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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY

FROM: Victor Vasquez *1/1*
Deputy Administrator
Office of Community Development

SUBJECT: Organizational Structure of USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps

ISSUE

There is a need to structure the AmeriCorps national service program within the Rural Development mission area in order to clarify the management and functions of the President's initiative.

BACKGROUND

The USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program is a major success. Among other projects, AmeriCorps members have helped families obtain running water; provided early childhood developmental services; and helped counties improve their ability to respond to emergencies. Most of these activities have occurred within the borders of Empowerment Zones (EZ), Enterprise Communities (EC), and Champion Communities.

There are currently two USDA Rural Development employees working with the AmeriCorps program on a full-time basis. One employee is a State Rural Development Coordinator in the Wisconsin USDA Rural Development state office who has been detailed to Rural Business Service (RBS) to work on AmeriCorps. The other has been detailed from Policy and Planning to work on AmeriCorps for Rural Housing Service (RHS) in the national office. Since the inception of the program, Norm Reid (RBS) and John Pentecost (RHS) have served as policy and program staff advisors. Policy decisions are generally made by obtaining approval from the Administrators of both RHS and RBS.

At present, there is little linkage between USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps and USDA Rural Development management in the national office. There is no formal structure of reporting to appropriate management officials.

OPTIONS

OPTION 1: Create a position, the Director USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps, who would be responsible for the management of the USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program and would report directly to the Under Secretary. Current USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps staff would report directly to this staff person.

PRO:

There should be a single point of contact for the USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program to ensure that policy decisions are made efficiently and consistently. As an important Presidential Initiative, the AmeriCorps program should be centralized and administered through the national office by an USDA Rural Development policy-making staff member.

As the work of the AmeriCorps program crosses traditional agency lines, it is important that the USDA Rural Development Under Secretary have direct responsibility and oversight over its management.

CON:

This would create a new layer within the organizational structure of USDA Rural Development, and would require an additional staff member.

This option would not encourage coordination between the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program, where most of the work of USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps occurs.

This option would require a significant change in the way the traditional chain-of-command is viewed and could give the impression that RHS and RBS will have less of a role in USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps.

OPTION 2: Place the management of the USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program under the umbrella of the rural EZ/EC initiative. Under this option, USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps staff would report through the Director of the EZ/EC initiative to the USDA Rural Development Under Secretary. The EZ/EC Director would communicate with the USDA Director of National Service to ensure further ensure proper management of USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps. EZ/EC staff would be assigned to work directly with the agency coordinators of RBS, RHS, Rural Utilities Service (RUS), and USDA AmeriCorps.

PRO:

There should be a single point of contact for the USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program to ensure that policy decisions are made efficiently and consistently. As an important Presidential Initiative, the AmeriCorps program should be centralized and administered through the national office by an USDA Rural Development policy-making staff who can make decisions impacting both rural EZ/EC and the AmeriCorps program.

Combining management functions would be more efficient. The EZ/EC initiative already crosses traditional agency lines and reports directly to the Under Secretary's office, meaning that it is organized to address issues applicable to the entire mission area.

The majority of USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps sites are located in EZ/EC and Champion communities. Therefore, it makes sense to strengthen the administrative ties and policy guidance between these two high profile presidential initiatives.

CON:

Not all members work in offices located within the borders of EZ/EC or Champion Communities. In FY 1996, for example, 40 AmeriCorps members operate out of USDA Rural Development state offices. Even these members, however, usually perform work for EZ/EC or Champion Communities.

This option would require a significant change in the way the traditional chain-of-command is viewed and could give the impression that RHS and RBS will have less of a role in USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps.

OPTION THREE: Maintain the current management structure.

PRO:

This option would require the fewest changes in current policy.

CON:

The current ad-hoc management structure is ill-defined, does not ensure an adequate future for the AmeriCorps program, and often leads to a inefficient decision-making process.

