

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 WBR 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.

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Program Development & Management



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.nationalservicerresources.org/filemanager/download/303/startups.pdf

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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. <i>(Since this training is so specialized, we do not attempt to explain it here in this section.)</i>
✓ Create and maintain an information gathering system to use in updating WBRS.

Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Web Based Reporting System	The website to input program data.	http://wbrs.net?

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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!*

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Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
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	<p><i>*Great sample forms to tailor to your program.</i></p> <p>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service -- promoting volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA.</p>	<p>http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/nsrc/forms/evaluation.html</p> <p>VIC9.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment</p> <p>VIC10.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment Answer Sheet</p> <p>VIC11.PDF -> National Service Knowledge Assessment Introduction and Rationale</p> <p>VIE4.PDF -> Generic training session evaluation for members and staff (32K)</p>
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

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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*

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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

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
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/ XVI.D.4.PDF -> AmeriCorps Member Training Needs and Skills Assessment Form
National Service Resource Center	<p><i>*Great sample evaluation forms to tailor to your program.</i></p> <p>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service -- promoting volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA.</p>	www.nationalserviceresources.org/ VIE4.PDF -> Generic training session evaluation for members and staff VIE6.PDF -> Participant pre-training and post-training questionnaire

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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 <i>A Guide to Working with the Media</i> 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*

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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

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
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/your_world_print.html
Guide to Working with the Media	A downloadable Guide. Highly recommended!	www.nationalservicerresources.org/nsrcli_rary/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