>VIC10.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment Answer Sheet<br><br>VIC11.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment Introduction and Rationale<br><br>VIE4.PDF -> Generic training session evaluation for members and staff (32K) |
| **Local or regional AmeriCorps programs** | To get ideas for your PSO | |
| **AmeriCorps Orientation video** | Give background to the National Service movement. | Corporation for National and Community Service |

## *Implement Pre-service Training*

**What is a Pre-service Training?**
A Pre-service Training (PST) helps your members develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to perform well on their assigned service project. Programs are required to provide training to members to ensure that quality and consistent skills are developed in the service delivery area. A PST is a requirement of your grant provisions.

**Why do you need a Pre-service Training?**
A PST component prepares members for the service activities ahead**.** The Pre-service Orientation discussed earlier familiarizes members with national service history, terminology, responsibilities, regulations and rules, benefits, and service activities. In other words, it focuses on "what" the program is and "why" we do it. The PST complements an orientation, by developing or enhancing the skills required for the particular service activities. Here the emphasis is on "how" to perform the service activities and it also helps members to internalize the project's mission and goals.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Identify credible and knowledgeable PST trainers. |
| | ✓ Prepare and conduct a Corps member needs/skill assessment. Use this data to design the PST. |
| | ✓ Develop the PST design to address the skills needed by Corps members. Clearly specify the outcomes you want to accomplish (…by the end of the PST, the member will be able to….) |
| | ✓ Create a PST agenda and create, adapt and/or collect support materials. |
| | ✓ Create authentic learning experiences so members can apply training to service activities. |
| | ✓ Prepare staff to model teamwork and service culture. |
| | ✓ Monitor, assess, and evaluate. Ask Corps members for feedback and make immediate changes if needed. See the sample *Pre-service Training Evaluation* form. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**What percentage of service hours are allowed for training and orientation activities?** *As mentioned in the previous section on the Pre-Service Orientation, programs can allocate only 20 percent of their service hours to orientation and training activities. That means 20 percent for both orientation and training activities, including ongoing training throughout the members' terms of service.*

**How long is a pre-service training?** *It depends on your program and the service activities that members need to be prepared for. A typical length is several days, but some programs may need as long as a week or more depending on the program.*

**Where should we do the actual PST?** *Hold it wherever is appropriate for the training design and the budget allocated.*

**How will I know if the PST is effective?** *If your members are able to carry out their service*

*activities pretty well from the start of the program, then you've probably done a good job in organizing and conducting the PST. The key to a great PST is to make sure the content and methodology of the training are appropriate to develop the types of skills required by the service activities.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training** | The Guide was developed specifically to address the needs of AmeriCorps*State, National, and Tribes and Territories programs in designing and delivering pre-service training to AmeriCorps members. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |
| **National Service Resource Center** | AmeriCorps Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/<br><br>XVI.D.4.PDF ->AmeriCorps Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form |
| **National Service Resource Center** | **Great sample evaluation forms to tailor to your program.*<br><br>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service -- promoting volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/<br><br>VIE4.PDF -> Generic training session evaluation for members and staff<br><br>VIE6.PDF -> Participant pre-training and post-training questionnaire |

## *Develop and Implement a Public Relations Plan*

**What is a Public Relations Plan?**
Public relations (PR) is positively presenting your organization and its programs to the local community. You use PR to inform the community of your outcomes, impact, and new initiatives. A PR plan is an annual plan that outlines how you will engage the community and the media to be informed of important activities and events.

**Why do you need a Public Relations Plan?**
Quite simply, to keep the community informed of the great things that Corps members and the program are doing. By effectively using the media, you increase your organization's visibility. Why is visibility important? Because it can improve your program's sustainability, fundraising capability, and recruitment capacity, to name a few opportunities.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review *Media Hot Tips* for quick ideas about conducting media interviews. |
| | ✓ Obtain a copy of *A Guide to Working with the Media* by contacting the Public Affairs Office from the Corporation for National and Community Service. This is an excellent, easy-to-use resource. |
| | ✓ Review the *Develop a Media Plan* |
| | ✓ Develop a Media List. For each television, newspaper (traditional and alternative), magazines, newsletters, or other media outlet, your list should include the name, title, address, e-mail address, phone number, and fax number of key reporters and editors. Many newspapers have "beat reporters" who cover certain topics such as education, crime, health, etc. |
| | ✓ Create a press kit about your event or activity. Press kits may include a press release, media advisory, picture(s), your logo, and organizational history. Tailor your press kits to appeal and be accessible to the audiences you are trying to reach. For example, if a sizeable portion of your population does not read or speak English, then translate your media pieces into their first language. |
| | ✓ Conduct media and community outreach training for staff and members. Everyone should be able to enthusiastically speak about the mission, facts, and services the program provides. Review the tool, *Preparing for a Media Interview*. |
| | ✓ Consider including a member of the media on your advisory board. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Are there any restrictions on Corps members giving interviews to the media?** *Yes. Review the grant provisions for specific guidance. Generally, when wearing the AmeriCorps uniform or identification, or during service hours, members must abide by the conditions outlined in the provisions.*

**Where can I go to get help in developing a media plan?** *There are two places. First, contact your parent organization (national direct) if you are a sub grantee or a partnering organization that does not have an in-house media department or contact your state commission office if your grant is through a state commission. They can provide guidance, feedback, and resources. A*

*second place can be a local public relations firm. Consider building a relationship with a firm that could offer pro bono (or no-fee) services.*

**What procedure should I follow that would allow a media photographer to take and publish photos of children and members from our after school program?** *At the beginning of the program, each child and member should have a signed permission slip granting your program the right to use the child's or member's name and image in media events and publications.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **State Commission or Parent Organization** | Office of Public Affairs or knowledgeable staff person. | |
| **Corporation for National and Community Service** | Print Materials for Newspapers and Magazines | http://www.americorps.org/resources/yourworld_print.html |
| **Guide to Working with the Media** | A downloadable Guide. Highly recommended! | www.nationalserviceresources.org/nsrclibrary/index.php |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Partner Agreement Document*

**Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps**
**Partner Agreement Form 2002-2003**

**Mission Statement**: It is the mission of the Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps to enable youth to become leaders and role models in the community by enhancing their educational and professional skills.

This form will serve as the partnership agreement between the Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps and

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Project Site Address (if different from Organization Address):

_____

_____

***GHYSC Schedule***
The Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps Members typically serve Monday-Friday 9:30-5:30.

Please determine the length and specifics of time you would like Corps Members to serve with your program.

| **Length of Project** | | |
|---|---|---|
| _____ short-term (less than 1 week) | _____ long-term (several weeks) | _____ ongoing (several months) |

| Number of Days | Number of Hours |
|---|---|
| _____ days per week | _____ hours per day |
| _____ specific days (optional) | _____ specific hours (optional) |

***Partner Organization Responsibilities***

- To provide Corps Members with adequate training, space, and supervision to ensure safe and effective service of the Member.
- To provide Corps Members and GHYSC staff with orientation to the project, goals, rules, and organization staff that will have direct contact with Corps Members
- To complete evaluations of Corps Members and GHYSC staff to ensure the service we provide to the community is needed and worthwhile to all those involved.
- To accomplish any goals set forth in the Partner Proposal Form

Please add any responsibilities that are specific to the Project Site and staff:

_____

_____

_____

Corps Members are prohibited by the Federal Government to engage in the following activities: ***Check your grant provisions to determine if any of the activities below are restricted only while serving in AmeriCorps.***

- Influencing legislation
- Engaging in partisan or election politics
- Organizing protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes
- Assisting or deterring union organizing
- Participating in assignments that displace employees
- Impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements
- Engaging in religious activities during service hours.
- Engaging in activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants
- Providing assistance to for-profit entities
- Participating in fundraising activities
-

## GHYSC Responsibilities

- To recruit, CORI check, and provide general skills training before their placement at sites
- To provide regular, on-going training for members to develop their skills toward better service and to promote their educational and professional skills (as mentioned above most training occurs on Wednesday mornings.)
- To provide regular supervision and transportation of members. Members are supervised by the Corps Leader (transportation and informal visits to site) and the Community Outreach Coordinator (scheduling and_____). Any problems, issues, and changes can be directed to either the Corps Leader or Community Outreach Coordinator.
- To provide project calendars to the project sites, notifying partners of Member Development Activities and scheduled days off or any other dates when members will be unable to serve.
- To accomplish service outcomes outlined in the partner proposal form and use performance measures to track progress.

- To resolve any issues dealing with members or scheduling in a timely and consistent manner.

## Authorization

By signing both parties agree to meet the above responsibilities as part of the Partner Agreement Form.

By signing both parties agree and understand the terms and conditions of this agreement.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| Signature of Community Outreach Coordinator | Signature of Partner Organization Representative. |
| _____ | _____ |
| Date | Date |

## *Pre-Service Training Evaluation*

**Pre-service Training Evaluation**
**ABC After school Program**
**January 30 -February 1, 2003**

Workshop Name_____ Date_____
**Presenter _____**

Scoring: 1–Needs Improvement 2- Fair 3- Good 4- Excellent 5- Outstanding

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall, the workshop was effective in providing relevant information | | | | | |
| The subject matter was presented in a clear, understandable manner | | | | | |
| The trainer was well prepared and knowledgeable. | | | | | |
| The trainer effectively listened and responded to questions and concerns. | | | | | |
| The written materials were useful and easy to understand. | | | | | |
| The workshop topic was of great interest to me. | | | | | |
| The workshop met my expectations. | | | | | |
| What part of the workshop was the most useful to you? | | | | | |
| What was the least useful part of the workshop? | | | | | |
| What would you improve about the session? | | | | | |

## *Develop a Media Plan*

Drafting a sound media plan each year will help you prepare for media attention, while conducting proactive media outreach. The plan should address three basic questions:

- **What are your Public Relations Goals?** Determining your goals will enable you to focus your efforts and stay on track.
  - Who are your audiences?
  - Are you trying to recruit new members?
  - Are you trying to increase awareness of your program?
  - Are you trying to build private support for your program?

- **What are your Resources?** Determining the resources you have available for media efforts will help you set realistic goals.
  - What materials and tools do you already have that will help you carry out a successful media strategy?
  - What staff are available to help you carry out your media plan?
  - How much time can staff devote to media-related activities?
  - What is your estimated budget for media relations?
  - Can your partner organizations provide assistance or resources?

- **What is your timeline?** Determining your time, opportunities, and limitations will enable you to organize and prioritize media plans.
  - Are there specific projects you'll be working on at a certain time that you'd like to promote?
  - Your timeline should include a plan for participating in events that all national service programs take part in — such as Opening Day, Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King Day, National Volunteer Week, and graduation/closing ceremonies.

Adapted from *A Guide to Working with the Media*

## *Media Hot Tips*

- Don't say "off the record." Everything is on the record!
- Make sure everything you say is something you would feel comfortable having printed on the front page of the daily newspaper.
- Be persuasive! Remember a typical urban media outlet has hundreds of potential stories to cover each day. Make your story stand out.
- Don't expect your event to be covered because you faxed or emailed the press release. You MUST call to confirm receipt and to make a personal connection with a reporter or news editor. Develop a cordial and on-going relationship with your local media people.
- Think about the visuals. Always position cameras so organization logos or the event itself becomes part of the visual.

Adapted from *A Guide to Working with the Media*

## *Preparing for a Media Interview*

Giving an interview to the press can be intimidating for people not familiar with the process.

**For all interviews**

- Analyze the potential audience.
- Think through what you want to accomplish as a result of the interview.
- Be honest, enthusiastic, and open.
- Don't use jargon or acronyms.
- Try to get your major message out as quickly as possible.

**TV and radio interviews**

- Look at the interviewer and have a conversation with him/her.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Don't make something up.
- Use anecdotes where possible; tell about how life was changed for a volunteer or a client.

**For the Press**

- Frequently reporters take notes and can't write as fast as most people talk; so it's best to make simple, powerful statements rather than to ramble on. This way you can avoid being misquoted.

**Articulating your program impacts for the media**

- Need + Service Activity + Accomplishment = Outcomes. Use powerful words and strong verbs: initiated, inaugurated, and established.
- Speak in terms of results: what situation was changed, whose life was improved?
- Use measurable terms: percentage of improvement, numbers of people affected positively.

*Adapted from Epicenter – Effective Practices Information Center*

# 0 ~ 3 Months
# Community & Site Partnerships

While developing your Community and Site Partnerships, during the Framing the Program phase, you worked to identify and link with local community organizations. Your goal was to develop relationships with organizations that could serve as service sites or complement your AmeriCorps program in other ways. By now you should be well on your way to solidifying partnerships and finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding.

In this section, you will be focused on creating and implementing Site Supervisor orientations for all your Service and Host Site Partners. Most likely you will have more than one partner, so you will also learn about managing multiple sites to achieve maximum effectiveness.

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Design and implement a Host/Service Site staff orientation.
- ❑ Identify ways to effectively manage multi-site partnerships.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Host/Service Site and Staff Orientation*

**What is a Site Supervisor Orientation?**
A Site Supervisor Orientation is a way to familiarize supervisors with AmeriCorps. It can be conducted in a variety of ways, such as one-on-one training, a workbook, or through a group workshop. The Orientation accomplishes several essential tasks. First, it introduces supervisors to the philosophy and universe of national service. Second, the orientation familiarizes participants with AmeriCorps' terms and conditions. Third, it establishes shared administrative priorities. Finally, the supervisor orientation clarifies roles and responsibilities. The orientation is a huge step toward building a strong program, establishing close relationships among supervisors, sharing effective supervisory practices, and helping site supervisors feel invested in the AmeriCorps program.

**Why do you need a Site Supervisor Orientation?**
Site supervisors are responsible for guiding and developing AmeriCorps members, ensuring the day-to-day service activities are executed, and satisfying administrative requirements. It is impossible to do this effectively without an orientation—an overview and understanding of the AmeriCorps service landscape plus the tools they need to operate the program successfully.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Assess whether the new site supervisors need basic supervisory or leadership skills training in addition to an AmeriCorps-specific overview and information. |
| | ✓ Create an interactive and effective orientation based on the above assessment and on requirements of the AmeriCorps program. Use the *Orientation Outline for AmeriCorps Site Supervisors* to guide the development of your orientation. Prepare well. Don't skimp on information. |
| | ✓ Hold the orientation prior to the start of the program year so site supervisors can help prepare their organization to put into place needed systems and structures. |
| | ✓ Take advantage of the expertise of the site supervisors. Capitalize on the skills and resources they possess and consider using experienced site supervisors to facilitate aspects of the orientation. |
| | ✓ Establish a plan for on-going support, including requirements, regular meetings, deadlines, and responsibilities that site supervisors need to respond to. Present and discuss the support plan during the orientation. The *Site Supervisor Ongoing Support* tool can give you ideas of things to include. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Where should we conduct a site supervisor orientation?** *The least costly option is to have the orientation on-site at your organization or at one of the partnering organization's offices. If you have a large number of site supervisors, you might want to hold the orientation at an off-site location such as a retreat center or civic hall. If you decide to do the orientation off-site, make sure you have funds in your budget to cover the facility and materials costs.*

**What happens after the site supervisor orientation?** *Definitely make sure there is an on-going support initiative. As the AmeriCorps program is implemented, your service site partners and on-site supervisors will have many questions and challenges. They will need opportunities for collaborative problem solving and other types of assistance.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps Grant Provisions; Program Policy and Procedures** | Includes some references and/or information to include in an orientation. | www.americorps.org |
| **AmeriCorps Front-line Supervisors' Workshop: Participants' Notebook** | Manual used in front-line supervisor's workshops. Includes roles and styles of supervision, communication skills, building a cohesive team, prioritizing work, and action planning. | www.nationalserviceresources.org |
| **Becoming a Better Supervisor** | Provides information on effective practices in supervising people. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Managing Multi-Site Partnerships*

**What is a Multi-site Partnership?**
Simply put, when your organization is working with one or more partner organizations where Corps members are placed, you have multi-site partnerships. Multi-site partnerships can be difficult if organizations are geographically distant from one another or if there are a large number of partnering organizations in a local area.

**Why do you need know about managing Multi-site Partnerships?**
When you have multi-site partnerships, you are working in a programming situation that is relatively complex in terms of oversight, shared supervision, communication and accountability. There are many places for breakdowns in both systems and support mechanisms and too many breakdowns will jeopardize the program's effectiveness. To create a strong partnership network, you need tailored site supervisor orientation, policy training, national or regional Corps member trainings, consistent and frequent communication, and regular site visits. Together, these components underpin the program and foster success.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Implement a strong *Memorandum of Understanding* outlining partnership roles and responsibilities. |
| | ✓ Conduct a strong Site Supervisor Orientation program. |
| | ✓ Develop an ongoing evaluation/continuous improvement instrument to determine the usefulness of field-generated effective practices. |
| | ✓ Implement strategies and protocols for consistent communication and stick to them. |
| | ✓ Implement strategies for *Working Effectively with Multiple Sites.* |
| | ✓ Determine ways all personnel can meet at a single location for beginning, mid-year and end-of-year activities. Make sure you put/have funding for these meetings in your budget. |
| | ✓ Conduct at least one formal site visit and informal site visits as needed. |
| | ✓ Conduct periodic training and team building activities for site supervisors. |

***Resource***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategies for Successful Multi-site Management (NWREL)** | This brief article provides additional suggestions in building strong relationships and celebrating accomplishments. | http://www.nwrel.org/ecc/americorps/newsletter/sum1999/article2.html |
| **Managing multiple sites and developing esprit de corps** | This article is written by practitioners and identifies concrete approaches to address challenges in three areas: Site Supervisors, National Training, and Site Visits. This article is geared for national direct programs. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/epicenter/index.php |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Site Supervisor Orientation Outline*

*Note: This outline does not include the leadership training aspects of the site supervisor orientation. If your supervisors are new to the task of guiding and managing members, then you will need to provide them with training to develop these skills.*

**Program Overview:** *Present the big picture of National Service and your organization and ensure that each site understands its place in your organizational structure.*

- National service overview: National Service history, AmeriCorps, Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Streams of Service: Show the Corporation for National and Community Service's organizational chart. Explain the different Streams of Service (SOS) and programs under the Corporation's umbrella, with an emphasis on the organizational structure in your state. Explain where SOS paths might cross and the role of the State Commission versus the Corporation state office.
- Describe the history and mission of the sponsor organization and its connection to National Service.

**AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions:** *Review the basic terms and conditions of AmeriCorps service.*

**Administrative Review**: *Review the program and fiscal information needed to run a successful program.*

- Corporation grant project application: Remind site supervisors that the Performance Measurement Worksheets are working documents and should be used to orient and guide new members.
- Financial agreements: Provide clarity on travel and training reimbursement processes and cost-share agreements, if applicable; review the terms, conditions and process for the stipend and education award; provide a schedule for pay periods; and explain who to call with questions on the living allowance.
- Reporting expectations and paperwork.
- Timeline/annual calendar: Explain which training, service projects, and team meetings are required and which are optional.

**Roles/Responsibilities:** *Review the different roles and responsibilities carried out by Corporation staff, program staff, site supervisors and Corps members.*

**Recruitment**: *If you will be coordinating member recruitment and placement, make sure that site supervisors are clear on the process and timeline, including a review of relevant deadlines and enrollment paperwork. If site supervisors have recruitment responsibilities, make sure relevant information is discussed.*

## *Site Supervisor Ongoing Support*

**Ongoing Management**

- The regular exchange of information should be a hallmark of your working relationship with your site supervisors.
- Both you and the site supervisors will get most of your information about the progress of your AmeriCorps program from the members themselves, through written and informal exchanges.
- While information from members is valuable, you will need more than that to manage your program effectively.

**Site visits**

- Establish a schedule for regular site visits, the initial one within the first month of the program. Plan to hold at least two others, one at the midpoint of the service year and then a final one near the end of the program.
- During site visits, look for program achievements as well as challenges.

**One-on-one and group meetings**

- Set aside a regular time each month or quarter to meet with your site supervisors privately to exchange feedback on the status of the program. Use time during your site visit if necessary.
- If you have multiple sites, plan group meetings that bring together all of your site supervisors in order to develop the sense of community and exchange that you established during their orientation.

**Resources for Site Supervisors**

- It is important to give your site supervisors a sense of being a part of the mission of your AmeriCorps program and the larger National Service network even though they may be working at different agencies and sites.
- In addition to group site supervisor meetings, make sure that site supervisors receive publications and information about AmeriCorps such as newsletters, upcoming trainings and invitations to local or regional AmeriCorps events.

*Adapted from the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service website* ***Site Supervisor Orientation*** *www.cnvs.org/am-tr3e1.htm*

## *Working Effectively with Multiple Sites*

*The following ideas were shared during a workshop on multi-site management during the 2001 National Conference on National Service and Community Volunteering. Details on this article (Working Effectively with Multiple Sites) can be found at www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter/.*

**Working with site supervisors**

- Provide technical assistance to potential site sponsors prior to them applying to the program so they understand the requirements for being a site.
- Decide which sites to place members based on a pre-determined set of criteria.
- Document the expectations of site supervisors and have each sign an agreement stating they understand what is expected of them.
- Conduct three days of orientation with site supervisors. Produce a site supervisors' manual that includes prohibited activities.
- Focus on a few performance measures for the site and make sure everyone -- site supervisors and members -- knows what the desired outcomes are and that the program is on track to accomplish those.
- To create buy in, get site supervisors directly involved with the program.
- Encourage members to talk with staff at their site about the national service program and its performance measures.
- Encourage communication between and among sites.
- Keep communication clear and direct. Provide information through newsletters, conference calls and the Internet.
-

**Team building and communicating with members**

- More Corps members at fewer sites works best. Place five to eight members at each site so members do not feel too isolated.
- Maintain a separate phone line for AmeriCorps members to contact you.
- Maintain a website for members to access updated information about the program such as meeting dates, reminders, forms, etc.

# 0 ~ 3 Months
# Member Development & Support

You are well on your way in the process of identifying and implementing the systems necessary to operate your program. A significant component of your program will be the AmeriCorps members you recruit and train to serve your local community.

Recruiting great AmeriCorps members whose personal values reflect the ethic of service can make the difference between a strong, productive service to the community and a program struggling with the challenges of attrition and ineffective service. This section and the ones to follow on Member Development and Support will guide you in recruiting and training a strong Corps.

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Develop or adapt the AmeriCorps member contract.
- ❑ Interview, select, and enroll your AmeriCorps members.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Member Interview and Selection Process*

**What is the Member Interview and Selection Process?**
This is a criteria-based process that includes standard questions, scoring rubrics, and organizational collaboration to select Corps members. In many ways, Corps members are community ambassadors as well as community service providers. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a process to select members with attributes and characteristics that fit well with your organization and/or the service site.

**Why do you need a Member Interview and Selection Process?**
You need a roadmap to guide you to the best candidates for your program. The process of interviewing candidates and selecting members requires considerable time and focus. To ensure objectivity and thoughtful decisions, you will need to involve at least two or more staff plus the service site partners who will sponsor members.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Decide what interviewing techniques/mechanisms the interview and selection committee wants to use. The *Planning Your Recruitment Process* worksheet can provide ideas on conducting interviews. (e.g., will interviews be conducted one-on-one, small group, large group, service activity?) |
| | ✓ Decide how your Service Site Partners, Community Advisory Group members and community stakeholders will be involved in the process. |
| | ✓ Train all interviewers in how to use the interview tools, document responses, and score candidates. |
| | ✓ Recruit for quality not quantity. |
| | ✓ Verify a candidate's eligibility to be in the program prior to enrollment. See the Program Director Handbook for specifics. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Using a Team Project to Conduct a Group Interview** | An innovative method to assess a prospective member's ability to work well within a group. The article provides a hands- on, team-based activity to use as a final selection process. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/epicenter/ |

## *Member Enrollment*

### What is the Member Enrollment Process?

Getting members into your program is a basic three-step process. The first two steps, recruitment and selection, were discussed earlier. The final step is the enrollment process. At this point you have received your award and identified potential members. Now you need to make them "official" members of your program.

### Why do you need a Member Enrollment Process?

Whether you have five or fifty-five potential AmeriCorps members, you need a careful and detailed process to set up their files, complete all their paperwork and update the WBRS system.

### How do you do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Ensure your organization is officially enrolled in WBRS. |
| | ✓ Ensure a *Member File Checklist* is included in each member's file folder. The member file can be a folder that contains all official documentation related to the member's service. All requirements must be accurate and up-to-date. Check all member files and documentation carefully for accuracy, proper signature, and appropriate and complete data. |
| | ✓ Decide whether the program will have a probationary period and establish a written policy. This probationary period can be up to 30-days (members must be entered into WBRS within 30-days). If a candidate is entered into WBRS immediately and drops from the program, your member attrition rate will be high and will not reflect well on your organization. Keep in mind the fiscal considerations associated with enrolling prospective members during a probationary period. Any funds spent on the individual during the probation period cannot come from the AmeriCorps grant. |
| | ✓ An enrollment policy should include a clause about the payment of the living allowance. An organization's option is to pay the living allowance out of its own budget or to pay no stipend at all until the candidate has completed the probationary period. This policy must be clearly communicated to the candidate. |
| | ✓ All member documentation is confidential and must be kept in a locked area. |
| | ✓ Review with prospective members their needs related to healthcare, accessibility, childcare enrollment, and loan forbearance. |
| | ✓ Complete criminal background checks on members working with children or other vulnerable populations. |

## *Member Contract*

**What is a Member Contract?**
It is the comprehensive, official document that specifies the obligations and responsibilities of the AmeriCorps member. The member contract states the minimal qualifications, position description, length of service, number of hours for successful completion, requirements, expectations, benefits, grievance procedures, member rights and responsibilities, and other organizational policies. The contract also spells out what the member can expect from the organization.

**Why do we need a Member Contract?**
The Member Contract ensures that the member and the organization have a clear, agreed upon set of expectations and remedies if expectations are not fulfilled.

How do you do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions to fully understand the obligations inherent in hosting and supervising members. |
| | ✓ Review your organization's policies and procedures and incorporate into the *AmeriCorps Member Contract* as appropriate. |
| | ✓ Walk prospective Corps members through the contract to ensure each member has a full understanding of her or his rights and responsibilities, and program requirements. |
| | ✓ Prohibited activities outlined in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions must be included in the contract and reviewed during orientation. |
| | ✓ Include a *Grievance Procedure* in the contract. Again, review this carefully with your prospective members. |
| | ✓ All member documentation is confidential and must be kept in a locked area. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Can team leaders discipline Corps members?** *No. Team leaders provide guidance and direction. The Program Supervisor is the appropriate person to address any issues related to a Corps member's violation of the prohibited activities, program code of conduct, or inappropriate behavior.*

**What are the "must include" items to put in the member contract?** ***Carefully review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions to ensure all required elements are in your member contract. The grant provisions include a list of specific items that are to be included in the member contract. The following are the critical elements: The minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the Program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award; description of acceptable conduct; prohibited activities; requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.); suspension and termination rules; specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause; position description; and grievance procedures. The contract may also include other program specific requirements as appropriate.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Agreements/Contracts/ Grievance Procedure for AmeriCorps members | www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/sample_forms/ |

## *Member Benefits*

### What are Member Benefits?

Once Corps members are enrolled into your program they become eligible for a number of benefits including training, a living allowance, health care coverage, accidental insurance, childcare benefits, uniforms, and an educational award.

### How do we do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions section on the benefits that Corps members receive. |
| | ✓ Ensure that AmeriCorps members are properly enrolled in the WBRS system to receive the living allowance. |
| | ✓ Determine if members need and are eligible for childcare and/or health care coverage. |
| | ✓ Determine if members have student loans that need to enter into loan forbearance (where loan payments are suspended for a specific time period). |
| | ✓ Implement an effective Life After AmeriCorps program. |
| | ✓ Implement on-going training and development activities. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps Grant Provisions** | Provide information on benefits available to Corps members. | Corporation for National and Community Service – Grants Office |
| **National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies** | Provide childcare for AmeriCorps members. | 1-800-570-4543 |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Planning Your Recruitment Process*

*Recruitment is not a magical process of having people sign up, but is one of the most critical aspects of operating your program. Recruitment should be a strategic process that connects you to candidates who need what you have to offer and who possess the skills and aptitude to help you reach your results. The success of your recruitment process will have direct effects on several areas, including morale, motivation, respect, retention, quality of service projects, relationships with service partners and community members, funding, and your ability to focus on the program rather than spend the majority of your time addressing problems. The following ideas may be helpful to use in recruitment strategies.*

### *Interviewing potential members*

- Conduct **group interviews** of 10 to 15 candidates. Include members in this process and have a plan to discuss common situations and challenges.
- Use **behavioral interviewing** techniques. Prepare questions that cannot be practiced by the candidate the night before. For example, "This position requires a tremendous amount of patience and effective communication skills working with diverse populations. Tell me about a situation when you were successful in communicating and how it worked out. Tell me about a time where you needed to be patient and communicate and you were not successful. What happened?"
- Use **scenario interviewing**. People have learned in the past how to complete applications, resumes, interview, and provide references. Scenario interviews will help you get a sense for how prospective members would respond to some of the common challenges encountered in the service activities in your program. These scenarios may even be conducted as an informal role-play during the interview.
- Check references very carefully.
- Trust your judgment. If you have an uncomfortable feeling about an applicant, you are might be right. What you see is what you get. Don't delude yourself into thinking that you will change them after the "marriage."
- Consider having partners and/or site supervisors sit in on the interviews.
- Connect with and/or visit a program with strong leadership and high-quality members. Find out what they think they did well and what they would do differently.
- Create an interview and selection process that includes multiple steps so that you have several opportunities to observe and interact with the candidates. For example, candidates come for an interview, visit a morning opening session, submit an application, take a test, meet with a member's council, etc.
- Invite more applicants to the orientation than you have slots. Some will not be interested.

**Serving, ongoing screening, and orientation**

- Establish some type of probation period.
- Develop an adequate orientation process. This should not be rushed. Invest time to build a functioning team of members who interact well with one another.
- Give all members a fair dose of what a typical program year will look like so that they can make an educated choice.

*Adapted from **Elements of a Successful Recruitment Process**, by Emilio N. Williams, formerly of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter/*

## *Member File Checklist*

| | Yes | No | N/A | Comments/Documentation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Member application (signed) | | | | |
| Member enrollment form | | | | |
| Documentation of Eligibility<br>• Age<br>• Citizenship Status<br>• High School Diploma/GED (see certification) | | | | |
| Parental consent (*if member is under18*) | | | | |
| Signed Member contract<br>• Position description<br>• Grievance Procedure<br>• Term of Service<br>• Performance Standards<br>• Standards of Conduct<br>• Other Program Requirements | | | | |
| Documentation of criminal background check | | | | |
| Time and activity logs, signed by member and supervisor. | | | | |
| Documentation of health care enrollment | | | | |
| Documentation of child care enrollment | | | | |
| Tax Documents: W4 (beginning of year); W2 (end of year) | | | | |
| Loan Forbearance Request form | | | | |
| Publicity release from (signed by parent if under 18) | | | | |
| Mid-term performance review | | | | |
| End of term performance review | | | | |
| Documentation of Compelling Circumstances | | | | |
| Change of Status Form | | | | |
| End of Term/Exit Form | | | | |

## *Sample AmeriCorps Contract*

### I. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this agreement to delineate the terms, conditions, and rules of membership regarding the participation of _____ (hereinafter referred to as the "member") in the _____ AmeriCorps Program (hereinafter referred to as the "Program").

### II. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The member certifies that he/she is a United States citizen, a United States national, or a lawful permanent resident alien and at least 17 years of age (or at least 16 years of age if the member is an out-of-school youth and a participant in one of two types of youth corps defined under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended).

### III. TERMS OF SERVICE

The member's term of service begins on _____ and ends on _____. The program and the member may agree, in writing, to extend this term of service for the following reasons:

1. The member's service has been suspended due to compelling personal circumstances.
2. The member's service has been terminated, but a grievance procedure has resulted in reinstatement.

The member will complete a minimum of 1700* hours (900 hours for part-time) of service during this period. ***[*Or the exact number of hours your program requires -- must be at least 1700 for full-time]***

The member understands that to successfully complete the term of service (as defined by the program and consistent with regulations of the Corporation for National Service) and to be eligible for the education award, he/she must satisfactorily complete at least 1700 (900) hours of service and satisfactorily complete pre-service training and the appropriate education/training that relates to the member's ability to perform service ***[You should customize this section to note any specific training requirements or other service requirements of your program. e.g., CPR, first aid, mediation and conflict resolutions skills and service-learning activities].***

The member understands that to be eligible to serve a second term of service the member must receive satisfactory performance reviews for any previous term of service. The member's eligibility for a second term of service with this program will be based on at least a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation of the member's performance focusing on factors such as whether the member has:

1. Completed the required number of hours;
2. Satisfactorily completed assignments, tasks, or projects; and
3. Met any other criteria that were clearly communicated both orally and in writing at the beginning of the term of service.

The member understands, however, that the mere eligibility for an additional term of service does not guarantee selection or placement.

## IV. POSITION DESCRIPTION

[In this section, the program should include the position description for the individual member to whom the contract applies. The position description should specify the types of duties, service activities, and assignments the member will be expected to complete.]

The name of the member's direct supervisor is _____.

## V. BENEFITS

A. The member will receive from the program the following benefits:

A living allowance in the amount of $_____.
The living allowance is taxable, and taxes will be deducted directly from the living allowance.
The living allowance will be distributed ***[weekly/biweekly]*** by ***[direct deposit]***
***[check]*** starting on _____[date]_____. The biweekly amount will be _____.

2. ***[Health benefits (if the member is eligible). The health insurance policy is attached.]***

If applicable, a childcare allowance of _____ will be provided by the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) directly to the provider, if the member qualifies for the allowance. (NACCRRA will distribute this allowance evenly over the term of service on a bi-weekly).

B. Upon successful completion of the member's term of service, the member will receive an education award from the National Service Trust. For successful completion of a full-time term, the member will receive an education award in the amount of $4,725. For successful completion of a part-time term, the member will receive an education award of ***[up to $2362.50.]***

If the member has not yet received a high school diploma or its equivalent (including an alternative diploma or certificate for individuals with learning disabilities), the member agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using the education award. This requirement can be waived if the member is enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis or the program has waived this requirement due to the results of the member's education assessment.

The member understands that his or her failure to disclose to the program any history of having been released for cause from another AmeriCorps program will render him or her ineligible to receive the education award.

C. If the member has received forbearance on a qualified student loan during the term of service, the National Service Trust will repay a portion or all of the interest that accrued on the loan during the term of service.

## VI. RULES OF CONDUCT

******REVIEW AMERICORPS GRANT PROVISIONS FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION.**

A. At no time may the member:

1. Engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state or federal law.
2. Engage in activities that pose a significant safety risk to others.

Engage in any AmeriCorps prohibited activities that include:

- attempting to influence legislation or an election;
- assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- engaging in religious instruction;
- conducting worship services;
- engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political candidates, political platforms, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- or providing a direct benefit to a for-profit entity, a labor union, a partisan political organization;
- engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- voter registration drives;
- other activities that the Corporation determines will be prohibited upon notice to the Grantee.

B. The member is expected to, at all times while acting in an official capacity as an AmeriCorps member:

***[NOTE: The following are given as examples only. You should customize this section to include all relevant requirements for your program.]***

1. Demonstrate mutual respect towards others.
2. Follow directions.
3. Direct concerns, problems, and suggestions to [*designate the appropriate program official here*].

C. The member understands that the following acts also constitute a violation of the program's rules of conduct:

***[NOTE: The following are given as examples only. You should customize this section to include all relevant requirements for your program.]***

1. Unauthorized tardiness.
2. Unauthorized absences.
3. Repeated use of inappropriate language (i.e. profanity) at a service site.
4. Failure to wear appropriate clothing to service assignments.
5. Stealing or lying.
6. **Engaging in any activity that may physically or emotionally damage other members of the program or people in the community.
7. **Unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of any controlled substance or illegal drugs during the term of service.
8. **Consuming alcoholic beverages during the performance of service activities.
9. **Being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs during the performance of service activities.
10. **Failing to notify the program of any criminal arrest or conviction that occurs during the term of service.

[***Your program may want to have these violations result in immediate termination or something more severe than having them remedied through the progressive discipline system described below. If so, you will need to move them out this section and add them to the subsection VII(B)(4) below.]***

Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, you must immediately notify the Program Director if you are convicted under any criminal drug statute. Your participation in the Program is conditioned upon compliance with this notice requirement and we will take action for violation of this.

