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*AmeriCorps:
A National Program*



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AmeriCorps: A National Program

AmeriCorps has a dual identity. As a community-based program, AmeriCorps meets local needs using local strategies. As a national program, AmeriCorps has national visibility and results.

We hope and expect that your program will develop its own identity and character, and that the AmeriCorps Members serving with you will feel that they are an important part of a team doing important work. Much of the information in this binder, the efforts of our program staff, and technical assistance resources made available by the Corporation are intended to help you ensure that your program achieves the program-specific objectives you established in your application.

National Identity

Your objectives will also be strengthened by your program's membership in and active identification with the AmeriCorps National Service Network. In addition to access to a major funding stream, your program will benefit from:

- **Increased visibility.** Alone, a single program may generate some local visibility and positive stories that enhance the public's appreciation of the program. But a national network of programs, coupled with an aggressive public education campaign, will increase public awareness and support exponentially. Local press interest expands if a home-grown initiative becomes part of a nationally recognized program; the national press also looks to local programs that can be identified as part of a national network.

We have planned for the fall a major public education campaign around the Launch of AmeriCorps, including extensive media outreach; television, radio and print public service announcements; and the participation of Administration officials and celebrities in a number of local events. This campaign will continue throughout the year, incorporating a 1/2 hour documentary on national service and additional activities to lend visibility.

- **Enhanced Member experience.** The term "Member" rather than "participant" or "volunteer" was chosen intentionally to convey a sense of belonging. While the feeling of being a part of a team begins at the program level (in the way a soldier feels loyalty to her unit or a an Olympian is proud to be part of his swim team), it is magnified by being part of a larger force (the Army or the American Olympic team). Membership in AmeriCorps provides context to the service experience (the ten children I tutored are among the 100,000 children tutored by all AmeriCorps Members), and connects the Member to a community of 20,000 other Americans. Ten years from now, AmeriCorps alumni/ae may number more than half a million; like the soldier or the Peace Corps volunteer who talks easily about her tour of duty, the AmeriCorps Member should have the pleasure of comparing his experience in the program with a person who served half a decade later, 1,000 miles away.

To help connect Members to one another, we plan to develop a Member Council and alumni/ae association. Your advice on both of these entities will be sought shortly.

- **Higher impact.** Most important, AmeriCorps is about getting things done. Your program can make an impressive impact locally; multi-site programs may aggregate their results and know that they have made a dent in solving a specific problem or meeting a specific need. By taking this effort to a national level and engaging 20,000 AmeriCorps Members in four key issue areas, we can have an even greater impact. Your program will be a recognized contributor to a major national effort to meet unmet needs.

Our data collection system will help us determine the total impact of all AmeriCorps programs on specific problems. In addition, the development of "affinity groups" among programs working on like issues, as well as issue forums planned for next year will highlight AmeriCorps working in the priority areas and offer an opportunity for idea exchange among programs, Members, and outside experts. And by sharing knowledge and resources, programs can increase their local effectiveness for even greater results.

- **Sustainable funding.** If we can prove to Congress that AmeriCorps is cost-effective, your program has the opportunity to enjoy a long-term base of funding that is relatively flexible (compared to many other federal funding sources). The challenge is to ensure that our product is worth the money that the taxpayers are spending -- and to prove it. We will all benefit from the positive press and outreach by other programs in the network -- or be hurt by the one bad apple. Throughout the year, you will have opportunities to showcase your results to local officials, Congress and others.

- **Improved fundraising potential.** AmeriCorps' requirement that programs achieve direct and demonstrable goals will be a strong sales tool -- program results demonstrate to funders that their contributions will support tangible changes. Even local funders will be attracted to the "seal of approval" represented by the AmeriCorps name and the visibility of contributing to a program that has national name recognition. The Corporation will direct national funders to appropriate local programs, and AmeriCorps materials will be made available to programs for fundraising.

- **Access to new ideas and program resources.** The most exciting innovations and best practices emerge from programs in the field. As part of the AmeriCorps National Service Network, your program has access to colleagues with a broad variety of expertise who can formally and informally offer technical assistance -- and save you from reinventing the wheel. Among the strategies we are pursuing to aid in this effort are the AmeriCorps Leaders program (discussed in Program Development Tab 17), a field fellows initiative, and a technical assistance system (described in Program Development Tab 16) that relies heavily on peer to peer exchange.

Building a National Program

To gain the benefits of a national program, we must work together to build a national identity beyond that of a common funding stream and program requirements. Over the last year, a task force has solicited the input of programs and experts about ways to build this identity. While many elements contribute to the success of decentralized programs with a strong national identity, the key features of national identity are grouped below under common ethic, common activities, common connections, and common look and language.

Common ethic

The centerpiece of the AmeriCorps' ethic is **getting things done** -- improving communities by meeting their education, public safety, human, and environmental needs. The other key aspects of the ethic are: **community, opportunity, and responsibility**. AmeriCorps brings together individuals from different backgrounds, and institutions with different experiences, in the common effort to improve our communities. AmeriCorps Members receive awards to further their education or pay back their student loans -- as well as invaluable job experience, specialized training, and life skills. Finally, AmeriCorps encourages Members to explore and exercise their responsibilities toward their communities, themselves and their families. This ethic, discussed in detail in attachment A, provides a context for all aspects of AmeriCorps programs -- the service provided, training, group activities, etc. -- and ties programs together programmatically.

You will want to orient your Members to the mission and ethic of AmeriCorps during an **orientation** that includes both national and program-specific background information. The suggested elements of the orientation are provided in attachment B.

To enhance Members' ability to carry out the responsibilities that are part of the AmeriCorps ethic, all AmeriCorps Members should be trained in three basic skills: **communication, conflict resolution, and CPR/First Aid**. Ideally, programs would use local resources to incorporate this training into the orientation or group trainings that occur throughout the year. The Corporation will provide training materials and suggestions for making this training available; if needed, in larger communities with high concentrations of AmeriCorps Members, the Corporation may arrange for group training of all Members in the area. More information about the skills training will be made available shortly. However, do not hesitate to begin arranging for training if you have a plan for doing so with local resources.

Common activities

The most important common activity for AmeriCorps is work in the four national priority areas: **education, public safety, human needs, and environment**. However, to enhance national impact and visibility, AmeriCorps will sponsor three common national projects. Programs are encouraged to participate in any or all of these projects:

1. **Citizenship education** -- Members would be trained to assist immigrants in preparing for the citizenship test; in so doing, they would strengthen their own civic awareness.
2. **AIDS awareness** -- Members would be educated about AIDS/HIV, and might develop a local project to teach others about AIDS.
3. **Environmental audit** -- Members would conduct an environmental audit of their community.

Project materials, technical assistance, and in some cases, additional financial resources may be made available to facilitate participation in these national projects.

In addition, throughout the year, AmeriCorps Members should have the opportunity to come together for **special events** related to their service. This will remind them that they are part of a national program, celebrate their accomplishments, and allow them to work with AmeriCorps Members who are not part of their immediate program. The tentative calendar of events includes:

September -- Launch
January -- Martin Luther King Day (locally planned activities)
April -- National Servathon during National Volunteer Week
June -- Launch of Summer of Service (and related activities
on SOS topic for '95 -- Child Health)
Summer -- Graduation at Close of Programs (locally planned activities)

More information will be made available throughout the year about these and other national and regional events.

Common connections

There will be many opportunities for representatives of different programs to share experiences and knowledge and for individuals from different parts of the country to become connected to programs outside of their home communities. For example:

Recruitment. The national referral system with its toll-free number, described in Policies and Procedures Tab 9, allows individuals to apply to programs anywhere in the country, bringing needed skills and helping to diversify programs.

AmeriCorps Leaders. Graduates of national service programs may apply to become AmeriCorps Leaders. Through the Leader program, graduates receive leadership training and are placed in new and emerging AmeriCorps programs where they serve as front-line staff.

Member "Council." This year, we will pilot an effort to bring together AmeriCorps

Members from different programs to discuss important issues facing communities on both a regional and a national basis.

Issue Groups/Forums. Throughout the year, program staff and Members working on national priority issues may be invited to participate in forums and planning sessions designed to highlight AmeriCorps achievements and develop strategies to improve our efforts.

Common look and language

Finally, AmeriCorps must have a common look and language as a means of connecting programs and people across the nation.

The AmeriCorps public identity will be built as community members see the AmeriCorps logo over and over again -- in television PSAs, on recruitment brochures, at the sites in which Members work, and on the uniforms of the Members themselves. The use of the logo, the AmeriCorps name, and other matters are discussed in the national identity agreement, in attachment C.

A shared vocabulary will help create a single AmeriCorps identity. Appendix Tab 20 contains a short lexicon of AmeriCorps-related terms; Corporation, state commission, and program staff, as well as Members themselves, should use these terms for clarity and commonality.

The AmeriCorps Ethic

What is the AmeriCorps Ethic?

- **Getting things done.**

Our primary goal is to improve communities by meeting their education, public safety, human, and environmental needs.

- **Strengthening communities.**

AmeriCorps brings together individuals from different backgrounds, and institutions with different missions and cultures, in the common effort to improve our communities.

- **Encouraging responsibility.**

AmeriCorps encourages Members to explore and exercise their responsibilities toward their communities, themselves and their families -- in their service experience and throughout their lives.

- **Expanding opportunity.**

AmeriCorps Members receive awards to further their education or pay back their student loans -- as well as invaluable job experience, specialized training, and life skills.

How is the AmeriCorps Ethic incorporated into programs?

Getting Things Done.

AmeriCorps Members will get things done. Beyond basic program requirements and good practices in this area -- spelled out elsewhere -- programs can enhance a shared identity around "getting things done" in several ways. You can involve Members in documenting results and reporting them to the Corporation and to other interested parties. Use ideas in the Continuous Improvement Handbook (found in Program Development Tab 18) to make sure immediate feedback from AmeriCorps Members and community members is incorporated into ongoing projects. And educate your Members to understand their service projects matter and what needs they meet nationally and locally by getting things done.

Strengthening Community.

By recruiting and retaining diverse participants, including but not only members of the community served, AmeriCorps programs will make an important start towards achieving this goal. Programs should work with other programs in the area or with organizations with like missions -- these institutional partnerships help build community too. For example, three AmeriCorps programs operating in a city might work with a local school, neighborhood association, and police department to establish a "safe corridor" for children to walk to school, or clean up a local park that could become an important community focal point.

Offering Opportunity.

This aspect of the ethic is partly a given: AmeriCorps Members will receive education awards upon successful completion of their term. But programs can add to the Members' experience through special job and life-skills trainings, group projects that build teamwork, and support services (exit counseling, GED training, housing assistance, etc.) tailored to the needs of Members.

Encouraging Responsibility.

In many ways, this is both one of the most difficult and most important aspects of the AmeriCorps Ethic to bring to life. While "responsibility," in the context of the AmeriCorps Ethic encompasses everything from civic participation to personal responsibility, programs have flexibility to emphasize appropriate aspects. A legal corps may not need instruction on the importance of serving on juries or paying taxes, but a youth corps might, particularly if a Member is called for jury duty or wonders about paycheck deductions! Programs should use "teachable moments" to discuss personal responsibility. After working on a child health project, Members can discuss responsibilities of parents for children. During a project to develop neighborhood patrols, Members can discuss citizen duties for public safety. A civic education or service-learning curriculum can also focus on responsibilities, as can a "life skills" curriculum for young participants. All programs should encourage Members who are eligible to vote to register; programs should also emphasize the importance of continuing to serve beyond the program year.

Recommended Member Orientation Outline

The content of Member orientation should be a blend of local and national information. The goal of the orientation is to help the Member understand that she is part of a national initiative with a national identity as well as a local program with specific goals and objectives. The orientation should also answer basic questions Members will have about benefits and responsibilities, as well as about the actual work that will be performed. Programs may want to begin actual programmatic training, which will help to emphasize the importance of "getting things done." Finally, orientation should begin the process of teambuilding among Members, and include a formal swearing in of the individuals as AmeriCorps Members (unless this step will occur at the end of a training or probation period).