RECOMMENDATION:

Option Two would provide for the best management structure of the USDA Rural Development AmeriCorps program and would help ensure the continued viability of the program. Working closely with the office of the USDA Rural Development Under Secretary and the Director of USDA's AmeriCorps program, the Director of the EZ/EC program is best situated to oversee this inter-agency program in an efficient manner.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY

Approve

Option 2 - JLD

Date

4-11-96

Disapprove

Discuss with me

Reviewed by

JOEL BERG

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY

FROM: Victor Vasquez
Deputy Administrator
Office of Community Development

SUBJECT: RECD AmeriCorps

ISSUE

There is a need to structure the AmeriCorps national service program within the RECD mission area in order to clarify the management and functions of the President's initiative.

BACKGROUND

The RECD AmeriCorps program is a major success. Among other projects, AmeriCorps members have helped families obtain running water; provided early childhood developmental services; and helped counties improve their ability to respond to emergencies. Most of these activities have occurred within the borders of Empowerment Zones (EZ), Enterprise Communities (EC), and Champion Communities.

There are currently two RECD employees working with the AmeriCorps program on a full-time basis. One employee is a State Rural Development Coordinator in the Wisconsin RECD state office who has been detailed to Rural Business Service (RBS) to work on AmeriCorps. The other has been detailed from Policy and Planning to work on AmeriCorps for Rural Housing Service (RHS) in the national office. Since the inception of the program, Norm Reid (RBS) and John Pentecost (RHS) have served as policy and program staff advisors. Policy decisions are generally made by obtaining approval from the Administrators of both RHS and RBS.

At present, there is little linkage between RECD AmeriCorps and RECD management in the national office. There is no formal structure of reporting to RECD management.

OPTIONS

OPTION 1: Create a position, the Director RECD AmeriCorps, who would be responsible for the management of the RECD AmeriCorps program and would report directly to the Under Secretary. Current RECD AmeriCorps staff would report directly to this staff person.

PRO:

There should be a single point of contact for the RECD AmeriCorps program to ensure that policy decisions are made efficiently and consistently. As an important Presidential Initiative, the AmeriCorps program should be centralized and administered through the national office by an RECD policy-making staff member.

As the work of the AmeriCorps program crosses traditional agency lines, it is important that the RECD Under Secretary have direct responsibility and oversight over its management.

CON:

This would create a new layer within the organizational structure of RECD, and would require an additional staff member.

This option would not encourage coordination between the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program, where most of the work of RECD AmeriCorps occurs.

This option would require a significant change in the way the traditional chain-of-command is viewed and could give the impression that RHS and RBS will have less of a role in RECD AmeriCorps.

OPTION 2: Place the management of the RECD AmeriCorps program under the umbrella of the rural EZ/EC initiative. Under this option, RECD AmeriCorps staff would report through the Director of the EZ/EC initiative to the RECD Under Secretary. The EZ/EC Director would communicate with the USDA Director of National Service to ensure further ensure proper management of RECD AmeriCorps. EZ/EC staff would be assigned to work directly with the agency coordinators of RBS, RHS, Rural Utilities Service (RUS), and USDA AmeriCorps.

PRO:

There should be a single point of contact for the RECD AmeriCorps program to ensure that policy decisions are made efficiently and consistently. As an important Presidential Initiative, the AmeriCorps program should be centralized and administered through the national office by an RECD policy-making staff who can make decisions impacting both rural EZ/EC and the AmeriCorps program.

Combining management functions would be more efficient. The EZ/EC initiative already crosses traditional agency lines and reports directly to the Under Secretary's office, meaning that it is organized to address issues applicable to the entire mission area.

The majority of RECD AmeriCorps sites are located in EZ/EC and Champion communities. Therefore, it makes sense to strengthen the administrative ties and policy guidance between these two high profile presidential initiatives.