In general, for violating the above stated rules in section VI(C), the program will do the following (except in cases where during the term of service the member has been charged with or convicted of a violent felony, possession, sale or distribution of a controlled substance):

1. For the member's first offense, an appropriate program official will issue a verbal warning to the member.

2. For the member's second offense, an appropriate program official will issue a written warning and reprimand the member.

3. For the member's third offense, the member may be suspended for one day or more without compensation and will not receive credit for any service hours missed.

4. For the fourth offense, the program may release the member for cause.

D. The member understands that he/she will be either suspended or released for cause in accordance with paragraphs (B), (D), and (E) of section VII of this agreement for committing certain acts during the term of service including but not limited to being convicted or charged with a violent felony, possession, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance.

## VII. RELEASE FROM TERMS OF SERVICE

A. The member understands that he/she may be released for the following two reasons:
   1. For cause, as explained in paragraph (B) of this section; or
   2. For compelling personal circumstances as defined in paragraph (C) of this section.

B. The program will release the member for cause for the following reasons:
   1. The member has dropped out of the program without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances from the appropriate program official;
   2. During the term of service the member has been convicted of a violent felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance;
   3. The member has committed a fourth offense in accordance with paragraph (E) of section VI of this agreement;
   4. The member has committed any of the offenses listed in ***[Your program may want to add the **violations in section VI(C) 6-10 here or any others you deem appropriate]***; or

   Any other serious breach that in the judgment of the director of the Program would undermine the effectiveness of the program.

C. The Program may release the member from the term of service for compelling personal circumstances if the member demonstrates that:

1. The member has a disability or serious illness that makes completing the term impossible;
2. There is a serious injury, illness, or death of a family member which makes completing the term unreasonably difficult or impossible for the member;
3. The member has Military service obligations;
4. The member has accepted an opportunity to make the transition from welfare to work; or
5. Some other unforeseeable circumstance beyond the member's control makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for the member to complete the term of service, such as a natural disaster, a strike, relocation of a spouse, or the nonrenewal or premature closing of a project or the program.

D. Compelling personal circumstances do not include leaving the Program:
1. To enroll in school;
2. To obtain employment, other than in moving from welfare to work; or
3. Because of dissatisfaction with the program.

E. The Program may suspend the member's term of service for the following reasons:

1. During the term of service the member has been charged with a violent felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance. (If the member is found not guilty or the charge is dismissed, the member may resume his/her term of service. The member, however, will not
receive back living allowances or credit for any service hours missed.)

2. During the term of service the member has been convicted of a first offense of possession of a
controlled substance. (If, however, the member demonstrates that he/she has enrolled in an approved drug rehabilitation program, the member may resume his/her term of service. The member will not receive back living allowances or credit for any service hours missed.)

3. The Program may suspend the member's term of service for violating the rule of conduct provisions in accordance with the rules set forth in paragraph (C) of section VI of this agreement.

F. If the member discontinues his/her term of service for any reason other than a release for compelling personal circumstances as described in paragraph (B), (D), and (E), the member will cease to receive the benefits described in paragraph (A) of section V and will receive no portion of the education award or interest payments.

G. If the member discontinues his/her term of service due to compelling personal circumstances as described in paragraph (C) of section VII of this agreement, the member will cease to receive benefits described in section V.

## VIII. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

A. The member understands that the Program has a grievance procedure to resolve disputes concerning the member's suspension, dismissal, service evaluation or proposed service assignment.

B. The member understands that, as a participant of the program, he/she may file a grievance in accordance with the Program's grievance procedure. ***[Incorporate your grievance procedure into the body of this section].***

## IX. AMENDMENTS TO THIS AGREEMENT

This agreement may be changed or revised only by written consent by both parties.

## X. AUTHORIZATION

The member and Program hereby acknowledge by their signatures that they have read, understand, and agree to all terms and conditions of this agreement. (If the member is under the age of 18 years old, the member's parent or legal guardian must also sign.)

| AmeriCorps Member | AmeriCorps Program Director |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| ***Signature*** | ***Signature*** |
| _____ | _____ |
| ***Name*** | ***Name*** |
| _____ | |
| ***Parent/Legal Guardian*** | |
| _____ | _____ |
| ***Date*** | ***Date*** |

# 0 ~ 3 Months
# Financial & Grants Management

You will be very busy with financial and grants management tasks your first three months of operations. Ensure your financial systems are compatible with AmeriCorps requirements. For example, you and your staff will enter new AmeriCorps members into WBRS; receive, verify, and properly file all eligibility documentation for AmeriCorps members; complete necessary reports and ensure that your program is meeting its cash match requirement. Use this section as a guide for these and other important first steps in the life of your program.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Learn about completing a monthly budget review.
- ❑ Assess whether your organization is meeting the grant match requirements.
- ❑ Identify your financial reporting requirements.
- ❑ Ensure you are meeting all your member responsibilities including member enrollment, the maintenance of member records, living allowance, and benefits.
- ❑ Ensure you review AmeriCorps Grant Provisions to identify Single Audit Act requirement.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Monthly Budget Review*

**What is the monthly budget review?**
This is a review of the status of your actual expenditures against the funds available (i.e., how much money you have spent as compared to how much funding you have available). This should be done on a monthly basis to make sure that there are sufficient funds available to meet stated goals and objectives. It is also a check on the match portion of the budget to make sure you are on track to fulfilling your match obligation

**Why do you have to review the budget?**
There are several reasons you want to periodically review the budget. First, you want to make sure that there are funds available before your organization incurs expenditures. Second, reviewing expenditures ensures that the correct expenses are charged to the account. Third, knowing where funds are spent can assist the executive director or program director to determine whether a budget modification is needed. Finally, the Office of Management and Budget Circulars require that an organization review the budget to actual expenditures.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Implement a system within your organization to obtain financial information on a regular basis. |
| | ✓ Establish a detailed General Ledger that accounts for individual expenditures by line item. Monitor expenditures monthly. |
| | ✓ Establish appropriate account numbers so that both AmeriCorps federal fund and matching funds are reported separately in the accounting system. |
| | ✓ Enter financial information into WBRS. Complete the Monthly Periodic Expense reports in the WBRS system. |
| | ✓ Mandate a financial reports schedule to receive financial information consistently each month. |
| | ✓ Have a list of the budget amendment regulations from the grant provisions available when you are reviewing the actual expenses. |
| | ✓ If you are a parent organization, you should establish a written budget amendment policy for your sub-grantees. Ensure that sub-grantees review their budgets and seek amendments when necessary. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**When do I need to submit a budget amendment? How do I do it***? The Grantee must obtain the prior written approval of the Corporation's Office of Grants Management before deviating from the approved budget. Budget amendments might include the need to reallocate funds from the "member support cost" category in the approved budget; purchases of equipment over $5,000; and/or changes in the cumulative budget line items that amount to 10% or more of the program budget where the Corporation's share of the grant award is $100,000 or less.*

**Are there specific budget amendment rules that I should know?** *There are a few budget changes that require special approval from CNCS. If the grant award is over $100,000, the changes requiring approval include: Reallocation of funds from the Member Costs category to other line items, purchases of equipment over $5,000, and specific costs as outlined in the OMB cost circulars. Grant amendments are also required for programmatic changes including: change in scope or goals and objectives, substantial changes in member supervision, and sub-grants or contracts not included in the approved budget.*

## *Meeting Grant Match Requirements*

**What is a match requirement?**
The match requirement is the percentage of resources (cash or in-kind) that complement the federal grant funds received by your organization. Match requirements are established by law and policy as a condition of receiving the AmeriCorps grant. In addition, the grant provisions require that the Grantee provide and account for matching funds as agreed upon in the approved application and budget. The match must be documented and verified in the financial records. If you do not believe that you will reach required match level, work with your Grants Officer.

**What form can the match be in?**
The match for member support costs must be in cash and from non-federal sources. The match for program operating costs can be either cash or in-kind contributions to your program. In-kind match is a non-cash donation of a good or service. In-kind donations have the same documentation requirements as other expenditures. Documentation must be kept to support the value placed on the items. Additionally, staff hours not charged to the grant can be counted toward the match requirement. The documentation for staff hours must be explicitly identified. Whether the staff is on budget in-kind or is being paid with grant funds, each must have a timesheet that differentiates between AmeriCorps and non-AmeriCorps time. Timesheets must track actual hours served and must be signed by two supervisors.

**How do we do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Report the in-kind contribution in the financial system so it is included in financial reports. |
| | ✓ Use the financial system to track match by creating expense and revenue accounts in the general ledger. |
| | ✓ Maintain supporting documentation when placing a monetary value on in-kind donations. The donor provides this supporting documentation. |
| | ✓ Check sub-grantees financial reports to ensure that they are meeting match. |

***Resources***
**Match Forms and Criteria**
This information applies to all match requirements not just operating costs.

| Costs | Match Source | Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| **Member Support Costs** | Non-federal cash | • Programs must meet the grantee share of Member Support Costs during each reporting period.<br>• The minimum match in this category is described in the grant application. |
| **Program Operating Costs** | Cash and in-kind donations. | • Match is verifiable from Grantee records.<br>• Match is not included as contributions from any other federally assisted program.<br>• Match is necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient accomplishment of program outcomes.<br>• Match is allowable under applicable cost principles.<br>• Minimum match for operating costs as described in application guidelines. |

## *Financial Reporting*

**What are the financial reporting requirements for my grant?**
There are two financial reports required by the grant. Grantees submit Financial Status Report (FSR) which goes to the Corporation. The second report, SF 272, goes to the Department of Health and Human Services. These reports are filed by grantees, not subgrantees. The SF 272 is filed electronically in the Payment Management System. You file this report to identify cash disbursed in the grant. A third report, the Periodic Expense Report (PER) is not a mandatory CNCS report although the state commission or parent organization may require it. If you are using WBRS to track expenditures, you will be able to generate the FSR from the PER.

**Why are these reports important?**
There are only two FSR financial reports required each year and it is important to have these accurate and timely. This is the information that CNCS uses to review financial grant activity. The PMS 272 report is important for HHS to have information about expenses incurred, funds disbursed, and cash on hand. If these reports are not done in a timely fashion, you will not be able to draw down funds until they have received the information.

**How do we do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Establish an appropriate chart of accounts that provides detailed information on both federal CNCS and grantee match expenditures. |
| | ✓ Perform a monthly reconciliation of the account to ensure that the information is accurate and correct (this will save considerable time when the reports are due). |
| | ✓ Mark the calendar a few weeks before the report is due as a reminder. |
| | ✓ Review financial information monthly to detect incorrect information, so reports can be submitted on a timely basis. |
| | ✓ Establish a system to receive consistent information from your sub-grantees (if applicable). |
| | ✓ If you have sub-grantees, give them a FSR due date, a few days before your aggregate report is due to ensure you have all information. |
| | ✓ Review the table *Financial Reports for the AmeriCorps Grant* for specific information on each financial report. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Are the FSR reporting requirements different if I have sub-grants?** *If you are a grantee that sub-grants part or all of the funds you receive from CNCS, you must submit an aggregate FSR report that includes all of the financial information from your sub-grantees. A grantee has the responsibility to analyze, review and follow-up on their sub-grantees' reports.*

**My sub-grantee is not submitting FSR information; they say it is not ready. What do I do?**
*The FSR reports are due to the Corporation 30-days after the designated period. Many organizations may not have finalized accounting information including all of the monthly journal entries to account for all of the activity. Organizations should take the best information available from their accounting system at the time the report is due. Small variances can be reported in subsequent periods. The information on FSRs is reported on a cumulative basis over the life of the grant. Remember it is critical that the FSR reports are submitted in a timely fashion.*

## *Member Enrollment Responsibilities*

**What are the Member Enrollment responsibilities?**
It is essential to obtain accurate and complete documentation for prospective AmeriCorps members to ensure their eligibility. While program staff are busy recruiting, interviewing, and selecting prospective AmeriCorps members, the Human Resources, Fiscal Departments, or the person responsible for these activities in your organization need to be prepared for the significant paperwork generated as individuals are brought on as members.

**Why are Member Enrollment processes important?**
Along with ensuring great people are recruited to serve; your organization must also ensure each member is eligible, the member's information is accurate, documented in paper files, and entered into WBRS. This is a requirement of the grant; member requirements are included in the Grant Provisions which will be formed in the grant regulations. When a member is officially enrolled, their Educational Award is put aside for them in the National Service Trust.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the Member Enrollment section of the Grant Provisions. |
| | ✓ When prospective members are interviewed, inform them of the documentation necessary for eligibility. |
| | ✓ Collect member eligibility documentation prior to prospective member's first day of service. |
| | ✓ Create a *Member File Checklist* for each member folder so that all information is collected. See the **Member Development and Support Section.** This folder contains all paper documentation on the member. |
| | ✓ Identify the staff member(s) responsible for reviewing and obtaining missing documents, inputting WBRS information, and maintaining member records. |
| | ✓ Locate a secure location where confidential member records will be maintained. |
| | ✓ Make sure to gather documentation for all members that demonstrates they meet eligibility requirements including:<br>• Citizen of the U.S., U.S National or lawful permanent resident alien.<br>• At least 17 years old at the beginning of service or out of school and enrolled in a program that meets specific requirements.<br>• Has a high school diploma or will enroll in GED classes during service. |
| | ✓ Member enrollment information must be reported to CNCS within 30 days through WBRS. See the **Member Development and Support Section** for more information. |
| | ✓ Perform site visits to sub-grantees and review member files to ensure they are collecting the proper documentation. |
| | ✓ Ensure all member files are complete prior to issuing the first living allowance check. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**How is bringing an AmeriCorps member into your organization different from hiring regular staff?** *Usually organizations have a standard hiring practice where all employees must complete an I-9 form prior to receiving their first paycheck. A completed I-9 form does not necessarily confirm that an individual is eligible to enroll as an AmeriCorps member, as it covers work authorization rather than eligibility for AmeriCorps. Programs that have relied on I-9 forms have faced the questioning of member costs in audits, simply because an I-9 itself is not necessary evidence of eligibility for AmeriCorps.*

## *Member Attendance Records*

**What are member attendance records?**
Programs are responsible for keeping track of each member's hours. There must be a time sheet or attendance log that is completed and signed by **both** the member and the supervisor. Even if member hours are tracked electronically, supporting documents must be retained in the member's file.

**Why are member attendance records important?**
These are official, certified documents that substantiate the number of service hours completed by a member. This information is necessary for members to receive their educational award.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Create a system to track members' time that has the capability to track service hours and training hours. At least 80% of AmeriCorps members' hours must be direct service and no more than 20% of AmeriCorps members' hours can be spent on training. Review your AmeriCorps Grant Provisions for more specific details. |
| | ✓ Ensure AmeriCorps members have opportunities to make up service hours for sick time or holiday time. |
| | ✓ Only count time served – do not include vacations or holiday time. |
| | ✓ Make sure time sheets are authorized (signed) by the members' supervisor. |
| | ✓ Keep accurate records on members' hours served, be sure to double check math on time reported. Provide member a monthly update on their progress of hours towards completion. |

**<u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>**
**If I enter member hours into WBRS, do I still have to keep their timesheets on file?**
*Definitely. You must retain member time sheets in the member's file. Without these records, the members cannot receive their educational award.*

**Do members complete the same timesheet as staff?** *No. Members should not complete the same timesheet as staff. You will need to create a different timesheet for them. Make sure that you are tracking training and service hours, in addition to total member hours.*

**How do I account for holidays and sick time?** *Members only accumulate hours for time that they are providing service, preparing for service, or training for service. They do not accumulate sick time or get credit for holidays.*

## *Member Living Allowance*

**What is the member living allowance?**
Some AmeriCorps members receive a financial stipend or living allowance for their service and participation in the AmeriCorps program. An important point is that the living allowance is not based on an hourly rate or annual salary. Members "serve" they do not "work." They are part of an "AmeriCorps program" not a "job." They receive a "stipend" or "living allowance" not an "hourly wage". The stipend is a fixed amount provided to active members.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Ensure that a section of the member contract states the living allowance, term of service, and amount distributed per pay period. |
| | ✓ Set and discuss policies concerning the number of hours members are required to serve. |
| | ✓ Check to see that the living allowance is within the required range. |
| | ✓ Correctly calculate member living allowances to be evenly distributed over term of service. |
| | ✓ Make sure that the living allowance is not paid based on hours worked in a pay period. |
| | ✓ Have Members complete a W-4 form. |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How much is the member living allowance?** *The allowable living allowance range can be found in the AmeriCorps guidelines. If your members will be paid a living allowance, the amount can be found in your program budget.*

**How do I distribute the member living allowance?** *To determine the living allowance, divide the number of weeks, months, or pay periods by the program cycle. This will enable you to ensure that the living allowance is consistently distributed and not based on hours served in a pay period. This amount should be paid equally over the member's term of service, regardless of the number of hours served in a given pay period. This ensures that the member earns the entire living allowance if she or he successfully complete the program.*

**What about withholding and other tax liability issues that may affect the payment of the AmeriCorps living allowance?** *The living allowance is subject to FICA, state and federal tax withholdings. Members should complete an annual W-4 form. In some states, the living allowance is subject to unemployment insurance. Check with your State Commission or State Labor Department to determine if unemployment tax must also be paid.*

**If a member only serves ten hours, rather than 40 hours, in one week, do they still receive their entire living allowance?** *Yes, a member's living allowance is not based on an hourly rate or the number of hours spent in service each week. Members are not paid while on suspension, however. If a member is missing a significant number of hours due to sickness or other reasons you might consider suspending her or his term of service until she or he is able to return to service. The living allowance cannot be withheld as long as a member is actively enrolled in the program. A member who misses a significant number of hours must meet the requirements of the contract in order to successfully complete her or his service year.*

## *Member Benefits*

**What benefits are AmeriCorps Members eligible for?**
Full-time AmeriCorps members are eligible for the education award, health care and childcare. You may choose to provide benefits to part time members. The health insurance plan must meet specific requirements and there are cost limitations imposed by CNCS. Childcare benefits are secured through an authorized CNCS provider.