Members of the community may contribute to the orientation. For example, project site sponsors may be called on to discuss what needs of the local community will be met through the program. Funders may talk about why they believe in national service. Local officials may stress how much the community values the service that the Members will soon provide. Program alumni/ae (if available) may offer insights into what the experience will actually be like for Members, and the benefits they gained from being in the program in previous years.

The orientation may take place over a few hours or a few days. It may be integrated with basic skills training, or precede it. To assist with your planning here is a sample outline:

AmeriCorps (National Service) Orientation

- Video (to be provided by the Corporation in early September)
- Basic information about AmeriCorps (found in Member handbook)
 - The AmeriCorps Ethic
 - History of National Service
 - Structure of the national network
- National skills (actual training could be provided during orientation or later in the year)
 - Communications
 - Conflict Resolution
 - CPR/First Aid
- Education award
 - How much, how earned, how used
 - Encourage planning for use of award, including the need to obtain GED if Member has not graduated from high school

Program Orientation (Locally determined)

- Program Goals
- Objectives for the year
- Member rights and responsibilities (include prohibited activities, and appropriate use of the AmeriCorps uniform)

Overview of Specific Projects (Locally determined)

- Background on community needs (community partner may be invited)
- Overview of the year, description of typical week
- Begin specific training for projects

Teambuilding Exercises

- Include exercise to introduce Members and staff

Community Speakers

- May be local officials, funders, community members, program alums

Oath

- National AmeriCorps Oath
- Local Program Oath (optional)

Guidelines on Identification as an AmeriCorps Program

As part of AmeriCorps, the President's national service initiative, your program will play a significant role in meeting the education, public safety, human service, and environmental needs of your community. Your program is also part of a national effort that will have national impact. These guidelines lay out basic rules for identifying your program as part of AmeriCorps. The benefits of this system are many: your participants will be motivated by the opportunity to belong to a larger, nationally known program; you will be able to attract local supporters who will identify your program with the President's initiative; your program will be more visible within and outside of your community.

AmeriCorps programs

Not every full-time national service program is part of AmeriCorps. Only those programs that receive funding through AmeriCorps*USA (the AmeriCorps grants program), AmeriCorps*VISTA, or the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps are currently considered to be AmeriCorps programs. We may provide for "accreditation" of programs not supported through these funding streams in the future. We will also encourage all Americans to subscribe to the AmeriCorps ethic of community and responsibility. However, the name AmeriCorps may only be used by official programs.

AmeriCorps members

AmeriCorps members (please note that we use the term "members" intentionally, as opposed to volunteers or participants) receive the benefits of being a part of a larger movement and feeling connected to other members across the country. The designation "AmeriCorps member" is reserved for individuals who serve in AmeriCorps programs and are eligible to choose or receive either an education award/Stafford Loan Forgiveness from the National Service Trust or another Corporation-approved post-service benefit upon completion of a term of service.

Program identification

As a program that is part of the AmeriCorps National Service Network, you agree to identify your program as an AmeriCorps program and your participants as AmeriCorps members in the following ways:

Program names

Although programs are not required to use the word "AmeriCorps" in their name, the AmeriCorps name and logo should appear on key elements of a local program's uniform, literature, and other materials. On stationery, in literature, and other appropriate materials, AmeriCorps programs should use the phrase "The AmeriCorps National Service Network" to establish the relationship between the program and AmeriCorps. The Corporation will supply camera-ready art to be integrated on the written material. Programs may also call themselves "an

AmeriCorps program" when the more formal phrase is cumbersome. The inclusion of AmeriCorps in these ways allows us to preserve the local nature of the program while ensuring that AmeriCorps has a national identity.

Uniforms

We are pleased to provide all AmeriCorps members with an initial basic uniform consisting of a t-shirt, sweatshirt, hat, and pin (and business cards, as well). Local programs should print their own program name on the front of the t-shirt and sweatshirt, whenever possible. This uniform must be worn at official AmeriCorps events as designated by the Corporation, and may be worn at other times consistent with the regulations. AmeriCorps members may order additional apparel bearing the AmeriCorps logo at cost.

Programs may provide additional uniforms for AmeriCorps members bearing the program's logo/name. However, the shirts and jackets (but not caps, pants, or other items) must include the AmeriCorps logo or the word "AmeriCorps," which may be followed by our slogan "Getting Things Done." In most cases, the logo would appear on a sleeve, pocket, or patch, and the name and slogan would appear on the back of the shirt. To help with design, we will provide illustrations. AmeriCorps members whose work demands that they wear business attire or clothing other than the program or AmeriCorps uniform should wear the AmeriCorps pin while on duty.

Site designations

Because of our emphasis on "getting things done," it is important that communities know when AmeriCorps members are working in their local area. Therefore, all AmeriCorps project sites when possible should be designated as AmeriCorps projects using a sign provided by the Corporation. All permanent structures constructed by AmeriCorps members are encouraged to incorporate an AmeriCorps plaque provided by the Corporation.

Participation in AmeriCorps events

To raise public awareness of AmeriCorps, and to make possible high-impact projects in the priority areas, the Corporation may sponsor national or regional AmeriCorps events and activities, such as national service days. AmeriCorps programs will be expected to participate in such events and may be asked to assist in their development and execution.

Use of the AmeriCorps logo

Programs will be provided a camera-ready logo that may be added to the following items:

- Uniforms
- Stationery items
- Signs identifying the AmeriCorps program
- Recruitment brochures
- Participant curriculum and orientation materials

- Banners for AmeriCorps events
- Press releases for AmeriCorps events
- Publications created by AmeriCorps members (see additional information below)

Other uses of the AmeriCorps name and logo must be approved by the Corporation.

In order to preserve the identity of AmeriCorps, and to prevent its use in merchandising in ways not consistent with national policy, programs may not, without written permission:

- use the AmeriCorps name or logo on materials that will be sold
- use the AmeriCorps name or logo on clothing intended to be worn primarily by individuals who are not AmeriCorps members or alumni/ae
- alter the AmeriCorps logo or use it as a part of any other logo or design
- allow a donor to use the AmeriCorps name or logo in promotional materials

Of course, there may be times when the licensing of the AmeriCorps logo or name, or gifts of AmeriCorps items to program supporters, are advantageous. For this reason, the Corporation expects to develop related materials that may be made available for the above purposes.

AmeriCorps member publications

As indicated above, publications created by AmeriCorps members may include the AmeriCorps logo. These publications, however, must include the following standard disclaimer: "Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National Service or the AmeriCorps program." You should provide informational copies of these publications to the Corporation. Please ensure that any AmeriCorps member publications are consistent with the regulations (may not be lobbying materials, include religious proselytization, etc.).

Fundraising

Programs may identify themselves as AmeriCorps programs for the purpose of soliciting funds or in-kind assistance. The Corporation may recognize donors consistent with guidelines to be furnished when they become available. Donors to local programs may not use the AmeriCorps name or logo in advertising or other promotional materials without the written permission of the Corporation. Permission may be withheld if recognition of the donor is inconsistent with the Corporation's policies.

Application

To make it easy for programs, and to make it clear to potential participants that they are applying for AmeriCorps, the Corporation will provide a standard AmeriCorps member application that may be used by AmeriCorps programs. Programs may, of course, supplement the application with additional forms, if needed. Programs that are unable for legal or other reasons to use the standard application may substitute their own application. The application

should be placed in an AmeriCorps application folder available from the Corporation, and should (in the first printing after the program is officially selected as an AmeriCorps program) include specific information about AmeriCorps provided by the Corporation.

Media Contacts

Programs are encouraged to work with local media to highlight the accomplishments of AmeriCorps members and programs. Again, for consistency and visibility, all press releases and press conferences should identify the program as an AmeriCorps program, with participants identified as AmeriCorps members. Outreach to national press should be coordinated with the Corporation. Informational copies of local press coverage should be provided to the Corporation.

National Launch

In mid-September, we will mark the national launch of AmeriCorps. All programs starting up on or before the launch will be invited to engage in launch-related activities in their own communities, such as a swearing-in ceremony. The Corporation will provide "launch kits" for each program with specific information about the events. However, for this launch to have maximum impact, which will benefit all AmeriCorps programs in the long run, we must ask that you follow these rules prior to the official launch:

- Programs operating prior to the launch may use the AmeriCorps logo on recruitment material, but not on other public items (including signs at the project sites and uniforms) prior to the national launch.
- We want to focus national media attention on service activities during the launch and thereafter; therefore, no program should solicit national media attention (except as limited to promoting, recruiting, and training) prior to launch. We would expect programs to continue their relationships with local and trade press throughout the summer.
- The President and other administration officials will not participate in AmeriCorps events sponsored by local programs prior to the national launch.
- The Corporation may make exceptions to these general rules.

6/7/94

Building Esprit de Corps



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Building Esprit de Corps and a Strong Organization in Your AmeriCorps Program

—Prepared for AmeriCorps by Eric Schwarz, consultant to the Corporation for National & Community Service, and former Executive Director of City Year Boston; and Trina Abbott, coordinator of Special Projects, Outward Bound U.S.A.

Building Esprit de Corps and a Strong Organization in your AmeriCorps program

esprit de corps: a common spirit of loyalty and enthusiasm developed among members of a group.

—Webster's Dictionary definition of esprit de corps

Introduction

National service programs thrive on strong, vital esprit de corps. Visit the best programs and it is clear the participants and staff work with the pride, joy, and sense of mission needed to build their community and get things done. Participants like each other and laugh easily; they work well together; they are driven to help achieve program goals; they have a pioneer spirit and strong sense of pride that they are helping to build national service from the ground up.

Esprit de corps is not created automatically by bringing people together. In fact, for many new AmeriCorps programs in which volunteers are spread thinly across the country, or where volunteers may have little day-to-day contact with each other, building esprit de corps will be a difficult challenge. Failure to develop it is a potential obstacle to success.

We have designed this guide to help you develop the participants in your AmeriCorps program or site into an effective, high-performing, motivated team. We have included both general principles and very specific techniques in hope that this chapter can be useful both to new programs and to programs that already enjoy a healthy sense of esprit de corps. It is also our hope that the suggestions here can do more than just build "morale" and "enthusiasm;" at the broadest level, esprit de corps is really about building a quality organization.

It is important to note that this is a work in progress (to which we hope you will suggest additions in the months to come). You will recognize the suggestions because they are rooted in common sense, and because they are drawn from the experience of leading national service programs as well as institutions as diverse as Outward Bound and the United States military. Chances are, you have also seen these ideas at work in your families, your volunteer organizations, and your own workplace. They are the lessons of experience.

Esprit de Corps: Summary of Important Principles

Organizations that develop outstanding esprit de corps believe their success comes from paying close attention to two important factors: 1) Communication; and 2) Teamwork. As you will see from the examples and discussion to follow, communication takes many forms and teamwork has many dimensions. Some of the important elements of effective communication and teamwork are:

I) Communication

1. Articulate a very clear mission, which encompasses vision (broad) and goals (specific) and is embraced and understood by all participants.
2. Develop a strong organizational culture and communicate your culture through rituals, celebrations, and experience.
3. Talk openly and honestly at all levels of your organization. Give participants the tools and time to develop trust through effective communication.
4. Communicate frequently and creatively. Meetings and regular written and e-mail updates are important, and should be fun as well as useful.