CON:

In FY 1996, of the 110 RECD AmeriCorps sites, there are approximately 40 that are not stationed inside EZ/EC or Champion Communities. Even these members, however, almost always perform work for EZ/EC or Champion Communities.

This option would require a significant change in the way the traditional chain-of-command is viewed and could give the impression that RHS and RBS will have less of a role in RECD AmeriCorps.

OPTION THREE: Maintain the current management structure.

PRO:

This option would require the fewest changes in current policy.

CON:

The current ad-hoc management structure is ill-defined, does not ensure an adequate future for the AmeriCorps program, and often leads to a inefficient decision-making process.

RECOMMENDATION:

Option Two would provide for the best management structure of the RECD AmeriCorps program and would help ensure the continued viability of the program. Working closely with the office of the RECD Under Secretary and the Director of USDA's AmeriCorps program, the Director of the EZ/EC program is best situated to oversee this inter-agency program in an efficient manner.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Date _____

Draft - Sean O'Neal 3-27-96

Reviewed by _____

Draft - Sean O'Neal 3-27-96



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

D9553

April 6, 1994

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY/DEPUTY SECRETARY

THROUGH: James Michael Kelly *JKelly*
Associate General Counsel

FROM: Joel Berg *JB*
Deputy Director, Office of Public Affairs

SUBJECT: Justification of Non-Competition of Current National Service Projects

ISSUE:

The Corporation for National and Community Service has given tentative approval to our grant request for money to operate our Summer of Safety project with the Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences. Their grant will make it possible to run the program this summer. It will provide jobs to participants, many of whom will be recent graduates of the high school, service to the community, and up to 50 education awards worth \$1,000 each for participants who successfully serve the entire summer. In order to accept the Corporation's funds for the Chicago project as well as the major yearlong programs we have planned in the areas of rural development, anti-hunger, and the environment, the Department must award the necessary discretionary cooperative agreements non-competitively for this year's round of applications.

BACKGROUND:

In September of 1993, Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act, which enables Federal Departments to manage national service programs individually or manage them in partnership with others. The basic mechanism for the Department to enter into "partnerships" with non-profit groups and State and local organizations for the purpose of implementing national service programs is a discretionary cooperative agreement. Under normal circumstances, such agreements should be awarded on a competitive basis. However, the time between publication of the Corporation for National and Community Service's final rules on March 11, 1994 and the application deadlines of March 14 for Summer of Safety programs and April 29, 1994 for AmeriCorps FY 95 yearlong projects, make it impractical to engage in a competitive process.

Departmental regulations allow for the award of agreements non-competitively where such awards are in the best interest of the Government and/or where such competition is impractical. The National and Community Service Trust Act makes it clear that Federal departments are expected to manage national service programs and that such participation is necessary for the Corporation to meet its objectives. The lack of sufficient time to compete awards was a factor

imposed on us externally by the Corporation and not the result of any delay within the Department. Combined, these two factors would seem to form a necessary justification for making non-competitive awards in this first year of the program.

In addition to the above issues, I believe that the other factors listed below further justify a decision to make our initial awards non-competitively:

1. The Department is using the implementation of pilot projects for FY 94 Summer of Safety and FY 95 AmeriCorps programs as the mechanism to develop the necessary regulations, procedures, and processes for ensuring maximum competition in future awards.
2. While it is impractical for the Department to initially make awards competitively, the award process is not devoid of competition. The Corporation's approval of applications is based on their own formal competitive process which conforms to all applicable Federal laws and regulations. For the Department's applications for FY 94 Summer of Safety and FY 95 AmeriCorps programs to be approved, they must first be reviewed and graded by a panel of independent experts and then selected on the basis of objective and subjective rankings.
3. The projects that will be sent to you for your final approval are the result of meetings, briefings, calls and mailings to hundreds of farming, anti-hunger, rural development, environmental, and other constituency groups over the last 11 months. We have endeavored to give the broadest possible exposure to TEAM USDA's national service program.

