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II. NATIONAL PRIORITIES

1B. NATIONAL SERVICE IN EDUCATION: SCHOOL SUCCESS

School Success

Aiding the educational achievement of school-aged children and adults who lack basic academic skills

Examples include:

- Working in classrooms with high concentrations of low-income students
- Mentoring, tutoring, and providing after-school and summer learning opportunities
- Coordinating service-learning activities for K-12 students

Introduction

Helping with the success of young people in school is a natural calling for national service and an area of work in which participants can be highly effective. There are many good models for high quality service that contribute to the success of students, including existing service programs and schools that have looked to service participants and volunteers for assistance.

For examples of national service programs involved in education, see the program examples in Appendix C.

Principle to Consider

1. **Participants use challenging and engaging academic content to fill existing gaps in learning; help students master current materials; and introduce new materials needed for enrichment and progress in school at a level needed for high school and college.**

Participants guided by teachers and other professionals teach students how to:

- think clearly and analytically,
- process the knowledge presented to them effectively,
- address real-life situations with the same analytical rigor with which they address classroom problems, and
- address classroom problems with the same interest and energy with which they address real-life problems.

Training and professional supervision give participants the tools they need to develop students as learners and thinkers both inside and outside the classroom.

2. **The best programs find ways to involve parents and other community members in the work participants do with students.**

Participants need to view students as members of families and members of communities and attempt to involve family, caretakers, and community members whenever possible. Staff and participants should find ways to involve parents on a regular basis to discuss how students are doing in the program, and to find out how the parents think the program could be improved. Likewise, finding ways to connect the students to others in the community is important, especially for those children who are from dysfunctional families.

3. **Participants see children as resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed. High expectations for student performance are based on assessments of students' individual strengths and interests.**

Students tend to achieve more and behave better when educators set high expectations, reinforce their belief that students can achieve high standards, and design lessons for students which challenge and engage

them. Teacher and service participant expectations will influence the goals students have for themselves. Participants in good programs set clear standards of acceptable behavior for students.

- 4. Participants deal positively and constructively with issues of diversity as they relate to the program and students' individual lives.**

Participants can help when they work with students to acknowledge issues of difference in our society, address those sensitive issues directly, and help students deal with them in positive and constructive ways.

See the Core Element on "Diversity."

- 5. In school-based programs, service learning is integrated into the curriculum and is appropriate to the academic level and age of students. It is not an add-on.**

Evidence strongly suggests that service-learning within the curriculum provides a learning experience of far greater impact than add-on activities. Students learn more from lasting programs, so participants can help by managing service-learning projects extending entire semesters, a year, or across several school years. Service-learning projects are designed to be appropriate to the age and academic level of students.

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2. NATIONAL SERVICE IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Crime Control

Improving criminal justice services, law enforcement, and victim services

Examples include:

- Enhancing community policing efforts by working with local law enforcement.
- Reducing specific crime problems such as drug dealing, domestic violence, crimes motivated by bias, crimes against senior citizens and child abuse.
- Improving services available for victims of crime and strengthening innovative criminal justice programs such as neighborhood courts and community restitution.

Crime Prevention

Reducing the incidence of violence

Examples include:

- Reducing crimes against youth by making schools safe, creating safe havens, providing training in conflict resolution, and involving youth in prevention efforts.

- Providing substance abuse counseling and education.
- Developing specific crime prevention strategies targeted at key locations such as playgrounds, public transportation points, and other public gathering places.

Introduction

Recent polls cite crime as the nation's number one problem. This feeling has been fueled by the increase in seemingly random violence, in the growing amount of violence by youth and toward youth, and the level at which criminals are armed. Results-oriented service work can make a difference with some of these problems.

Many agencies can run, sponsor, or participate in programs: police and sheriff's departments, courts, prosecutor and defender offices, victim assistance and treatment providers, probation, parole, institutional and community corrections, and of course, non-profits and community organizations interested in reducing crime and violence.

For examples of national service programs involved in public safety, see the program examples in Appendix C.

Useful Principles to Consider

1. **National service participants are involved in the long-term prevention of crime.**

Participants can help in several ways. Some examples:

- Research has shown that child abuse is more likely to happen to children growing up in certain high-risk situations. Participants can spot these situations and (in connection with appropriate professionals) offer preventive support.
- Conflict resolution programs in schools, especially elementary schools, can teach children non-violent ways to resolve problems and can help them trust police. Participants can set up such programs.

2. **Particular problems in communities contribute to crime, disorder, and fear. Participants engage the community in problem-solving.**

Effective public safety institutions across the nation, especially law enforcement agencies, are moving from merely responding to crime events to solving problems that lead to crime, disorder, and fear.

Participants can help a community carry out a problem-solving process that includes:

- Identifying specific problems: "What's wrong here?"

Frequently crime is related to problems in other areas (housing, education, and others). Participants and residents must acknowledge and deal with perceptions about crime and safety as well as the real situation. Participants assist the community in finding and analyzing hard information on the problems they seek to address.

- Coming up with solutions: "What do we need to do?"

Each community must identify the outcomes it seeks as the evidence that life is safer. Participants help community members identify desired outcomes by asking, "How would you know this neighborhood is safer and stronger?" to create a picture of what the stronger neighborhood could be. Results should always be direct and demonstrable.

For more about deciding outcomes and measuring progress, see "Evaluation: Learning Lessons and Documenting Results".

- Bringing together people to locate resources and get the job done.

Community organizations and other groups, as well as individual community members, are all part of identifying the problem and finding solutions. Even more groups and individuals may bring resources to bear on the solution.

For more about partnerships and collaboration in service programs, see "Community Partnerships".

- 3. Local law enforcement and criminal justice agencies are actively invested in the program; project activity extends or enhances but does not replace their efforts.**

While the police or sheriff's department does not need to be the "lead" agency in the collaborative effort to make the neighborhood stronger and safer, experience shows that community efforts on public safety greatly benefit from the endorsement and advice of local police.

- 4. National service participants assist in improving the effectiveness of public safety services and systems which respond to crimes.**

Participants help law enforcement, criminal justice, and other public safety institutions serve community members better by helping expand the availability and responsiveness of services. For example, participants

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can serve as victims' advocates, helping crime victims navigate the court system and connecting them to support services in the traumatic time following a crime.

5. **Because young people are disproportionately both victims and victimizers, national service efforts in public safety should include informing and involving youth in preventing violence and other crimes.**

Though some crime rates have dropped, the level of violence by youth offenders has increased, and has become a dramatic part of the public's perception of crime. Communities need to offer youth a stake in the strength of the neighborhood. National service participants can be effective at reaching out to youth at risk, offering the opportunity to become positive contributors to the reduction of crime and to serve, themselves, as role models and mentors for youth—thereby offering a powerful contrast to public perception.

6. **In the long run the best defense against crime is a strong neighborhood, built from within. A strong neighborhood has less crime and less fear — these are the outcomes national service participants should help achieve.**

National service ultimately builds strong, cohesive communities that are able to reduce the incidence of crime and disorder and the level of fear. In a strong neighborhood people know each other, support each other, and share expectations about public behavior. This cohesion reduces crime, disorder, and fear.

Building strong neighborhoods also takes work on the other issues that affect the vitality of the community: affordable housing, health of residents, quality of education, the livability of the environment. Service efforts to increase public safety should include these if relevant to a particular neighborhood.

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3A. NATIONAL SERVICE IN HUMAN NEEDS: HEALTH

Health

Providing independent living assistance, home and community-based health care.

Examples include:

- Providing independent living assistance and health care to the homebound elderly, people with disabilities, and people living with AIDS.
- Improving the health of low-income communities by offering preventive health services through community health clinics
- Offering prenatal care, parenting education, and health care to families of young children through home visits

Introduction

National service participants working with the professional health care community offer a cost-effective means of increasing health services and access to them, while reducing burdens on professional providers and health care systems.

For examples of national service programs involved in health, see the program examples in Appendix C.

Participants can help in a number of ways. They can offer preventive care by providing health education and extensive outreach. With training and supervision they can do basic tasks such as giving immunizations or assisting with patient intake, enabling professional providers to see more patients. Participants can increase access to good care by helping people overcome geographic, cultural, linguistic, social, and other institutional barriers. Participants who are trained health care professionals can do much more.

Principles to Consider

1. **The community is involved in determining what health needs national service participants help address and in assessing the quality of services provided.**

Since health care services reach into the most personal and vulnerable parts of a community's life, effective health programs have strong ties to the communities they serve. Participants performing service will be more effective when local residents trust that the work being provided is safe and reliable.

Think about:

- How can the sponsor involve the community in identifying health needs and giving feedback about the work to be performed and results of national service efforts?
- How will the program demonstrate the impact of its services to the community?

For more on measuring and demonstrating impact, see "Evaluation: Learning Lessons and Showing Results."