II) Teamwork

1. Practice teamwork beginning the first day of your program. New games, Outward Bound initiatives, team sports, scavenger hunts, skits, etc. provide important ways to practice teamwork while also deepening bonds among participants and developing a strong service ethic.
2. Challenge teams to complete tasks that individuals can't. True teamwork comes from realizing that you can do more with a team than alone, and knowing that every individual is *needed* for the team to succeed. Shared challenges — be it the U.S. Marines basic training, or scaling a wall in an Outward Bound exercise — build esprit de corps.
3. Have fun and be silly together. The old saw says "the family that plays together stays together."
4. Ask participants to build and lead your organization, not just follow it. Build peer networks that draw on the strengths of your participants and teach citizenship skills.

The following sections will elaborate in more detail on the points made here.

Important Principles, Helpful Hints, and Real Examples

Esprit de corps is something to build from day one. From the minute your program begins, you will be setting a tone and building an organizational culture. Will your participants feel part of the national service team? Will their service experience inspire them as citizen leaders? If you are an individual placement program, or part of a larger national network, how can you develop effective teams at the national level, the site level, and, if relevant, among clusters of participants? Take the time to develop and implement a strategy that takes into account the following principles.

1. Articulate a very clear mission, which encompasses vision (broad) and goals (specific) and is embraced and understood by all participants.

Consider some of the following questions:

- Do your participants feel connected to your program's mission and the national service movement?
- What is important about what they are doing?
- If they do great work, will it help build their community and the nation?
- Do they feel like pioneers? (A staffer at one leading individual-placement program, Volunteer Maryland, recalled that first-year corps members emerged from their opening training with "a raw, runaway, pioneer energy").

Effective programs devote considerable time at their beginning-of-the-year training to reviewing both their organization's history and mission, and the history of national and community service. Consider bringing in outside speakers to inspire participants. Consider making room in your budget for some or all of your participants to attend a national or regional service conference. Remember, your participants are building AmeriCorps from the ground up.

In team-based national service programs, the team leader's inspirational qualities are critical. (In an individual placement model, the team leader is analogous to a program leader, or for a smaller program, the site director). At the beginning of the year, team leaders will often deliver a "team leader speech," a modern-day fireside chat. The following is an excerpt from the team leader speech given by "Tony" in Suzanne's Goldsmith's book: *A City Year: On the streets and in the neighborhoods with twelve young community service volunteers*.

"What I do like is professionalism. When we walk around in the city and people see us, they're going to think, there is a group of people who are professionals and who are providing service. They're going to see it in our bodies and in the way we carry ourselves...."

"The sacrifice you make coming into this group is giving up part of who you are. When you walk down the street, you're not going to see things the same way. Everything is going to look

different. You're not going to be able to see an abandoned building and just walk by. You're not going to be able to see a homeless person and just step over him....

"We're going to open up your heart. And it's going to make you vulnerable. You will come to a point where it hurts so much you will want to leave....

"When I go to bed at night, I don't sleep very well. I read the newspapers and I watch the news and listen to the radio, and sometimes I get scared for the world that things are not going to work out. But there is hope. I happen to believe that of all the things that are happening in this country, this is the one place that offers genuine hope....

"While you are here, I want you to remember this. I'll be the first to support anybody when they need it, but I will be the first to hold the door open and say good-bye to any one of you who is destroying what is good for the rest of the team. It's painful, but I'm willing to do it. I don't want anything to ruin the beautiful thing that we're creating as a team."

2. Develop a strong organizational culture and communicate your culture through rituals, celebrations, and experience. Consider some of the following ideas:

- Maximize the potential of the AmeriCorps opening ceremony with balloons, banners, music, and lots of people; your participants are pioneers in building a true national service program;
- Pledges of commitment (or "swearing-in") ceremonies for staff and corps;
- Uniform presentations in which participants receive their uniform and discuss the history and symbolism of the uniform and your logo, including the AmeriCorps logo;
- Public graduations (from your program, or an element of your program such as a GED or Leadership course) and other recognition ceremonies;
- Story-telling to communicate organizational history and the history of national service.

Programs with strong esprit de corps have strong organizational cultures, often rooted in history. It is important to think about your culture and what you want it to be. In doing so, keep in mind that an organization's culture tends to be expressed and passed on through ritual and through experience.

People will come to understand your culture *through their experience of it*. As an example, if attention to detail and organization is a highly valued attribute, make sure that on the first day of your program you greet your participants in a highly organized way. Ask yourself: Do you have name tags? Can you make a personalized folder for each participant containing a schedule for basic training? Can you greet people at the door

as they arrive? Investing time in these details is likely to pay off because participants will learn that they are joining a program that prizes organizational excellence.

Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Computer Inc. and founder of NeXT Inc., revolutionized the computer industry by developing a better, more exciting personal computer. In the following excerpt from an interview with INC. magazine, Jobs describes the importance of attention to detail and excellence in building esprit de corps and a strong organization.

"I've found that the best companies pay attention to aesthetics. They take the extra time to lay out grids and proportion things appropriately, and it seems to pay off for them. I mean, beyond the functional benefits, the aesthetic communicates something about how they think of themselves, their sense of discipline in engineering, how they run their company, stuff like that.....

"Woz (co-founder Steve Wozniak) and I cared from the very beginning....We thought, why don't we take the extra few days or weeks and do it right? We had a fundamental belief that doing it right the first time was going to be easier than having to go back and fix it. And I cannot say strongly enough that the repercussions of that attitude are staggering. I've seen them again and again throughout my business life. They're just staggering.....

"In my experience, people get far more excited about doing something as well as it can be done than about doing something adequately."

3. Talk openly and honestly at all levels of your organization. Give participants the tools and time to develop trust through effective communication.

Strong teams thrive on trust, which is built when participants share their feelings and are supported. Program staff should encourage practices such as:

- Feedback, where participants are trained how to give (and receive) balanced feedback that will help teammates learn from strengths and weaknesses;
- Diversity workshops, to acknowledge different backgrounds, ideas, and approaches and learn how to communicate and work effectively in diverse groups;
- Discussions, in which participants are encouraged to share with the group their background, goals, and personal reflections. This can happen at corps-wide community meetings, at your opening training, or at any other time and place you make room for it;
- Evaluation of program success. Engaging participants in evaluation and the improvement process spreads ownership and improves morale. (Evaluation can be simple, like asking for "thumbs up, down, or in the middle" after a workshop).

Internal evaluation of your own program is a great way to improve quality and improve esprit de corps at the same time. The following workshop outline, "Evaluation: Brainstorming, Prioritizing, and Report-backs," can be very effective if combined with a simple written evaluation collected ahead of time. Following is a model design for the workshop:

1. **Present.** Outline to the group a summary of written evaluations of your program. These evaluations may have been completed by service partners, individuals you are serving, or your participants themselves. Identify some common themes, consistently noted strengths and weaknesses, or other interesting points. Read a few comments from the evaluations. (The presentation of evaluations and outline of the workshop can take from 30 to 50 minutes).

2. **Brainstorm.** Either in small groups or together, ask participants to brainstorm ways to solve the problems and build on the successes identified in the written evaluation. This will require the facilitator to shift gears from analyzing the evaluation to identifying solutions. Brainstorming is a way to get people's ideas flowing, and develop a long list of unedited ideas. The main "rules" of brainstorming are: any idea is okay; shout out ideas, don't comment on them; and repetition is okay. After taking down ideas for five to ten minutes, the facilitator should review the list with the group. (In total, brainstorming usually takes 5 to 10 minutes).

3. **Prioritize.** In small groups of five to ten, ask participants to discuss the possible solutions identified in the brainstorm and to select the three action steps they think are most important for your organization. Each group should appoint a facilitator who can develop a rough consensus on three or four priority actions and can write down the group's suggestions. (Prioritizing discussions can take 20 to 30 minutes once the small group has been formed).

4. **Report-backs.** Pull the entire group back together and ask one or two people from each small group to report-back their top three priorities with a brief explanation of their rationale. After each group has reported back, consider taking a few additional comments. (Report-backs can take 5 to 25 minutes total, depending on how many groups you have).

5. **Summary and Next Steps.** Summarize the workshop and explain to participants what you plan to do with the suggestions that have been made. It may make sense to type up and distribute the group's suggestions, as well as forming a small working group to actually implement as many suggestions as possible. (The workshop summary usually takes 5 minutes).

4. **Communicate frequently and creatively.** Meetings and regular written and e-mail updates are important, and should be fun as well as useful. Communication should be "in-sync" with your mission and vision, and should reinforce it. Consider the following ideas:

- Celebrate individual and team accomplishments at meetings and with written and/or e-mail updates;
- Set aside a public space at your headquarters to record progress toward goals (i.e.: number of children immunized or number of volunteers recruited) on a thermometer chart or other display;
- Keep everyone informed of changes small and large; information is power;
- Pay attention to language and the importance of idealism and inspiration. To spread inspirational messages, use devices such as a "quote of the day" distributed (by e-mail or in person) to all participants;

- Consider a daily, weekly, or at least monthly written "briefing" that can serve as the "newspaper of record" for your community;
- Depending on your structure, hold daily or weekly team or program-wide meetings; (if necessary, conduct these meetings by conference call);
- Make sure updates aren't dry laundry lists of information. Staff or all-corps meetings, for instance, can include skits, charismatic outside speakers, small discussion groups with report-backs, or even a song as a way to present information.

Go to breakfast at a Volunteer Maryland retreat or one of their monthly all-corps training days and you will be awakened by the music from Chariots of Fire. By the time the song's stirring rhythm is over, every Volunteer Maryland participant and staff member has found a seat in a pre-arranged circle of chairs. They are ready for "Ignition," their morning ritual, and then for a full day building one of the nation's leading youth corps.

Ignition begins with a participant leading the group in a new icebreaker and then sharing a poem or reading. There is time for logistical announcements, and then, going in turn, each participant briefly states a personal accomplishment ("I recruited five new volunteers for my pre-school site") and a challenge ("I need to learn to work better with parents of the kids I am teaching"). When each participant has spoken, the Marylanders begin their day.

Volunteer Maryland participants also end their monthly training days in a circle, which is called "One Word." In it participants take turns saying one word that sums up how they feel about their day.

5. Practice teamwork beginning on the first day of your program. New games, Outward Bound initiatives, team sports, scavenger hunts, etc. provide important ways to practice teamwork while also deepening bonds among participants and developing a strong service ethic. Good teamwork promotes high performance and quality.

Just as a baseball team goes to spring training before its ready for the regular season or the World Series, AmeriCorps participants need to practice working as a team. Before you ask a team to design a new violence prevention curriculum, or devise a lead paint abatement strategy, let them practice on easier tasks — like a game of volleyball, a low ropes course, or a creative skit together. Tasks like these are fun and bring teams together. With strong facilitation, a low ropes course or even a skit can turn into an amazing seminar on group dynamics. Programs should support practices such as:

- "Signature services" that bring participants and staff together for large, one-day service projects. (Signature services have been used particularly

effectively by individual placement programs to re-connect participants serving in different parts of a community);

- Low ropes courses, Outward Bound activities and initiatives, or other well-facilitated training to build trust and teamwork. (Low ropes courses typically challenge groups to complete a moderately difficult physical challenge that requires teamwork, such as passing everyone on a team through or over a rope fence without anyone touching the rope);
- Affinity groups of participants who come together for joint training in their service area;
- Training that includes friendly team-based competition including (but not limited to) athletic competition;
- Committees and task forces of participants designed to address important organizational issues such as plans for recruiting the next year's corps;
- Recognition for a team that does particularly good work.

John Smith had a thick knot in his stomach as he sat down for dinner with 10 of his fellow corps members. It was only their second day of training, and in one hour Smith and his team needed to design and practice a five minute skit on the subject of diversity: "what diversity means to you."