**How do we do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) manages CNCS's childcare benefits program. |
| | ✓ If you have full-time AmeriCorps members, secure a health insurance provider. Check with other AmeriCorps programs in your state for recommendations on health insurance providers. |
| | ✓ Explain to AmeriCorps members what the benefits are in the plan and how to access coverage. |
| | ✓ Be clear about members' benefits in the Member Contract. |
| | ✓ During your member orientation include a section to describe member benefits and how to access them. |
| | ✓ Create a handout for Members that describes there benefits and provides contact numbers. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**I have a health benefits plan for current employees. Are members eligible for the same benefits?** *Full-time members are eligible for health insurance. There are certain requirements for benefit plans, as well as, allowable cost limitations to the grant. Plans costing more than $150 per member per month must be approved by CNCS. Be sure to review the Grant Provisions for specific information.*

**How are member benefits different from staff benefits?** *A member's health benefits policy must meet specific requirements as provided in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. Other employee benefits such as dental, life insurance, and retirement are not allowable costs for members on the AmeriCorps grant.*

**Are all AmeriCorps members eligible for benefits**? *Full-time members are eligible for benefits. Part-time members can also receive benefits as long as the costs of the benefits are not paid for from the CNCS grant.*

**Is there a cost-share or co-pay for the members to pay for part of the cost of health insurance?** *Sometimes. It depends on the health insurance provider. The Corporation allows 85% of the member costs to be paid for with federal CNCS funds and requires a 15% match for all of the costs in the member Support Cost category.*

**Does CNCS recommend any particular health insurance plan/s?** *No. There are a few insurance plans that are commonly used by AmeriCorps programs because they are cost effective and meet the requirements. However, the exact insurance provider is up to the grantee. Make sure to check the grant provisions for the specific plan requirements and cost limitations.*

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Financial Reports for the AmeriCorps Grant*

| Organization | Report | Due Date | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|
| Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System | PMS 272 | Quarterly basis forty-five days from the end of each quarter | HHS serves as the Corporation's banker. This report identifies amounts of cash disbursed by the grantee. It is submitted each quarter. Sub-grantees are not required to complete this. |
| Corporation for National and Community Service | Financial Status Report (FSR) | Two reports only.<br>**October 1 – March 31**<br>**April 1 – September 30**<br><br>Due to CNCS 30 days from the end of the reporting period. | FSRs report both federal and grantee expenditures. |

# 4 ~ 6 Months
# Sustaining the Program

Now that you have reached this point…take a deep breath, relax a little, then do some reflecting. How did my recruitment and enrollment go? Are my partnerships in place and working? Are my administrative requirements being met? Did my orientation work? Is the training calendar appropriate?

The 4-6 month program phase gives you an opportunity to examine your work and your program through the lens of continuous improvement. You will conduct site visits and AmeriCorps member midterm evaluations, but more importantly you will apply meaning to them. What does this examination imply about the need to improve our program? What does it say about how well we are meeting our program's performance measures and the community's needs?

You get to look forward and backward at the same time. What has my recent experience told me that I should apply to the next time I do this particular task? For example, what should I put in place for next recruiting season? How should I modify my site agreements?

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Assess and report progress on performance measures.
- ❑ Plan, design, budget, and execute a staff retreat.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Progress Report*

### What is the Progress Report?

A progress report is the report on the progress of your AmeriCorps program towards meeting its performance measures. It is submitted electronically through WBRS. The WBRS includes a section where you will find the forms that should be completed in order to compile your progress report. The progress report will include information about your Corps member enrollment, hours, performance measures, accomplishments, outcomes, and great stories.

### Why do you need to submit a Progress Report?

Each state commission has different requirements regarding the submission of progress reports. Generally, progress reports provide the commissions and/or parent organizations with a "picture" of how the program is functioning. Check with your commission or parent organization to determine progress report submission requirements.

### How do you do it?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Complete the training for WBRS through your state commission. |
| | ✓ Complete the initial set up of the WBRS system. |
| | ✓ Check with your commission or parent organization to determine how many times per year you need to submit a progress report. |
| | ✓ Ensure there are systems established to record and capture required data. This includes establishing data collection systems with your Service Sites. |
| | ✓ Maintain an on-going file of information so that you have it ready when you need it for the APR. |

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

**When do we submit a progress report?** *Consult with the reporting policies established by your Commission or national direct parent organization to determine when the progress report is submitted. CNCS requires that direct grantees of the Corporation (National parent organizations, commissions, tribes and territories) submit an annual report called the Grantee Progress Report. This is submitted through WBRS within approximately 45-60 days of the end of the CNCS fiscal year September 30th.*

## *Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures*

**What does it mean to Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures?**
Once your program is in full swing, it is time to begin assessing program accomplishments. The idea is to chart progress toward goal accomplishment, determine the success of partnerships, and determine what is working and what needs improvement. Once you have done the assessment, you should report progress to all stakeholders.

**Why should you Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures?**
Simple. You want to ensure that everyone is doing what they said they would do, members are experiencing a productive and successful service year, communities being served see value in the service the members are providing, and to ensure everything is on target. Most importantly, progress equates to a better chance of continued funding.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Identify staff person(s) responsible for collecting and analyzing data. |
| | ✓ Work with your host sites and other partners to identify a method for disseminating and collecting the performance measurement tools (surveys, interview protocols, etc.). |
| | ✓ Establish a system that collects program data on a monthly basis. |
| | ✓ Review any performance measurement data gathered from an external evaluator. |
| | ✓ Invite your host site partners, community partners, Corps members, and community members served to participate in completing your Customer Satisfaction Survey. |
| | ✓ If a site visit has been conducted, use that data also to assess performance measures. |
| | ✓ Implement a variety of performance measurement tools and use the data to evaluate program achievement and identify challenges. (See Resources) |
| | ✓ Revisit program goals with partners. Identify next steps and set targets. |
| | ✓ Report relevant information on the WBRS progress report. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| National Service Resource Center | *Great sample forms to tailor to your program.*<br><br>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service helping to promote volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA. | http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/sample_forms/<br><br>XVI.B.2.PDF -> AmeriCorps Community Survey<br><br>XVI.E.2.PDF ->AmeriCorps Program Director Survey<br><br>VIC1.PDF -> AmeriCorps member mid-year self-evaluation form<br>VID1.PDF -> Service site evaluation of AmeriCorps program and members<br><br>VID2.PDF -> Site supervisor check-up for AmeriCorps |

## *Refine Annual Calendar*

**What does it mean to refine your annual calendar?**
At this point in the program cycle, you may have a better picture of the activities and events that impact program planning and operations. It's a perfect time to review and make adjustments to the calendar based on what you are learning and seeing.

**Why should you refine your annual calendar?**
By revisiting and updating the program calendar, you are taking into account the lessons learned during the first few months of the program. The result will be a stronger, more on-target program.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Pull together and review any performance measurement data you have about the program. |
| | ✓ Review performance measures and end outputs. |
| | ✓ Bring together relevant staff members to participate in the review and revision of the program calendar. |
| | ✓ Make sure that stakeholders who have activities that could impact the revised program calendar are invited to participate. |
| | ✓ Bring together your service site partners to review and revise the program calendar. |
| | ✓ Share the revised program calendar with all members of the organization. |

## *Staff Retreat*

**What is a Staff Retreat?**
Take a breather, reconnect, reevaluate, chart the next six months—that's what a staff retreat is all about. Sometimes it may serve the dual purpose of a retreat and training workshop. It is primarily an occasion for all the staff to come together, usually away from the office, to review past activities and chart the goals and targets for the future.

**Why should you conduct a Staff Retreat?**
The process of starting up a program takes an incredible amount of energy. A mid-year staff retreat gives everyone a chance to step back and gain perspective on what has happened in the program. It's also a time to celebrate the successes and make adjustments where needed.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Conduct a needs assessment using interview and/or surveys to determine staff training needs and to identify key programmatic and management issues that need attention. |
| | ✓ Design the retreat using information gathered from the above needs assessment. |
| | ✓ Work with senior management and a steering committee that represents a cross-section of staff to create the agenda. Ensure the retreat schedule doesn't compete with other organizational priorities. |
| | ✓ Develop and communicate clear goals and objectives of the retreat. See *Conducting an Effective Staff Retreat*. |
| | ✓ Prioritize the issues you want the retreat to address. |
| | ✓ Include team building and networking activities so the staff can develop stronger linkages between each other. |
| | ✓ Ensure your budget can support the staff retreat. |
| | ✓ Identify an off-site space to conduct the retreat. The staff needs to be away from the office to really focus. |
| | ✓ Invite outside presenters/trainers to bring new learning to the organization. If you use an outside consultant, clearly communicate what you want to achieve. |
| | ✓ Follow through on the suggestions or recommendations that arise in the retreat. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **State Commission, Parent Organization, or other AmeriCorps groups.** | Training and Technical Assistance Providers and Resource list. Use this to identify potential external trainers. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/training/index.html |
| **Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training** | Good information about training implementation. | http://www.etr.org/nsrc/pdfs/startingstrong/starting.html |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**What benefit is gained from holding a retreat off-site?** *The biggest benefit is focus. Without the distraction of the everyday work pressures, staff members are able to focus and fully participate in the workshop.*

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Conducting an Effective Staff Retreat*

Retreats are a valuable resource, but much of their potential can be wasted if they are planned ineffectively. Retreats should always be a forum for learning and working together that supports program activities in the field.

**Consider the following when implementing a retreat:**

- Define the desired outcome of the retreat.
- Determine who needs to attend in order to accomplish the desired outcome.
- Decide whether you will use a facilitator to help plan the agenda and manage the retreat.
- If you use a facilitator, decide whether s/he should be from outside the organization or inside the organization.
- Once you know how many people to invite, the type of space you need, etc., identify a facility that can accommodate your requirements.
- Visit the facility if you are not familiar with it to verify the accommodations.
- Develop an agenda for the meeting and determine whether you want the attendees to do any work prior to the retreat.
- Schedule some "fun" or "down" time for attendees to reflect and just enjoy being together.
- Hold retreats that last longer than a day at the beginning of the week. Participants will be much more focused if they have had the weekend to relax.
- Reconfirm details with the facility a few days before the retreat.
- Arrive early the day of the retreat to set up the room.
- Ask everyone to complete a Retreat Feedback Form at the end of the retreat.

**Outcome or impact achieved:**
Properly implemented retreats can create a setting that encourages communication and strengthens bonds as well as give you a better understanding of your participant/staff needs.

***Source:*** *Corporation for National Service. Handbook for Continuous Improvement, Tools & Practices, Participant/Staff Retreat, pp. 1-12.*

# 4 ~ 6 Months
# Community & Site Partnerships

Much of the success of your AmeriCorps program relies on the strength of your relationships with Service Sites and other community partners. Your role in these partnerships includes several elements. First, you want to ensure that your AmeriCorps members are engaged in productive service. Second, you want to determine whether on-site member development activities are taking place along with appropriate supervision and support. Third, you want to identify whether the Service Site is maintaining appropriate and accurate records. Finally, you want to determine what training or supports are needed by community partners to sustain the relationship. This section will prepare you to fulfill your role.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Plan and conduct a site monitoring visit to assess the strengths and needs of your subgrantees or service sites.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Site Monitoring Visit*

**What is a Site Monitoring Visit?**
A site monitoring visit is a physical visit to an operating, placement, host, or service site to observe firsthand the work, the challenges, the successes, and the "big picture" of your partners who often may be some distance from the your organization.

**Why should you conduct a Site Monitoring Visit?**
There are three key reasons to conduct site visits. First, you want to ensure that Corps members are receiving and providing the services the service site partner has agreed to provide. Second, a visit can provide needed support and guidance to sites that are struggling and need timely support. Third, as mentioned above, an in-person visit helps you get a feel for the experiences of this particular site, the members, and the community they serve.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the *Four Types of Site Visits*. Consider which type of site visit you want to complete. |
| | ✓ Send or provide service site partner with a copy of the site visit schedule. Review and implement *Site Visit Procedures* and the *Checklist for an Ideal Site Visit* tools. |
| | ✓ Provide a copy of the *Desk Audit Form* well in advance of the visit. |
| | ✓ Where appropriate use the *Member Files Desk Audit* tool as a checklist of what is supposed to be in the Corps member files. |
| | ✓ Review a random sampling of Corps member files. Physically check the contents of the file using the Member Files Desk Audit tool. |
| | ✓ Site visits are not punitive. Be open and transparent about the process. Conduct visits regularly or base your visits on a risk assessment of the organization. |
| | ✓ Review your completed Site Monitoring Form with the service site partner staff. |
| | ✓ Provide sites with *Site Satisfaction* and the *AmeriCorps Site Satisfaction Survey* tools to use to reflect on effective practices. These tools can be helpful in discussing areas of strength and improvement. |
| | ✓ Clarify and monitor follow-up actions (compliance issues, staff skill enhancement, etc.) to be taken on the part of the Service site. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***
**How many times should I visit a site during the program year?** *Every site merits in-person attention. If your budget or staffing levels permit, at least one site visit per site is recommended. Some sites may need more visits and more technical assistance from you than other sites. In cases where sites need a great deal of support, also consider providing it through desk audits, e-mail, phone and fax communications in addition to the in-person visits.*

**Who, from my organization, should be involved in the site-monitoring visit?** *Certainly someone familiar with the compliance and regulatory issues of the grant should make the on-site visits. Additionally, someone skilled in program management, financial management systems, supervision, and community service would be welcomed as a qualified monitor and provider of technical assistance.*

**Who, from the Service Site, should be involved in the site-monitoring visit?** *The person(s) responsible for site management, fiscal management, and direct supervision of the AmeriCorps members should be involved. Depending on the purpose and type of site visit it may be appropriate to hear from AmeriCorps members, senior management, board members, community members, or clients.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Handbook for Continuous Improvement, 1994** | Site Visit Tools and Practices | www.nationalserviceresources.org/<br><br>pp. 1-5 and sample formats, 6-19 |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Four Types of Site Visits*

*The National Readiness and Response Corps employs several types of programmatic site visits: Monitoring (includes fiscal aspects), Informational with limited monitoring (e.g. Pre-service orientation), Follow-up Visit, and Monitoring conducted by Operating Sites with multiple locations. Below is an explanation of each type.*

**1. Monitoring Visits**

The NRRC Program staff will conduct a one to two day programmatic site visit at least once every two years. The purpose of this visit is to observe the operations of the site's program and to address any specific compliance or continuous quality improvement issues.

A typical site-monitoring visit consists of the following:

- An interview with the operating site supervisor;
- Interview(s) with the financial department and a review of financial systems in place;
- Interviews with NRRC members;
- Observation of program activities at local service sites;
- At minimum 50% randomly selected sample of member files;
- Meet with key State Commission, CNCS State Offices to discuss past and/or explore future opportunities for program coordination and collaboration;
- Wrap-up with the program coordinator and staff members; and
- Provide any training or technical assistance on programmatic, management, reporting, program development and / or financial issues as needed.

NRRC program staff will schedule site visits at least four weeks in advance of the visit. One week prior to the visit the host site supervisor will forward an agenda for the visit to the program staff.

Prior to the visit, NRRC program staff will complete a pre-site visit checklist. During the visit the NRRC program staff will review at minimum 50% randomly selected sample of member files.

Immediately after the visit, NRRC program staff will document the visit on the Site Visit Form. Within 15 working days following the visit, NRRC program staff will provide the grantee with a document detailing any compliance issues, quality improvement opportunities and required follow-up actions. Copies will be made available to chapter management and other pertinent staff. The NRRC program staff will continue to use the Site Visit Form to document when the corrective action plan was received and the date(s) the corrective action plan must be implemented.

**2. Informational with limited monitoring**

This type of site visit may be conducted if an NRRC program staff is in the general area of a local site and is considered to be more "informal", but not necessarily less important than a Monitoring Visit. These visits are generally less than one day. During these visits NRRC program staff will:

- Meet and talk with local site manager;
- Meet and talk with other appropriate staff (as available);
- Meet and talk with NRRC members (as available);
- Discuss concerns from the national level with site staff; and
- Provide training or technical assistance as needed.

If issues of concern or compliance do arise during the visit, the NRRC program staff will review them with the site manager at the time. Immediately after the visit, the NRRC program staff will document the visit on the Site Visit Form. Within 10 working days following the visit, the NRRC program staff will provide the grantee with a document detailing any compliance issues, quality improvement opportunities and required follow-up actions.

Copies will be provided to the chapter management. NRRC program staff will continue to use the Site Visit Form to document when the corrective action plan was received and the date(s) the corrective action plan must be implemented.

**3. Follow-up Visit**

These visits are only used in cases where the NRRC program staff determines it is necessary, based on previously documented issues and/or as requested by the Corporation for National and Community Service. These visits will follow the same guidelines as indicated by a Monitoring Visit and will specifically focus on compliance issues. They will occur within two months of a prior Site Visit.

Reasons for a Follow-up Visit include, but are not limited to:

- Site is not in compliance concerning financial matters (e.g. members are being paid on an hourly basis, no back up documentation for in-kind has been submitted);
- Findings of inadequate supervision on the part of the site supervisors;
- Staff transition at the chapter since the last Site Visit;
- Members have indicated that the site could be more supportive of members' needs;
- NRRC program staff determines that the site has had a history of consistent problems and questions the future of the program in an upcoming program year.

**4. Other**

These visits may occur in conjunction with a training event. Please refer to "Informational with Limited Monitoring".

Also, this would include any site visits that are conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service State Offices. NRRC and the local site are notified in advance of these visits and will work together to ensure a successful visit.

## *Service Site Satisfaction Survey*

**Each Service Site Supervisor should complete this Satisfaction Survey.**

Service Site: _____ Date: _____
Person Completing this Form: _____

Please read each of the statements below and mark the appropriate box.

| How would you rate the Corps members ability in the following areas | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Needs Improvement | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preparation to complete the assigned work | | | | | |
| Recruiting Reading Partner volunteers | | | | | |
| Placing Reading Partner volunteers | | | | | |
| Relationship with Reading Partner volunteers | | | | | |
| Relationship with Reading Partner schools (primary contact) | | | | | |
| How satisfied are you with the work of the Corps members? | Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Mostly Unsatisfied | Not at All Satisfied |
| WHY? | | | | | |
| How significant was the work of the Corps members to your organization | Extremely Significant | Very Significant | Significant | Not Very Significant | Not At All Significant |
| WHY? | | | | | |

Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Return completed Form to _____ By _____ Thank You

## *LISC AmeriCorps Site Satisfaction Survey*

Name of LISC Site Supervisor: _____ Position: _____

Name of Placement Site: _____ City: _____

Name of LISC AmeriCorps Member: _____ Date: _____

*LISC AmeriCorps is asking our placement sites to evaluate our work as a national initiative. Please respond to the following questions regarding your experience with the program. Your comments will help us to strengthen our programs and services. Thank you for your time and continued support.*

Place a check in the box or boxes next to the activities, programs and/or services provided by the LISC AmeriCorps Member at your site.