2. **National service projects are supported by other professional health efforts in the community, and are coordinated with them.**

National service participants offer useful services that extend existing health resources within the community, instead of duplicating them. If a professional health organization is using national service participants to help give health care, its staff are involved in designing the program and understand the potential benefits of service efforts. This enables them to effectively integrate participants into service delivery and so fully benefit from national service.

In order to coordinate service efforts effectively, the organization should also think about the following questions:

- How will other staff members be informed about the work of participants?
- How will resource sharing be planned?

An independent service organization that will put participants to work on health issues should learn what other community-based health and social service organizations are involved in similar efforts and consider sharing resources. Potential partners include hospitals, universities, state and local health departments, community health centers, and other non-profits.

For more on establishing strong partnerships, see "Community Partnerships".

3. National service participants understand patients' health needs in the context of the patients' larger life circumstances.

Too often, a patient's health needs cannot be sufficiently addressed by health services alone because other factors in his/her life — lack of housing, adequate nutrition, or other circumstantial or emotional strains— contribute to the health problems. Participants spend time with patients to understand the larger picture of people's lives to identify those things which may negatively effect their health. They then work with patients to make adjustments and, when possible, connect them to other social services.

4. Health professionals carefully supervise participant work to ensure safe practices.

Guidelines for participants' activities are consistent with standards set by health professionals. For example, participants assisting in home care for the homebound elderly follow the rules and standards set for physical therapists, home nurses, etc. Service programs which are not run by established health organizations involve health professionals, who can help the project to plan for task-specific standards and limitations. Their guidance will help protect patients, participants, and the program from harm as well as liability. Levels of supervision are appropriate, tailored to the participant's training and experience.

5. Participants understand the risks they may be exposed to in the course of their work.

Participants are taught how to minimize risk to themselves when dealing with certain patient populations (e.g. those who have TB or AIDS) or when conducting outreach in a potentially unsafe areas. Consider:

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- What is the appropriate level of supervision and type of supervision required by industry standards?

For more on project supervision and training see "Excellent Service Projects" and "A High Quality Participant Experience."

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3B. NATIONAL SERVICE IN HUMAN NEEDS: HOME

Home

Rebuilding neighborhoods and helping people who are homeless or hungry

Examples include:

- Helping people who are homeless by providing shelter support, assisting in moving into permanent housing, and related services
- Renovating and rehabilitating low-income housing
- Helping individuals move from public assistance and into self-sufficiency by providing job training, literacy tutoring, and other services

Introduction

Rebuilding neighborhoods includes the improvement of a neighborhood's physical infrastructure — its housing, recreational facilities, and community centers — and the provision of basic, urgent human services — emergency shelter and food, job counseling, and other services. Results-oriented national service can help make a difference in all of these areas.

Any program which hopes to rebuild a neighborhood must understand the crucial role of the people who live there and must

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make use of their talents. Unless there is community "ownership" of the project, the project may not be sustained.

For examples of national service programs involved in meeting human needs, see the program examples in Appendix C.

Principles to Consider

For programs renovating and rehabilitating low-income housing

1. **Participant health and safety are of great concern when working in housing construction or renovation.**

The tangible result of construction work, new homes, is satisfying for participants. This kind of work, however, is physically demanding. Health and safety concerns must be extensively addressed in training and remain a high priority for the organization in everything from developing assignments to ensuring proper use of tools and equipment.

2. **Programs must involve experts from the construction field to provide training in task-specific skills, ensure compliance with zoning and building codes, and to make sure the project's finances are appropriately managed.**

Specialized professionals are an essential part of construction projects. Programs work closely with the relevant trade unions, adhere faithfully to the law in this extensively regulated field, and manage capital expenditures according to established industry practices.

3. **Programs and participants are sensitive to conflicting interests within a community that may affect projects.**

Because many constituencies are invested in where housing is built and social services are provided, difficult and often emotional issues can arise. Participants can facilitate the process of compromise and consensus, and help deal with controversial issues (e.g. the "not in my backyard" syndrome) positively.

4. **Rehabilitated facilities will not last unless there are methods in place to address the facilities' subsequent maintenance needs. Participants can help identify potential maintenance needs and develop plans for addressing them.**

Immediately before or just after residents move into facilities, participants should provide them with training in basic plumbing, electrical, and physical maintenance. In situations where residents are not able to fix household problems themselves, they need to know how and where to get the help they need.

People who have lived in homeless shelters or transitional living arrangements may lack the extra items (dishes, bedding, towels, cleaning supplies, tool kits, garbage cans) needed when living in a permanent setting. Participants can work with local social service agencies and businesses to help new residents locate and acquire these items.

For programs serving the homeless

- 5. The short-term goal in serving homeless people is to make sure their basic needs are met. The longer-term goal is to enable them to move into permanent housing.**

Participants can be especially effective if they understand how to work with homeless people with different circumstances. For example, participants can do much to help homeless families have a sense of home, by making a shelters more livable and providing educational and recreational activities for children.

For programs working in the general area of human needs.

- 6. Participants coordinate delivery of services in order to help people move off of public assistance and into self-sufficiency.**

Whether participants are job counselors, literacy tutors, or shelter support workers, they should work with clients to link them to the larger web of social services and other opportunities available in the community as needed.

- 7. Participants view the people served with respect, and where possible involve them in defining the objective of service activity.**

Instead of looking at homeless people, for example, only as people in need, participants encourage homeless people to assess their own resources: for families without homes to take an active role in their children's lives, education, and recreation. When working in a literacy program, participants identify and develop curricula around materials that learners themselves believe are important to master.

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4. NATIONAL SERVICE IN ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhood environment

Reducing community environmental hazards

Examples include:

- Revitalizing neighborhoods by creating and maintaining recreation areas, green spaces, and community gardens
- Eliminating environmental risks through education, testing, and cleanup
- Reducing waste through energy efficiency efforts, recycling, and other conservation measures

Natural environment

Conserving, restoring, and sustaining natural habitats

Examples include:

- Conserving and restoring public lands, forests, rivers, streams, and wetlands
- Making parks more accessible through trail maintenance and infrastructure improvements
- Sampling, mapping, monitoring, and recording air and water quality and status of groundwater, land, plant, and animal resources

Introduction

Since the days of the original Civilian Conservation Corps, service programs have accomplished important work in conserving and restoring our natural environment. Many existing programs do environmental work well. With growing attention to the neighborhood environment, national service can build on the solid foundation of experience toward new goals.

For examples of national service programs involved in the environment, see the program examples in Appendix C.

Principles to Consider

1. **A successful project should be able to demonstrate its short term impact and place it within the context of a long term strategy.**

National service programs develop projects that have both direct and demonstrable results and long-term goals. For example, if a corps chooses to plant trees, it can measure the impact in a variety of ways: erosion control, visual aesthetics, community satisfaction, wildlife habitat potential, and more. Consider:

- Will our planned work have to be repeated regularly, or can lasting improvement be achieved?
- What tangible goals can we set given limited resources and time?

As a starting point for action, participants can collect environmental data and monitor the status of air, water, public lands, etc. Information, however, is not collected for its sake alone, but as part of a larger strategy to assess needs for specific activities the service participants can become engaged in to address environmental problems.

2. **Participants who do not have sufficient preparation are trained in environment-specific skills and prepared as "environmental citizens".**

There is much complex technical work to be done in environmental service. For example: participants might identify and remove hazardous material at a neighborhood disposal site, or take water samples to test for toxins. Safety training for working with equipment and materials is important as well. Whether their skills come from education or training, highly skilled participants can make immediate and significant contributions.

If the national service program is sponsored by a service organization that is providing participants to environmental host sites, that service organization will not have all the knowledge or staff to train participants in the specific skills they need. It will rely partly on the environmental organizations serving as host sites to train them in the specific skills they need for their projects and to help them become "lifelong environmental problem-solvers."

3. Practice what we preach.

Organizations performing environmental service practice what they preach by looking for ways to buy goods and materials that minimize their impact on the environment, by recycling as a regular activity, and by observing other sound environmental practices.

4. Specific projects and priorities should be identified in partnership with a diverse group of community partners in order to rank needs, keeping in mind the unique ecology of the region.

The projects completed by national service participants should support existing environmental efforts and fill niches that particularly benefit by service — those that particularly require human resources for completion. Community environmental priorities should be identified in consultation with a diverse group of citizens and the local community should define who should be involved in making the decisions — local government, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, industry, etc.

Participants can help connect traditional conservation groups with the newer environmental justice organizations, and to invite to the table typically underrepresented constituencies.

III. THE CORE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS INTRODUCTION

People have been successfully meeting community needs for many years. Service-based programs in particular have found effective ways to engage participants in accomplishing vital community work through service. Effective programs report from their experience that the following characteristics make them stronger and more successful.

We have called these characteristics the “Core Elements of Successful National Service Programs.” They offer little that is dramatically new, for these are the basic lessons of experience. We have attempted to put them in a format that will be easy for applicants, state commissions, the Corporation, and others to use.