"A skit," John exclaimed. "I haven't acted since the 5th grade." Most of his teammates laughed nervously. For a few moments everyone at the table sat in silence, eating purposefully. Then Annie spoke up. Annie hadn't acted since grade school either; but she was a championship note taker. She pulled out her journal, and suggested that the team at least think of a few themes and definitions. Let's try a brainstorm, she suggested. "Different abilities," someone suggested. "Diversity of culture and ideas," said another. "Not tokenism," added John. John's suggestion piqued the interest of one member of the team who did have experience acting. "I know," she said. "Let's act out all the things diversity isn't. It'll be funny. We can open each scene with a sign saying: 'this is diversity.' One person can play the token coming in for a job. And then at the end of the scene we'll close with a big sign saying: "NOT."

The team liked this idea, and ideas for other humorous scenes starting flowing fast and furious. John started sketching out the skit, and within 15 minutes the team had come up with four good ideas, and everyone had a role. They just needed a finale, but John was sure they'd figure that out. The team was on its way.

6. Challenge teams to complete tasks that individuals can't. True teamwork comes from realizing that you can do more with a team than alone. Shared challenges — be it the U.S. Marines basic training, or scaling a wall in an Outward Bound exercise — build esprit de corps.

Intense esprit de corps comes from what Outward Bound calls "shared adversity." When a group has come through a rigorous program together, they share a powerful bond. The California Conservation Corps' slogan,

"Low pay, hard work, miserable conditions" and the Peace Corps', "The toughest job you'll ever love" are effective because they speak to a strong desire within most people for challenge and adventure. Programs should support practices such as:

- Overnight retreats and challenging activities;
- Challenging one-day physical service projects that stretch people to their limits. (For programs that do physical service every day, consider mixing in a challenging one-day human service project);
- Physical Training, or PT, as a way to start the day with focus and energy;
- Clear rules and expectations that are consistently enforced;
- High standards. (At some youth corps, participants cannot begin the year until their entire team has been "certified" as reaching excellent standards in PT).

A team leader in a leading national service program formerly served as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. He shared his thinking about the ways the Marines built esprit de corps, and how it applies to his youth corps experience. "In the Marines there was shared suffering, a shared very intense experience. You were given tasks so hard that you couldn't succeed by yourself, you needed a team. The entire team bonded around the drill sergeant, the person you all hated and then all admired....There was a sense of pride because all marines were trained in one of two places in the country — Parris Island or San Diego. Everyone was on the same sheet of music. ...Another thing that transfers from the military to national service is the uniform. The uniform as a major unifying force.....They spent a lot of time in the military teaching history and customs and rituals, and for the most part it really worked. People knew what it meant to be a marine....One of the benefits is with race relations. The military has a long history of being relatively color blind. It works because to become a marine is so deep it transcends your color."

7. Have fun and be silly together. The old saw says "the family that plays together stays together." Service work is hard, and taking time for whimsy is an important way to build spirit and motivation. Some ideas to consider, include:

- Songs and cheers written by staff and corps and enjoyed together throughout the year;
- Talent shows and dances at overnight trainings or on other special occasions;
- Anything else that brings people together to laugh or, at times such as the end of the year, cry.

Ice-breakers, name-games, and warm-up exercises are a good way to start almost all training workshops or large meetings. Described here are two examples which national service programs have used to get people laughing, focused, and ready to begin their day. Ice breakers can seem very silly, particularly on paper, but they are a highly effective way to get almost any group loosened up and ready for work.

Barnyard: In a large, open room, arrange everyone (15 to 100+) in a circle. Pass everyone a piece of paper containing the name of a barnyard animal: horses, cows, pigs, chickens, dogs, sheep, etc. Ask everyone to keep his or her "animal" a secret. With the whole group, practice the sound that one or two of the animals make: "oink oink" for a pig, and "moooo" for a cow. Ask for volunteers who can make a good sound for each animal. Now ask everyone to close their eyes and start to make the sound of their animal, over and over again. Explain that people should search (with their eyes closed) for other people playing the same animal and link up with them. When a pig finds another pig, for example, they should hold hands and continue making their sound and looking for other pigs. After about five minutes, ask people to stop making their noises and open their eyes.

The wind blows: Arrange chairs in a circle, with one fewer chair than there are people. The facilitator in the middle of the room can start the game by saying: "the wind blows for everyone wearing white socks" (or any other attribute). Everyone wearing white socks then needs to get up and find another seat, not counting one right next to them. Whoever is left standing then makes up another question: "The wind blows for anyone who has ever worked on a farm." Continue for 10 to 15 turns.

8. Ask participants to build and lead your organization, not just follow it. Build peer networks that draw on the strengths of your participants and teach citizenship skills.

A month or two into the year, participants should be calling on each other frequently to discuss common problems and get advice. Do your participants know the special skills of their colleagues? Your participants will have more esprit de corps if they feel they are an important part of your success. Some ideas to try include:

- Ask all participants what special skills they have (sign language, CPR, First Aid, New Games, event planning, arts and crafts, gardening, carpentry, etc.). Make a list and distribute it to all participants; at a more basic level, make sure participants know what their peers are doing;
- Form committees and task forces that are truly needed and that channel the skills of your participants into helping to strengthen the organization; make sure committees have clear goals and timelines, and when they make recommendations, make sure they are fully considered;
- Establish affinity groups that allow participants working on similar projects to get together for critical training, which they help to design and lead;

- Hold periodic training in which participants can rotate "taking the hot seat." A participant in the hot seat presents his or her work challenges to the group, and then receives practical suggestions;
- Ask your participants to help connect your program to established community groups and to design reflective activities that enhance the service experience.

For individual placement programs, which have participants serving all over the community, the state, or even the country, it is especially critical to create and maintain peer groups that keep participants working together and learning from each other. Directors of three programs that have done this well, the Pennsylvania Service Corps, Public Allies, and the Delta Service Corps, explain what they do to build esprit among their far-flung participants.

"The corps members call each other up all the time," says Amy Hart, director of the Pennsylvania Service Corps, which trains and places more than 100 volunteer leaders at schools, community centers, and youth corps throughout the state. "It starts at training in the beginning of the year and then continues in our monthly 'university in dispersion' training. We distribute a list of what people are working on and what resources they have. People are very supportive. The best is when one of the corps members has a special event, and all the others pitch in to help out."

Trudy Bell, Louisiana Director of the Delta Corps, which places almost 300 volunteers in three states: Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, says the key to building esprit de corps among her participants is her team leaders. "The most important person is the team leader, who checks in with each participant almost every day and brings them together as a group ideally once a week, or at least once a month. Some of our volunteers are in very remote locations and the team leader is the person who keeps them connected."

Public Allies Chicago Executive Director Michelle Obama says the key to building esprit among her 30 participants is the opening training, social events, and a major public event that the organization as a whole takes on once a year. "Tomorrow's Leaders Today" is a signature service in which Public Allies work with their sponsoring community organizations and the public to identify and honor 100 young Chicago leaders at a major dinner. Last year the dinner was attended by the mayor and well-covered by the press. "When the Allies actually get down to work on something together, that's when the sense of teamwork gets built," says Obama.

Resource guide

If you do not already have access to a trainer knowledgeable about New Games and activities that can help build esprit de corps, try using the following resources and publications. (This is a partial list of relevant publications).

- 1) The New Games Book: Play Hard, Play Fair, Nobody Hurt; ed. by Andrew Fluegelman, Headland Press; 1976.
- 2) Outward Bound for Teachers, ed. by Mitch Sakoff, available from Outward Bound; Route 9D Rt. Box 280; Garrison, NY. 10524-9757; 914-424-4000.
- 3) "Project Adventure, Inc.", with headquarters in Hamilton, MA, and Covington, GA, has published many books and short guides to team-based educational activities. A list of publications is available through the publisher, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company in Dubuque, Iowa, which can be reached at 1-800-228-0810.
- 4) Your program officer at the Corporation for National & Community Service is a resource for you as you design a plan to build a strong team. A companion chapter to this document which details a variety of name games, ice-breakers, and team activities will be available at the Corporation's AmeriCorps Director's Conference and through your program officer.

"But beyond the concrete achievements of AmeriCorps, beyond the expanded educational opportunities those achievements will earn, national service, I hope and pray, will help us to strengthen the cords that bind us together as a people; will help us to remember in the quiet of every night that what each of us can be is to some extent determined by whether all of us can be what God meant us to be."

—President Bill Clinton

NASCC Materials



TM



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

AmeriCorps/USDA Staff Training

“Getting Things Done”

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Introduction



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

WHAT IS NASCC?

The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) is the membership organization for youth corps programs. Since its founding in 1985, NASCC has served as an advocate, central reference point and source of assistance for the growing number of state and local youth corps around the country.

NASCC's primary mission is two-fold: to strengthen the quality of existing youth corps programs and to promote the development of new ones. To accomplish this NASCC:

- ▶ provides written and on-site technical assistance to new and operating corps, as well as those in the planning stages;
- ▶ maintains an Information Clearinghouse on youth corps policies, programs and practices, as well as the overall status of the youth corps field;
- ▶ sponsors an Annual Conference for youth corps staff and corpsmembers;
- ▶ undertakes a wide range of policy development and public affairs activities to bring the value of youth corps to the attention of policymakers, the media, the philanthropic community and the general public;
- ▶ organizes professional development workshops for corps program directors and other staff on a range of policy, program and management topics;
- ▶ participates in national coalitions such as the Working Group on National and Community Service Policy and the National Youth Employment Coalition; and
- ▶ publishes an annual **Youth Corps Profiles**, a quarterly newsletter -- **Youth Can!** -- and other information bulletins on issues of importance to the field.

NASCC is a non-profit corporation governed by a board of directors which is composed of corps program directors from throughout the U.S. and prominent citizens. NASCC receives support from membership dues and registration fees, as well as from foundations and corporations, including the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Xerox Corporation.



National Association of
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WHAT ARE YOUTH CORPS?

Conservation and service corps programs--youth corps--harness the energy and idealism of young people to meet the needs of communities, states, and the nation. Corps programs engage young people, generally 16-25 years old, in paid, productive, full-time work which benefits the both young people and their communities.

Corps work. Participants in corps programs--corpsmembers--most often work in crews or teams of eight to twelve with a paid adult supervisor who sets and models clear standards of behavior. Youth corps crews undertake a wide range of work projects. Some are similar to the forestry and parks projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s; others fill gaps in the services of urban parks, renovate housing, and assist human service agencies. All corps projects meet community needs and allow young people to serve as community resources. Most corpsmembers receive at least minimum wage for their work.

Corps educate. Corpsmembers devote part of each week to improving their basic education skills and to preparing for future employment. Most corps not only offer pre-GED, GED and college credit courses, but also offer classes focusing on essential life skills, such as budgeting, parenting, and personal health and well-being. Corps programs also encourage corpsmembers to engage in tangible acts of citizenship, such as voting. Some corps offer educational scholarships or cash bonuses to corpsmembers who complete their term of service.

Corps are widespread and growing. More than 100 youth corps operate in 37 states. Some of these programs are statewide; the majority are locally-based. Most corps operate year-round, although some operate only during the summer. Nationwide, more than 28,000 young adults serve each year in youth corps. Funding for corps comes from a variety of sources including state, county and municipal appropriations; fee-for-service contracts; foundations and corporations; as well as federal job training and community development block grants. During 1992 and 1993, the National and Community Service Act of 1990 provided funding for corps through grants to states. In September 1993, the National and Community Service Trust Act (P.L. 103-82) was signed into law by President Clinton. The Trust Act allows corps to apply for funding through statewide population-based and competitive grants.



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HISTORY OF THE YOUTH CORPS

Today's 100 youth service and conservation corps trace their roots back to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s. The CCC, of course, was one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's most successful efforts to find alternative employment for the enormous number of young men whose chances in life had been derailed by the Great Depression. Over 6 million young men served in the CCC. Today, many still remember their service with pride and actively participate in the National Association of CCC Alumni.

