

# Identifying Local Resources for Your Literacy Program

## *A Guide for National Service Programs*

*Produced by LEARNS  
Linking Education and America  
Reads through National Service*



**Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
Community and Education Volunteer Services Center**

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A version of this publication can be found online at <http://www.nwrel.org/learns>.



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# Using This Guide

**T**his guide for locating local resources to support your literacy program is designed to help you identify partners and stakeholders in your community—ones you may not have thought of as a resource. First, a word about resources. In the context of this guide, resources refers to any organization, initiative, or individual who supports education-focused national service programs by sharing materials and information, collaborating on joint projects, or providing monetary or in-kind contributions, client or constituent referrals, or volunteers.

The guide is organized around the typical needs of program coordinators. You will find topics such as Knowledge of Literacy Peers and Parent Involvement under the *If You Need . . .* heading, followed by the types of organizations and individuals who may be able to help meet that need. For each need, you'll read about:

- *What Others Have Done* to connect with similar resources in their communities.
- *Building Reciprocity*, which shows how national service programs and members have in turn been valuable, responsive partners to schools, community organizations, and others.
- *Research Hints* that give suggestions on how to identify and make initial contact with organizations, offices, or individuals who could be important allies for your own program.

The examples in this guide come from two case studies of how education-focused national service programs tap into local literacy resources. These case studies of programs in North



Carolina and Wyoming are available in separate publications. We wish to thank those who participated in this research for sharing their stories: program coordinators, members and volunteers, executive directors of the state commissions on national and community service, state directors of the Corporation for National Service, and the many teachers, principals, and nonprofit organizations who are their valued partners.

In both states we found that strong, sustainable programs have cultivated relationships with many different partners, relationships that are based on how they can assist each other in understanding the entire community's needs, providing quality resources, and delivering effective services. This guide will help you connect with people and organizations to create equally powerful partnerships that link national service, education, and literacy to build a stronger community.

If You Need . . .

# Knowledge of Literacy Peers

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Community college and university
  - Adult basic education and GED preparation programs and staff
  - Community resource center
  - Cooperative Extension Services
  - Department or college education faculty and students
  - English as a second language faculty and students
- ✦ District and school staff; in addition to teachers and principals, connect with:
  - District reading specialist
  - Other volunteer coordinators
  - Reading Is Fundamental coordinator
  - School-to-Work coordinator
  - State and national teachers associations, local representatives
  - Teachers using special reading programs (e.g. Reading Recovery)
- ✦ Literacy Volunteers of America, local affiliates
- ✦ Local and state literacy councils
- ✦ Other national service staff in education-focused programs
- ✦ Public library staff and special programs

## What Others Have Done

Project PAL, an AmeriCorps\*State program in Laramie, Wyoming, helped create an umbrella organization that brings together all groups and individuals interested in literacy. The group is comprised of the Reading Is Fundamental coordinator, local representatives of the state and national education associations, a representative from the dean of the College of Education at the University of Wyoming, a Foster Grandparent director, Rotary club members, and the AmeriCorps coordinator.

The Community of Readers is a coalition of organizations, human service agencies, activists, and individuals interested in literacy in Guilford County, North Carolina. They are currently conducting a study of literacy in the county and reviewing area literacy programs.

Building Reciprocity: This year, an AmeriCorps member in Laramie, Wyoming, will receive training in diagnosing scotopic sensitivity, a vision condition that manifests reading difficulties sometimes mistaken for dyslexia. When certified, the member will be available to area teachers, schools, and organizations to test children for this condition.

## Research Hint

To connect with important literacy peers in the school system, find out if the district has a reading specialist or if any of the schools use reading programs like HOSTS or Reading Recovery. If you're new to a community, call the local or state literacy council to connect with them and other peers such as adult literacy educators and Literacy Volunteers of America affiliates in your area.

If You Need . . .