- ☐ Housing Counseling
- ☐ Housing Development
- ☐ Youth Enrichment Programs
- ☐ Tax Preparation Assistance/Job Training/Referral
- ☐ Volunteer Recruitment
- ☐ Work with Neighborhood Groups
- ☐ Publishing Newsletters
- ☐ Distribution of Resource/Informational Materials
- ☐ Workshops/Training
- ☐ Neighborhood Revitalization
- ☐ Other

2. For how long have you been supervising the work of this member: _____ months.

3. Using the rating scale below, please rate the LISC AmeriCorps for each of the following items.

| **5** = Excellent | **4** = Good | **3=** Average | **2**= Fair | **1** = Poor | **N/A=Not applicable** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| ITEM | RATING | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. How well did the objectives & suggested activities for the program fit the mission and scope of work of your organization? | | |
| 2. How clear were LISC AmeriCorps service objectives and the expectations of the program? | | |
| 3. How would you rate the Member's level of preparation for the placement and the service activities? | | |
| 4. How would you rate the training offered to members in helping them perform their service activities? | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5. How would you rate the benefit of monthly meetings to members? | | |

| **5** = Excellent | **4** = Good | **3**= Average | **2**= Fair | **1** = Poor | **N/A** = **Not applicable** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| ITEM | GRADE | |
|---|---|---|
| 6. How would you rate the AmeriCorps member's ability to meet organizational needs? | | |
| 7. How would you rate the Member's ability to meet community needs? | | |
| 8. How would you rate the member's ability to recruit and train volunteers to take on the responsibility for initiating events or activities that are of benefit or interest to the community? | | |
| 9. How would you rate the organization's capacity to offer an increased level of services to the community as a result of the AmeriCorps member's placement? | | |
| 10. How well do you think the organization will be able to sustain the work begun by the member after the member has completed service? | | |
| 11. How well did LISC do in helping to solve any placement site or other member/program related issues you may have encountered? | | |
| 12. How would you rate the level and effectiveness of communication between LISC and your organization? | | |
| 13. How would you rate the level of support you received to manage the AmeriCorps member? | | |
| 14. How effective is the LISC AmeriCorps program at attracting and recruiting people into the community development field? | | |
| 15. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the LISC AmeriCorps program. | | |
| Other: | | |
| Other: | | |

Please describe any ways your organization benefited through the participation of an AmeriCorps member. Cite examples, wherever possible.

Please describe any ways the larger community benefited by having an AmeriCorps member placed at your organization:

Please describe any partnerships or collaborations formed with other organizations as a result of the AmeriCorps member's work.

Please tell us how you raise the match requirement for the member's placement.

Comments/suggestions on ways to strengthen the LISC AmeriCorps Program:

## *Site Visit Procedures*

*Timeline: Site visit should be conducted 2-4 months after start of program year.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **One month prior to visit:** | • Contact the program by phone to arrange mutually convenient date for the visit. |
| **2-3 weeks prior to visit:** | • Send written confirmation of site visit date and requirements to the Program Director. Confirmation should include a reminder about the length of time the visit will take, a brief agenda for the visit, and specific requests for time with staff members and Corps members.<br>• A copy should be sent to the Commission members who have adopted the program. |
| **2-5 days prior to visit:** | • Review WBRS reports, rosters, member forms, and time logs, etc. Check service hours to identify that all information is entered and is up-to-date, review any reports that have been completed.<br>• Review all recent site visit reports and follow-up. Note what the concerns were (if any) and the agreed upon improvements or corrective actions.<br>• Survey Commission staff to determine if there are any other outstanding issues other than those identified above. |
| **Day of the visit:** | • Arrive promptly at the agreed upon time.<br>• Wear AmeriCorps identification (pin, button, sticker, shirt).<br>• Follow the agenda. Make every attempt to stay on schedule.<br>• Document the site visit. Make notes on all key comments, questions answered, etc. |
| **Following the visit:** | • Within two working days, write a brief thank you note to all of those who participated in the visit.<br>• Within two weeks, complete the formal written site visit report.<br>• Send the site visit report along with a cover letter to the Program Director. The cover letter should indicate whether you require a response to the findings or concerns noted in the report. Usually such responses must be provided within 30 days of receipt of the letter. Identify if the program has requested T/TA.<br>• Send a copy of the site visit report to the Commission member who has adopted the program. |
| **Follow-up:** | • If a written response is not received on the date requested (and an extension not granted), resend the site visit report to the next level of authority within the organization. The cover letter should indicated the overdue response and allow for an additional 2 weeks to provide the requested information.<br>• If a written response is not received after the second request, notice should be sent to the certifying official (who signed the grant application) that reimbursements are being held pending receipt of the requested response. |

*Adapted from the Missouri Service Commission*

## *Checklist for an Ideal Site Visit*

**Advance Arrangements Timeline:**

- Confirm dates with program coordinator and send checklist (four weeks prior)
- Reserve plane ticket and rental car, if flying (four weeks prior)
- Develop itinerary with program coordinator (three weeks prior)
- Make appointments to meet with Lead Agency, if possible (two weeks prior)
- Make hotel reservations (two weeks prior)
- Draw up itemized budget and file "Request for Official Travel" form (two weeks prior)
- Confirm itinerary with coordinator and email to members and supervisors (one week prior)

**Do Not Forget To Bring:**

- Team Meeting Agenda
- Assessment and interview forms (member, supervisor, training, etc.)
- Operating Site Performance Measures
- Most recent member progress reports
- Analysis of Operating Site's pre- and post-training questionnaires
- Site In-kind Reports and schedule of missing months
- Status of non-federal match payments
- Addresses and phone numbers of field offices and Lead Agency
- Uniform Order Form (or other items of interest for members)
- AmeriCorps buttons/stickers
- Camera, lodging itinerary, and maps
- Handbook and Policy and Procedure Manual
- Bring organization materials (brochures, pins, etc)

**While on the Site Visit:**

- Meet with program coordinator and complete Reporting Review and Supervisor Interview forms
- Meet with each member and complete Member Interview Form
- Meet with each site supervisor and complete Supervisor Interview Form
- Meet with each field office team to go over progress toward completing performance measures
- Complete Site Performance Measurement Form for each field office and for site as a whole
- Meet with Lead Agency

**Upon Returning to Local Organization:**

- Write thank you letter to Program Coordinator and attach Site Performance Measurement form
- Write thank you letters to site supervisors and attach Site Performance Measurement Forms
- Write thank you letters to members and attach Training Performance Measurement Forms with personalized notes
- Follow up on any action items revealed during the visit
- Write thank you letters to Lead Agency, if necessary

*[on your organization's letterhead]*

# *Desk Audit Tool*

## ***SECTION A: DOCUMENTATION***

Below is a list of items designed to verify for LOCAL ORGANIZATION your site's compliance with key programmatic and operational requirements. Please send these to _____ by [insert deadline.]

- Copies of Program Coordinator and Site Supervisor Position Descriptions
- Copy of site's liability insurance policy
- Evidence that your site is a drug-free work place
- Evidence your site has a non-discrimination policy that includes providing reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities
- Sample of travel reimbursement form used to pay for member or staff mileage
- Sample of log used by member to track _____
- Sample of member personal development plan

## ***SECTION B: STATUS OF COMMITMENTS TO LOCAL ORGANIZATION***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION has indicated the status of key commitments to the program. Please respond as necessary.

Payment of Participation Fee (i.e. cash match)

____ Yes, paid in full. Thanks!
____ Past Due

If past due indicate reason and expected date of transmission to LOCAL ORGANIZATION. Name who in the organization is responsible for the transmission if someone other than the Program Coordinator.

Completion of quarterly in-kind reports

___ Up-to-date. Next deadline is [Insert upcoming report schedule]
___ Past Due

If past due indicate reason and expected date of transmission to LOCAL ORGANIZATION. Name who in the organization is responsible for the transmission if someone other than the Program Coordinator.

List of any ***PAST DUE*** member enrollment or evaluation materials.

***PLEASE NOTE THESE ITEMS ARE DUE AT THE TIME THE DESK AUDIT IS RETURNED.***

____ Enrollment Paperwork
____ Pre-service Community Interviews

____ Mid-term evaluations of members
____ *Add needed information*

***PLEASE REMEMBER, THE NEXT PROGRESS REPORT IS DUE _____***

***SECTION C: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY***

What State Commission events have you and your members attended or will attend this year?

Member Enrollment Commitment [Insert #]
Member Enrollment to-date [Insert #]

Please describe your plans to develop and retain currently enrolled members. What recruitment methods will you use beginning this fall for program year _____?

3. Have your members been or will they be involved in any local or national service activities in cooperation with other National Service sites (i.e. AmeriCorps, VISTA, RSVP)? If yes, which and how? If no, why not?

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "excellent," 5 being "mediocre" and 0 being "awful," rate the following:

_____ Training and technical assistance provided by LOCAL ORGANIZATION

_____ Success at recruiting and retaining quality AmeriCorps members

_____ Member achievement of service goals

_____ Value of AmeriCorps program to your operations

_____ Value of AmeriCorps program to your members

_____ Value of AmeriCorps program to your community

_____ Overall level of satisfaction with the AmeriCorps program.

Please list any areas not covered above that you would like to discuss with LOCAL ORGANIZATION directly:

{Program Director} will call to arrange a phone appointment to discuss these areas as well as the rest of the document items with you. Thank you for your time and effort.

## *Member Files Desk Audit*

**National Readiness & Response Corps**
**Desk Audit of Member Files**

***The goal of the "desk audit" is to determine if the local site is compliant with their documentation of member files. In addition, to verify hard copies for accuracy with information found on WBRS.***

***Local sites will be asked to forward a minimum of seven files throughout the year (random selection to be determined by NRRC program staff). NRRC program staff may ask for files from prior program years. In accordance with the AmeriCorps Provisions, sites should maintain all member files for up to three years after the close of the grant.***

NRRC Operating Site Location:_____

**Program Year:**_____

**Site Manager:** _____

**NRRC Member**: _____

| ***Are the following items in the member's file?*** | Yes | No | Comments/Files missing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Member application | | | |
| AmeriCorps enrollment form<br>• Is it signed and dated by the member? (Will be approved by site supervisor via WBRS)<br>• Was the form entered onto WBRS within 30 days of enrollment?<br>• Were hard copies of the forms sent to the program headquarters by the date specified? | | | |
| Member Agreement / Contract<br>Is the site utilizing the NRRC Member Agreement of Participation?<br>• Is it signed and dated by the member?<br>• Is it signed and dated by the site manager?<br>• If the member did not begin service on the start date, are the dates on the agreement adjusted? | | | |
| Member Activity Summary Sheets (MASS)/Service Hour Logs<br>• Do both the member and the site supervisor sign logs?<br>• Are they up to date?<br>• Do the hour logs segregate/track separately hours for service vs. hours for training?<br>• Are the site supervisor's in kind time indicated?<br>• Did the member complete the service reflection section?<br>• Do the WBRS reports match what is on the hard copy version?<br>• Were the WBRS reports uploaded by the appropriate date for Parent Org. review? | | | |
| Documentation of citizenship/naturalization/resident alien status<br>Primary documentation of status as a US citizen or national.<br>*One of the following forms of documentation is acceptable and should be attached:*<br>Documents to verify a member's status as a citizen or national include;<br>• A birth certificate stating that they were born in one of the 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana islands;<br>• A US passport, current and current<br>• A report of birth abroad of a US Citizen (FS-240 issued by the State Department);<br>• A certificate of birth-foreign service (FS-545 issued by the State Department);<br>• A certification of report of birth (DS-1350 issued by the State Department); and<br>• A certificate of naturalization (From N-560 or N-561 issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service);<br><br>Documentation to verify a member's status as a lawful permanent resident alien of the US include:<br>• Permanent Resident Card (INS Form I-551);<br>• Alien Registration Receipt Card (INS Form I-551); and<br>• Departure Record (INS Form I-94) indicating that the INS has approved it as a temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence; | | | |

| ***Are the following items in the member's file?*** | Yes | No | Comments/Files missing |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High school diploma/GED**<br>• Has member certified on the enrollment form that they have a high school diploma/GED?<br>• Does the operating site have the ***date*** of when the member received their high school diploma or GED? | | | |
| Documentation of Health Care Enrollment (if member is eligible)<br>• If the member has exited, is there a termination letter on file stating when their AmeriCorps health care benefits ended?<br>• Was the NRRC program headquarters notified within two weeks of member's exit so that the SRC roster is updated?<br>• If there are any questions on healthcare coverage, please contact the program headquarters. | | | |
| Disaster Services Human Resources Enrollment<br>• Has the member been enrolled in the DSHR system on file?<br>• Is there a copy of the member's DSHR enrollment form on file?<br>• Is there a copy of the member's DSHR acceptance letter on file?<br>• Is there a copy of the member's disaster assignment WPE on file? | | | |
| Documentation of Child Care Enrollment (if member is eligible)<br>***A member will only be considered eligible for child care benefits if***<br>• *they are a full-time stipend member,*<br>• *the member is the parent or legal guardian (or acting in loco parentis) for a child under the age of 13 who resides with the member,*<br>• *the member has a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines for a family of the same size. At a maximum, family income can be no more than 75% of the state's median income; and*<br>• *at the time of acceptance into the Program, member is not receiving childcare from another available source.*<br>• If there are any questions on childcare coverage, please contact the program headquarters. | | | |
| Tax documents<br>• Is there a W-4 form to document tax withholdings?<br>• If the program year is over, is there a W2 form? | | | |

| ***Are the following items in the member's file?*** | Yes | No | Comments/Files missing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Member discipline documentation<br>• Was the member disciplined in accordance with the guidelines as indicated in their member agreement and program handbook? | | | |
| Mid-term performance evaluation<br>• Was the mid-term Service Performance Review completed on time? | | | |
| End of term performance evaluation<br>• Was a final Service Performance Review completed prior to member's out-processing?<br>• Is there a copy in member's file? | | | |
| Member End of Term/Exit Form (if member has exited)<br>• Is it signed and dated by the member in the two places indicated?<br>• Is the supervisor signature concurrent with or after the member's?<br>• Is the form approved by the site supervisor on WBRS?<br>• Was the form submitted within 30 days on WBRS? | | | |
| Documentation of Compelling Personal Circumstances (if applicable)<br>• If the member received a pro-rated ed-award (check the exit form), is there documentation of compelling personal circumstances that falls within the parameters identified in the AmeriCorps Provisions for the relevant program year? (WBRS will check this.) | | | |
| Change of Status Form (if applicable)<br>• Do enrollment form and exit form for each individual reflect the same term of service?<br>• If not, is there an approved change of status form in the file that reflects the appropriate conversion?<br>• Was the conversion made within the first three months of the member's term? If not, is there evidence of grantee and Corporation approval?<br>• Was the form submitted to the Corporation within 30 days? *(Needs to be verified at CNS)* | | | |

# 4 ~ 6 Months
# Member Development & Support

Member support and development is a process that lasts as long as each member's term of service. It begins in the 0 – 3 months program phase with the recruitment process, selection and support of Service Sites, and the AmeriCorps member training and orientation program.

At this stage in your program year, you should continue supporting and developing members through several important activities: a mid-term member evaluation, a staff and member retreat, and a continued focus on Life After AmeriCorps.

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Find out how to build a service ethic and increase your member's knowledge of national service.
- ❑ Identify additional ways to support your members including building the esprit de corps of your teams.
- ❑ Conduct mid-term evaluations for your AmeriCorps members.
- ❑ Design and implement your Life After AmeriCorps curriculum for each member.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Building Service Ethic and National Service Knowledge*

**What is service ethic and national service knowledge?**
National service refers to any of the service programs affiliated with the Corporation for National Service. National service knowledge can include understanding the history, language, legislation and basic program information about the various service initiatives funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, which includes AmeriCorps. Each of these programs promotes service as an American value (service ethic), an example of an active and educated citizenry.

**Why should you build service ethic and national service knowledge?**
Program directors and supervisors should be able to articulate the service ethic and the history of national service to their members and partners so that they, in turn, will understand their role in a national legacy of service. If you underscore and model the service ethic in your organization, you help members understand the magnitude of their commitment, develop a sense of pride in their membership and community and recruit others to get involved. Emphasizing the service ethic and history also helps to properly frame the member's term as a service experience, not a work experience.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Implement opportunities for members to learn and apply concepts about national service covered during the Pre-service Orientation. |
| | ✓ Create a National Service game to reinforce concepts and history. |
| | ✓ Engage Corps members in reflective conversations and exercises to build understanding of the service ethic concept and its application in everyday society. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***
**How does one instill an ethic of service in another person?** *You can't. Despite all of the activities, reflection and information you give, you will not be able to create an ethic of service in your members. They have to do it themselves, but the environment that a program creates fosters that development. Program directors should look for indicators of a service ethic when recruiting/screening members. Asking about one's previous volunteer experience is one way to assess whether an individual values service.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps** | This handbook helps members reflect on their experiences with AmeriCorps, their future plans and other opportunities to serve in effort to develop a lifelong service ethic. | Corporation for National and Community Service |
| **Getting Started: A Guide for AmeriCorps Members** | Formerly known as the AmeriCorps Member Handbook. | Corporation for National and Community Service |

## *Member Support*

**What is Member Support?**
Member support refers to the combination of supervision, training and benefits provided to members during their term of service. Together, these components should provide a safe and structured environment in which members can grow and serve. Unlike a typical 'boss-employee' relationship, the Program Supervisor plays many different roles, including mentor, disciplinarian, teacher, guidance counselor, and 'people manager'. Individuals who enter the AmeriCorps program come from different cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. It is important for the Program Supervisor to recognize value and encourage the diversity present in an AmeriCorps team and engage members in appreciating and positively supporting one another. Policies, procedures, training and benefits can be used to support this effort.

**Why should you be concerned with Member Support?**
The success of a program is dependent on the activity of members. Member support helps to sustain members during their service term. Member support efforts reinforce retention, quality services and program compliance. Programs are required to provide member support to include GED training opportunities for members who do not have a high school diploma. If your program utilizes multiple site supervisors or team leaders it is important that they also receive training on and fully understand the expectations of their responsibilities as it relates to member support.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Continuously improve the quality of your program. You may find opportunities throughout the year to remind members about program expectations (always write these times down for future knowledge). |
| | ✓ Continue activities related to the Life After AmeriCorps component of your program and service skill development training. |
| | ✓ Implement a Corps member evaluation (required mid-year and end-of-year) process. Use the information gathered to provide additional training or support to members. Also use the data to inform program improvements. |
| | ✓ Complete a site visit to ensure AmeriCorps members have appropriate supervision and are participating in approved activities. |
| | ✓ Ensure members are receiving their benefits. |
| | ✓ Conduct team meetings on a consistent basis. |
| | ✓ Relay importance of member support components and role of site supervisors during site supervisor orientation and training. |

***Resource***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Stages of Group Development for AmeriCorps and Other National Service Programs** | Check out this resource for information and support on guiding the progression of your Corps members. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Building Esprit de Corps*

**What is *Esprit de Corps*?**
*Esprit de corps* literally means group spirit. It is a feeling that develops over time when people learn to work effectively as a team toward a common goal. *Esprit de Corps* is an integral part of the AmeriCorps experience.