OPTIONS:

1. Participate in the national service program for the summer of 1994 and the yearlong programs beginning in September of 1994 and running through June of 1995 by relying on the attached justification for non-competition as well as the competition conducted by the Corporation. In addition, use the experience gained in running programs to establish the necessary competitive procedures for all awards in following years beginning with the Summer of Service programs in June of 1995.

PRO: The Summer of Safety program we are proposing to run in partnership with the Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences will be able to proceed. This program alone will result in the Corporation awarding up to 50, \$1,000 education awards to participants. The yearlong programs we are proposing will result in the award of up to 1,500, \$4,725 education awards from the Corporation's funds. Both the summer and yearlong programs will also result in significant benefit to the public in the areas of rural development, anti-hunger, and the environment.

CON: An organization or member of Congress may protest based on the lack of competition in our selection process. However, it must be pointed out that our regulations do provide for exemptions to competition and OGC has concurred with the attached justification laying out the rationale for non-competition in this instance.

2. Do not participate in the national service program for the summer of 1994 and the yearlong programs beginning in September of 1994 and running through June of 1995 until the necessary competitive procedures can be established.

PRO: No discretionary cooperative agreements would be granted without competition.

CON: The Summer of Safety project involving the Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences would have to be canceled. We would not be able to run the major yearlong programs we have planned in the areas of rural development, anti-hunger, and the environment you have previously announced. The Department could not participate in any projects until the next Summer of Service period which would be June of 1995.

RECOMMENDATION:

I recommend implementing option one. I request that you endorse the attached justification for non-competition of current national service projects, which will allow us to proceed with any projects the Corporation for National and Community Service approves this year.

As manager of the Department's national service program I want to assure you that I recognize the need for and value of competitive awards. Given the circumstances, every effort is being made to minimize the negative impact of non-competition and to use the existing circumstances to ensure that a sound, long-term process is set in place to foster competition in all future awards. In the interim, the projects that are forwarded to you for final selection as part of the USDA AmeriCorps application were not formulated in a vacuum. They are the result of almost a year's worth of conversations and presentations to the widest variety of constituent groups, non-profit groups, members of the public, and State and local organizations.

As a final note, I would add that the approach recommended here, that is to award non-competitively now while developing proper procedures for competition in all future awards, is an approach that is being adopted by other Federal departments, most notably Health and Human Services.

Agree

_____✓_____

Date

_____4/24/94_____

Disagree

Discuss

Reviewed by

**JUSTIFICATION FOR NON-COMPETITIVE SELECTION OF SITES
AND PARTNERS FOR USDA FY 94 "SUMMER OF SAFETY"
AND
FY 95 AMERICORPS YEARLONG PROJECTS**

Pursuant to the regulations contained in 7 CFR 3015.158 (d), the Deputy Director for Public Liaison who serves as the Department of Agriculture's National Service Program manager hereby determines that it is in the best interest of the government and necessary to the accomplishment of the goals of the program to award co-operative agreements for FY 94 Summer of Safety and FY 95 AmeriCorps programs non-competitively. As these agreements are being executed, a concurrent effort will be undertaken to develop the rules, policies, and procedures necessary to ensure that all subsequent awards are made competitively. This determination was made after careful consideration of several factors including:

1. USDA participation in national services programs is needed for the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Government to meet the goals for the nation's national service program;
2. The limited time available to apply to the Corporation for funds makes competition impractical;
3. The national service program is new and pilot projects are needed to maximize the Department's ability to define the proper procedures and rules for implementing the program in the future;
4. Because Federal agency involvement in national services programs is designed to build on existing structures, the Department opted to focus on projects that most closely resembled current service structures in order to provide a foundation for expanding structures and services in the future; and
5. The process of awarding funds for projects is not completely devoid of competition because the Department's application to AmeriCorps is approved by the Corporation on a competitive basis.