The “Core Elements” are:

- **A strong organization**
- **Excellent service projects**
- **Evaluation: Learning lessons and documenting results**
- **A high quality participant experience: preparation and support**
- **Community partnerships**
- **Diversity**

III. Core Elements of Successful National Service Programs

A service program is usually administered in one of two ways: as a free-standing entity which employs participants and assigns them to sponsors to work on projects individually or in teams; or as a component of an existing organization—a health center, a YMCA, or the city housing department—operated from within to help meet the larger mission.

The “Core Elements” apply to both situations. They will help an organization new to national service check that it is developing the basic capacities it needs to get things done with national service participants. They bring value to service programs that wish to assess and improve their current state of practice.

Many organizations are already proficient at these elements or working toward excellence. We hope that the principles offered below will help an organization or program become more effective whether it is new or old, large or small, successful or seeking to become so.

III. CORE ELEMENTS

1. A STRONG ORGANIZATION

Introduction

National service programs thrive with the support and resources of a healthy organization behind them. A strong organization has worked at and articulated a clear mission and goals. Its mission and goals provide a compelling declaration of what it will accomplish and how.

In an effective program the mission motivates staff and participants, and has their support. The mission helps to form a set of values and culture that lead to effective, dedicated service. Among other things, it helps link the program to the "big picture" of national service across America.

Effective programs have a staff that works as a team, composed of skilled people who understand and believe in the promise of national service to meet critical needs.

On a more basic level, the organization is prepared for the responsibility of managing federal funds and meeting the high expectations of taxpayers and the Corporation. Its systems and operations are smooth and professional.

Principles to Consider

1. **The program has a compelling long-term mission relevant to community needs that articulates the benefits it will bring to the community.**

The mission and goals provide concrete direction to the organization and can be articulated by all staff and participants. The mission presents the organization's reason for being in a few simple sentences — it fits on a T-shirt.

Developing a mission statement is not an easy task. It takes time and careful thought and should be accomplished with input from the board (if one exists), leadership, staff and community. Defining a clear mission pays off in cohesion and a sense of purpose.

To work toward clear mission and goals, consider these questions:

- How do your mission and goals define success in terms of the results you expect? Do you have a commitment to performing high quality service?
- Does your mission provide the direction to design specific policies and activities, and to set specific objectives and priorities?

2. **The program translates its mission into a concrete operating plan that guides and facilitates good management.**

An operating plan turns the mission and goals into specific annual objectives. It should be based on the resources you have to commit to the program, and lead to fulfilling your specific objectives.

Your mission states your desired results. Your operating plan is the roadmap to make sure you get there. Key elements of the roadmap include: annual and quarterly program objectives; timelines; staffing plan and staff development plan; training plan; fundraising plan; outreach and communication plan; and a plan for evaluation.

3. **The organization is led by a strong team that recognizes the importance of strong community support, works well with each other and the board, and delegates responsibility and authority to a strong staff.**

Strong leadership and, in the case of non-profit organizations, a strong board, will provide direction and promote the program in the community. Among other things, strong staff: understand the mission, respect participants and work well with them, are "coaches", are articulate

spokespeople for the program, are as diverse as participants and the community, understand service-learning, and care about delivering high quality service.

4. **A program needs great staff to succeed. Recruitment and development of an effective staff is emphasized and sufficient resources are devoted for recruitment, training and development.**

In a progressive management system, people are considered assets and the organization invests in the support, coordination, and development of staff so they can help achieve its goals. True coordination of people entails setting up a strong, clear structure in which the strengths of your staff are tapped and their weaknesses are made subordinate. People management is not about forms and procedures, it is about substantive structure and supportive policies. Only when these are in place can you move beyond management of staff to true leadership. Consider:

- How will you recruit strong staff?

5. **The organization encourages teamwork and leaders emphasize the need for teamwork to accomplish its goals.**

Leadership and staff support the concept of teamwork by ensuring practices such as (but not limited to):

- orientation to the vision, mission, and goals
- clear, frequent communication on key issues
- performance appraisal
- recognition for good work
- opportunities for reflection, and desire from superiors and colleagues for feedback
- opportunities for participation in decision making and improving the organization
- training in essential skills
- and others.

Consider how you can set the expectation that every member of the organization should try to bring out the best work of others.

6. The organization is built on effective program and fiscal management processes.

The work of managing basic functions is essential to results. The community will judge the quality of your program by basic measures — Are they spending my tax money wisely and honestly? Are they managing for results? A successful program is able to satisfy the highest levels of scrutiny of its practices and the expectations of competent professional operation.

The program uses and accounts for all funds properly, and has strict safeguards to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. Information systems are in place that capture important information efficiently and accurately, and enable staff to access information quickly. A good system will provide the right information to the right person to make a good decision.

The Corporation will provide further information on effective and appropriate fiscal management.

7. From the start, the program looks to the future and has a financial strategy that moves it toward long-term sustainability.

Programs are required to raise funds to match Corporation support. Fundraising efforts should begin before applications are submitted to the Corporation. Lasting programs build a solid financial base by considering a variety of strategies and developing supporters within the community. Consider:

- What are appropriate sources of funds for your program?
Does Corporation funding fit with your mission and strategy for sustainability?
- Where will your funding come from five years from now?
- What level and kinds of support in the community will be necessary to sustain your program?

How can you forge those links?

The Corporation will provide further information on seeking financial support and working toward sustainability.

8. The program assumes the role in the community of visible model for national service and champion of the ethic of service.

1. A Strong Organization

National service programs have the opportunity to be the leaders of a movement that can capture the imagination and ignite the energy of the American public. Each program must use its activities and partnerships to help citizens see national service happening, see the dramatic results it can have, become supporters, and increase the service they do personally.

Think about:

- How can you bring projects to the attention of neighbors, other citizens, and institutions in the community?
- How can you prepare the organization and all its members to present a powerful image that conveys the impact and excitement of national service?

III. CORE ELEMENTS

2. EXCELLENT NATIONAL SERVICE PROJECTS

Introduction

Each program's success will be judged foremost by the results it produces for the community it serves. Therefore, effective design and implementation of service projects is fundamental to a successful national service program. Projects are the place where national service happens and where participants spend the majority of their time.

Projects must do more than just keep participants busy, offer temporary solutions, or provide free labor to organizations. Carefully-planned, well-managed projects that engage participants in important tasks and teach them valuable skills form a solid foundation from which participants can effectively contribute to their communities.

The principles offered below apply equally to both team-based service programs and programs which place individual participants with sponsors to do projects.

Principles to Consider

- 1. Service projects address real needs and create direct and demonstrable results in lasting ways. The results are often visible and tangible and can be identified by members of the community.**

III. Core Elements of Successful National Service Programs

Projects are selected through a thoughtful assessment of community needs and priorities, based on input from community residents, organizations, and public officials. Assessment of needs happens regularly, as needs change over time.

Excellent projects are part of a long-term solution to the need being addressed. Residents know why the work is being done and value it. Such a lasting contribution is at the heart of "getting things done." There is a plan for maintaining the project or its product if/when participants leave.

2. **The program and service sponsor agree about the results to be achieved and the role of participants. They also understand the mission and goals of national service.**

The sponsor agrees with the objectives of the project. At the same time, the program ensures that the objectives and tasks fit the definition of national service.

- Do all relevant partners understand and agree with the desired outcomes of each project?

See "Community Partnerships".

- Will partners and sponsors be trained to work effectively with program and participants?

3. **Participants do not displace workers or volunteers, or duplicate their efforts, in carrying out their projects.**

Programs will not be providing a service to the community if participants are taking jobs away from local residents or replacing volunteers who are already at work. Whenever possible, however, participants should encourage and coordinate volunteer activity. This will multiply the impact of their work and help build community.

4. **Service projects draw on the unique qualities of national service participants: their abilities, professional education or training, age, diversity, idealism, intelligence, and other assets.**

National service programs do not approach participants primarily as a source of labor or as clients. National service programs view participants as resources to the community. For example, a participant who is a

business school student can work a in community development bank, advising low-income families about securing home loans. Projects should challenge participants and draw on their strengths.

- In what ways is this a project that national service participants are uniquely suited to do?
 - Why are national service participants the first choice of the sponsoring agency to implement this project — could this project be accomplished just as well or better by other volunteers or full-time paid employees?
5. **Service projects are planned carefully, and all key elements of the project are documented. When appropriate, opportunities for learning are built into project design.**

A project's success can largely be attributed to the quality and thoroughness of the planning that occurs before participants begin work. It is also much more difficult to change project structure or procedure once a project starts. Documents, including workplans, timelines, project outcomes, safety information, and contact people are indispensable to project management.

Much can also be learned on any well-organized worksite, including: skills which prepare participants for careers in particular areas; experience in how to work on teams, manage tasks, problem-solve, and more. Participants learn more from projects which are deliberately designed to facilitate learning.