While the CCC was officially disbanded in 1942, the concept lived on in the nation's heart and mind. It was revived in 1957, when the Student Conservation Association (SCA) placed its first college students as volunteers in national parks and forests. Just over a decade later the late Senator Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson used the SCA model as the basis for legislation that created the Youth Conservation Corps -- the YCC. At its height during the mid-1970's the YCC was funded at the level of \$60 million and enrolled some 32,000 young people each summer in programs operated by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture and by states as well. YCC participants worked in both cities and wilderness areas across the country, performing a variety of conservation projects, including tree-planting, river clean-up and erosion control.

Later in the '70s, an even larger federal program was launched -- the Young Adult Conservation Corps -- the YACC -- which provided young people with year-round conservation-related employment and education opportunities. With an annual appropriation of \$250 million, the YACC operated at both the federal and state levels.

The First Wave -- State Conservation Corps

Both the YCC and the YACC were virtually eliminated in 1981 due to dramatic federal budget reductions. By that time, however, the value of youth conservation corps had been proven and many states had already begun to support these programs directly. California was the first, of course. Then-Governor Jerry Brown launched the California Conservation Corps in 1975. Other states, including Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington and Wisconsin promptly followed suit. Throughout the 1980s, states continued to launch corps.

The Second Wave -- Urban Conservation Corps

In 1983 the emerging youth corps movement took a new twist with the birth of the first local corps programs. Once again California took the lead with the start-up of urban conservation corps in San Francisco, Marin County and Oakland (East Bay) and five more in subsequent years. The California urban corps were strengthened by passage of the California Bottle Act in 1985 which earmarked funding for local corps recycling projects.

History of The Youth Corps Continued:

In 1984, New York City established the City Volunteer corps and added a new dimension to the youth corps field by engaging young people in the delivery of human services as well as conservation work. During the mid-1980s, despite the lack of federal support, new state and local corps continued to spring up across the country.

The Third Wave -- Urban Corps Expansion Project (UCEP)

In the late 1980's, with support from several large foundations (Ford, Kellogg, Hewlett, Mott, Rockefeller, and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, among others), Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) and NASCC launched a national demonstration to create and evaluate the outcomes of urban corps in 12 cities across the country. The first of these new corps -- which all follow a prescribed model -- became operational in the fall of 1990 and the most recent came on line in September, 1991.

The Fourth Wave -- NCSA Funded Youth Corps

In 1992, the youth corps movement saw the first targeted federal funding in more than a decade, when the Commission on National and Community Service awarded \$22.5 million in grants to 23 states, the District of Columbia, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps and 5 Indian tribes. While not all established corps benefited directly from these funds, the field as a whole increased by almost 50% as a result of the new federal money. In 1994 more than 100 youth corps are operating in 38 states and the District of Columbia serving 26,000 young people annually.



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

YOUTH CORPS PROGRAM MODELS

Size, structure, sponsorship, funding sources, leadership, and mission all vary from one corps program to another. State governments began to create year-round and summer corps programs in the mid-1970s. Cities and counties began to organize youth corps several years later. In the mid-1980s, numerous operators of summer youth employment programs under the federal Job Training Partnership Act developed local and state youth corps. The early 1990s witnessed the creation of new networks of corps with National and Community Service Act funding.

Nevertheless, corps programs fall generally in line with several models. The elements of those models are listed below.

State year-round corps programs are often:

- ▶ Managed by a land-managing or employment and training agency, sometimes through contracts with a nonprofit organization;
- ▶ Funded from general appropriations, bonds, user fees, and contracts;
- ▶ Designed to employ young adults 16-25 who are out of school;
- ▶ Set up to conduct projects on public lands or in public institutions and to provide corpsmembers with basic education and life skills training; and
- ▶ Set up to involve residential or non-residential crews, or both.

State and local summer corps programs are often:

- ▶ Developed by a state department in cooperation with local agencies, such as Service Delivery Areas or parks departments;
- ▶ Funded through discretionary and local-grant federal JTPA funds and private sources;
- ▶ Designed to operate for 8-12 weeks on a small number of projects and to provide educational services so as to prevent summer "learning loss;" and
- ▶ Designed to employ youth as young as 14 in non-residential settings.

Year-round urban corps programs are often:

- ▶ Funded by a broad mix of federal, state, and local government funds, as well as private sources and fee-for-service contracts;
- ▶ Designed to employ young adults 16-23 who are out of school;
- ▶ Set up to conduct projects ranging from human service to conservation;
- ▶ Operated as a non-profit organizations or as part of a larger nonprofit;
- ▶ Set up with the cooperation and assistance of city and state government; and
- ▶ Designed to provide comprehensive education and support services to corpsmembers.



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR HIGH QUALITY CORPS PROGRAMS

Since 1976, youth corps have been launched across the country at a slow, but steady pace by an array of state and local government agencies and non-profit organizations. There has been no common funding source or other authority to dictate goals and strategies. Rather, the founders of corps have learned from one another, building their program components upon the values and most successful experiences of the colleagues who preceded them. Despite, or perhaps, because of the absence of a centralized authority, corps share a common set of principles which, in turn, provide a framework for consistent, effective practice.

Over the years, NASCC has served as the primary forum through which corps directors have exchanged information and developed their craft. The members of NASCC now choose to articulate, endorse and pledge support for the key principles that have been developed and tested over time. The principles are intended to reinforce the efforts of existing corps and guide new ones in their pursuit of practices that benefit corpsmembers and communities and reflect the highest standards of conduct, integrity and excellence.

WORK PROJECTS

High quality corps programs accomplish work and service projects that are of value to the community and to the corpsmember. Valuable work and service projects are those which:

- fill an unmet, but valued, community need
- are visible, tangible, meaningful and achievable
- have an educational dimension
- provide introductory skills training
- are conducted according to accepted safety and design principles
- provide long-term benefits to the community
- are environmentally sound
- lend themselves to group effort and close supervision
- are subject to a well-defined monitoring and evaluation process
- clearly divide responsibilities between work sponsor and crew
- do not displace work sponsor staff

CORPSMEMBER DEVELOPMENT

High quality corps programs provide corpsmembers with structured opportunities to learn both academic and practical skills which meet the individual needs of each participant. Corpsmember-focused education:

- occupies a substantial and consistent place on the corps schedule
- is based upon individual assessment of corpsmember needs
- is carried out by corps staff or under written contract
- builds upon and embraces work and service project experiences
- involves goal setting and rewards for mastery

High quality corps programs provide life skills training that prepares corpsmembers for successful adulthood. Successful life skills training:

- occupies a substantial and consistent place on the corps schedule
- effectively addresses topics critical to young adults
- makes use of and trains corpsmembers in the use of community resources
- provides leadership opportunities and develops group skills
- encourages reflection on service and the corps experience
- is linked to basic education through reading, writing and discussion
- encourages career planning and development and ties into post-corps job and education placement
- encourages a sense of community within the corps
- helps youth to see themselves as resources
- encourages youth to value differences

High quality corps programs provide corpsmembers with a disciplined, positive and supportive experience. Such an experience results from:

- the payment of stipends or wages (and benefits) tied to work
- clearly stated rules and procedures
- initial orientation and on-going training
- high standards for attendance and strong retention efforts
- the provision of needed support services
- effective deployment of corpsmembers using the crew structure

PROGRAM OPERATION

High quality corps programs work to achieve the goal of diversity, i.e., an understanding and appreciation of people with different backgrounds, experiences and ideas, at all levels of the organization. To achieve the goal of diversity, corps programs:

- ensure to the greatest extent possible and appropriate that their governing bodies, staff and participants reflect the pluralism of the community which they serve
- design work projects, collaborative exchanges with other national service programs and educational components to ensure that corpsmembers are exposed to a broad range of experiences that help overcome stereotypical attitudes and behavior
- develop mission statements that define diversity within the context of each program and community, as well as written plans for moving toward that diversity

High quality corps programs are highly visible and publicly responsive organizations. To achieve such visibility and responsiveness, corps programs:

- consistently make use of uniforms, insignia and other markers
- issue a clear statement of their purpose and population served
- periodically make public reports
- respond to community needs, including the need to bridge ethnic and socioeconomic gaps
- publicly recognize corps partners

High quality corps programs employ sound management and administration practices. Such sound practices are those which:

- ensure that the size of the crew and the ratio of crew supervisors to corpsmembers in a crew allow for work projects to be conducted with safety, efficiency and opportunities for learning
- utilize a governing or advisory board representative of the community
- maintain thorough record keeping and reporting systems regarding participants, work accomplishment and finances
- establish and adhere to clear criteria and processes for the selection of work projects
- have systems in place to ensure equal employment opportunity, affirmative action and periodic review of the representatives of staff and management

- enlist a wide range of community partnerships to ensure strong recruitment, funding stability and visibility, as well as non-duplication of services
- maintain administrative and financial systems that allow for continued growth and complexity of programming
- assure ongoing staff training and development at all levels in the organization
- conduct strategic planning

High quality corps programs cultivate relationships throughout the broader corps movement. To cultivate such relationships, corps programs:

- adopt a collaborative spirit toward colleagues
- respect differences in mission and program design
- interact regularly with others in the field
- constructively approach perceived problems and issues
- avoid duplication of effort and competition for local funding
- consult with existing corps programs before launching a similar program within the same community
- seek to build the capacity of the entire corps field by sharing best practices and special organizational and program strengths with other corps programs



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FY93

ADVOCACY

- NASCC worked to make the new **National and Community Service Act of 1993** as "user friendly" as possible for corps programs and the young people they serve. Included in the final bill are NASCC recommendations which strengthen the involvement of disadvantaged young people, require payment of a minimum living allowance and put a greater emphasis on the expansion and improvement of existing programs.
- NASCC also worked to provide new avenues of federal support for the corps.
 - ▶ Introduced as an amendment to the national service bill, the **Public Lands Corps Act of 1993** provides the Departments of Agriculture and Interior new incentive and authority to contract with state and local youth corps to undertake the backlog of conservation work which needs to be done on public lands.
 - ▶ The **Urban Youth Corps Act of 1993**, also introduced as an amendment to the national service bill, provides the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Transportation the incentive and authority to contract with urban corps to perform rehabilitation and beautification work for public housing, public works and transportation agencies.
 - ▶ In an attempt to make **HOPE VI** funding available to the corps, NASCC served as the liaison between PHA directors eligible to apply for HOPE VI funding and corps with eligible PHAs in their states. As a result, more than a dozen youth corps collaborated with PHAs in developing applications for HOPE VI funding. Seven corps were among those which received the first grants and two additional corps are likely to be funded in the second year. To ensure future access to HOPE VI funding, NASCC recently provided HUD and the appropriate authorizing committees with language to reinforce the involvement of youth corps in HOPE VI.
- NASCC initiated a series of meetings with staff in the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration in an effort to improve access to JTPA funds. As a result of those meetings, the DOL sent an advisory about the corps to their state liaison agencies and SDAs.