**Why should you build *Esprit de Corps*?**
*Esprit de Corps* fosters team success which in turn promotes member retention and development.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Learn to recognize the stages of team development (forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning); understand the role that supervisors may play in helping the team move through the stages toward eventually becoming a "high performing team". |
| | ✓ Incorporate icebreakers to increase member interactions. |
| | ✓ Implement experiential activities as a way to begin to develop teams in a controlled environment. Experiential activities are fun, educational and challenging activities that affect people on several levels of learning (cognitive, physical, emotional, social and even spiritual). |
| | ✓ Make sure that if teamwork is an important part of the program, it is reflected in member performance evaluations, site supervisor development, orientation, etc. |
| | ✓ Celebrate small successes along the way. Include recognition of individual and team accomplishments. Reward the entire team for team accomplishments. |
| | ✓ Focus on the goals not the obstacles. |
| | ✓ Establish regular effective team meetings. Rotate AmeriCorps members' responsibility for facilitating meetings. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**How can I ensure our teambuilding activities involve more than just fun and games?** *When leading experiential team building activities it is essential to reflect on and discuss the "experience" be it a game, puzzle, physical challenge or problem to solve. It is very easy to get caught up in the fun, physical, and/or competitive aspects of team building exercises. Immediately after the exercises, ask participants to talk about the experience, how they felt about it, see how it is similar to "real life". Help them draw out and apply the lessons learned to their community service or their lives after AmeriCorps. Manage the process and the energy, but don't over-control the exercise; in order for teambuilding to be effective, you must let the natural course of emotions and behavior flow.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Starting Strong: Training Topics and Activities** | AmeriCorps Affiliation and Teambuilding chapter provides instructions and preparation needs for numerous team building activities. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Mid-term Member Evaluation*

**What is a Mid-term Member Evaluation?**
Member evaluations are a formal assessment of a member's service performance. It should include a review of the elements of the program that ensure its success. Member evaluations, at a minimum, should focus on whether the member has completed the required number of hours; whether the member has satisfactorily completed assignments; and whether the member has met other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service. Member evaluation provides the Program Coordinator and the member with a report of how the member is developing in the program. This evaluation should be considered a 'formal process' and should be documented and placed in the member's file. There are several different models for evaluation that can be implemented as a whole or in parts that are explained below.

**Why should you conduct Mid-term Member Evaluations?**
As a condition of the grant, a program must conduct and keep a record of at least a mid-term and end-of-term written evaluation of each member's performance. In addition, member evaluations provide an opportunity for improvement. Program Coordinators can assist AmeriCorps members in reaching their potential through continuous quality improvement, also known as evaluation. An evaluation's goal is not to find out what is 'wrong', but rather what is going well and what can 'be improved'. The evaluation can be beneficial if it is reciprocal—that is, the member should be invited to evaluate ***your*** performance and/or the performance of their ***site supervisor*** as it relates to the member's service role.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Find out how evaluation is conducted currently in the organization. Once again, the human resources staff may be able to help on this subject. |
| | ✓ Remember to ask yourself: "What do I need to know about the member's experience to make the program more effective?" List your needs and then find suitable evaluation models and tools to use. See a sample *Member Evaluation* tool. |
| | ✓ Evaluation works well when it is conducted at several different levels. Consider who is being evaluated and who is completing the evaluation when you design your system, and remember you can always improve the system throughout your experience. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***
**When should I conduct member evaluations?** *AmeriCorps members must be evaluated at least mid-way through their service term and at the end.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Search on member evaluation for sample tools. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Life After AmeriCorps*

**What is Life After AmeriCorps?**
Life After AmeriCorps is the phrase used to describe the intentional developmental efforts used to help corps members transition from the AmeriCorps experience to the next steps along their life path. Your job is to guide the members through this transition and help them identify opportunities to incorporate their service experience into their next steps. Life After AmeriCorps development is achieved through training, networking, identifying future education and career opportunities, and counseling.

**Why should you be concerned with Life After AmeriCorps?**
The Life After AmeriCorps aspects of a program help to develop your corps and therefore improve your program's quality, credibility and benefit to the community. It is a required component of all AmeriCorps programs: Because AmeriCorps members come from diverse cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds they also come with many different aspirations. You may find yourself with a team that has members who want to go back to school for post-baccalaureate degrees, members who want to advance in the local community career setting they are in, members who want to attend the local community college and members who are unsure of what they want to do. Your guidance and linking to resources will assist these individuals to make concrete, informed decisions on what direction they want to move in life and how service can be an integral part of it.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Guide members in developing resumes and cover letters outlining their AmeriCorps experience and past professional or volunteer experiences. |
| | ✓ Guide members in identifying what they would like to do in the future. |
| | ✓ Provide members opportunities to design and implement trainings and other skill development activities. |
| | ✓ Create a library of information about colleges, universities, and technical schools. Make sure all members know how to use the Internet to search for information, access bulletin boards, participate in chat rooms relevant to their future job interests, and so forth. |
| | ✓ Make information about the Education Award available to members. |
| | ✓ Identify individuals in the organization and the community that you feel may be good mentors or speakers on career and education paths of high interest to members. Create ways for members to connect (more than once) with these valuable resources. Do this early in the program! |
| | ✓ Invite guest speakers to talk about career opportunities. |
| | ✓ Be aware of the diversity of your Corps and ensure that activities are appropriate for all. The "Life After AmeriCorps" needs of someone without a high school diploma will differ from a college graduate similarly a 22-year old will differ from a 50-year old. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**When should I start planning and doing Life After AmeriCorps activities?** *Ideally, you should pass out the* ***Next Steps*** *book the first day of the Pre-Service Orientation. Encourage members to start looking through the book and thinking about how their community service may relate to and impact on their future lives and livelihoods.*

**My members have many different goals and aspirations; how do I schedule training and/or speakers for such a diverse group without boring some of them or losing their attention?** *Unlike normal member training that all members must attend, you may want to offer a variety of Life After AmeriCorps activities and make some of them optional or elective. This way, members can sign up for the activities that are of greatest interest to them and pass on others. In addition to providing a series of talks on career opportunities, also explore linking members to outside 'mentors' in career areas that are attractive to them. Arrange for them to spend a half-day "shadowing" a mentor or interviewing 2-3 people in a particular profession. These sorts of activities will provide members with a realistic (vs. idealistic) understanding of their particular profession or technical area of interest. You may also attempt to use members in trainings as panelists on topics like the college experience or as facilitators, so that they can take an active role in the development of other corps members.*

***Resources***

| ***Resource*** | ***Description*** | ***Contact*** |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Contains a number of Life After AmeriCorps resources. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Sample Member Evaluation*

**Name:**_____

**Date of Evaluation:**_____

**Dates of Service: Start:**_____ **Expected Completion:**_____

**Operating Site:**_____

**Program Coordinator:**_____

**Please list type(s) of service:**_____

The criteria listed below reflect "an effective and committed service member". These behaviors or characteristics were identified based on experiences and perspectives from members, program coordinators, and community partners. Using the scale provided, please evaluate the performance of the above-named member based on 1) your observations as the Program Coordinator and 2) feedback from community partners and service recipients with whom service was provided as an AmeriCorps member. Space is provided at the end of the form and should be used for additional comments to highlight specific feedback or clarify a specific rating.

**Directions for Using Rating Scale:**
Circle the number that best describes the member's performance.

**Please rate the service member on the following criteria:** *(please circle one for each question)*

***Scoring:*** **1 – Excellent 2 – Good 3-Fair 4-Needs Improvement**

| **A. GENERAL WORK ETHIC** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Member can be relied upon to work steadily and effectively during service work. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 2. Member demonstrates a professional demeanor when interacting with others as a service member. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 3. Member maintains an appearance (grooming, attire, behavior) appropriate to the service assignment(s). | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 4. Member demonstrates concern for the quality, accuracy, and completeness of tasks performed as a service member. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 5. Member demonstrates the ability to organize tasks effectively. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 6. Member is able to accept and utilize critical feedback effectively. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Member demonstrates punctuality for work commitments and planned activities (includes meetings and trainings). | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 8. Member demonstrates ability to balance service and personal commitments appropriately. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |

| **B. COMMUNICATION** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Member demonstrates ability to communicate plans, needs, and feedback effectively to *community partners*. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 10. Member demonstrates ability to communicate plans, needs, and feedback effectively to other *team members*. | | | | |
| 11. Member demonstrates ability to express and resolve conflicts effectively. | | | | |

| **C. AMERICORPS PHILOSOPHIES** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Member demonstrates ability to work cooperatively as a team member. | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| 13. Member demonstrates an appreciation of and respect for other team members opinions, abilities, and needs. | | | | |
| 14. Member demonstrates skills in taking initiative in problem solving and project management. | | | | |
| 15. Member demonstrates an understanding of the AmeriCorps mission and philosophies. | | | | |
| 16. Member demonstrates an understanding of their role as a citizen in the community. | | | | |
| 17. Member demonstrates a sense of commitment to the health of their community. | | | | |
| 18. Member carries through on commitments for service projects. | | | | |
| 19. Member demonstrates leadership skills in team activities. | | | | |
| 20. Member demonstrates ability to work with community partners effectively. | | | | |

21. Briefly discuss the special strengths this member has demonstrated.

22. Briefly discuss any area(s) on which this member should focus to improve his or her effectiveness as a service member.

23. Would you recommend this member to another service corps? _____ Yes _____No

Additional Comments: (Use additional space if needed.)

_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature of
Member:_____Date:_____

Signature of
Evaluator:_____Date:_____

If above is a person other than the Program Coordinator, briefly explain relationship to Corps member.

_____

Member response to this
evaluation:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# 7 ~ 9 Months
# Program Development & Management

The three program areas—Community and Site Partnerships, Member Development and Support, and Financial and Grants Management—discussed throughout the Guide are continued during this time phase. In each area, you will focus your time and effort on implementing and following through on activities started at the beginning of your program. Therefore, this section of the Guide is intentionally short.

This program phase emphasizes the activities around performance measurement, continuous improvement, and communication with stakeholders. How have we done? What else needs to be done? What can be done better? The idea is to continue doing many of the program development and support tasks you started months before, only now you want to reflect on how to do them even better. As you move through these middle months, you will be able to identify your program's good practices and use them to help you shape your ideas for the next program year.

### *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Identify components of your program where improvements can be made using a continuous improvement tool.
- ❑ Identify ways to sustain your program over time with or with out AmeriCorps funding.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Continuous Improvement*

**What does Continuous Improvement mean?**
Continuous improvement is about finding better ways to do things. You will essentially scrutinize all components of the program in search of opportunities for improvement. This process will ultimately lead to more satisfied customers and better results.

**Why is continuous improvement important?**
If you create an organizational culture focused on continuous improvement, long-term sustainability can be assured. Continuous improvement involves understanding stakeholders' expectations and meeting those with a well-run program. It also means taking real action to improve upon gaps in practices or functions. The health of an organization and its staff really depends on a culture of making things better.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Review the *Principles of Continuous Improvement* from the Corporation's *Handbook for Continuous Improvement*. |
| | ✓ Create a climate within the organization that values constructive criticism and approaches problems as opportunities to grow and learn. |
| | ✓ Engage staff in identifying ways to improve practices. |
| | ✓ Use data collection tools discussed earlier to substantively improve your program functions. |
| | ✓ Where possible, involve stakeholders as key resources to assist in improving processes. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Contains descriptions of tools and practices that service and other organizations use to continuously improve their ability to accomplish results. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Program Sustainability*

**What does program sustainability mean?**
Sustainability means that a program is able to "stay alive" and be kept viable for an extended period of time even with reduced, or in the absence of, AmeriCorps funding. Sustainability relates directly to the organization's ability to develop funding resources it needs to maintain the current services and operations, and plan for the future. It usually includes efforts to increase the public's awareness of your activities and services.

**Why is program sustainability so important?**
If your organization and AmeriCorps program are serving the community well, then the community probably wants you around for many more years to come. However, sustainability can be a difficult status to achieve. Many nonprofit organizations need to be mindful of fluctuations in the general economy, the additional resources (personnel, space, equipment, etc.) required for program expansion, the degree of public awareness about the program, the ratio of paid staff to volunteers, the potential for safely expanding the volunteer staff, and other issues. Suffice it to say, there are many factors that can positively or negatively impact program sustainability.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Commit to on-going evaluation mechanisms for staff, service site partners, AmeriCorps members, community members, and other key stakeholders. |
| | ✓ Use performance measurement data to identify gaps that might detract from your program's potential to be sustainable over time. Work to close those gaps. |
| | ✓ Identify the impact on the community and stakeholders if your program were removed. Use this to inform planning outreach and strategic partnership building. |
| | ✓ Look at the long-range plans for your organization. Identify possible budgetary and/or staffing shortfalls in the areas of fundraising, public awareness, performance measures, cross-sector partnerships, and volunteers or interns. |
| | ✓ Continue collaborating with service site partners and others to enhance the impact of the AmeriCorps program services. |
| | ✓ Engage board members in identifying and cultivating resources to sustain the program over the long-term. |

***Resource***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **National Service Resource Center** | Contains descriptions of tools and practices that service and other organizations use to imbed program sustainability. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

# *TOOLS for SUCCESS*

## *Principles of Continuous Improvement*

1. Our "customers" are the reason we exist. We must stay attuned to their needs and strive always to exceed their expectations.

2. Volunteers, participants and staff are customers too. They must be motivated, trained, and satisfied if they are to serve our customers well.

3. It is not enough to talk about customer satisfaction. We must set measurable goals, communicate them throughout our organization, regularly and systematically gauge our progress against these goals, and take action to continuously improve their performance.

4. Anytime we learn we are falling short, we have an opportunity to improve. Anytime we learn we are meeting or exceeding targets, we have an opportunity to set higher targets.

5. Continuous improvement is the responsibility of everyone in our organization.

6. Effective communication within our organization is essential to continuous improvement. To help improve the organization, staff must understand what customers' value and how well customers' think the program is doing.

7. Constructive criticism is a positive step toward a solution, not a negative spotlight on a mistake. We learn from our failures as well as from our successes.

8. Creating energized, empowered teams is the best catalyst for improving an organization. Motivated teams can produce extraordinary results—results that exceed those achieved by individuals or less cohesive groups.

# 10 ~ 12 Months
# Maintaining the Program

Congratulations! You have almost completed one year of operating an AmeriCorps program.

Much of the work you will engage in between now and the conclusion of your program year will be a combination of continuing current activities, completing year-end evaluations and reporting requirements, celebrating and thanking partners and participants, and assisting members in their transition from AmeriCorps to their next steps in life.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Assess your outcomes. Write and submit your final progress report.
- ❑ Present your successes, accomplishments, and challenges in a board presentation to senior staff.
- ❑ Correctly exit members in WBRS.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Final Progress Report*

**What is the final Progress Report?**
The final progress report is the last report detailing your program's accomplishments, outcomes, great stories, and progress to your state commission or national parent organization. It is submitted electronically through WBRS.

**Why do you need to submit the final Progress Report?**
Final progress report is used to aggregate information about service for your state commission and or parent organization. Depending on whether you must report to a state commission or parent organization, this information is pulled into a required annual report (Grantee Progress Report – GPR) that is submitted to the Corporation and used to demonstrate the overall impact of the AmeriCorps programs nationwide.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Submit the final progress report as required. |
| | ✓ Maintain a file of other progress reports and on-going program information to draw from in order to complete the final progress report. Reports submitted to the appropriate bodies will be maintained in WBRS. |

## *Year-End Senior Management Board Presentation*

**What is a Year-End Senior Management Board Presentation?**
Most likely the advisory body, board, or senior management team has been actively involved and briefed on the progress of the AmeriCorps program. As the program year comes to a close, this is an excellent time to bring board members back together to share the successes and challenges of the first year of program implementation.

**Why do you need to conduct a Year-End Senior Management Board Presentation?**
At the conclusion of the program year, it is imperative to formally address the board and communicate the lessons learned over the course of the program year to gain continued support and commitment. Board members need to know where they can be helpful and where they might need to intervene on behalf of the organization. If additional resources are needed to sustain the program, enlist board members to identify and cultivate those resources. If your program needs to strengthen its visibility in the larger community, your board members need to be apprised of how they can assist.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Make sure you have accurate information from key stakeholders, including staff members. |
| | ✓ Identify the appropriate persons to address the board. |
| | ✓ Create an agenda to guide your presentation. |
| | ✓ Update the board on a budget changes or impending issues. |
| | ✓ Create simple, clear handouts that illustrate the important points you want to make. |
| | ✓ Anticipate questions the members might have about the implementation and management of the project. |
| | ✓ Identify specific ways that board members can get involved. |
| | ✓ Use evaluation data collection to strengthen presentation, i.e. program accomplishments. |

## *Exit Members in WBRS*

**What does it mean to exit members in WBRS?**
Exiting a member means that he/she is no longer active in the program and program staff have completed the necessary WBRS forms to notify the Corporation. This may be the result of a member's termination from the program for cause or compelling personal circumstances or the successful completion of service hours and program obligations. Within 30 days following the end of each Corps member's term of service, you must update his/her enrollment status in the WBRS system. For each corps member, you must complete an End of Term form in WBRS. This form contains a statement about the member's total service hours. Those that you certify as eligible to receive an educational award, are automatically downloaded to the National Service Trust.