For more on learning from service work see "A High Quality Participant Experience: Preparation and Support".

- Could a new supervisor easily take up development/management of the project if the original planner were gone?
 - Are all materials, trainings, equipment, curricula, etc. confirmed and in hand before the start date?
6. **Participants get the specific training they need for each project. Projects consist of tasks and activities which are safe and appropriate for participants.**

Project tasks and activities should challenge participants, but not be beyond their ability to achieve. Participants need training in task-specific skills, safety procedures, and understanding the needs and context of the

community where the project takes place. Adequate safety training, clear emergency procedures, and proper materials and equipment are essential to a safe work environment. Programs are liable for participant safety.

For more on challenging work, safety, and training see "A High Quality Participant Experience: Preparation and Support".

7. Service projects receive attentive management and close supervision.

Managing a project is a highly active and dynamic task involving constant refining and troubleshooting. The program must assign, brief, and train staff; support and coach field supervisors; and communicate constantly and regularly with work sponsors and other partners. A well managed project creates its own momentum and will free the supervisor for creative management, community outreach, and project development.

- Who is accountable for good management of the project and communication with the service sponsor? Are lines of authority and the roles of the program and sponsor clear to everyone involved?
- How will progress be checked and evaluated? How will the quality of service work be assured?

See "Evaluation".

III. CORE ELEMENTS

3. EVALUATION:

Learning Lessons and Documenting Results

Introduction

The Corporation strongly believes that effective evaluation is essential to program success. In this context, evaluation should be viewed as a dynamic process which sets goals and objectives, applies lessons learned, and reports results. Programs look at themselves critically in order to continually improve program quality. This process never stops.

Principles to Consider

1. **National service programs set significant annual objectives consistent with both their own mission and the Corporation's goals.**

Objectives should address the extent to which programs meet specific community needs, develop participants, and strengthen community ties. They should be direct, demonstrable, clear, and challenging yet realistic.

Whenever possible, objectives should be quantifiable. Workable objective statements address only one activity (e.g., providing health outreach services). They include one result (e.g., making 500 households better

informed about health issues) and include at least one indicator of the quality of service provided (e.g., 60% of households report acting on the information they received).

2. Programs have effective mechanisms in place to collect the needed information.

While service projects are underway, programs must be able to track progress toward their established objectives. Programs should also be able to describe their participants and the work they do. Finally, programs should get regular feedback from partners, residents, other beneficiaries of service, participants, and others.

3. Programs consistently use the information they obtain to improve operations.

Information serves no purpose by itself. It is a valuable tool which can be used to inform decisions, assess program effectiveness, and improve quality.

If the program does not regularly act on what it learns, staff should re-assess whether the information they are gathering is useful, or consider how to apply it to make improvements.

4. Programs effectively communicate their results to the community, participants, partners, the general public, and the Corporation.

Once programs have documented results they must make the information accessible to others. Clear, useful reports which convey relevant information about the program's development and successes will help others appreciate the program's value.

High quality programs recognize that many of the benefits of service cannot be counted. When one works with a troubled child, it may be years before the benefits can be seen. Programs can capture one type of evidence through qualitative records: journals, photos, pictures.

III. CORE ELEMENTS

4. A HIGH QUALITY PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE:

Preparation and Support

Introduction

Getting things done in the community and a great participant experience go hand in hand. Citizens participate in national service because they want to help meet critical needs. As they do important and valued work, they learn. When the job is done well, they have the deep satisfaction of knowing they have contributed.

At the same time participants do better work if they are sufficiently prepared and supported. Almost every participant needs some measure of preparation and support, but the needs of different participants vary. While all participants work toward being more active citizens, an adult participant may have less need to work on basic math and reading skills than an adolescent. A college graduate may need less training for a specific project than a high school graduate.

Providing the training, learning, guidance, and support that form a high quality participant experience requires serious commitment of staff and sponsor time, energy, and resources. The results — both those that are immediate, and the ultimate value in shaping a participant who will contribute to the community for the rest of his or her life — are worth the investment.

Although high quality work and high quality participant experience reinforce one another, we recognize that tensions can arise at times between the two. At those times participants, programs, and service

sponsors should remember that getting the work done comes first. Good programs keep those situations to a minimum.

The principles that follow will help program planners who want to get the full benefit of a great participant experience. They are divided into categories for: setting up the participants' experience; training and service learning; and support for participants.

Principles to Consider

Setting up the participant experience

1. **The program is there to serve the community. To involve participants effectively in fulfilling its mission and meeting its specific goals, the program must provide a high quality participant experience that includes a clear structure to work in, sufficient training and learning, and good support.**

Strong programs work from their mission and goals to anticipate the specific skills and knowledge participants will need.

2. **The program and participants have clear expectations of each other, set out in written form.**

A program with fifty participants faces fifty sets of expectations. The challenge in creating a successful experience for participants lies in setting common expectations and goals, which come from the program's mission, while encouraging personal growth as citizens.

In describing itself to potential participants the program makes clear that national service is about the exciting enterprise of getting things done and strengthening the community. The participant contract explains responsibilities of participants and the training and support that are the program's responsibilities. Throughout the term of service, the program treats participants as capable and responsible adults.

3. **The program builds among participants a spirit of commitment to national service, the community, and each other. It helps participants develop themselves into actors in the community interest, with a sense that they have entered a partnership to get critical things done.**

The quality of national service is higher when participants understand the value of their work to the community's well-being. Such a recognition motivates participants to perform good service and helps instill a lifelong ethic of service.

4. A High Quality Participant Experience

Good programs seek consciously to build community among participants and staff, and to encourage cohesion within the group. The goals of a service project are more easily met and the work more rewarding when a philosophy of service is shared and teamwork with peers and partners is evident.

- 4. The program is aware of and respects the backgrounds, cultures, ages, and abilities of participants, community residents, and partner organizations.**

Service programs often bring together individuals of diverse cultures, races and backgrounds. A good program anticipates this variety of experiences and perspectives and plans for ways to draw strength from diversity.

For more see the core element of "Diversity".

- 5. The program helps each participant prepare for and make the transition to his or her next endeavor, whether education or work.**

The program instills an awareness of options and ways to achieve personal and professional goals. It helps the participant plan for further education — college, graduate school, trade school, etc. — or identify good jobs and a career path. The program makes it possible for participants lacking the G.E.D. (high school equivalency degree) to work toward that goal during the term of service. National service may help participants advance career goals or change careers. For example, a military engineer joins a corps focused on the cleanup of environmental waste as a way of entering the environmental field.

- 6. Participant safety is a paramount concern. Effective programs take it seriously.**

The safety of participants is accorded the highest possible priority in planning and implementing projects. Programs comply with federal, state, and local health and safety standards, and prepare for liability issues. Participants have sufficient training and supervision, and are placed on projects with safety in mind.

For example: Participants working in homeless shelters may need to be inoculated against tuberculosis or other diseases from which the residents might be suffering; participants who will do door-to-door outreach work need personal safety training to prepare for unexpected situations.

The Corporation has additional information on liability issues in national service for those who are interested.

Training and Service Learning

7. **Effective preparation for participants includes teaching project-related skills and leadership, and enables participants to understand the value of service, the nature of citizenship, and the national needs which their service will address (e.g., homelessness or urban crime).**

To contribute to the program's goals, participants must have the skills to fulfill their responsibilities. They must be competent to tutor children in school, or to install sheetrock in a house being renovated. At the same time, participants develop leadership skills—for example, facilitating a meeting of neighborhood residents discussing ways to reduce crime; speaking in public; planning and managing projects; and so forth.

8. **Effective training balances the complementary goals of project skills development and personal development, enabling both to happen.**

To do good work participants must be highly motivated. Such commitment comes from understanding the community need being addressed — how does the ill health of young children prevent them from being ready for school? — and from knowing how performing service makes a difference.

Successful programs adapt to their purposes good training done by others.

9. **Training is most effective when it is directly relevant to the work of participants, and when the content of training is informed by explicit input from participants. The program prepares participants to help guide their own learning.**

Participants get more value from training that applies clearly to their work activity and daily life. Good training varies in its settings and methods, but in general “looks and feels” as much as possible like the anticipated service and the participant's normal surroundings. Also, some of the best training and learning occurs while performing service. Work that challenges participants will help them develop work and leadership skills.

10. **Service-learning can be a powerful tool for engaging participants to be active, productive citizens, and for preparing participants to serve. National service programs integrate service-learning into the participants' experience as appropriate.**

Service-learning is a strategy that is integrated into participants' work, training, and other activities. It is not a stand-alone function. Service-learning involves gaining insight and skill from examining one's experience, from performing service and reflecting on it deliberately.

See next page for an explanation of service-learning.

11. Training is an ongoing activity. It does not end with orientation.

At its best training is a far cry from the stereotypical picture of people sitting in chairs listening to a lecture. It is often interactive, and built around experience and active work. On a regular basis participants need to assess how their service is going, identify further information and skills they need, and get additional training or other preparation.