# Knowledge of National Service Peers

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Corporation for National Service State Office
- ✦ State Commission on National and Community Service
- ✦ Corporation for National Service (headquarters)
- ✦ Learn and Serve America director with the state education agency
- ✦ Listservs associated with national service in general or with your stream of service, both regionally and nationally
- ✦ National Service Resource Center at ETR Associates

## What Others Have Done

- State-level offices are instrumental in linking projects across streams. In Wyoming, the Corporation State Office Director introduced a new Foster Grandparent director to a veteran AmeriCorps\*State coordinator located in the same town. Since then, the two have shared materials and collaborated on training volunteers.
- In North Carolina, the Commission on National and Community Service maintains the Clearinghouse on Community Service Web site, which includes a directory of national service programs in the state. The Web site is located at [www.nccu.edu/clearinghouse](http://www.nccu.edu/clearinghouse).

**Building Reciprocity:** After meeting at the beginning of the year, VISTA members in Wyoming began a periodic newsletter to keep in touch. Several provided articles and other information, another put together the newsletter, and the State Director copied and distributed it to all VISTA members in the state.

## Research Hint

Check with your State Commission, Corporation for National Service State Office, or state educational agency about other education-focused programs near you. The National Service Resource Center and Corporation for National Service have online directories of State Commissions and State Offices at [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC) and [www.cns.gov](http://www.cns.gov). Explore the possibility of joint events, collaborate on volunteer recruitment, and share resources with other national service staff.

If You Need . . .

# Books and Materials

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Local businesses
  - Chain stores
  - New and used bookstores
  - Office supply stores
- ✦ Local nonprofit and other organizations
  - Goodwill stores
  - Salvation Army stores
- ✦ Local and state literacy councils
- ✦ National service resources
  - Other national service programs and staff
  - LEARNS Web site and National Service Resource Center Web site, as well as other national training and technical assistance providers
- ✦ Parents and community members
- ✦ Professional organizations
- ✦ Public library
- ✦ School resources

## What Others Have Done

- As a special project, volunteers with Durham County Literacy Council in North Carolina recorded books in order to expand the organization's collection of books on tape.
- An AmeriCorps program in Laramie, Wyoming, coordinates an annual literacy fair. The project coordinator uses her membership in ZONTA International—an organization that works to improve the condition of women throughout the world—to get information, ideas, and materials to help plan and put on the event. Local and chain bookstores donate books, bookmarks, and gift certificates as prizes and promotionals.

**Building Reciprocity:** In Jackson, Wyoming, the public library turned to the Teton Literacy Project, a VISTA sponsor and America Reads program, when the library wanted to expand its Spanish-language holdings. TLP drew on its own resources and talked to others in the community to give the library a long list of recommended books.

## Research Hint

By joining professional and other organizations that promote literacy, you can expand your access to resources. Organizations such as the International Reading Association or Literacy Volunteers of America have useful publications that keep you current on news, research, and events. These publications and events can enhance your knowledge and practice.

If You Need . . .

# Space

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Churches
- ✦ Civic organizations
- ✦ Community college and university
  - Adult basic education or GED preparation programs
  - Department or college of education
  - Student services
  - Tutoring or learning centers
- ✦ Neighborhood centers
- ✦ Other tutoring programs in the community
- ✦ Parks and recreation office
- ✦ Public library
- ✦ Schools and after-school programs

## What Others Have Done

Lutheran Family Services provides assistance to immigrants and refugees in Greensboro, North Carolina. During the summer, children attend classes to learn English speaking skills and help prepare for school in the fall. Classes are held at the local Lutheran church.

The Albany County Public Library in Wyoming provides an area for an AmeriCorps Project PAL tutor to meet with children and adults one day a week. The AmeriCorps tutor has become such a reliable, popular part of library services that children and parents plan trips to the library around her schedule.

**Building Reciprocity:** St. Stephens Indian School in St. Stephens, Wyoming, is the hub of community activity. Once a month, the school hosts Family Resource Night when children and adults can meet with each other and teachers, use the computer lab, and engage in learning activities. The America Reads VISTA member and teachers have used Family Resource Night to share information about reading and tutoring with parents.

## Research Hint

Is there an after-school program in your school or in a nearby organization such as the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club? Are the public or community college libraries willing to lend rooms for tutoring? How about a church, local neighborhood or parks and recreation center? There's only one way to find out: Look around and ask. And when you approach a potential partner, think about what you can offer them. Be ready to give as well as to receive.

If You Need . . .

