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YOUTH POLICY INSTITUTE

David L. Hackett
Executive Director

February 5, 1993

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Mr. Eli Segal
Office of National Service
White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Segal:

As you face these critical decisions about national service in the face of tightened resources, I wanted to highlight the model of the Policy Action CORPS, as a vehicle for real change and as a new breed of service (following page).

Representatives of the CORPS or myself would be happy to describe the ongoing activities of the CORPS in greater detail.

Sincerely,

David L. Hackett

David L. Hackett
Executive Director

The Policy Action CORPS

Comprehensive Objective Research on Proposed Solutions

Problem:

There are limited resources for enacting a national service plan.

Solution:

With a small amount of investment, President Clinton can initiate a process that taps into an existing resource, and opens the way for full-scale service and volunteerism.

Undergraduate and graduate students represent a source of talent that goes unused. Students interested in service can be rapidly trained to begin providing information for their community. This service costs next to nothing as it is linked to their ongoing academics, e.g., course credit can be received for the research, it can be tied to a senior honors paper, a thesis, a dissertation.

The information they provide meets the needs of community organizations and residents. The students collect and disseminate solutions. On a specific issue, the student brings together the best thinking from the past, the present, and from practitioners and policy-makers throughout the country. In the end, they supply choices for solving community problems.

Proposed Approach:

There are two service roles:

- The *collectors* are a select group trained to collect and assemble proposed solutions.
- The *facilitators* are trained to make the information accessible and facilitate its use, by working directly with community organizations and resident groups.

The collectors and facilitators set the groundwork for direct service and volunteerism that is more meaningful and productive. Young people can become truly informed about the problems this country faces, and the real opportunities they have for serving. At the same time, the decision-making and planning of the organizations they serve is significantly enhanced.

Implementation:

With a 'slight change in the process,' and at very little cost, we can take the first step in providing the information that every citizen, organization, and community needs to plan. Once aware of our successes and failures, we can then finally begin to integrate the solutions that have been developed on every issue. And we can empower all citizens to participate in creating new solutions for their neighborhoods and their nation.

THE POLICY ACTION CORPS

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BACKGROUND

Between 1961 and 1963, the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency provided grants to 16 communities to initiate planning at the local level. In 1963, when President Kennedy instructed the Council of Economic Advisors to develop a poverty plan, the Committee's model was chosen. The Committee recommended keeping the poverty plan quiet while ten demonstration projects were established. The reasoning was that the government simply did not have the experience yet to raise expectations. The ten projects would initiate integrated planning in five rural and five urban sites, involving the public and private sectors, and the residents of the neighborhoods. The plans would then 'rise up' from the community to a White House office which would coordinate the Federal response. This proposal was accepted in November 1963, but was never implemented because of the assassination.

In 1964, there were two clear choices for a national approach to poverty: the decentralized model of the Kennedy administration, or the approach that President Johnson would quickly choose, a government-driven War on Poverty. This decision was just one example of a choice that was not understood by the American public at the time, or even today.

THE PROBLEM

Since the 1960s, however, we have acquired a tremendous amount of experience and developed successes in every field.

"[Former] Governor Kean of New Jersey said that there isn't a problem in education that hasn't been solved somewhere in this country. He could as well have been talking about health or social services."

Lisbeth Schorr, author of Within Our Reach

Yet in our libraries and databases, there is little access to information on past successes and failures, and there is no unified collection of information on current and proposed solutions.

"As someone who has spent all of her working life in the field of public policy research...no one knows better than I that an accessible national information network does not exist."

Christine de Fontenay, the Brookings Institution

"The rich record of experience in national, state, and local policy must be re-discovered and mined. Successes and failures will be unearthed, forgotten good ideas rescued from oblivion, new ideas created from the material of past practices. America lacks a political memory."

Bill Cannon, Bureau of the Budget (now OMB)

The information needed to plan and make informed decisions is still not available. Unlike 1963, we now have extensive knowledge, but this knowledge is not collected and presented in a way that is of use to citizens, organizations, and communities across the country.