**Why do you need to exit members in WBRS?**
This is a mandatory requirement of your AmeriCorps grant. If a member's data is not entered into WBRS showing that she/he completed the required hours, the member will not be eligible to receive the Educational Award. Failure to appropriately exit corps members and account for grant funds can adversely affect the administrative and financial status of your organization. The most important consideration is this can adversely impact the member's eligibility for and receipt of their educational award.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Ensure that the Member Information Profile in WBRS is complete and accurate. This form was done at the beginning of the program year and should be reviewed again before exiting members |
| | ✓ Ensure that local record keeping of AmeriCorps members' hours is accurate. |
| | ✓ Exit all members within the 30 days of the end of the AmeriCorps members' term of service. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***
**Do I wait until the end of the service year to exit members?** *No. Exit members as they complete their service hours, or immediately if a member is asked to leave the program early. All members must be exited within 30-days of the program end date.*

# 10 ~ 12 Months
# Community & Site Partnerships

Most AmeriCorps programs cannot be successful without the support and participation of the service sites and community partners. To sustain these partnerships, you will need to perform several key tasks: conduct a final site visit, formally recognize the partners' contributions, and renew Site agreements with those community partners who wish to continue their relationship with your program.

## *At the end of this section, you will be able to*

- ❑ Conduct final site visits if necessary.
- ❑ Celebrate the successes of your organization and your host/service site partners.
- ❑ Complete the financial closeout process.
- ❑ Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

## *Final Site Visit*

**What is a final Site Visit?**
A final site visit can guide each organization to reflect on the viability of the overall service relationship including challenges or areas of conflict. The outcome of a final site visit can guide both organizations to determine whether continuing the partnership would be productive.

**Why should I be concerned with conducting a final Site Visit?**
The final site visit provides you with a picture of the site's overall functioning. This visit can also guide future conversations related to partnering for the following program year. The final site visit not only provides time and space to see how the organization is functioning, but also whether the AmeriCorps program fits well with the mission of the partnering organization.

**How do I do it?**
The general purpose of site visits may include one or more of the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Assess administrative, financial, management and organizational capabilities and systems. |
| | ✓ Identify or clarify problems, issues, or concerns. |
| | ✓ Resolve or follow up on problems, issues, or concerns. |
| | ✓ Monitor systems, policies, practices, or procedures. |
| | ✓ Monitor and review compliance with grant award. |
| | ✓ Identify technical assistance and training needs. |
| | ✓ Provide technical assistance. |
| | ✓ Establish a continuous improvement system for financial management and grants compliance. |

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| **Effective Practices Database** | Contains a number of tools for conducting a site visit. | www.nationalserviceresources.org/ |

## *Site Recognition*

**What is Site Recognition?**
Celebration, acknowledgement, thanks! It takes a lot of work to make change in a community. It is equally strenuous to build an outstanding partnership. At the end of a year of service, take the opportunity to highlight and celebrate the successes of your site partners.

**Why should you implement a Site Recognition program?**
Recognition is a crucial element in maintaining a great partnership. Partners invest significant human and financial resources to build the relationships, serve the community, and support the members. Show your appreciation for their effort and commitment.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Develop a mechanism to collect "great contributions". |
| | ✓ Budget for a year-end celebration. |
| | ✓ Publish a newsletter to highlight great achievements. |
| | ✓ Create an organizational award to acknowledge publicly a strong partnership. |
| | ✓ Use the media to get the word out about your sites. |
| | ✓ Be creative! Recognition can come in many forms and should be personalized. |
| | ✓ Make it someone's job to maintain relevant information about your site partners. |
| | ✓ Consider a recognition program as an investment in organizational and community loyalty. |

## *Financial Closeout Process*

**What is the Financial Closeout Process?**
The financial closeout process requires state commission and parent organizations to complete and submit final program reports, identify financial adjustments and payments left to be satisfied, inventory and account for equipment and supplies purchased through the grant, finalize the financial relationship between any subgrantees, submit the final Financial Status Report through eGrants and reconcile the final FSR to the SF 272 and cash drawn from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System. **This occurs at the end of the project period usually 3-years.**

**Why is the Financial Closeout Process important?**
The process allows the Corporation to reconcile grant expenditures, de-obligate unspent funds, and close accounts at HHS. To ensure that future grant opportunities are not adversely impacted, it is imperative for your organization to complete the financial closeout obligations within 90 days from the end of the grant or as instructed by your state commission.

**How do you do it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | ✓ Ensure that accurate records are maintained throughout the year to account for your organization's stewardship of the grant. |
| | ✓ Submit the following documents within 90-days of the end of the approved project period in accordance with the state commission or parent organization requirements through eGrants.<br>1. Final (Cumulative) Financial Status Report (FSR)<br>2. Final (Cumulative) Project Report<br>3. Inventory of Equipment (if appropriate)<br>4. Inventory Residual Supplies (if appropriate)<br>5. Subgrant Certification (if applicable) |
| | ✓ Review and reconcile your account at HHS. Your FSR and the SF 272 must match. You must also draw out the same amount of funds from HHS that you report on the 272 and the FSR. If the numbers don't match you may owe the Corporation funds. |

***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Who is responsible for the closeout of subgrants and what is the applicable procedure**? *Each grantee is responsible for the closeout of all its subgrants. The grantee completes and signs a certification form when subgrantee closeout is completed. Only one certification is required for all subgrants that a grantee has to close. It is submitted to the Corporation along with the other documents required for closeout. The procedures applicable to the closeout of a primary grant are also applicable to the closeout of a subgrant.*

**To whom should a grantee send the final FSR?** *The grantee will submit the final FSR through eGrants to its assigned Grants Management Specialist.*

**What happens if a grantee is unable to meet the required match at the end of the project period?** *Failure to meet the minimum percentage of match could result in a downward adjustment of the federal award and the grantee having to refund a portion of the award to the Corporation.*

**How long does it take to complete grant closeout?** *Closeout can take a few days or weeks depending on the completeness of the documents on file and the time it takes to resolve any financial or programmatic issues identified during the review.*

**For how long after closeout must a grantee retain grant records?** *Under CNCS regulations, financial records and all other records pertinent to a grant must be retained for a period of three years from the date of submission of the final expenditure report (FSR). This requirement is included in the Grant Provisions. If an audit is initiated prior to the expiration of the three-year retention period, records must be retained until audit findings involving such records have been resolved and final action taken. While not required, some programs find it useful to retain records up to seven years from the end of term for members, given that the members have seven years to use the Education Award.*

**What should a grantee do if a subgrantee was discontinued and there is no one available to do close out?** *The grantee is responsible for the closeout of all its subgrants. So if a subgrant is discontinued before the end of the project period, the grantee should secure all pertinent financial and programmatic reports from the subgrantee at that time. Using these reports and its own records, the grantee should be able to account for the discontinued subgrant and complete the closeout process.*

**Can a grantee use an FSR generated through WBRS or is a paper copy required for closeout?** *WBRS is not capable of generating a final and cumulative FSR at this time. For this reason, a grantee must submit a paper copy of the final FSR for purposes of closeout.*

***Resources***

| *Resource* | *Description* | *Contact* |
|---|---|---|
| Corporation for National and Community Service | Financial management closeout forms. | http://www.americorps.org/resources/closeout_forms.html |
| Corporation for National and Community Service | A comprehensive list of FAQs related to the closeout process. | http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/cross/closeout_qanda.html |

# *A BRIEF HISTORY OF NATIONAL SERVICE*

When faced with challenges, our nation has always relied on the dedication and action of its citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) carries on a long tradition of citizen involvement by providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to improve their communities through service.

## *The Civilian Conservation Corps*

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps. Four million young people joined in response to his call to service, restoring the nation's parks, revitalizing the economy, and supporting their families and themselves. For 11 years the Civilian Conservation Corps provided billions of dollars in services and enabled millions of families to live in dignity.

## *The GI Bill*

During the 1940's, the GI Bill linked wartime service to educational benefits, offering returning World War II veterans the opportunity to pursue higher education in partial compensation for service to their country. Veterans improved their own lives by attending college. They also contributed mightily to America's future. With the education they received, those citizens helped spark the economic boom that helped make America the world's leading economy.

## *Peace Corps*

In the 1960s the call to service came from President John F. Kennedy, who challenged Americans in his inaugural address "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." In response to this challenge, the Peace Corps was born. The Peace Corps continues to engage thousands of volunteers who travel the world far and wide, building schools where none existed, helping farmers provide food for the hungry, and creating hospitals to care for the sick. After returning from overseas, Peace Corps volunteers put their new knowledge of others to work at home, in the spirit of citizenship, changing America for the better.

## *The War on Poverty*

President Lyndon B. Johnson brought the spirit of the Peace Corps home to America by creating Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in 1964. VISTA, which is now part of AmeriCorps, continues to fund programs under the sponsorship of local public agencies or nonprofit organizations to improve the condition of people living in under-served, low-income communities throughout America. Other initiatives such as the Retired and Senior Volunteer Corps (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program were developed in order to engage older Americans in the work of improving the nation.

## *Youth Service Movement*

In 1970, Congress created the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), a summer environmental employment program for youth ages 15-18. In 1978, a Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) became part of CETA, but was eliminated in 1982 by the Job Training Partnership Act

(JTPA) which did not include national service programming. Some components of YCC and YACC remained active in several states, funded through public and private dollars, and in 1976, California became the first state to create its own youth conservation program, the California Conservation Corps. Youth Conservation Corps still operates on a limited basis in some national parks and wildlife refuges. Private funders helped create additional youth corps programs during the seventies, including the Youth Volunteer Corps of America, City Year, and YouthBuild. Associations such as Youth Service America (YSA) and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) were formed to work with the various youth service movements. Youth service programming grew on college campuses, sponsored by such national programs as the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) and Campus Compact.

### *Revival of Interest National and Community Service*

President George H. W. Bush helped spark a revival of interest in national service when he instituted the White House Office of National Service in 1989. In 1990 Congress passed the National and Community Service Act, which created a Commission on National and Community Service sought to "renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the United States." Full implementation began in 1992, when the commission awarded $64 million in grants to support four broad types of state and local community service efforts. These initiatives were the Serve-America programs (now Learn and Serve) which involved school-aged youth in community service and service-learning through a variety of school and community-based activities; Higher Education Innovative Projects aimed at involving college students in community service and at promoting community service at educational institutions; American Conservation and Youth Service Corps, supporting summer and year-round youth corps initiatives that engage both in- and out-of-school youth in community service work; and the National and Community Service Demonstration Models, for programs that were potential models for large-scale national service. The National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a demonstration program to explore the possibility of using post-Cold War military resources to help solve problems here at home, was enacted later as part of the 1993 Defense Authorization Act. It is a residential service program modeled on the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps and the United States military.

### *National and Community Service Trust Act*

President Bill Clinton sponsored the National and Community Service Trust Act, a revision of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which was passed by a bipartisan coalition of Members of Congress and signed into law on September 21, 1993. The legislation created a new federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), to administer federally-funded national service programs. The law created AmeriCorps, which was designed to support local, state, and national organizations across the nation that involve Americans in results-driven community service. Individual AmeriCorps participants, known as members, typically serve for a year, during which they receive a living allowance. After service, members receive an education award, administered by the National Service Trust, and paid as a voucher redeemable for current education costs at colleges, universities, other post-secondary institutions, and approved school-to-work programs, or to pay back qualified student loans already incurred. The legislation drew on the principles of both the Civilian Conservation Corps and the GI Bill, encouraging Americans to serve and rewarding those who do. The new agency also took over the programs of two previous agencies, ACTION, which was responsible for running VISTA and the

National Senior Service Corps programs, and the more recent Commission on National and Community Service, including the NCCC, forming a new network of national service programs under AmeriCorps.

### *Service in the New Millennium*

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to serve their country for the equivalent of two years and announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, an umbrella network for volunteerism. A coordinating council housed at the White House and chaired by the President, is working to expand and strengthen federal service programs like the Peace Corps, Citizen Corps, AmeriCorps, and Senior Corps, and to raise awareness of and break down barriers to service opportunities with all federal government agencies. Several bills have been introduced in Congress over the past three years to increase funding for national service and to reauthorize the National and Community Service Act.

# *CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS*

CNCS provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and the nation through three programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. Members and volunteers serve with national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies to help meet pressing community needs. CNCS is part of USA Freedom Corps, the White House initiative to foster a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility, and help all Americans answer the President's Call to Service. CNCS fosters civic responsibility, strengthens the ties that bind us together as a people, and provides educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

Each year, CNCS also sets forth specific goals, such as recent ones to increase volunteer generation, to make funding more accessible to small community and faith-based organizations, and to increase civic engagement. Occasionally, CNCS will fund special initiatives, such as the Overcoming the Digital Divide and America Reads programs in order to meet pressing national needs.

## *AmeriCorps*

This program, sometimes referred to as "the domestic Peace Corps," is the national service program that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in results-driven service in the five priority areas of education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and other human needs. AmeriCorps programs provide full and part-time opportunities for members to provide service to their communities through community organizations and agencies. Over 250,000 people have served in AmeriCorps since the program was founded ten years ago.

Within AmeriCorps, there are three major goal areas:

| | |
|---|---|
| Needs and Service Activities | AmeriCorps programs provide a variety of specific and identifiable services that address community needs. This may involve direct service or capacity building activities that provide a direct benefit to communities. |
| Participant Development | AmeriCorps expands opportunities, helping those who help AmeriCorps. Because of their AmeriCorps service, members develop additional skills, gain valuable experience, and receive education awards that can be used for post-secondary education or to repay student loans. To help ensure that members are prepared for and benefit from their service, programs provide members skills and leadership training. |
| Strengthening Communities | AmeriCorps strengthens communities by involving citizens directly in serving community needs. AmeriCorps members help bring individuals and groups from different backgrounds together to cooperate in achieving constructive change and to solve critical community problems. |

## *AmeriCorps*State and National Direct*

AmeriCorps*State and National members participate in local service programs operated by community based nonprofit organizations, local and state government entities, Indian tribes, territories, institutions of higher education, local school and police districts, and partnerships among any of the above. Members serving in these programs help meet communities' critical education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and other human needs. Approximately three-quarters of AmeriCorps grant funding goes to state commissions appointed by governors, which in turn distribute and monitor grants to local organizations and agencies in response to local needs. These programs are called AmeriCorps*State programs. They are funded either through a formula allotment granted to each state or through a competitive process wherein programs compete for funding against other programs throughout the nation. The other quarter of AmeriCorps funding is granted by the CNCS through a competitive grants process to national nonprofit organizations operating programs in more than one state. These programs are called AmeriCorps*National Direct. Program recruitment, selection, placement of members, and supervision are the responsibility of the grantees. Within AmeriCorps*State and National, there are also Tribes and Territories programs, Education Awards programs, and other special initiatives.

## *AmeriCorps*VISTA*

AmeriCorps*VISTA members serve low-income communities and families across the country. Members of AmeriCorps*VISTA work and live in the communities they serve, creating or expanding programs that continue after they complete their terms of service. AmeriCorps*VISTA members are assigned to local project sponsors and focus on building community capacity, mobilizing community resources, and increasing self-reliance. VISTA project host sites are selected by the State Offices of CNCS, with the approval of each state's governor.

## *AmeriCorps*NCCC*

AmeriCorps*NCCC is a 10-month residential national service program for more than 1,200 members ages 18 to 24. Based on a military model, it sends members in teams of 10 to 14 to help nonprofit groups provide disaster relief, preserve the environment, build homes for low-income families, tutor children, and meet other challenges. AmeriCorps*NCCC teams meet community needs in cooperation with non-profit programs, state and local agencies, and other community groups. Members live at one of five regional campuses located in Charleston, South Carolina, Denver, Colorado, Perry Point, Maryland, Sacramento, California, and Washington, D.C., though their projects often take them to other communities throughout their region. Members are trained in CPR, first aid, and mass care and can be assigned to new duties on short notice, they are particularly well-suited to meeting the emerging homeland security needs of the nation.

## *National Senior Service Corps*

The National Senior Service Corps, also known informally as "Senior Corps," taps the skills, talents, and experience of more than 500,000 Americans age 55 or 60 and older to meet a wide range of community challenges through three programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP. These programs receive funding through annual appropriations and are

selected by CNCS State Offices on a non-competitive basis. In addition, National Senior Service Corps programs may compete nationally for funding as Programs of National Significance.

### *The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)*

Foster Grandparents serve as mentors, tutors, and caregivers for at-risk children and youth with special needs through a variety of community organizations, including schools, hospitals, drug treatment facilities, correctional institutions, and Head Start and day-care centers. In fiscal year 2001 more than 30,000 Foster Grandparents tended to the needs of 275,000 young children and teenagers. Local nonprofit organizations and public agencies receive grants to sponsor and operate local Foster Grandparent projects. The Foster Grandparent Program is open to people age 60 and over with limited incomes. Organizations that address the needs of abused and neglected children, troubled teens, young mothers, premature infants, and children with physical disabilities work with the local Foster Grandparent program to place and coordinate the services of the Foster Grandparent volunteers. Local partners (called volunteer stations) include children's services agencies, child and youth-oriented charities, and faith-based institutions.

### *The Senior Companion Program (SCP)*

Senior Companions serve one-on-one with the frail elderly and other homebound persons who have difficulty completing everyday tasks. They assist with grocery shopping, bill paying, and transportation to medical appointments, and they alert doctors and family members to potential problems. Senior Companions also provide short periods of relief to primary caregivers. Because of the program, thousands of citizens are able to live with dignity in their own homes. SCP is open to healthy individuals age 60 and over with limited incomes. In fiscal year 2001, 15,500 Senior Companions tended to the needs of more than 61,000 adult clients. Local nonprofit organizations and public agencies receive grants to sponsor and operate Senior Companion projects. Community organizations that address the health needs of older persons work with local SCP projects to place and coordinate the services of the SCP volunteers. These local partners (volunteer stations) include hospitals, area agencies on aging, and home health groups. The stations' professional staff identify individuals who need assistance and work with SCP projects to place them with Senior Companions.

### *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)*

RSVP volunteers serve in a diverse range of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based groups. RSVP is open to people age 55 and over. Among other activities, RSVP volunteers mentor at-risk youth, organize neighborhood watch programs, test drinking water for contaminants, teach English to immigrants, and lend their business skills to community groups that provide critical social services. In fiscal year 2001, approximately 480,000 volunteers served an average of four hours a week at an estimated 65,000 local organizations. Local organizations, both public and private, receive grants to sponsor and operate RSVP projects in their community. These projects recruit seniors to serve from a few hours a month to almost full-time, though the average commitment is four hours a week. Most volunteers are paired with local community and faith-based organizations that are already helping to meet community needs.