# Volunteers

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Churches
- ✦ Civic organizations
  - Kiwanis
  - Lions Club
  - Rotary Club
- ✦ Community college or university
  - Faculty, staff, and students
- ✦ Local corporations and small business associations
- ✦ Local United Way
- ✦ Neighborhood associations
- ✦ Public radio and television stations
- ✦ School
  - High school and middle school students
  - Parents and parent-teacher associations
  - Student-teacher associations
  - Staff
  - Volunteer coordinator
- ✦ Senior centers

## What Others Have Done

• In Jackson, Wyoming, three projects have combined efforts to serve children. Adolescent girls in GAP! (Girls Actively Participating) tutor and mentor elementary students who are involved in either the America Reads tutoring program or an after-school care program.

• Land of Sky Regional Council RSVP program places volunteers in literacy councils and schools in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties in North Carolina. This year more than 100 RSVP volunteers serve as tutors in local schools.

**Building Reciprocity:** Many national service coordinators talk at local civic organizations' meetings and breakfasts to spread the word about their services. After such presentations, the AmeriCorps program in Laramie, Wyoming, receives as many calls from those who want to become tutors as they do from those who want to be tutored.

## Research Hint

Most United Way affiliates can help with recruitment. Their offices may send out press releases advertising your project's need for volunteers. Civic organizations offer luncheon and breakfast opportunities to speak about volunteer needs. Local papers may feature a regular volunteer opportunities section. Large corporations often have employee volunteer coordinators that funnel contacts. Possibilities abound.

If You Need . . .

# Training for Volunteers

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ American Society for Training and Development, local affiliates
- ✦ Community college or university faculty
- ✦ Literacy Volunteers of America, national organization and local affiliates
- ✦ Local expert consultants
- ✦ Local government agencies
- ✦ Local and state literacy councils
- ✦ National service resources
  - State Commission on National and Community Service
  - Corporation for National Service State Office
  - National training and technical assistance providers
  - Other national service staff and projects
- ✦ Retired teachers
- ✦ School personnel

## What Others Have Done

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Federal Work Study students from Wake Forest University serve as tutors with the university's America Reads program. Faculty members from the university's department of education conduct training at the beginning of the year and through fall and spring semesters.

VISTA members serving in the Natrona County School District in Wyoming attended the VISTA Early Service Training focusing on literacy. They have combined this training with each school's focus, needs, and resources to create the most relevant tutor training possible.

**Building Reciprocity:** When a Foster Grandparent Program was started in Laramie, Wyoming, the nearby AmeriCorps coordinator met with the new FGP director. They have shared training materials and resources, and collaborated on training volunteers. The AmeriCorps coordinator has also helped bring the new director into the local literacy community.

## Research Hint

Find out from your State Commission or State Office about other projects in your area. Collaborating on training events conserves costs, and working with other streams of service can be an enlightening experience. Some commissions have a designated training coordinator who may know of good trainers in your area. Keep and share your contact information on good trainers.

If You Need . . .

# Curriculum Assistance

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ District and school staff
  - Classroom teachers
  - Curriculum specialist
  - Reading specialist
  
- ✦ Community college and university
  - Adult basic education and GED preparation program staff
  - Department or college of education faculty
  - English as a second language instructors
  
- ✦ Library resources
  - American Library Association, chapters and organization affiliates
  - Center for the Book at the state library
  - Reference librarians
  
- ✦ Local and state literacy councils
  
- ✦ National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, local and state affiliates
  
- ✦ Other national service staff

## What Others Have Done

The Wyoming Center for the Book is one of 14 centers implementing the Mother Goose Asks "Why?" curriculum, which helps pre-kindergarten and elementary students develop literacy and science skills. Several VISTA members have been trained in the curriculum and will use it with parents and children next year.

Literacy South is a nonprofit organization that supports literacy practitioners in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. Literacy South assists programs with staff development, training, evaluation, and the creation of learner-centered curriculum.

**Building Reciprocity:** The Corporation State Office in Wyoming maintains contact with the Wyoming Center for the Book, and has referred VISTA members interested in family literacy to their resources. These members will be instrumental in piloting the Mother Goose program in their communities.

## Research Hint

More and more, downloadable curriculum materials appear on the Internet. Try some searches using key words and several search engines. The International Reading Association ([www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)), National Council of Teachers of English ([www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)), and the American Library Association ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) all offer on-line resources. Many literacy-affiliated organizations host discussion groups and open forums. Commercial publishers often post curriculum resources and activities on their Web sites as well.