For instance, it is difficult for anyone to answer the following types of questions:

- Individuals and families
 - What are our options for affordable child care?
 - How do we buy our first home?
- Organizations that serve individuals and families
 - What models are there for setting up a substance abuse program?
 - How do we integrate our services?
- Businesses, both large and small
 - How do we computerize our office?
 - What are the choices for decentralizing our operations?
- Organizations (public and private) that serve the community
 - What are a mayor's options for restructuring a city's public housing?
 - How can we establish a community health center?
- Communities as a whole
 - How do we integrate successes on all of the issues above?
- Citizens concerned about their neighborhood or their country

"The institutions which affect the poor—education, welfare, recreation, business, labor—are huge, complex structures, operating far outside their control. They plan programs for the poor, not with them. . . This bill calls for 'maximum feasible participation of the residents.' This means the involvement of the poor in planning and implementing programs, giving them a real voice in their institutions."

Attorney General Robert Kennedy, 1964

THE SOLUTION

University students and the libraries can provide the information on solutions that allows all citizens and institutions to meet their needs. There can be planning and true productivity.

A slight change in the academic process has been developed which enables university students to provide proposed solutions relating to any issue. As the CIA recruits some of our brightest young people to analyze options for international problems, students can research options for the problems of citizens, organizations, and communities in this country.

Through the Policy Action CORPS, young people can provide this service in one of two roles:

Collectors are trained in a detailed methodology with the responsibility to collect the range of solutions for specific problems. They must look at options which come from federal, state, and local policy, from demonstration projects and exemplary programs, from the

recommendations of scholars and practitioners, from the judicial and regulatory systems. Their product must be approved by professionals in the field they are examining.

Facilitators are trained to make the information gathered by the collectors accessible to individuals and families, public and private organizations, and the community as a whole. Potentially, there can be dozens of facilitators working in every neighborhood. Their responsibility is to present information so that people can become informed, can make decisions, and can plan and implement programs.

Libraries will be the central means for disseminating the work of the collectors. With the advent of telecommunications, the library is becoming the cornerstone of a national information network. Within the next decade, it will be a given that an individual can use a terminal in their home to access any information they choose in a nationwide library system.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

The product of the CORPS creates new opportunities*:

**For research*

Once a student in Philadelphia has completed a topic like child care, the information is immediately available to students and communities across the country. For a student in Los Angeles looking at child care, they not only do not have to repeat the work of others, but they can refine it to meet specific local needs.

**For meetings*

- As policy-makers from the NATO countries assemble to discuss housing policy, they have access to the wealth of solutions that have been developed in each of the nations, whether on homelessness or fair housing for minority populations.
- As Hispanic immigrants meet with their Congressional representatives, they have access to and are informed about the range of policy options for the issues they are concerned with: business development, immigration policy, affordable housing.

**For planning by individuals, organizations, and communities*

- As developmentally disabled individuals in Washington, D.C. plan for their futures, they have access to options for independent living.
- As the city of Dallas develops a plan for desegregating its low-income housing, they have access to proposed solutions from around the country.
- As the decision-makers in a Peace Corps community plan a project for rural youth, they have access to information on model programs from around the world.

**For integrated planning*

Once a community agencies in West Philadelphia have access to proposed solutions on all of the problems that they face, they can begin planning how to integrate successes, involving the public and private sectors and the residents themselves.

*All of the opportunities described are based on current contracts and projects.

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Youth Policy

The status of proposed policy solutions relating to youth

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Numbers 7 & 8



The Future of Welfare

A discussion of plans that would:

Reform Welfare

- Reward Responsible Behavior
- Require Responsible Behavior
- Combine Rewards & Requirements

Replace Welfare

- Mandate Public Service Jobs
- Provide Child Support Supplements
- Eliminate Welfare Entirely