## *Learn and Serve America*

Learn and Serve America provides grants to schools, colleges, and nonprofit groups to support efforts to engage nearly one million students from kindergarten through college students in community service linked to academic achievement and the development of civic skills. This type of learning, called service-learning, improves communities while preparing young people for a lifetime of responsible citizenship. Learn and Serve grants are used to create new programs or replicate existing programs, as well as to provide training and development to staff, faculty, and volunteers. CNCS funds state education agencies, state commissions on national and community service, nonprofit organizations, Indian tribes, and U.S. territories, which then select and fund local service-learning programs through Learn and Serve K-12. Institutions of higher education and consortia are funded directly through Learn and Serve Higher Education.

# *FUNDING FOR NATIONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES*

## *Corporation for National and Community Service*

As the primary federal source of funding for national service activities, CNCS is obviously the most important player on the field. But AmeriCorps operates in a decentralized manner that gives a significant amount of administrative responsibility to states and national and local nonprofit groups. CNCS realizes that the many organizations and individuals around the country with which it shares administrative responsibility for AmeriCorps will look to it for assistance on a broad range of issues and problems. The following table suggests some of the principal support functions that CNCS offices can provide:

| OFFICE | SUPPORT FUNCTIONS |
|---|---|
| Program | Houses CNCS program officers who are the primary liaison with and support and respond to programmatic issues for State Commissions and National Direct parent organizations. |
| Grants | Oversees financial aspects of grants and awards. |
| Training and Technical Assistance | Works with national technical assistance providers and with training and technical assistance coordinators in State Commissions. |
| Trust | Manages the education awards for AmeriCorps members. |
| Public Affairs | Oversees media relations, marketing and publications. |
| Public Liaison | Oversees national initiatives, national service days, and all AmeriCorps awards. |
| General Counsel | Provides legal counsel for CNCS and can answer legal questions related to AmeriCorps program management. |
| OIG | Detects and deters waste, fraud, abuse, and violations of law of CNCS funded programs. |
| Recruitment | Provides support for the online recruitment system and other national recruitment efforts. |

For administrative purposes, CNCS has divided the nation into five regions, called clusters, to facilitate efficient communication and better support national service efforts. Each cluster has some specific CNCS personnel, such as a program officer, assigned to assist it. The table below can be used to identify which cluster a particular AmeriCorps program belongs to.

| Atlantic | North Central | Pacific | Southern | Southwest |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Connecticut | Illinois | Alaska | Alabama | Arizona |
| Delaware | Indiana | California | District of Columbia | Arkansas |
| Maine | Iowa | Hawaii | Florida | Colorado |
| Maryland | Michigan | Idaho | Georgia | Kansas |
| Massachusetts | Minnesota | Montana | Kentucky | Louisiana |
| New Hampshire | Nebraska | Nevada | Mississippi | Missouri |
| New Jersey | North Dakota | Oregon | North Carolina | New Mexico |
| New York | Ohio | Utah | South Carolina | Oklahoma |
| Pennsylvania | South Dakota | Washington | Tennessee | Texas |
| Rhode Island | Wisconsin | Wyoming | Virginia | |
| Puerto Rico | | | West Virginia | |
| Vermont | | | | |
| Virgin Islands | | | | |

## *CNCS State Offices*

CNCS also operates offices in each state. These offices are responsible for administering AmeriCorps*VISTA programs as well as the three National Senior Service Corps programs. The CNCS employees in these locations assist with the monitoring of National Direct AmeriCorps programs, solicit and review Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service grants in their states, and participate in cross-program planning initiatives, including Unified State Plan development. One of them, usually the state office director, serves as an ex-officio member of the State Commission.

## *State Commissions*

State commissions exist to foster a bipartisan state-level commitment to advancing service initiatives in the state. State commissions have direct accountability for the grantees running local AmeriCorps programs. To do this, State commissions must develop a solid infrastructure that will enable them to select and support high quality national service programs and effectively manage commission activities in their states. Commissions monitor and evaluate programs to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements, are progressing well towards meeting program objectives and have high quality service projects and management systems. Commissions also have the broad role of developing and communicating a statewide vision and ethic of service and promoting that vision throughout their respective states. That vision should incorporate all components of AmeriCorps (State, National, VISTA, NCCC, and Tribes and Territories, as applicable), Learn and Serve America, the National Senior Service Corps, and the larger volunteer community. It can be realized by promoting the idea of service statewide, by offering supportive training and technical assistance activities, both formal and informal, and by fostering partnerships between CNCS-funded programs and other service and volunteer activities.

## *National Directs*

National Directs are national nonprofit organizations operating in at least two states that run a multisite AmeriCorps program. They are responsible for administering a grant process for their subgrantees, monitoring and evaluating them to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements, offering technical assistance and training specific to AmeriCorps, and providing financial oversight. Both National Directs and their subgrantees work in collaboration with State Commissions and CNCS State Offices by attending statewide events and conferences and keeping them informed of their activities.

## *State Education Agencies*

State education agencies (SEAs) receive and administer the school-based Learn and Serve funds. These monies are distributed to SEAs on a formula basis and support service-learning activities for K-12. States have significant latitude in how they design their programs. For example, some states offer large grants for district-wide implementation of service-learning. Other states offer smaller grants to individual schools, classrooms, or teachers. Unlike AmeriCorps, SEAs apply for funding for service-learning and then decide which programs/districts to fund through a competitive process that occurs after the fact. Funds support both the implementation and capacity-building of service-learning. In addition, SEAs may choose to apply for other Learn and Serve funds on a competitive basis. These funds may vary each year depending on CNCS' priorities and appropriations. SEAs are responsible for monitoring, reporting, and training the

CNCS-funded service-learning programs they administer.

### *Other Stakeholders*

Other stakeholders include corporations, private foundations, elected officials, the media, and some state agencies. State Commissions and National Directs need to build long-lasting relationships with these other stakeholders to strengthen service programs and build public support for national and community service.

# *AMERICORPS: JUST THE FACTS*

| *TYPE OF PROGRAM* | *WHO CAN APPLY* | *PROGRAM PURPOSE* | *FOR AN APPLICATION* | *MATCH REQUIREMENT** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AmeriCorps* State** | • State and local non-profit organizations<br>• State and local Governments<br>• State and local education institutions<br>• Indian Tribes<br>• Faith-based and other community organizations | To engage AmeriCorps members in providing direct service to address unmet community needs. Local programs design service activities for a team of members serving full-time/part-time for one year or during the summer.<br><br>Sample activities: restore parks, tutor youth, assist crime victims, or build homes. | State Commissions. Most states have a governor appointed board that administers AmeriCorps programs within the state.<br><br>For programs in **North and South Dakota** contact the Corporation for National and Community Service 202-606-5000 ext. 346 | The Corporation requires a 15% cash match for AmeriCorps member support cost and 33% cash or in-kind match of the overall operating program costs.<br>State commissions may add additional match requirements. |
| **AmeriCorps* National** | • National non-profit organizations that operate in two or more states (such as the American Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity)<br>• Consortia formed across two or more states, consisting of institutions of higher education, Indian tribes, or other nonprofits, including labor and faith-based and other community organizations. | Same as above | Corporation for National and Community Service 202-606-5000 ext. 163 | 15% cash match for AmeriCorps member support cost and 33% cash or in-kind match of the overall operating program costs. |
| **AmeriCorps Indian Tribes and US Territories** | • Indian Tribes<br>• Programs in US Territories<br>• Territories on behalf of the territory and individual programs | Same as AmeriCorps* State | Corporation for National and Community Service 202-606-5000 ext. 417 | 15% cash match for AmeriCorps member support cost and 33% cash or in-kind match of the overall operating program costs. |
| **AmeriCorps Education Awards Program** | • Local non-profit organizations, state and local units of government, except State Education Agencies apply through the state commission<br>• State commissions, national non-profits, multi-state collaborations, faith-based and other community organizations<br>• Institutions of higher education and state education agencies may apply to the State Commission or directly to the Corporation | Same as AmeriCorps* State<br><br>• Summer programs<br>• College-based programs<br>• Program sponsors with capacity to manage service programs with minimal or no additional CNCS funds. | State Commissions<br><br>Corporation for National and Community Service 202-606-5000 ext. 417 | Programs cover all costs with the exception of the education awards earned by members and up to $400 per full-time equivalent program participant. |

* For updated information, consult your grant provisions for relevant rules and grant guidance.

# *USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES*

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| About the Corporation | http://www.cns.gov/about/index.html |
| AmeriCorps Gear and Signage | www.nationalservicecatalog.org |
| AmeriCorps Regulations and Legislation | www.nationalservice.org/about/ogc |
| AmeriCorps Provisions and Handbooks | www.americorps.org/resources/manuals.html |
| Education Award Information | www.americorpsalums.org |
| | www.americorps.org/members/resource/education/ |
| National Service Calendar, Listserves and other resources | www.nationalserviceresoures.org |
| National service programs funded by CNCS | www.americorps.org |
| Recruitment | http://www.americorps.org/resources/recruitment.html |
| State Profiles | www.nationalservice.gov/state_profiles/ |
| Training and Technical Assistance Providers | www.americorps.org/resources |

# *GLOSSARY OF TERMS*

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| **Administrative costs** | Administrative costs are costs associated with the overall administration of a Program, and are defined in the General Provisions, in the Administrative Costs section of the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. |
| **AmeriCorps member "Corps member" "Member"** | An individual serving on a full-time or part-time basis in an AmeriCorps program. Corps is pronounced "core", as in "apple core". |
| **AmeriCorps member "Corps member" "Member"** | An individual serving on a full-time or part-time basis in an AmeriCorps program who is eligible to receive an education award or alternative post service benefit. |
| **AmeriCorps National Service Network** | The network of all AmeriCorps programs, including AmeriCorps*USA, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps*NCCC. |
| **AmeriCorps Promise Fellows** | Promise Fellows serve in a leadership corps of approximately 500 full-time AmeriCorps members who spearhead community efforts to deliver the Five Promises of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future to children and youth across the nation. |
| **AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)** | AmeriCorps*NCCC is a 10-month, full-time residential program which combines the best practices of civilian service with the best practices of military service, including leadership development and team-building. A team-based program for young women and men between the ages of 18 - 24. |
| **AmeriCorps*State and National** | A national service program operated by local and national non-profits, local and state government entities, Indian tribes, territories, and institutions of higher education. Members participate in local service programs operated by not-for-profits, local and state government entities, Indian tribes, territories, and institutions of higher education, local school and police districts, and partnerships among any of the above. |
| **AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)** | A national service program focused on eradicating poverty. Members serve full-time at community-based organizations. Members of AmeriCorps*VISTA work and live in the communities they serve, creating or expanding programs that can continue after they complete their service. |
| **Audit trail** | A step-by-step record review by which accounting transactions (revenues and/or expenditures) can be traced to the source. Thereby, the validity and accuracy of accounting data can be verified by reviewing the sequence of events leading to the stated data. |
| **Benefits** | Included in AmeriCorps member benefits are training/education, health insurance (for full-time AmeriCorps members not otherwise covered), and childcare (for eligible full-time AmeriCorps members). See Grant Provisions for a list of specific benefits. |
| **Budget** | A budget is a document that lists planned income and expenses, specifically showing the dollar value for each. At a later date, actual transactions should be compared to the budget for analysis and control of future budgetary decisions. Of the many kinds of budgets, a cash budget shows cash flowing in and out of an organization; an expense budget shows expected payments of money; and a capital budget shows anticipated payments for capital projects. Budgets are separated into various categories and the categories are further broken down into individual components, called line items. For |

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| | example, travel could be a line item within a broader category called operational expenses. |
| **Chart of accounts** | A chart of accounts is a listing of account names, descriptions of transactions, and classifications that are used for recording accounting transactions. Information is generally numbered and grouped according to assets, liabilities, revenues and/or expenses. |
| **Community-based agency** | A private nonprofit organization (including a church or other religious entity) that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and is engaged in meeting human, educational, environmental, or public safety community needs. |
| **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)**<br>**"The Corporation"** | The Corporation for National and Community Service established under section 191 of the Act (42 U.S.C. 12651). |
| **Corps** | This word is used to describe a team of AmeriCorps members. The word is pronounced as "core" (as in "apple core"). |
| **Education award** | An Education award is an award provided to a member who has successfully completed a required term of service in an approved national service position and who otherwise meets the eligibility criteria in the Act. An education award may be used: (1) to repay qualified student loans, as defined in the Act; (2) toward educational expenses at a Title IV Institution of Higher Education; and (3) toward expenses incurred in participating in school-to-work programs<br>approved by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. A benefit of $4,725 (full-time) or $2,363 (part-time) AmeriCorps members may receive after successful completion of a term of service. |
| **eGrants** | The Corporation for National and Community Service's online grant application and management system. eGrants is designed to automate the entire grants management process from application to closeout. |
| **End-outcome indicators** | End-outcome indicators specify changes that have occurred in the lives of the community beneficiaries and/or members that are significant and lasting. These are actual impacts, benefits or changes for participants during or after a program. |
| **Fiduciary** | A relationship that implies a position of trust or confidence wherein one person is usually entrusted to hold or manage property or money for another. |
| **Financial Statements** | A written document(s) describing the net worth, earnings or other monetary relationship of a person, or business; a record of financial information and financial status. The most common of the many types of financial statements are the balance sheet, the income statement and the cash flow statement. |
| **Fiscal systems** | Procedures and systems used to maintain accurate financial records and to safeguard the assets of the company. |
| **General Equivalency Diploma (GED)** | A degree obtained by examination that may substitute for a high school diploma. A Member must agree to obtain a GED or high school diploma before using his or her AmeriCorps education award. |
| **Grantee** | The direct recipient of an AmeriCorps grant. The Grantee is responsible for ensuring that Sub-Grantees or other organizations carrying out activities under the grant award comply with AmeriCorps provisions, including regulations and OMB circulars. The Grantee is legally accountable to the Corporation for the use of grant award funds and is bound by the provisions |

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| | of the Grant. |
| **Host site** | An organization that administers an AmeriCorps program or serves as a member placement site. This is a group or organization that acts as a project sponsor and is responsible for the actual location where a project is to be performed. This entity may provide task specific training, technical assistance supervision, or other services as agreed to in a "contract" between the program and the host site. |
| **Independent auditor** | A professional accountant who has passed certain exams, achieved a certain amount of experience, and met all other statutory and licensing requirements of the state where he or she performs his/her services. The word independent is added to emphasize that the professional work is performed by a fair, unbiased source. |
| **Intermediate-outcome indicators** | Intermediate-outcome indicators specify changes that have occurred in the lives of community beneficiaries and/or members, but are not necessarily a lasting benefit for them. They are observable and measurable indications of whether or not a program is making progress. |
| **Internal controls** | The control of an organization's operations, through procedures designed to safeguard its assets, generate appropriate accounting data, ensure efficiency, and confirm compliance with management policies and grant regulations. An important component of internal controls is to ensure that no one individual should be tasked to perform all the steps of a specific process, particularly relating to financial transactions. This will ensure that there are adequate checks and balances to safeguard the organization's assets and produce accurate financial information. Internal controls should be written down, documenting specific policies and procedures an agency and its personnel adheres to.<br>*Examples of good internal controls include: Documented policies and procedures, adequate review process for financial reports and budgets, adequate cash management procedures, monthly bank reconciliations, an asset tracking system, an established financial system to track members' and employees' time and activities, and a system to follow-up on problems identified to ensure resolution.* |
| **Living allowance** | A living allowance, not a "wage" or "salary", that may be provided to AmeriCorps members enrolled and active in an AmeriCorps program. |
| **National and Community Service Act of 1990** | The Act of 1990 was passed by Congress and signed into law to establish the Commission on National and Community Service. |
| **National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993**<br>**"Act"** | The Act of 1993 amended the National and Community Service Act of 1990, to establish the Corporation for National Service by combining the Commission for National and Community Service and ACTION. |
| **National service identity** | The sense of purpose and membership in a common program that all AmeriCorps members share. National identity can be promoted and strengthened by everything from buttons and T-shirts to reflection activities, common national service projects, and civic education. |
| **National Service Network** | The network of Corporation funded service programs, including AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America and National Senior Service Corps. |
| **National Service** | The trust fund in the United States Treasury Department was established by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 to hold and to |

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| **Trust Fund**<br>**"Trust Fund" or "Trust.** | disperse AmeriCorps education awards. |
| **Office of Management and Budget (OMB)** | The Federal government's Office of Management and Budget assists the President in preparing the annual federal budget and oversees its execution. OMB must approve the Corporation's regulations, applications, forms, and any other documents that affect the public. |
| **Output indicators** | Output indicators are the amounts or units of service that members or volunteers have completed, or the number of community beneficiaries the program has served. Output indicators do not provide information on benefits or other changes in the lives of members and/or community beneficiaries. |
| **Performance Measures** | Performance measures are indicators intended to help a grantee measure the results of an AmeriCorps program's activities on community beneficiaries and participants. Performance measures are based on outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes. |
| **Program** | A coordinated group of activities linked by common elements such as recruitment, selection, and training of participants and staff, regular group activities and assignment to projects organized for the purpose of achieving the mission and goals of national and community service. |
| **Project** | An activity or a set of activities carried out as part of a program. |
| **Request for Proposal (RFP)** | Request for Proposal issued by the Corporation, or another agency, to solicit program applications for available grant funds. |
| **Service site** | A service site is a place where service is being performed by AmeriCorps members and perhaps other people who are volunteers and/or employees. A service site is **not** a "work" or "job" site. |
| **Source documentation** | Information that is used to support individual accounting transactions. A utility invoice would be an example of the source documentation for that particular expense that is noted in the chart of accounts and/or general ledger. |
| **Stakeholder** | One or more people or organizations that have a high degree of interest in your organization's vision, mission, and success. |
| **State commission** | A 15 - 25 member, independent, bipartisan commission appointed by a governor to implement service programs in a state. Each state commission receives funding from the Corporation to operate the commission, and may apply to the Corporation for formula and competitive program grant funds. |
| **Sub-grantee** | An organization receiving AmeriCorps Grant funds from a Grantee of the Corporation. |
| **Term of service** | A term of service is determined by each program and must contain at least 1700 hours served within 9 to 12 months (full-time); a minimum of 900 hours served within 2 years (part-time). |
| **Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)** | The support and assistance provided to AmeriCorps programs to strengthen program operations. |
| **Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)** | Used by programs awarded grants through AmeriCorps State/National. |

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| **Written policies and procedures** | An established and comprehensive set of ***written policies and procedures*** should be reviewed annually to ensure they are up-to-date. Policies should detail appropriate segregation of duties to ensure no one individual is responsible for the entire financial management and accounting system. Policies and procedures should include detailed information on all financial management and accounting practices. |