Browsing used book stores is also a good way to find used teaching and curriculum materials. If you feel you need specific guidance, contact a college or public library reference librarian, or a school district curriculum specialist.

If You Need . . .

# Parent Involvement

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Community college and university
  - Community resource centers
  - Cooperative Extension Services
- ✦ Community-based organizations
  - After-school and/or day-care providers
  - Boys and Girls Clubs
  - United Way
  - YMCA and YWCA
- ✦ Faith-based programs
- ✦ Immigrant outreach programs
- ✦ Parent-student associations
- ✦ Parent-teacher associations
- ✦ Parks and recreation programs
- ✦ Public library
- ✦ School groups and staff
  - Head Start
  - Parent involvement or volunteer coordinator
  - Principals
  - Teachers
- ✦ State parent training and information centers

## What Others Have Done

- VISTA members at Wyoming Indian Elementary School in Ethete took their tutoring to parents and children when they realized many families did not have reliable transportation to reach the school for tutoring sessions. Teachers and tutors used the school van to visit parents and students at home for summer tutoring sessions.
- The Mother Goose Asks "Why?" curriculum requires significant commitment from parents for training and participation. In Wyoming, site coordinators using the curriculum recognized the many demands on parents' time and made adjustments to encourage their participation. Two sites now offer free child care and refreshments.

**Building Reciprocity:** In Fayetteville, North Carolina, Bridges Early Childhood Service Center involves parents by sponsoring programs for the entire family, including adult literacy and computer classes, pre-school programs, family math night, and homework and tutoring sessions. Volunteers from a local church and parents from the community work together to get others involved.

## Research Hint

Get to know parents, their concerns, and needs. If many parents work during the day, hold informational meetings during the evening or weekend. Find neutral meeting locations in parents' neighborhoods. Be aware of and try to help with transportation and childcare issues, and provide snacks for meetings. If parents' primary language is other than English, seek out a respected ally (maybe another parent) who will team with you on parent outreach. In addition to the parents themselves, talk with teachers, students, school and community members to find effective ways to reach out.

If You Need . . .

# Community Involvement

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Child care or parenting organizations
- ✦ Churches
- ✦ Civic organizations
  - Kiwanis
  - Lions Club
  - Rotary Club
- ✦ Community centers
- ✦ Government officials and offices
- ✦ Hospitals
- ✦ Local businesses
- ✦ Neighborhood associations
- ✦ Neighborhood newsletters or newspapers
- ✦ Organized community events
- ✦ Parent-student associations
- ✦ Parent-teacher associations
- ✦ Public library
- ✦ School districts and school boards
- ✦ Social service agencies

## What Others Have Done

The *Durham Herald-Sun* prints Newsbrief, a weekly news feature sponsored by the Durham County Literacy Council and Duke University's Community Service Center. The Literacy Council adapts articles that appear in the newspaper by writing them on levels appropriate for adult learners. The articles are then used by Duke University student volunteers who tutor university auxiliary staff.

Many programs have community-wide literacy fairs and celebrations. In Laramie, Wyoming children's authors read from their own books, and in Casper, VISTA members held their fair at a local shopping mall so that all community members could take part.

**Building Reciprocity:** For the last two years AmeriCorps members in Laramie entered a float in the city's summer celebration, Jubilee Days. They also staff a booth at the fair where they give out bookmarks, door prizes, literacy and AmeriCorps membership information.

## Research Hint

Get to know community members who have a stake in the success of your program. Connecting with the broader community will expand your network of peers and resources. It's also a good way to gain exposure and support. Explore ways you, tutors, and students can be a part of the community at large. Look for opportunities to volunteer at blood drives, walk-a-thons, neighborhood clean-ups, and other events that will help you build relationships and reciprocity.

If You Need . . .