The following discussion presents a detailed explanation of each factor considered in making the determination to award cooperative agreements non-competitively.

I. ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROGRAM GOALS

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, P.L. 103-82, clearly states that one of its main objectives is to, "build on the existing organizational service infrastructure of Federal, State, and local programs and agencies to expand full-time and part-time service opportunities for all citizens..."¹ The important role of Federal agency participation in national service programs is reinforced in the Act's provision to allow the Corporation for National and Community Service to, "...enter into a contract or cooperative agreement with another Federal agency to support a national service program carried out by the agency."² It is clearly the intent of the program to use participation by Federal agencies to accomplish its goals. There are even specific funds set aside solely for the purpose of awarding money to Federal agencies who apply to run programs individually or in partnership with other Federal agencies, non-profit organizations, institutions of higher learning, etc. A failure by Federal departments to participate would adversely affect the Corporation for National and Community Service's (AKA AmeriCorps) ability to achieve its goals.

II. TIME CONSTRAINTS

In order to participate, Federal agencies (Federal departments and independent agencies) must submit applications for funds to the Corporation for National and Community Service by the deadlines established by the Corporation's rules. Because the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was not signed into law until September 21, 1993, there has been little time for the Corporation for National and Community Service (AKA AmeriCorps) to establish the necessary rules to guide Federal departments in their implementation of the program. Prior to enactment of the law, the Department undertook several initiatives to prepare for its implementation. A work group was established in March of 1993 to begin defining how to implement national service within USDA and to structure the "models" that form the guides for such service. Unfortunately, the late signing of the bill left insufficient time for USDA to complete all the steps necessary to engage in full competition for its projects.

AmeriCorps did not publish its notice of availability of funds for Summer of Safety programs until February 3, 1994. The time between this notice and the application deadline of March 14, 1994 was insufficient to allow for a publication by USDA of a request for proposals, review the applications, and submit an application to AmeriCorps. This left two options: one, do not submit a Summer of Safety application; two, identify projects that had previously been discussed within the Department and see if they were candidates for submission to AmeriCorps. In view of the time constraints, it was determined to be in the best interest of the Government and necessary to carry out the objectives of the USDA National Service program to choose the later option. The precise mechanism for choosing projects is described in Paragraph IV.

¹P.L. 103-82, Sec. 2(a)(7)

²P.L. 103-82, Sec. 121(b)(1)

The severe time constraints placed on applicants in the initial year of the program can be seen in table 1. These time constraints are imposed on the Department externally and are not caused by delay within the Department.

Table 1. Time Line for Significant Events in Preparation of CNCS Application for FY 94 Summer of Safety Application Due 3/14/94 and Yearlong FY 95 AmeriCorps Programs due 3/29/94.

EVENT	DATE OCCURRED	DATE SUMMER OF SERVICE APPLICATION DUE	DATE YEAR-LONG AMERICORPS APPLICATION DUE	TIME AVAILABLE FOR USDA TO ESTABLISH AND CONDUCT COMPETITION ¹	REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME NEEDED TO CONDUCT COMPETITION ²
National and Community Services Trust Act of 1993 signed by President Clinton	9/21/93				
Draft Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) regulations published	1/7/94				
Notice of availability of Funds for Summer of Safety programs published	2/3/94				
Comment period on draft regulations ends	2/7/94				
CNCS Regulations approved by OMB	3/11/94	3/14/94		3 DAYS	150 DAYS
CNCS final regulations published	3/18/94		3/29/94	42 DAYS	150 DAYS

¹ Time from the approval of rules to the time an application was due to be delivered to the CNCS.