- NASCC also took some first steps toward resolving the problems which the **Davis-Bacon Act** causes corps in their efforts to secure fee-for-service contracts. Meetings with staff in the Employment Standards Division at DOL confirmed that the most promising strategy revolves around simply raising the prevailing wage threshold. NASCC is currently tracking legislation which may accomplish this.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- As part of its **NCSA Technical Assistance Project**, NASCC delivered on-site technical assistance services to 15 NCSA funded corps in eight states--Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Oregon and West Virginia. Such assistance included program assessment, staff development, crew supervisor training, staff burnout prevention and conflict resolution. A new "**Corps Program Planning Packet**" was also developed to orient new programs to corps values and philosophy, program models, corpsmember development issues, work project planning and corps visibility. To prepare these new corps for their participation in the national evaluation being conducted by Abt Associates, NASCC also developed a tracking system with particular focus on attrition rates, educational achievements, the number of service hours offered and the kinds of projects completed.
- To help the corps take advantage of new JTPA options, NASCC commissioned a "user friendly" guide to JTPA entitled "**Making JTPA Work for the Corps**" and released it to the field in late May. This new technical resource paper was drafted by Jim Buckheit, who designed the creative link between the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps and that state's JTPA system, and was reviewed by several experts in the youth employment and training community, as well as by top JTPA administrators in the U.S. Department of Labor.
- In April, NASCC began its **Mentor-New Corps Director Partnership Project**. This initiative matches veteran corps directors with new directors of NCSA-funded corps for an intensive year-long exchange. After a careful recruitment and selection process guided by a Peer Review Team, five partnerships were launched this summer. The mentors will make two or more site visits to the new corps, provide as much telephone "hand-holding" as needed and serve as brokers to secure other expertise for their partners. The new corps directors will spend up to two weeks on "working sabbaticals" at the mentor's corps and/or another corps to learn by observing the operations of mature programs.
- In June, NASCC launched its **On-Site Consulting Project**, which dispatches veteran corps practitioners with specific kinds of expertise to provide two days of intensive on-site consulting and telephone follow-up to corps which need assistance. Areas of specialization include fee-for-service, fundraising and marketing, sustainability, new corps planning and work-learning integration.

- As part of its 1993 Annual Conference, NASCC presented a two-and-a-half hour **"Fee-for-Service" Workshop** on the principles and practices of developing fee-for-service contracts. Designed for both new corps directors and work project coordinators from mature corps programs, the workshop walked a standing-room-only crowd of 60 participants step-by-step through the process of capturing and maintaining valuable fee-for-service projects. A special workbook on the topic, prepared for the session, is now part of NASCC's on-going written technical assistance arsenal.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Almost 300 corps program representatives, including 100 corpsmembers, from across the country convened in San Diego from October 21-24 for the **Seventh Annual NASCC Conference** and the parallel **Corpsmember Development Institute (CDI)** -- a three-day leadership development program for youth corps participants. The conference theme, **"Together We Make a World of Difference,"** was reflected in keynote presentations and sessions on cultural diversity for both corpsmembers and staff. In addition to putting in a full day of service in Balboa Park, participants attended workshops which covered such topics as work safety procedures, preventing staff burn-out, service learning and computerized tracking and evaluation systems.
- In mid-July, NASCC and the Student Conservation Association delivered a three-and-a-half day **Advanced Wilderness Work Skills Workshop** for senior crew supervisors in Maryland's Green Ridge State Forest. Twenty participants from corps across the country acquired hands-on practice in trail design and survey techniques, traditional timber construction methods and backcountry safety and crew management procedures.
- Also in mid-July, NASCC convened corps directors for a two-day community discussion on the values and practices related to diversity among the participants, staff and governance bodies in the youth corps movement. Prior to the symposium, NASCC prepared and distributed a background paper--**"Expanding the Definition of Diversity"**--to introduce participants to the varying points of view on the meaning of diversity and the role of diversity in shaping national service policy.
- Over 400 youth corps representatives, including a record-breaking 220 corpsmembers, came together in Baltimore, Maryland, from July 14-17 for NASCC's **Eighth Annual Conference and Corpsmember Development Institute**. The conference coincided with the 60th reunion of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni being held nearby and prompted the theme **"Linking Generations of Service."** In addition to attending workshop sessions, the youth corps representatives participated in a Youth Corps Rally on Capitol Hill and a day of service at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, where they were joined by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Senator Paul Sarbanes and Representative Steny Hoyer.

PUBLICATIONS

- In the summer of 1992, NASCC realized that it had little current accurate data on the overall status of youth corps against which to track the field's growth, funding sources, participant demographics and improvements in educational and service-learning components. To remedy the situation, NASCC collected the missing data and published it in the **1992 Youth Corps Profiles**. The document contains more information and more accurate information than has ever been collected about the youth corps movement. It has been used extensively by the Commission on National and Community Service, the White House Office of National Service and many Congressional staff working on the national service legislation.
- NASCC also published the **1992 Youth Corps Staff Compensation and Benefits Survey**, the first profile of salaries and benefits within the corps community ever to be done.
- NASCC published four issues of its quarterly newsletter, **Youth Can!**, featuring reports on corps disaster relief efforts in Dade County, updates on the Urban Corps Expansion Projects sites, NASCC conferences and workshops, technical assistance to new and existing corps, corps and corpsmember profiles, National Youth Service Day and national service legislation and policy updates.

OTHER SERVICES

- NASCC continues to maintain an **Information Clearinghouse** to respond to requests for information on youth corps programs, practices and policies. Requests for information were extremely high this year as a result of NCSC grants, Congressional initiatives, and increased exposure in national publications--including an article in Foundation News magazine.
- NASCC initiated a corpsmember health insurance plan for organizational members.



AmeriCorps/USDA Staff Training *Synopsis of Workshops*

National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

Orientation/Program Management

The major concern for new program starts has been the definition of critical ingredients in developing an effective model; fundamentals of operating strong corps programs; day-to-day tools, work/service learning integration; and staff and organizational development issues. Some of the concerns NASCC would focus on are issues relative to recruitment, selection, orientation, assessment, life skills, participant development, and others.

Diversity Training

Struggles exist in community service programs over how to define, and how to achieve, diversity. Diversity starts at the top and is not one dimensional. Careful thought, planning and selection must go into the governance structure, board of directors, staffing, work projects, sponsors and others if the message of diversity is to move beyond mere rhetoric and into practical application and relevance to those we are chartered to serve. This session will focus on definition; clarification, and tips for achieving socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and gender diversity.

Team Building

For over 50 years conservation and service corps have prided themselves on the crew-based model -- working as a team. Team building involves many levels of attention and demands a clear understanding and sensitivity toward the various members of the team itself. It should create mutual respect, cooperation, interdependence, enjoyment, and an increased level of trust. This session will focus on discussions of why teams don't succeed; obstacles to team goals; and the team leader's role. Particular attention will be paid to the crew/team-based model's role in impacting retention.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict situations normally occur when either the concerns or goals of two individuals or organizations appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe the behavior along two basic areas: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which attempts are made to satisfy own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which attempts are made to satisfy the other's concerns. NASCC's work with corps programs has demonstrated the need to identify and clarify those areas where the greatest levels of incompatibility will occur between organization -- participant -- staff -- work project sponsor -- community based organizations -- and beneficiaries of the service.

Orientation/Program Management



National Association of
Service & Conservation Corps

YOUTH CORPS PLANNING PACKET

February, 1994

WHAT IS NASCC?

The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps is the membership organization for youth corps programs. Since its founding in 1985, NASCC has served as an advocate, central reference point and source of assistance for the growing number of state and local youth corps around the country. NASCC's primary mission is two-fold: to strengthen the quality of existing youth corps programs and to promote the development of new ones. To accomplish this, NASCC:

- ▶ Provides written and on-site technical assistance to new and operating corps and those in the planning stages;
- ▶ Maintains an Information Clearinghouse on youth corps policies, programs and practices, as well as the overall status of the youth corps field;
- ▶ Sponsors an Annual Conference for youth corps staff and corpsmembers;
- ▶ Undertakes a wide range of policy development and public affairs activities to bring the value of youth corps to the attention of policymakers, the media, the philanthropic community and general public;
- ▶ Organizes professional development workshops for corps program directors and other staff on a range of policy, program and management topics;
- ▶ Participates in national coalitions such as the Working Group on National and Community Service Policy and the National Youth Employment Coalition; and
- ▶ Publishes an annual **Youth Corps Profiles**, a quarterly newsletter--**Youth Can!** -- and other information bulletins on issues of importance to the field.

NASCC is a non-profit corporation governed by a board of directors which is composed of corps program directors from throughout the U.S. and prominent citizens. NASCC receives support from membership dues and registration fees, as well as from foundations and corporations, including the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Xerox Corporation.

The NASCC technical assistance program currently provides Circuit Riders -- corps practitioners who are expert trainers -- for on-site consulting on topics ranging from service work-learning to corps startup. In addition, NASCC sponsors intensive staff development workshops for crew supervisors and corps directors each year. NASCC staff and members worked closely with new corps startups and corps expansion efforts in eight states over the past two years, following the first round of grants from the Commission on National and Community Service. NASCC staff and members have also provided extensive technical assistance in the startup of youth corps in numerous states and cities, including Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, New York, Virginia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Salt Lake City. From 1988-1993, NASCC staff and members contributed heavily to the success of the Urban Corps Expansion Project, through which ten new corps began operation in larger U.S. cities such as Albany, Kansas City, Miami and Milwaukee.

STATE CORPS PLANNING PACKET

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PART I:

THE CORPS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

WHAT IS A YOUTH CORPS?

Conservation and service corps programs -- youth corps -- harness the energy and idealism of young people to meet the needs of communities, states, and the nation. Corps programs engage young people, generally 16-25 years old, in paid, productive, full-time work which benefits the young people and their communities.

Corps work. Participants in corps programs -- corpsmembers -- most often work in crews or teams of eight to twelve with a paid adult supervisor who sets and models clear standards of behavior. Youth corps crews undertake a wide range of work projects. Some are similar to the forestry and parks projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s; others fill gaps in the services of urban parks, renovate housing, and assist human service agencies. All corps projects meet community needs and allow young people to serve as community resources. Most corpsmembers receive at least minimum wage for their work.

Corps educate. Corpsmembers devote part of each week to improving their basic education skills and preparing to search for future employment. Many corps also provide education about life skills, such as budgeting, parenting, and personal health and well-being. Corps programs encourage corpsmembers to engage in tangible acts of citizenship, such as voting. Some corps offer educational scholarships or cash bonuses to corpsmembers who complete their term of service.

Corps are widespread and growing. More than 100 youth corps operate in 37 states. Some of these programs are statewide; the majority are locally-based. Most corps operate year-round, although some operate only during the summer. Nationwide, more than 28,000 young adults serve each year in youth corps. Funding for corps comes from a variety of sources including state, county and municipal appropriations, fee-for-service contracts, foundations and corporations, as well as federal job training and community development block grants. During 1992 and 1993, the National and Community Service Act of 1990 provided funding for corps through grants to states. In September 1993, the National and Community Service Trust Act (P.L. 103-82) was signed into law by President Clinton. The Trust Act allows corps to apply for funding through statewide population-based and competitive grants, and to carry out work under contract to Federal agencies on public lands, transportation, and community development and housing projects.

PHASES OF PLANNING A NEW YOUTH CORPS PROGRAM

The following is a sketch of the phases through which planning and development of a new corps is likely to pass. Some phases may overlap. See "How to Start a Youth Corps" for a detailed list of tasks and concerns within each phase.

Getting Started

- Identify critical needs a corps can help meet in your state.
- Identify prominent, hard-working leaders for the planning period.
- Locate a lead agency with the capacity for planning and development.

Early Program Planning

- Develop the mission statement and goals.
- Establish the preliminary program design -- and publicize it.
- Broaden the base of support for the program -- continually.

Intensive Program Planning and Development

- Raise funds
- Refine the program design and plans
- Establish a solid operating base for the program

Implementation and Operation

- Opening Ceremony -- operation begins!
- Ongoing review, evaluation, and refinement

HOW TO START A YOUTH CORPS

Many ways exist to start a youth corps. States, cities, counties, employment and training agencies, and nonprofit organizations have all taken different routes to the same end -- operation of a sustainable, high-quality corps program. However, it is possible to identify some of the phases through which most corps planning and development efforts must pass. It's important to remember that these phases may not happen exactly in sequence -- they may overlap, or stretch or shrink, depending on local conditions. An outline of the phases and their components appears below.

Phase I: Laying the groundwork. During this phase, the corps planning team must identify needs to meet, leadership for planning and development, and planning capacity.