Support for Participants

12. The program links participants to essential support services such as counseling and education, or provides them directly.

All participants, especially young people, thrive when their basic needs are met and they are attaining personal, educational and social goals. They contribute to others more selflessly and suffer less distraction and crisis. Equally important, they are able to develop the leadership skills of determination and follow-through.

13. The program encourages the participant's development of personal and social skills, including self-discipline, independence, and competence.

Participants who achieve personal discipline and competence at tasks will become more productive and effective. Investing effort to support participants pays off.

14. Whatever their jobs, each program staff member is competent in basic counseling, crisis intervention, and referral to social services.

The program must anticipate and be prepared to handle crises skillfully and sensitively to ensure that the program operates smoothly.

To prepare staff to aid participants with issues, consider:

- What training will staff receive to equip them best in identifying and responding to possible crises participants may face?

What procedures will staff follow in such situations?

What is service-learning?

Service-learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subjects, skills, and values are taught. It involves active learning — drawing lessons from the experience of performing service work. Though service-learning is most often discussed in the context of elementary and secondary or higher education, it is a useful strategy as well for programs not based in schools.

There are three basic components to effective service-learning:

The first is sufficient preparation, which includes setting objectives for skills to be learned or issues to consider, and includes planning projects so they contribute to learning at the same time work gets done.

The second component is simply performing service.

Third, the participant attempts to analyze the experience and draw lessons, through such means as discussion with others and reflection on the work.

Thinking about the service creates a greater understanding of the experience and the way service addresses the needs of the community. It promotes a concern about community issues and a commitment to being involved that mark an active citizen. At the same time the analysis and thought allow the participants to identify and absorb what they have learned.

Learning and practicing citizenship are life-long activities which extend far beyond the conclusion of formal education. Service-learning can be used to increase the citizenship skills of participants of any age or background. For this reason service-learning can be a tool to achieve the desired results of programs, even those involving older, highly educated participants. For example, service-learning can be part of the training of participants to prepare them to do high quality service that has real community impact.

Some service-learning occurs just from doing the work: after a month working alongside police a participant has surely learned some important lessons about how to increase public safety, and something about what it means to be a good citizen. However, programs that encourage active learning from service experience may have an even greater impact.

III. CORE ELEMENTS

5. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Service programs, by their very nature, must collaborate and form partnerships with a wide variety of organizations and individuals. We are seeking community-wide solutions to problems.

In many cases, service programs operate as independent organizations placing participants, as crews or individually, in other organizations — “service sponsors” — that need their services. In these cases, the program and sponsor form a partnership, with each accepting responsibility for specific aspects of the participant’s experience and service projects. In other cases, service programs collaborate with other organizations for certain purposes only, such as recruitment, educational services, joint planning and projects.

Each successful partnership needs to have a structure and a style that reflect the diversity of needs, populations, and organizations in its community. Building successful partnerships requires high trust and cooperation, creativity, and -- above all -- time. Any number of problems can prevent or damage a partnership. Despite the challenges involved in developing and maintaining collaborations, they are worth the effort. Partnerships increase the impact of individual organizations, develop new leaders, build an ongoing power base, and broaden the scope of programs.

Experts describe collaboration as a linkage exemplifying mutual problem-solving, decision-making and mutual respect. Vital elements include: mutual needs and interests; a commitment of time by all participants; energy outlay and generation; sharing of resources with expected outcomes worth each participant’s investment;

communication; broad-based representation; group process; shared ownership and commitment; rewards for cooperation; and openness of partners.

Principles to Consider

1. **The basis for the partnership is a common vision that national service can meet critical community needs and have mutual benefit for the partners.**

Partners believe that every community organization can support national service efforts, and that programs are sustained by many organizations working together.

Collaborators work through such tough issues as involving diverse partners in the early planning stages of the program, and in ranking community needs. Partners understand their roles and responsibilities for the program, and staff members in each organization understand the common vision and support it.

2. **Each partner organization makes a strong commitment to support the success of the program.**

It will take the best each organization can give to make an outstanding national service program. Committed partners recognize that success will require real time, money, and talent devoted to the effort, and will give such resources. The mechanisms for managing shared program activity must be stable, consistent, and fair in how they involve partners and draw on their resources.

Good programs identify the strengths each partner brings and agree to the contributions expected of each.

3. **Communication is essential. It enables the program to adapt to circumstances in the community and changes in the situations and status of partners.**

To communicate well, think about these questions...

- What mechanisms will be used to facilitate regular, clear communication?

How will the program keep all partners "on the same page"?

- How does the partnership structure accomplish collaborative planning, consensus building, conflict resolution, and evaluation of results?

III. CORE ELEMENTS

6. DIVERSITY

Introduction

To counter the social and economic forces pushing us apart, the Corporation has established the requirement that each program must seek "to strengthen communities and encourage mutual respect and cooperation among citizens of different races, ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational levels, among both men and women and individuals with disabilities."

One way in which this important objective may be accomplished is to involve diverse participants in projects. The Corporation recognizes and respects, however, that some programs, as part of their mission, have valid reasons for recruiting participants who share similar characteristics. For example, a professional corps of lawyers would recruit only participants who have completed law school rather than people of all educational backgrounds.

Although such groups lack diversity in one or more of the required areas, they must strive for other forms of diversity in their programs. Programs should seek to build a diverse group of staff, participants, and partners. The interaction between the talents, experience, and wealth of resources provided by all these people will fuel the program to deliver service of exceptional depth.

Principles to Consider

1. Commitment to diversity is built into the program's mission.

In any group there are different perspectives, beliefs, and experiences. Learning to respect, understand, and value such differences is necessary to strengthening communities. Consider:

- How does diversity serve your mission?

2. Recruitment is designed specifically to recruit a broad range of backgrounds. Programs adopt specific strategies to retain diverse participants.

Excellent programs draw participants, staff, and board members with various strengths and build on those strengths. It will not be easy to attract the group you seek. Careful planning, creative approaches, and tireless effort are required to go from interest in diversity to incorporating it into organizations and their service.

Identify what barriers exist; identify how to remove them. These can be physical barriers, in the case of people with disabilities, or social barriers, in the case of older people.

- Think about the best ways to reach the people you seek: how do they obtain information?
- What about your program will interest and excite them?
- Have you considered the full range of diversity (race, class, disability, education, and others)?

Ask current participants and residents of the communities you serve to help with outreach and recruitment. You may want to set specific goals for your participant mix.

3. Programs draw strength from diversity at each important level of activity.

Reach common goals through diversity by taking advantage of opportunities including (but not limited to):

- basic structures (e.g., how teams are put together);
- project planning (e.g., what contribution each participant can make to each aspect of the program); and

- management of the organization (e.g., how different people will be involved in making decisions).

The ability to deal constructively with diversity can directly benefit program outcomes. A few examples:

- A program in early child care that deals effectively with diversity works with two partners—one an improvisational, informal but high quality child care center, the other a heavily regulated branch of a large municipal health services agency—to accomplish shared goals. Although, due to differences ranging from structures of fiscal management to personalities of leadership, the two groups have never collaborated before, participants take the lessons learned from their own diverse team and diverse organization to help the two organizations see how both will benefit from bringing health workers into the day care center on a regular basis. After a year and a half, the rate of inoculation among the siblings of children at the center has risen dramatically. In addition, the new babies born to the young mothers of the center have higher birth weights and overall improved health thanks to improved prenatal care and nutrition.
- An after-school program combines academics, arts, and athletics for a diverse group of middle school students coming from several different middle schools. The diversity of the group works well—thanks in part to conflict resolution and other training done with the students. The popular group models a “positive” gang for other middle school students—and the group members themselves use their newly discovered skills in conflict resolution to prevent fights at their schools.
- An AmeriCorps participant, who is getting his degree in Nutrition, spends his service year training local people to become nutrition aides in Head Start and other programs, including day care and senior centers. He believes this program could be a great tool for career development. He himself uses a wheelchair and, through the networks he has been a part of since childhood, plans to target people with disabilities as well as those without. His partners will include the state Arc, Centers for Independent Living, and local rehabilitation centers as well as both state and local resources in health and nutrition, Head Start programs, universities, local community colleges, and high school vocational programs. He sees the program as an opportunity to act as a positive role model as well as an opportunity to provide skills to

others that will make it possible for people with a wide range of disabilities and those without disabilities to seek employment in these sectors, or in the private food service business.

4. **The program partners with diverse organizations in its community, and looks for opportunities to interact with people outside of its community or groups not reflected in its program.**

Just as diversity within the program strengthens it, diversity of partners make programs more effective at identifying community needs and resources. Reach out to business, non-profit, and governmental partners.

Diversity can be achieved through the inclusion of new partners who know how to involve people you may be trying to reach: for example, organizations that have experience working with the disability community, or who already provide day care for single mothers.