² Time required to publish a request for proposals, have proposals evaluated by independent review panel, and make award of cooperative agreement, including the time to develop the necessary rules, publishing them, get comments and publish them in final form. The entire process could take 120 to 180 days. 150 days is used here as an average.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL RULES

Because Federal Department involvement in national service programs is new, it is necessary to establish the most effective process for ensuring that all future awards are made with the maximum degree of competition. The Office of Communications is establishing a schedule for the development of the necessary rules and regulations that will allow for full competition of awards beginning with the Corporation for National and Community Service's Summer of Service program in FY 95. The experiences gained in the initial awards will serve as a valuable "testing" ground to final rules and procedures that emphasize the integrity of the Department's program and the maximum benefit to the public.

IV. INTEGRATION OF NATIONAL SERVICE INTO USDA STRUCTURE

In addition to establishing departmental rules and procedures, it is necessary to evaluate how national service programs can be integrated into the Department's organizational structure. It is an obvious goal of the national service program to allow existing Federal organizations to merge, where practicable, their existing program delivery with national service projects. This is a formidable task in a department with 43 agencies and 115,000 plus employees.

Part of the process for developing rules and procedures involves an assessment of how the Department's existing resources can be focused to provide support to national service projects. This assessment involves three steps: 1) identify key agencies; 2) establish national service teams; and, 3) identify pilot projects for FY 94 applications.

1. Identify Key Agencies.

- a. In March of 1993, a national service work group was established in USDA. The group consisted of representatives from all agencies and offices. This group developed a proposed model for deliver of national service programs within USDA. The model consists of three "Teams":

- (1) An Environmental Team
- (2) An Anti-Hunger and Empowerment Team
- (3) A Rural Development Team

- b. In conjunction with the work group, the Office of Communication identified the key agencies that would need to be involved in pilot efforts. Initially, a total of four key agencies or groups of agencies were determined to already have program delivery mechanisms that mirror or closely resemble those necessary for national service projects. The Extension Service (ES), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) were determined to be the key groups associated with the Anti-Hunger team. The Forest Service (FS), the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and ES were determined to be the key group associated with the Environmental Team. The Rural Development Administration (RDA), Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), and Rural Electrification Administration (REA), SCS and FS were determined to be the key groups associated with the Rural Development Team.

Several of these agencies have large existing programs or delivery mechanisms that lend themselves to most effectively defining how national service should be implemented within USDA. The Extension Service supports the world's largest volunteer group, the 4-H Clubs. The Forest Service through its human resources division runs Youth Conservation Corps and National Forest Foundation camps that are similar to the type of project expected to be run under national service. The new Rural Development Team groups those agencies which form the focus of services in rural development which is one of the Corporation's priority areas. Finally, the Soil Conservation Service deals daily with the public in an interactive mode quite similar to that proposed for national service.

2. Establish National Service Teams.

Once the key agencies were identified, teams were established to develop the necessary procedures and propose pilot projects for submission in FY 94 applications. The teams were an expansion of the agencies' representatives on the national service work group. Their purpose is to move from a "work group" structure toward integration of national service within the agencies' established organizational structure.

3. Identify Pilot Projects.

- a. As part of the efforts to establish models for national service within the Department, USDA representatives attended a wide variety of forums, meetings, conventions, and briefings where the public was informed of the proposed national service program and the role that Federal departments might play if the law was enacted. In addition to the meetings, interviews were given to magazines and newsletters that would most likely be read by groups interested in engaging in partnerships with the Department.

While these efforts were not official requests for proposals, they served to alert the public of the national service program. As a result of these efforts a few organizations submitted unsolicited proposals to the Department. Three criteria were used to identify candidate pilot projects. Note that these projects are called "candidate" because their identification by USDA does not guarantee that they will be approved by AmeriCorps. The criteria are:

- (1) Does the project conform to the criteria established by the Corporation for National and Community Service;
- (2) Does the project maximize the Department's ability to use its resources in unique ways with an emphasis on the greatest number of partnerships between other Federal agencies, public, and non-profit organizations;
- (3) Does the project maximize the Department's ability to establish sound Department-wide rules, policies, and, procedures for the implementation of national service within its agencies.