# Special Projects Assistance

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Adult basic education and GED preparation programs and staff
- ✦ Civic organizations
  - Kiwanis
  - Lions Club
  - Rotary Club
- ✦ Local businesses
- ✦ National Endowment for the Arts, regional or state affiliates
- ✦ National Endowment for the Humanities, local or state affiliates
- ✦ Public library
- ✦ Schools
- ✦ Service-learning educators and programs
- ✦ State and local arts and humanities councils

## What Others Have Done

• VISTA members in Casper, Wyoming, collaborated with each other and community members to plan their first literacy fair. Each recruited a local celebrity to read to children. The mayor, police chief, and others volunteered to read. The local mall donated the space, and the newspaper and television stations covered the event.

• In honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, a branch of the Charlotte, North Carolina, Public Library System held a family fun night for members of the community. The event included contests, games, and story readings. The event was part of the annual nationwide celebration of Dr. Seuss' birthday, co-sponsored by Read Across America, Reading Is Fundamental, the National Center for Family Literacy, and the American Library Association.

**Building Reciprocity:** In a classic "buy one, get one free" bargain, the Teton Literacy Project has struck deals with the local radio station and newspaper to advertise their events and volunteer trainings. The newspaper often donates one ad for every one that the program buys. The radio station frequently donates the production costs of radio ads and public service announcements.

## Research Hint

Become aware of local organizations who might serve as partners or advisors on events. Think strategically about those who have a vested interest in the project (e.g., local businesses often donate paint for murals in high graffiti areas. Local artists donate time to gain exposure). Consult the community pages of your newspaper and school newsletter with an eye toward how your program might be able participate in already-planned special projects.

If You Need . . .

# Technical Assistance

## Try Looking Here:

- ✦ American Society for Training and Development, local affiliates
- ✦ College or university staff and programs
- ✦ Local organizations (e.g. United Way)
- ✦ Local school districts and staff
- ✦ National service resources
  - State Commission on National and Community Service
  - Corporation for National Service State Office
  - National training and technical assistance providers
- ✦ Peers in literacy or national service
- ✦ State education agency staff and programs

## What Others Have Done

The national organization SCALE (Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education) provides training and support through conferences, newsletters, and Internet technologies for America Reads Federal Work Study programs. In October, SCALE will host its 10th Anniversary Literacy Summit at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the organization's headquarters.

With seven VISTA members assigned to the Natrona County School District, peer support and assistance are easily found. The members meet weekly, drawing on one another's experience, ideas, and resources. Together, they've planned volunteer trainings and created special events for the whole community.

**Building Reciprocity:** Many experienced program coordinators act as informal peer mentors, sharing knowledge, expertise, and lessons-learned with newcomers to the field. Such mentoring can occur in many forms and places, from developing and delivering a training together to telephoning each other to debrief the week's work.

## Research Hint

Contact your State Commission, State Office, or state education agency to get a list of the national training and technical assistance providers. Or download them from the Internet at [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC) Ask state staff for their recommendations of local or regional trainers. Explore peer consultations with other national service program staff and local schools, and seek out their recommendations of local consultants.

If You Need . . .

# Funding

Try Looking Here:

- ✦ Local businesses
- ✦ Local or national nonprofit or regional organizations
- ✦ Local, state, or regional foundations
- ✦ National arts and humanities associations
- ✦ Other federal funding agencies
- ✦ Public libraries
- ✦ State and local arts and humanities councils

## What Others Have Done

• Reading Connections, an adult literacy organization in Greensboro, North Carolina, is a former Corporation for National Service program. In order to ease its transition to financial self-sufficiency, the agency looked to its Board of Directors and created a special committee devoted to raising funds and community awareness. The organization has received support from the United Way, the North Carolina Community College System, and private foundations.

• The Teton Literacy project in Jackson, Wyoming, was primarily an adult basic education tutoring program funded largely by a local foundation. Children and youth were tutored individually only when referred to the program by parents or teachers. The America Reads initiative presented the program with an opportunity to work closely with the local school to tutor more children in a systematic way.

**Building Reciprocity:** The Teton Literacy Project adapted its America Reads proposal to better meet the needs of the teachers and students who would be involved. Each partner valued the other's input and were flexible about the program's set-up. Today, TLP's America Reads project thrives, and next year will expand.

## Research Hint

Listserve, newsletters, public libraries and the Internet are good resources for grant announcements and other funding opportunities. Always research an organization to find out their criteria for awarding grants and any limitations on awards. Understanding how your program's work aligns with the funding organization's mission will also help you make a strong, intelligent proposal.