5. **Bring people together. Everything the program does about diversity, everything it does to encourage different people to contribute to shared goals enhances the larger goal of building community.**

Participants help bring communities together by showing the power of collaboration by different people and providing an example of teamwork between themselves and community members. A diverse group of staff and participants gives the program advantages in providing a range of role models for positive citizen action.

IV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

DEFINITION OF TERMS.

These definitions are intended to clarify the meaning of certain terms as used by the Corporation in this handbook. It will be very helpful to read the text of the law and regulations for full understanding of the Corporation's programs.

Community-based agency. A private nonprofit organization (including a church or other religious entity) that:

1. is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community; and
2. is engaged in meeting human, educational, environmental, or public safety community needs.

Eligible participants. Participants who:

1. are 17 years of age or older at the commencement of service, unless the individual is in a youth corps programs in which case the participant must be between the ages of 16 and 25;
2. either have received a high school diploma or its equivalent, including an alternative diploma or certificate for those individuals with mental and physical disabilities for whom such alternative diploma or certificate is appropriate, or agree to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent. However, if the program conducts an independent evaluation demonstrating that the potential

participant is incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent, the Corporation may waive this requirement;

3. have not have dropped out of elementary or secondary school in order to enroll as a national service participant or are enrolled in the program, unless the participant is enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 484 of the Higher Education Act of 1965;
4. are citizens or nationals of the United States or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States; and
5. meet the task-related eligibility requirements established by the program.

Partnership. A joint arrangement among a group of organizations eligible for Corporation assistance under this application, or a nonprofit organization created or identified by such a group, whose purpose is to carry out common objectives that are specific and well-defined, and in which the responsibilities of each partner are clearly defined and mutually understood.

Program. A planned and coordinated group of activities, procedures, etc. linked by common elements such as recruitment and selection of participants, training for participants and staff, regular group of activities, and assignment to projects:

1. organized for the purpose of achieving the mission and goals of national service, and
2. carried out with the assistance provided under the Act.

Program sponsor. An entity responsible for recruiting, selecting, and training participants, providing them benefits and support services, engaging them in regular group activities, and placing them in projects.

Project. An activity, carried out through a program that receives assistance under the Act, that results in a specific identifiable service or improvement that otherwise would not be done with existing funds, and that does not duplicate the routine services or functions of the employer to whom participants are assigned.

Service Sponsor. An organization, or other entity, that has been selected to provide a placement for a participant.

APPENDIX B

AMERICORPS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FROM THE REGULATIONS OF THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

In this appendix we have excerpted the section of the regulations that set minimum requirements for programs. You must satisfy these requirements in your application. Your application is not required to satisfy the principles offered in the main body of this document; however, reading and thinking about those principles is likely to help you develop a better program.

Requirements for AmeriCorps programs

These requirements are taken verbatim from § 2522.100 of the regulations. We strongly suggest that you read the section of the preamble to the regulations entitled "AmeriCorps program issues Section I: Programmatic Issues".

Exact text of the regulations:

PART 2522 — AMERICORPS PARTICIPANTS, PROGRAMS, AND APPLICANTS

Subpart A— Minimum Requirements and Program Types

Sec. 2522.100

What are the minimum requirements that every AmeriCorps program, regardless of type, must meet?

Although a wide range of programs may be eligible to apply for and receive

support from the Corporation, all AmeriCorps programs must meet certain minimum program requirements. These requirements apply regardless of whether a program is supported directly by the Corporation or through a subgrant. All AmeriCorps programs must:

(a) Address educational, public safety, human, or environmental needs, and provide a direct and demonstrable benefit that is valued by the community in which the service is performed;

(b) Perform projects that are designed, implemented, and evaluated with extensive and broad-based local input, including consultation with representatives from the community served, participants (or potential participants) in the program, community-based agencies with a demonstrated record of experience in providing services, and local labor organizations representing employees of project sponsors (if such entities exist in the area to be served by the program);

(c) Obtain, in the case of a program that also proposes to serve as the sponsor, the written concurrence of any local labor organization representing employees of the project sponsors who are engaged in the same or substantially similar work as that proposed to be carried out by the AmeriCorps participant;

(d) Establish and provide outcome objectives, including a strategy for achieving these objectives, upon which self-assessment and Corporation-assessment of progress can rest. Such assessment will be used to help determine the extent to which the program has had a positive impact:

(1) On communities and persons served by the projects performed by the program;

(2) On participants who take part in the projects; and

(3) In such other areas as the program or Corporation may specify;

(e) Strengthen communities and encourage mutual respect and cooperation among citizens of different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, both men and women and individuals with disabilities;

(f) Agree to seek actively to include participants and staff from the communities in which projects are conducted, and agree to seek program staff and participants of different races and ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and genders as well as individuals with disabilities unless a program design requires emphasizing the recruitment of staff and participants who share a specific characteristic or background. In no case may a program violate the nondiscrimination, nonduplication and nondisplacement rules governing participant selection described in part 2540 of this chapter. In addition, programs are encouraged to establish, if consistent with the purposes of the program, an intergenerational component that combines students, out-

of-school youths, and older adults as participants;

(g) Determine the projects in which participants will serve and establish minimum qualifications that individuals must meet to be eligible to participate in the program; these qualifications may vary based on the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Regardless of the educational level or background of participants sought, programs are encouraged to select individuals who possess leadership potential and a commitment to the goals of the AmeriCorps program. In any case, programs must select participants in a non-partisan, non-political, non-discriminatory manner, ensuring fair access to participation. In addition, programs are required to ensure that they do not displace any existing paid employees as provided in part 2540 of this chapter. To this end, programs may not select any prospective participant who is or was previously employed by a prospective project sponsors within six months of the time of enrollment in the program.

In addition, all programs are required to comply with any pre-service orientation or training period requirements established by the Corporation to assist in the selection of motivated participants. Finally, all programs must agree to select a percentage (to be determined by the Corporation) of the participants for the program from among prospective participants recruited by the Corporation or State Commissions under part 2532 of this chapter. The Corporation may also specify a minimum percentage of participants to be selected from the national leadership pool established under § 2522.120 of this chapter. The Corporation may vary either percentage for different types of AmeriCorps programs;

(h) Provide reasonable accommodation, including auxiliary aids and services (as defined in section 3(1) of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102(1))) based on the individualized need of a participant who is a qualified individual with a disability (as defined in section 101(8) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 12111(8))). For the purpose of complying with this provision, AmeriCorps programs may apply for additional financial assistance from the Corporation pursuant to § 2524.50 of this chapter;

(i) Use service experiences to help participants achieve the skills and education needed for productive, active citizenship, including the provision, if appropriate, of structured opportunities for participants to reflect on their service experiences. In addition, all programs must encourage every participant who is eligible to vote to register prior to completing a term of service;

(j) Provide participants in the program with the training, skills, and knowledge necessary to perform the tasks required in their respective projects, including, if appropriate, specific training in a particular field and background information on the community, including why the service projects are needed;

(k) Provide support services—

(1) To participants who are completing a term of service and making the transition to other educational and career opportunities; and

(2) To those participants who are school dropouts in order to assist them in earning the equivalent of a high school diploma;

(l) Ensure that participants serving in approved AmeriCorps positions receive the living allowance and other benefits described in §§ 2522.240 through 2522.250 of this chapter, including a living allowance and other benefits;

(m) Describe the manner in which the AmeriCorps educational awards will be apportioned among individuals serving in the program. If a program proposes to provide such benefits to less than 100 percent of the participants in the program, the program must provide a compelling rationale for determining which participants will receive the benefits and which participants will not. AmeriCorps programs are strongly encouraged to offer alternative post-service benefits to participants who will not receive AmeriCorps educational awards;

(n) Agree to identify the program, through the use of logos, common application materials, and other means (to be specified by the Corporation), as part of a larger national effort and to participate in other activities such as common opening ceremonies (including the administration of a national oath or affirmation), service days, and conferences designed to promote a national identity for all AmeriCorps programs and participants, including those participants not receiving AmeriCorps educational awards. This provision does not preclude an AmeriCorps program from continuing to use its own name as the primary identification, or from using its name, logo, or other identifying materials on uniforms or other items;

(o) Agree to begin terms of service at such times as the Corporation may reasonably require and to comply with any restrictions the Corporation may establish as to when the program may take to fill an approved AmeriCorps position left vacant due to attrition;

(p) Prior to receiving Corporation support, comply with all evaluation procedures specified by the Corporation, as explained in §§ 2522.500 through 2522.560 of this chapter;

(q) In the case of a program receiving funding directly from the Corporation, meet and consult with the State Commission for the State in which the program operates, if possible, and submit a copy of the program application to the State Commission; and

(r) Address any other requirements as specified by the Corporation.