- **Needs to meet.** In order to set goals and objectives for the corps program, you must know what needs the community most wants the corps to meet. These could include needs for parks and recreation projects, for service to the elderly or children, for improved or more comprehensive employment and training programs, and for better educational services for young adults who have dropped out of school.
- **Leadership.** Often, this involves two separate but related efforts.
 - 1) *Recruit a high-profile champion* from the public or private sector who can use influence and persuasion to bring support to the corps concept, to keep the planning and development effort on track, and to establish links to resources to support the corps program. Governors, legislators, mayors, city council members, judges, and businesspeople have all filled the champion role.
 - 2) *Form a high-level task force, or interagency planning group.* The Task Force meets regularly to steer corps planning, to review draft plans or legislation, to bring attention to the effort, and even as a try-out method for future members of a corps advisory or governing group. The governor, mayor, or corps champion may appoint the Task Force, or ask people to serve.
- **Planning and development capacity.** The task force or champion needs to determine the best locus for planning. This could be a public or private agency. The elements of capacity include:
 - Planning experience*, preferably with start-up youth employment/education programs;
 - Ability and readiness to obtain and process new technical information* about corps;
 - Support for planning*, i.e. in-kind donations of staff time or a planning grant;
 - A positive professional reputation* in local or state circles; and
 - Absence* of demands that conflict seriously with planning and the corps model.

Some locales have chosen to delay extensive planning and development work until they have raised or secured planning funds. Others have carried out initial corps planning through a volunteer effort, but planning ultimately must occur at a professional level and responsibility often becomes centralized with one person.

Phase II: Early Planning.

Leaders and staff of the planning effort convene to discuss and define what the program will do. Key steps in this phase include:

- **Develop the mission statement and goals.**
- **Establish the preliminary program design.** Identify basic parameters such as:

Residential or non-residential
 Year-round or seasonal operation
 Corpsmember age range
 Participant eligibility criteria
 Types of work projects
 Projected work sponsors
 Youth development features
 Service-learning activities

Daily corps schedule
 Size of crews
 Post-program services
 Administrative arrangements
 Staffing plans
 Methods of evaluation/review
 Projected funding sources

- **Broaden the base of support.** Consider expanding the task force as you identify other potential key partners and interested persons.

Phase III: Program Planning and Development.

Leaders and staff of the planning process now move to ever-finer levels of detail of plans for the corps program. At some point in this stage, a new organization or office may take shape, and permanent staff may be hired to take over the planning and development effort. Components of program planning and development include (not necessarily in this order):

Recruit/orient/train staff members
 Sign cooperative agreements with partners
 Finding a headquarters site
 Order supplies, tools, equipment, vans
 Develop project plans and schedules
 Establish safety guidelines
 Fundraising and cash flow planning

Recruit corpsmembers
 Plan corpsmember orientation
 Develop an evaluation system
 Establish advisory/governing board
 Promoting the program
 Planning an opening event or ceremony
 Develop operating procedures

Note: You may want to consider using the attached "Corps Development Action Plan and Worksheet," as a tool for this stage.

Phase IV: Implementation and Operation: Items to Watch For

As the plans for the new corps program get set, opening day arrives. Most corps programs have not been able to dot every "i" or cross every "t" by that time, so that planning, development, and refinement of components continues for some time afterward. Some of the issues that often receive attention as programs refine themselves include:

- Variable quality of work projects provided by sponsors
- Consistently educating corpsmembers, staff, and board about corps mission and values
- Meeting the program and paperwork requirements of funding agencies
- Scheduling -- education, work projects, community meetings, etc.
- Staff burnout
- Maintaining strong linkages between corpsmember development and work projects
- Bringing public attention to the program and its successes
- Evaluating the overall program and its components, and ensuring that changes occur as the result of evaluation
- Establishing effective rewards and incentives for corpsmembers and staff
- Fundraising
- Reducing attrition

Note: The "Report to the Field" on NASCC's 1992-93 Eight-State Implementation Project provides much useful information on the issues that new corps face, and the best means handling those issues as they arise.

A final note on planning corps programs...

Planning to start a youth corps program requires some specialized knowledge about program features. Many program planners have acquired that knowledge through contact with the NASCC office and existing corps programs. Even more important to planning is a grasp of the basic principles of sound planning, which include:

- Keep goals and objectives clearly in mind;
- Establish a schedule with deadlines, and strive to meet them;
- Build a planning team with a balance of skills and strengths;
- Don't reinvent the wheel; seek resources and ideas from other places; and
- Evaluate or establish the capacity of an office, agency, or person to plan the program, before planning begins.

Sources: Urban Corps Expansion Project, New York State Conservation Corps

FORMING A CORPS PLANNING TASK FORCE... AND PUTTING IT TO THE BEST USE

Forming a task force of people who will guide the planning and development of a youth corps program is an important -- and strongly recommended -- early step for your city or state. Task forces can help identify the local needs that a corps works to meet, and can focus community attention on the needs of the young people who would participate in a corps. Task forces also help identify individuals and organizations who are likely to support the corps or who could be persuaded to support the program. Then they take an active role in recruiting those people and groups who will lend ongoing support in various forms.

Task forces can also serve as sounding boards in planning program components such as recruitment, work projects, and support services. Task forces can often identify sources of pro bono support for the corps. They can review the work of corps planning staff. Depending upon their levels of interest and effectiveness, task force members might be recruited to serve as board members of corps programs established as non-profit organizations, or members of advisory boards for publicly operated programs. Task forces disband when their work is done.

The best task forces include representatives of a variety of organizations, agencies, and interests. The best working task forces involve no more than 10-12 people, but can vary in size. Sectors from which other states and cities have drawn members include:

- Office of the governor or mayor
- The legislature or city council
- Education -- vo-tech, community college, and university
- Offices that coordinate youth services or child welfare
- Social service agencies
- Public works and parks agencies
- Employment service
- State Job Training Coordinating Council or Private Industry Council
- Community and civic leadership
- Foundations (community, local, national)
- Business leadership
- Union representatives
- Private nonprofit social service and community-based organizations
- Youth representatives

Source: Urban Corps Expansion Project

FEDERAL-STATE COOPERATION TO START CORPS: THREE APPROACHES

Federal agencies and Federal funding have proven critical to the startup of several corps programs. NASCC strongly recommends establishing partnerships with Federal agencies early in the corps planning process. See also Part III summaries of the Public Lands Corps and Urban Youth Corps for more information about partnership possibilities, and contact NASCC for more background on the three approaches, which include:

Partnership for Public Lands: The Arizona Conservation Corps (ACC).

The ACC began operation in 1990, but startup of the year-round program was the culmination of a two-year period of resource sharing and cooperation between federal, state, and local agencies. This complementary partnership remains strong today -- many of the corps projects take place on Federal land, and are paid for through cooperative agreements. Beginning in 1988, Forest Service professionals provided much of the initiative for a corps program -- one advised Karan English, then a state legislator, who drafted enabling legislation; another organized a statewide information meeting on youth corps and persuaded representatives of more than 40 agencies to attend. Following the 1989 passage of enabling legislation, the BLM and Forest Service loaned staff to plan the new corps program. Later, another national forest and the corps arranged to share the cost of a field operations coordinator. Today, a national forest staff member serves as the chair of the corps' governing board. *This approach fits particularly well in states with large tracts of federally-managed land.*

Partnership for Employment and Training: The Missouri Youth Conservation Corps, the Virginia Opportunity Knocks corps program, the Montana Conservation Corps, the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps, and others. In each case, state agencies entered into collaboration with Service Delivery Areas, Private Industry Councils, and SDA and PIC contractors to establish networks of youth corps paid for largely with Job Training Partnership Act funds -- federal funds that are administered locally. Pennsylvania has pioneered the large-scale conversion of summer JTPA programs into youth corps. See the NASCC technical paper "Making JTPA Work for the Corps" for more information about how corps can fulfill JTPA requirements and about the division of labor between state and local agencies. *This approach is particularly apt where a strong working relationship exists between state and local job training agencies.*

Partnership for National and Community Service: The Massachusetts Youth Service Alliance, the Kansas Office for Community Service, the Colorado Office of Rural Job Training, and others. In these cases, state and nonprofit agencies used grants from the Commission on National and Community Service as seed funding to establish a network of corps programs. Matching funds came from state, local, and private sources, and the statewide groups identified local agencies capable of managing corps development. *This approach works best when states have access to significant sums of national service funding and can focus resources on a limited number of startup corps.*

PART II:
SHAPING YOUR CORPS

CORPS PROGRAM MODELS

Size, structure, sponsorship, funding sources, leadership, and mission all vary from one corps program to another. State governments began to create year-round and summer corps programs in the mid-1970s. Cities and counties began to organize youth corps several years later. In the mid-1980s, numerous operators of summer youth employment programs under the federal Job Training Partnership Act developed local and state youth corps. The early 1990s witnessed the creation of new corps with JTPA funds, National and Community Service Act funding, and other sources.

Nevertheless, corps programs fall generally in line with several models. The elements of those models are listed here.

State year-round corps programs are often:

- Managed by a land-managing or employment and training agency, sometimes through contracts with a nonprofit organization;
- Funded from general appropriations, bonds, and user fees, and contracts;
- Designed to employ young adults 16-25 who are out of school;
- Set up to conduct projects on public lands or in public institutions, and to provide corpsmembers with basic education and life skills training; and
- Set up to involve residential or non-residential crews, or both.

State and local summer corps programs are often:

- Developed by a state department in cooperation with local agencies such as Service Delivery Areas or parks departments;
- Funded through discretionary and local-grant federal JTPA funds and private sources;
- Designed to operate for 8-12 weeks on a small number of projects, and to provide educational services so as to prevent summer "learning loss;" and
- Designed to employ youth as young as 14 in non-residential settings.

Year-round urban corps programs are often:

- Funded by a broad mix of federal, state, and local government funds, as well as private sources and fee-for-service contracts;
- Designed to employ out-of-school youth from 16-23;
- Set up to conduct projects ranging from human service to conservation;
- Operated as a non-profit organization or as part of a larger nonprofit;
- Set up with the cooperation and assistance of city and state government; and
- Designed to provide comprehensive education and support services to corpsmembers.

Variations on all three models exist. Contact NASCC for more information.

TEN BASIC PRINCIPLES -- STATE CORPS

- **Clear structure.** Set forth a clear administrative structure that assigns responsibility for program implementation to a single state agency with adequate capacity.
- **Distribute operations.** Authorize funding levels sufficient to establish youth corps programs of sufficient scale in all regions of the state.
- **Align program with provisions of federal youth service and job training laws.** Set forth programmatic requirements that would qualify the corps for federal assistance under the National and Community Service Trust Act and the Job Training Partnership Act. These include:
 - * Clearly define the corps in keeping with the definition at 42 USC 12572
 - * Authorize age-appropriate educational activities for participants;
 - * Provide for recruitment to reach a cross-section of the community's youth;
 - * Dedicate the corps to work projects performed in crews and well-supervised;
 - * Provide work, living, and study environments that meet basic standards of health, sanitation, and safety;
 - * Allow for necessary support services and benefits -- basic health coverage, transportation, child care, counseling, & housing.
- **Case management.** Include case management services to ensure that participants and their dependents receive adequate health care (immunizations & health screens).
- **Incentives for cooperation.** Require or create mutual incentives for the corps to cooperate with and benefit from other education, training, and youth development programs in the state, especially those receiving federal Job Training Partnership Act funds.
- **Non-displacement.** Require that work projects not displace other regular public or private employees, and require consultation with local labor organizations.
- **No incentive to drop out.** Require that corps take steps to ensure that young people are not encouraged to drop out of school to participate in the corps.
- **Broad range of projects.** Allow the corps to tackle a broad range of work projects.
- **Adequate benefits.** Authorize minimum living allowances as well as a structure to provide post-program benefits (cash stipends, grants, or vouchers) to encourage program completion and to encourage further education and training.
- **Assess effectiveness.** Require the corps to generate and report participant and work accomplishment data that can be used to assess program effectiveness.