APPENDIX C

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

National service gets things done — and most successful grantees will focus on the basics: helping teachers to deliver strong educational fundamentals; working with police to prevent crime and violence; assisting doctors in clinics to provide basic health care; and the like. Around the country, service programs are already engaged in these core activities, and we will be working to help spread national service successes (beyond the materials included earlier in this handbook). And we want to continue innovating; the following are program examples based on new ideas, programs built on partnerships among people or organizations that have not previously worked together, or programs that solve problems not previously addressed by community service. We have intentionally focused on examples of programs not in widespread existence, in an effort to advance the field in new directions. Applicants are by no means restricted to developing programs that look like these examples or the examples found elsewhere in this handbook. These descriptions are designed to encourage the creation of new and additional approaches.

EDUCATION

School Readiness: furthering early childhood development

- Head Start. To improve the quality of Head Start centers, a program sponsored by a Head Start grantee, delegate agency, or State Head Start Association involves college graduates working in Head Start centers. Possible

activities include those discussed in the Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion, such as efforts to improve the quality of services, create new community partnerships, expand the range of services offered through the center to meet families' needs, help in assessing children's progress, renovate and repair facilities, increase parental involvement, and offer extra assistance in the classroom so children experience more one-on-one activity.

- *Child Care Corps.* To attract highly qualified individuals to the early childhood field, a program enables participants to spend the summer after college receiving intensive early childhood development training sponsored by a higher education institution. In the fall, they are assigned by a child care resource and referral agency to different child care centers throughout the region to assist the classroom staff and to work with the center's director or the social service coordinator to bring additional services to the center. In addition to working directly with children, participants could teach a parenting education class, recruit a volunteer doctor or nurse to provide immunizations, and arrange a resume writing and job search workshop for parents. The Corpsmembers participate in on-going training and regular team building activities that bring together participants serving at different sites. They are encouraged to remain in the early childhood field at the conclusion of their terms of service.
- *The Family Learning Corps.* To mentor parental ability to develop learning readiness skills in pre-school children, an intergenerational corps involves participants in activities that encourage parents to improve their own basic skills while they learn to engage children in learning activities such as telling stories, reading books, and singing songs. Participants are assigned to local sponsors and coordinate training sessions, service projects, and literacy programs within the community.

School Success: improving the educational achievement of school-age children and adults who lack basic academic skills

- *Comprehensive School-linked Health and Social Services.* To improve the educational achievement of school-age children, a team of highly skilled national service participants assist local schools in serving as community centers. All participants have strong educational backgrounds in related fields and many have specialized degrees. The participants' work complements the school's efforts to offer a wide array of health, social, and community services to the students and the local community. Participants provide school-based services such as social work counseling, dental and medical care (including immunizations), after-school educational enrichment programs, recreational activities, parental involvement programs, community

children after school at a local library. The Service Learning Corpsmembers also assist in the academic and leadership development of the school-age youth.

- *School-based Mentors.* To improve the educational achievement of school-age children, college student participants are long-term and comprehensive mentors to students. The mentors are based in a school and provide individual support and guidance to several students for three years. As a comprehensive mentor, they address many of the career, social, language, and academic needs affecting their students. Mentors are active both during and after school—accompanying students on college visits, exploring career options, linking students with needed services and job training programs, attending cultural events, and tutoring.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Crime Control: improving criminal justice services, law enforcement, and victim services

- *Victim Assistance Corps.* To improve the assistance provided to victims of crime in a community, corpsmembers work with law enforcement, courts, and victim service providers. From the beginning, corpsmembers assist with community outreach and provide crisis response immediately following the report of a crime. Then, they follow-up with victims on an on-going basis to assure that vital services are provided and that needs are being met. This may include addressing medical or mental health support, home repair, emergency funds, and lost documents. Corpsmembers also accompany victims to court appearances and coordinate victim/witness involvement in the judicial process.
- *Domestic Violence Corps.* To reduce domestic violence, college-experienced corpsmembers rotate among various organizations within a community. One team works in the local police department to follow-up on reported incidents. Another team works with a victim assistance provider conducting outreach to counsel victims of domestic violence, linking them to other needed social services. This team also assists with the operation of domestic violence shelters and provides information and support during the court process. Another team works in the local district attorney's office to interview victims, provide referrals, and help prepare cases.
- *Crime Against Recent Immigrants Initiative.* To enhance the response to crime against recent immigrant groups, trained teams of participants conduct extensive outreach and services to these populations. Team members perform

education classes, service-learning activities, and adult education classes. The schools also form partnerships with service agencies, community-based organizations, cultural institutions, local corporations, institutions of higher education and community volunteers.

- *Multi-Lingual Corps.* To improve the educational achievement of school-age children, a corps of participants fluent in a non-English language used by area residents assists local schools in providing multi-lingual services. With guidance and training, the multi-lingual corpsmembers coordinate programs that develop an active educational partnership between the schools and non-English speaking students and/or non-English speaking parents. These projects include corpsmembers working to assist teachers in the classroom and in after school activities, teaching an English as a Second Language class for parents, assisting students and parents in the completion of cumbersome legal forms, translating the school newsletter, and introducing other students to new languages. Due to the nature of this work, corpsmembers must possess strong oral and written skills in the respective languages and cultures. These efforts will build a bridge between schools and families and will assist in the overall education of the students.
- *Educational Technology Corps.* To improve the educational achievement of school-age children, a corporation, school district and higher education institution sponsor a team of national service participants with computer expertise to be placed in low-income schools. These participants are trained and supported by professional computer experts, and have potential corporate sponsorship. The national service participants would focus on training and supporting teachers and/or students to integrate computer information systems with their curricula. Potential projects include teaching students and teachers how to use computer networks for research projects, developing a technology lab in high schools, training teachers on accessing educational programs via computer networks, training calculus and physics teachers on the applications of computers in the classroom, and demonstrating how computer technology has everyday applications. The Educational Technology Corps ensures that low-income schools are linked into the most recent innovations in the technology world and their direct educational applications.
- *Service Learning Coordinators Corps.* To improve elementary and secondary education, a team of recent college graduates receive extensive training in leadership, service-learning methodology, and community problem solving. The corpsmembers then assist school-age youth and teachers to assess, develop and implement service activities. Projects might include planting and harvesting a community garden and distributing the produce to home-bound senior citizens, youth training in violence prevention, and reading to younger

child advocates in Juvenile and Family Courts to ensure that the interests of individual children are not ignored. In addition, corpsmembers provide specialized child care for abused children and assist in the training and support of parents who lack needed skills or resources.

- Youth Safety Corps. To reduce the vulnerability of children and youth, the Youth Safety Corps works with local youth, parents, law enforcement, schools, youth-serving organizations, and civic groups. Trained corpsmembers develop and provide crime prevention and anti-violence training workshops. Corpsmembers work with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and the surrounding community to establish peer conflict resolution programs in the schools. Corpsmembers also develop a network of "safe houses" and after-school activities for young people, including safety-related service-learning projects and field trips to prisons, police stations, courts, hospitals, and family violence shelters.

HUMAN NEEDS

Health: providing independent living assistance and home- and community-based health care

- Healthy Babies Project. To increase the utilization of prenatal care by low-income women and improve the health of their newborns, national service participants, including some who are mothers themselves, receive preservice and inservice training in prenatal health and baby care, home visitation, and community outreach. Participants identify all pregnant women in the target community and recruit families to join the program. Each corpsmember is assigned to several families identified by this process and conducts home visits, ensures that the mothers attend their prenatal and postnatal appointments, arranges child care and transportation, provides nutrition counseling, and ensures that all children in the family are immunized. Participants also teach classes in nutrition, childbirth, prenatal exercise, and parenting.
- Rotating Health Care Corps. To provide home- and community-based health care, a team of trained national service participants administers diagnostic health tests and teaches preventive health classes at locations throughout a designated low-income region. The corpsmembers are college graduates with a strong pre-medical background, medical students and others that are trained and supported by medical experts in the respective fields. The Corpsmembers travel throughout the region conducting eye, dental, and hearing examinations, teaching classes to prevent common health problems,

a multitude of activities: outreach to the community to develop data for analysis and to facilitate cooperative relationships with law enforcement and other municipal service providers; establish links with service groups which assist the target population to provide information about specific crime threats; conduct victim assistance outreach to ensure that crimes are reported and that victims receive appropriate attention; provide language and cultural training for law enforcement personnel.

- Lawyers Corps. To improve crime control, a corps of trained lawyers provides legal services, counsel and community education. They work in a specific community with legal services programs and other community service providers to educate community members, especially juveniles, about aspects of the law that affect their daily lives. One team works with community development corporations to do the legal work that accompanies neighborhood economic development. Another team works in the criminal justice system on behalf of children and victims of domestic violence.

Crime Prevention: reducing the incidence of violence

- Community Policing Corps. To reduce crime in areas plagued by violence, corpsmembers partner with police officers engaged in community policing. The corpsmembers are trained by the police department in problem-solving and conflict resolution, trained by staff from other city agencies in identifying and accessing city resources, and trained by community groups in neighborhood organizing and leveraging neighborhood resources. The corpsmembers work alongside community policing officers but may also coordinate "safe haven" activities for youth, staff community policing substations, hold crime prevention workshops for community businesses and residents, organize block parent networks, and assist with community outreach.
- Safe Schools. To reduce the incidence of violence in the schools, a corps of college students works in middle and high schools throughout an urban area. The corpsmembers work with school administrators, students, parents, teachers, and the surrounding community to establish peer conflict resolution programs in the schools. Corpsmembers train students and school staff in conflict resolution and assist in the organization of self-sustaining programs in which students assist their peers in resolving conflicts. Possible projects include incorporating conflict resolution into the disciplinary approach of the school and outreach to the community encouraging non-violent approaches to conflict.
- Child Abuse Prevention Corps. To reduce the incidence of child abuse and the likelihood of repeat occurrences, a corps of trained participants serve as child abuse case aides. Corpsmembers follow-up on child abuse cases by gathering information and providing assistance and referrals. Corpsmembers serve as

and administering immunizations. Corporate partners provide the needed equipment, including corrective eye wear, dental instruments and hearing aids.

- *Health Corps.* To improve the health of low-income communities, undergraduate nursing, pre-medical, psychology, and biology students at a university receive training from medical residents and faculty on preventive health care. Students are organized in interdisciplinary teams of four, with one medical student leader in each. Participants begin working part-time with community health clinic staff, conducting health outreach, teaching preventive health classes, performing routine procedures, and following up with patients through home visits. For one year after graduation, participants work full-time at the community health clinics, applying the skills they learned during the part-time phase of the program and taking on increasing responsibility.
- *HIV/AIDS Prevention Corps.* To reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in a community, a corps of national service participants provides HIV/AIDS education to the populations at greatest risk of infection within a metropolitan area. This team of post-college students receives training from university faculty, local health clinics, and national organizations on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and related health issues. Corpsmembers serve as HIV/AIDS educators throughout the metropolitan area by conducting workshops in public and private schools, universities, community centers, local clinics, and non-profit organizations. Participants work with community organizations and schools to conduct AIDS education outreach, teach preventive health classes, develop service-learning projects and establish effective sustainable prevention programs. Their work enhances the educational efforts of local clinics while also serving as a mobile clearinghouse for prevention and treatment resources.
- *Home Health Care.* To allow continued independence of those in need, a program sponsored by a veteran's hospital, AIDS clinic, or facility providing health care to senior citizens engages an intergenerational team of participants in providing home-based services. Participants conduct follow-up visits to individuals discharged from the hospital, provide routine preventive health checks, assist home-bound individuals in obtaining needed services, provide nutritious meals, offer companionship, and provide transportation to medical and other appointments.
- *Home Visiting.* To reduce infant mortality among low-income families, a program is sponsored by a community agency, hospital, community health center, or other organization offering prenatal care. Participants, including many who are parents themselves, are trained to conduct home visits, conduct blood pressure and other health examinations, provide nutrition

counseling, offer parenting education, refer pregnant women and new mothers to needed services including substance abuse treatment, and organize support groups for new mothers.

- Participants with cognitive disabilities. To utilize the resource presented by individuals with mental retardation and address community needs, a program involves individuals with cognitive disabilities in service alongside people who do not share this disability. Goals include increasing community appreciation of individuals with mental retardation as resources, increasing their self-sufficiency, and providing needed services in nursing homes, homeless shelters, and day care centers.

Home: rebuilding neighborhoods and helping people who are homeless or hungry

- Intergenerational Building Corps. To rebuild neighborhoods, an intergenerational team comprised of skilled carpenters, architects, electricians, planners, engineers and construction workers builds and renovates low-income residences, public facilities, abandoned houses, and non-profit facilities. Corpsmembers undergo general construction and architecture training sponsored by community-based development organizations and institutions of higher education. The Corps focuses on rebuilding local communities in conjunction with the existing community efforts and involves local residents in the identification of needs and potential projects. Such projects may include the development of a single room occupancy residence, the renovation of a local school building, and the rehabilitation of several low-income single-family houses. The Corps makes a significant effort to collaborate with labor unions and retired military personnel who are skilled in the appropriate areas.
- Community Housing Corps. To assist people who are homeless move into permanent housing, a team of skilled participants assist low-income homeowners and residents in home management and in identifying and accessing needed resources. The trained corpsmembers conduct educational sessions on the care and management of one's home, such as basic plumbing, electrical, and physical maintenance. In addition, corpsmembers familiarize and link the residents with the existing network of community services such as employment training, homeowner's clubs, child care, health facilities and tutoring programs.
- Community Centers. To strengthen communities, a program supported by the local government and community leaders creates a safe, functioning community center. The community center may be a new facility, a renovated building, or an existing center that has fallen out of use. Trained national service participants help develop the center by doing physical construction

and renovation work, strengthening partnerships with police and community groups to make the center a safe haven, and providing services such as summer and after school programs, literacy tutoring, recreational activities, and education classes.

- *A Corps of Artists*. To utilize the arts as a vehicle for community and physical space improvement, this program brings together a corps of artists with higher education training. The artists conduct community-based educational and enrichment programs for at-risk youth in the local schools, youth service facilities, community organizations, and shelters. The artists develop innovative arts-based curriculum for existing national service programs to nurture and channel the artistic talents of youth in constructive ways. Possible projects include creating positive community art (murals, sculptures, etc.), theater productions, and intergenerational quilts.
- *Community Economic Development*. To increase economic stability within a low-income neighborhood, national service participants assist both non-profit community development banks and community members. Using their expertise in business and finance, participants provide advice to low-income residents on issues such as personal financial management, home loans, and mortgages. Participants work with non-profit neighborhood development organizations to attract new investments and jobs to the neighborhood. Participants assist non-profit community development banks in administering loans and creating new small business opportunities.
- *Veterans' Assistance Program*. To help people who are homeless, an intergenerational program provides individual case management to link homeless veterans with a broad range of services such as housing, job training and health care. The participants are trained and supported by local shelters and veterans' assistance agencies. Possible projects include compiling oral histories of veterans' service and post-service experiences, providing recreational activities, and developing and distributing a regional directory of resources for veterans.
- *Disaster Relief Corps*. To rebuild neighborhoods and help people who are homeless, a disaster relief corps provides needed services to communities affected by federal emergencies. Participants are selected based upon demonstration of special skills required for recurring demands of the first stage of emergency response. Such skilled participants include emergency room technicians, public information specialists, volunteer coordinators, and search and rescue experts. The participants receive a common training and then are placed across the country in emergency service programs such as emergency medical clinics in rural areas and CPR training programs. Upon

the occurrence of a national emergency, the participants would converge on the disaster site in a coordinated response, assisting local emergency authorities in critical activities.

ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhood Environment: reducing community environmental hazards

- **Lead Paint Abatement/Weatherization Program.** To improve energy efficiency, cut operating costs in public buildings and housing, and reduce the incidence of lead poisoning, a corps of college students weatherize and remove lead paint in public buildings and low-income housing. Participants work with public agencies and housing authorities to retrofit buildings with energy efficient windows, insulation, and solar panels. Students gather data on building energy efficiency and design systems and solar panels for them. As part of the window re-installation and energy retrofitting, they also test for lead paint and work to remove it where needed in the buildings.
- **The Clean Up Corps.** To eliminate environmental risks, a corps of college graduates in environmental and natural sciences conduct community clean up projects. The corps is trained and supported by an organization of environmental and hazardous waste experts. The corps develops and implements major waste removal initiatives throughout urban and rural communities, especially in low-income areas. In addition, the corps conducts beautification projects, community education classes, and coordinates service learning projects.
- **Neighborhood Park Corps.** To revitalize neighborhoods and provide safe environments for children, landscape architecture students at a university work with local neighborhoods to design and construct neighborhood parks. The students survey the neighborhood to find out what kind of parks are needed and recruit local residents to help develop a site plan, raise funds, and construct and maintain the green spaces.

Natural Environment: conserving, restoring, and sustaining natural habitats

- **Youth at Sea.** To conserve and restore natural habitats, a corps of young participants spend nine months aboard a ship conducting conservation and restoration work along a region of the ocean's coast. The corpsmembers are trained and educated in environmental sciences, oceanography and biology by university faculty and issue experts. The corpsmembers conduct waste

removal projects, restore eroded shorelines, and preserve endangered plant life. Aboard the ship, corpsmembers are responsible for the daily operations and maintenance of the vessel.

- *Biological Survey Program.* To conserve natural habitats, participants gather data on plant, animal, mineral and other resources. Participants are graduate students in biology, resource conservation, and environmental studies. The students are trained and supported by State and Federal resource agencies and university faculty. The students survey plant and animal life and monitor the status of land, plant, and animal resources. The students compile this data which the agencies use to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and the health of specific ecological systems.