Source: Building Youth Corps, Gary Lacy and Alice Yang, Children's Defense Fund, 1990.

STATE CORPS MODELS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Iowa Conservation Corps

- **Program Model: State Umbrella Agency.** The ICC is a division of the state Department of Economic Development, and operates as an umbrella agency in support of four service programs for youth and young adults, with an overall age range of 14-24. The programs involve 700 corpsmembers year-round, 175 more during the summer, and 100 seasonally.
- **Operations and Funding.** The ICC contracts with school districts as well as CAP, employment and training, and other agencies to operate crews. These agencies contribute a match of at least 35% of project costs. Total budget: \$2,000,000.
- **Implementation.** Enabling legislation for a state corps program passed in 1982. Regulations to implement some of the current programs took effect as early as 1975, based on the 15 prior years' experience with summer youth and in-school work experience programs. As amended, the regulations create the office of a state youth coordinator who administers the ICC grant program. For each program, regulations either limit grant size or set out a distribution formula.

Florida Conservation and Service Corps

- **Program Model: State Contract with Nonprofit Agency.** FCSC consists of two elements -- a residential statewide program for 40 young adults ages 18-21, as well as a nonresidential program for 80 participants ages 16-25 operating in Fort Lauderdale.
- **Operations and Funding.** The residential facility, which the first group of corpsmembers renovated, is located in a rural community. Corpsmembers conduct conservation projects on public lands. Eckerd Family Youth Alternatives operates the residential program under contract with the Department of Natural Resources, and contributed capital costs for the residential center. A small staff in DNR's Office of Civilian Conservation monitors corps operations and expenditures. EFYA also operates the Fort Lauderdale Conservation Corps. Total budget: \$1,970,919.
- **Implementation.** Legislation creating the Florida corps passed in 1987. The final version of the bill provided that the DNR could request proposals leading to a contract with a public or private nonprofit agency to administer residential and nonresidential conservation corps centers. State officials then developed comprehensive implementing regulations. Fort Lauderdale was one of 15 Urban Corps Expansion Project sites supported by foundation planning and seed grants.

Washington Service Corps

- **Program Model: State/Local Partnership.** The WSC has two components -- a year-round program involving 430 unemployed young adults 18-25 and a summer program for 180 youth ages 14-21 -- and is administered by the Washington Youth Employment Exchange (Job Service) of the state's Employment Security Department.
- **Operations and Funding.** The state identifies and contracts with a wide variety of public and private nonprofit local agencies for placement of individual corpsmembers, who are linked together through a regional crew structure. Work sponsor agencies must provide a 20% cash match to the program. Corpsmembers assist the elderly, refugees, and the disabled, and promote tourism and economic development. The corps provides participants a stipend, and assists corpsmembers' pursuit of further education and training through scholarship grants. The WSC also supports a network of small local corps throughout the state. Total budget: \$1,300,000, of which \$1.1 million is a state appropriation and \$200,000 are local matching funds.
- **Implementation.** The 1987 enabling legislation for the Service Corps is highly detailed. Youth Employment Exchange staff members summarized additional guidelines and administrative requirements for enrollees, supervising agencies, and the service corps in a twelve-page handbook.

California Urban Corps Network

- **Program Model: Decentralized Local Corps Network.** Ten localities are home to independent non-profit, nonresidential urban corps programs that employ 850 year-round and 1040 summer/seasonal corpsmembers ranging in age from 12-26.
- **Operations and Funding.** In all ten urban corps, crews of corpsmembers carry out a wide range of conservation, community development, and human service projects. The corps operate or develop links with basic education and employability development programs. Funding sources include: Fee-for-service projects with land managing agencies; the state Department of Conservation's Bottle Bill recycling program; urban-emphasis funds granted to local programs by the California Conservation Corps; cities, CDBG, and JTPA; and the private sector. All programs operate year-round with young adult corpsmembers; some corps operate parallel programs for junior-high age youth or expand in the summer to include younger participants. Aggregate budget: \$23,860,000.
- **Implementation.** Urban corps took shape 1983-1994 through separate, locally-driven planning efforts. Legislation has required the California Conservation Corps to pass through funds to urban corps meeting certain criteria since 1984. Urban corps have applied for and received state recycling grants since 1988. Many of the urban corps have developed close relationships with land-managing agencies that result in revenue-producing projects. Some cities have granted beautification funds to urban corps.

Pennsylvania Conservation Corps / Urban Corps / Summer JTPA Corps

- **Program Model: State and Local Program Network.** A statewide conservation corps for 350 young adults, seven local/urban corps for over 200 young adults, and summer corps in every Service Delivery Area in the state enrolling 5,200 youth operate with the support of PennServe, the state office of citizen service located within the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI).
- **Operations and Funding.** State agencies and local governments submit project proposals to the state corps for projects of public benefit that will produce revenues for the state (e.g. fee campgrounds and cabins). Urban and summer corps solicit and develop work projects with a range of public and nonprofit agencies, and carry out basic education and employability development programs on-site or in cooperation with a local institution. State corps originally operated with support from bond funding. Urban Corps have received state funding from the Departments of Labor and Industry (JTPA discretionary funds), Education, Public Welfare, Aging, and Community Affairs. Other urban and summer corps funding has flowed from foundations, corporations, local private industry councils and the Commission on National and Community Service.
- **Implementation.** Economic recovery legislation passed in 1984 to establish the state corps. Urban corps received state support through a competitive process. The state provided technical assistance, training, and small grants to encourage SDAs to establish summer corps programs.

Maryland Conservation Corps

- **Program Model: State/local partnership.** The MCC is a statewide program that recently expanded operations from summer-only (700 corpsmembers) to year-round (60 corpsmembers). The Forest, Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Natural Resources operates the summer program for youth ages 14-20 in partnership with SDAs across the state, and the year-round program for young adults 17-25.
- **Operations and Funding.** The state applies to all SDAs in the state for JTPA funding to support operation of locally-chosen summer crews, and for assistance in recruiting corpsmembers. During the summer, the DNR provides training, uniforms, materials, supplies and transportation; DNR also helps develop conservation projects on state, county, and private lands. MCC deploys year-round corpsmembers in five sites (one residential). Summer- and year-round corpsmembers also participate in employability development and environmental and basic education activities. Funding comes from the National and Community Service Act (58%), JTPA (20%), state appropriation (11%), and corporations and foundations (11%).
- **Implementation.** The state first implemented the program as one of several parts of its environmentally-focused Chesapeake Bay Initiative.

Wisconsin Conservation Corps

- **Program Model:** Independent state agency and corps commission. The WCC is a statewide nonresidential program for 330 young adults from 18-25. The program operates as an independent state agency attached to the Department of Administration for fiscal and budgetary purposes. The governor appoints a citizen policy board to administer the program.
- **Operations and Funding.** Public and nonprofit agencies submit proposals to receive services from crews organized and staffed at the local level; the corps operates primarily on public land. Corpsmembers who complete one year receive a \$500 bonus or a \$1,500 scholarship. State appropriations, links to federal and state conservation funds, and a small share of the state's National & Community Service Subtitle C grant combine to produce a budget of \$4,400,000.
- **Implementation.** Legislation creating the WCC passed in 1985. The citizen board appoints an executive director who hires central-office and regional staff members. The board also approves policy and project proposals. Board terms are staggered.

STATE CORPS ENABLING LEGISLATION:

TYPES AND SAMPLES AVAILABLE

States have approached the task of drafting corps enabling legislation from many angles, and the resulting laws are yet another reflection of the diversity within the corps network. The following is a list of some of the governing structures that legislation has created for corps programs; samples of these laws are available from NASCC.

Corps operates as part of a state natural resources agency

California Conservation Corps and urban corps****
 Florida Conservation Corps#*****
 Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps#
 Montana Conservation Corps*****
 Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps

Corps operates as part of a state employment and training agency

Iowa Youth Corps#
 Missouri Youth Service and Conservation Corps#
 Oregon Youth Conservation Corps**
 Pennsylvania Conservation Corps*, urban corps, and local incubator corps
 Washington Service Corps#

Corps operates as a state agency governed by a commission

Arizona Conservation Corps***
 Wisconsin Conservation Corps

- * Includes provision for bond funding
- ** Includes provision for amusement tax funding
- *** Includes provision for funding through donations
- **** Includes provision for "Bottle Bill Float" funding
- ***** Includes provision for operation by contracting with a nonprofit organization

Regulations or guidelines also available

FOR STATES WITH JTPA CORPS PROGRAMS:

DIVISION OF LABOR AT IMPLEMENTATION

Several states now operate a corps program with its basis in the existing job training system, funded in large part by the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Several models of summer and year-round corps programs based on JTPA already exist. Whether summer or year-round, these corps typically depend on the joint efforts of state and local agencies. Often, the Service Delivery Area (SDA) fulfills local responsibilities. Sometimes, SDAs contract with local corps or other training providers to field youth corps crews. The division of responsibilities may look something like this:

STATE ROLE: In consultation with local providers, state agencies develop systems, procedures, and standards for a wide range of program issues such as --

- Fiscal and budget management, and dissemination of funds
- Post-program benefits for corpsmembers
- Promotion, public relations, marketing (e.g. brochure)
- Identifying/obtaining commitment of work sponsors
- Crew supervisor training, staff recruiting
- Preparation of an Operations Handbook ** (see next page)
- Administration, MIS, program evaluation, annual reports

The state may also take the lead in helping local agencies communicate and understand the corps model. It can do this with an overview document, a sample corpsmember handbook, public meetings, and a handbook of regulations. The lead state agency also fulfills the external relations role by developing and recommending amendments to corps enabling legislation, and by involving the corps in emergency response training.

SDA ROLE: Participating Service Delivery Areas adopt the principal local role on tasks such as --

- Identify/solicit/contract with program operators
- Conduct staff recruitment and administrative training (perhaps limit to job descriptions, selection criteria)
- Conduct corpsmember recruitment and certification
- Provide local budget/fiscal management & private fundraising systems
- Communicate the model through PIC, public & private agencies
- Conduct outreach to potential work project sponsors (includes development of master agreements with public agencies)
- Conduct outreach to potential corpsmember development component providers (of education, post-program services, support services, and life skills)
- Develop local post-program benefits and placement options

CORPS OPERATOR: If the SDA does not operate the corps program, it may ask its contracting agency to implement the corps locally. This means the contractor will develop local systems and procedures for the following --

- Recruitment and orientation of corpsmembers
- Staffing
- Communicating the model and its local form
- Work program -- criteria and process for choosing/scheduling projects
- Corpsmember development program -- in house or contracted out

OPERATIONS HANDBOOK:

The state can ensure greater local consistency and rapid implementation by preparing a generic handbook or set of forms. The handbook/forms would address:

- Corpsmember recruitment/hiring/orientation/discipline/grievances/wages/benefits/assessment/evaluation;
- Work project sponsors -- application, contract, hazard analysis, evaluation, reports;
- Administrative functions such as MIS, personnel procedures;
- Practical items such as facility, vehicles, tools and equipment; and
- The preferred or mandated outline for corpsmember development and training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please refer to the 1993 NASCC technical paper,
Making JTPA Work for the Corps.

STATE CORPS PLANNING RESOURCES:

A BRIEF LISTING

All resources listed below are available from NASCC, either free or at cost.

Sample corps enabling legislation/regulations -- available for numerous states. Free.

Corps Development Action Plan -- useful tool for planning corps implementation. Free.

Corps program annual reports -- reviews and evaluations of state programs. Free.

Urban Corps Expansion Project Resource Book --

A state-of-the-art compendium that explains and provides examples of numerous corps program operations and procedures. Designed for use with urban corps programs but many materials and much commentary are applicable to state corps as well.

Available at cost.

Building Youth Corps -- A thorough discussion of the process of forming a state corps program, with numerous examples. Free.