- b. Table 2. shows the projects selected for the FY 94 Summer of Safety application submitted by the Department and the reasons for their selection.

Table 2. FY 94 Summer of Safety Pilot Projects

PROJECT	CRITERIA	RATIONALE FOR SELECTION
Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences	1. Conform to AmeriCorps criteria.	Participants will be doing work in three areas identified as appropriate for Summer of Safety: Youth as a Resource Restoring Safety to Public Spaces Youth Safety Initiatives
	2. Maximize Department's ability to use its resources and partner with other agencies.	Run in conjunction with the Justice Department, this project involves the participation of the Extension Service, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, The Chicago Public School District, and The Chicago Housing Authority. This mix of partners was not found in any other potential pilot project.
	3. Maximize Department's ability to establish sound policies and procedures for future awards.	The large number of partners, the relationship between USDA and the Justice Department and several local agencies lends itself to identifying issues and solutions in a wide variety of situations
Arizona Department of Youth Treatment and Rehabilitation	1. Conform to AmeriCorps criteria.	Participants will be doing work in three areas identified as appropriate for Summer of Safety: Youth as a Resource Restoring Safety to Public Spaces Youth Safety Initiatives

PROJECT	CRITERIA	RATIONALE FOR SELECTION
Arizona Department of Youth Treatment and Rehabilitation	2. Maximize Department's ability to use its resources and partner with other agencies.	Participants in this project include the State of Arizona Department of Youth Treatment and Rehabilitation, Arizona State University, the Forest Service and the Maricopa County Court System. It provides an expansion of the existing Youth Conservation Corps concept with the providing of service in an urban setting.
	3. Maximize Department's ability to establish sound policies and procedures for future awards.	The largest existing program in USDA that mirrors the national service concept is the Youth Conservation Corps. This project provides the opportunity to explore ways to expand that concept and integrate it with national service. It also provides an opportunity to work with elements of the local justice system to determine ways to best structure national service programs targeted at crime related issues.

V. EXISTING COMPETITION

There is already an element of competition in the award process. Projects developed by the Department are submitted to the Corporation for National and Community Service. All applications are reviewed by panels of independent experts, graded, and then evaluated by the Corporation's management before they are rejected or approved.



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250-1300

September 20, 1993

DECISION MEMO FOR THE SECRETARY

From: Joel Berg, Deputy Director of Public Affairs

Through: Ali Webb, Director of Public Affairs

Subject: Next Steps for National Service at USDA

ISSUE:

As you know, the National Service Trust Act will be signed by President Clinton tomorrow. While slightly scaled-down in cost and size, the final law basically resembles the broad outlines of the national service program that Clinton proposed during the campaign. It is a major victory for both President Clinton and the "New Democrat" politics championed by the DLC.

The House version of the bill contained an amendment by Congressman George Miller mandating that USDA run an environmental corps on public lands. Since you had previously testified in the Senate about your intention for USDA to run precisely such a program, we strongly supported the amendment and it was included in the final conference bill.

As a direct consequence of your vocal public support for national service, I have been able to obtain strong backing for our long-term planning efforts from most USDA agencies. The White House has continually recognized USDA as the leading Cabinet department in promoting the initiative, which is one of the President's top priorities.

USDA is also playing a major role in coordinating flood relief efforts tied to youth service. Ron brokered a compromise between myself and the Extension Service wherein a minimum of 10% of the disaster relief money spent by the Extension Service in the Midwest -- a minimum of \$290,000 -- will be used for 4-H youth service projects. Additionally, John Maynor and I are working closely with Secretary of Education Riley's office to determine what role we can have in helping manage a program authorized by the disaster bill that will allow up to \$8 million in work-study funds to be used for Midwest college students involved in community flood relief projects.

With regard to our long-term, non-flood related planning, we have made great progress. I have informally solicited help from over 30 different USDA employees in 10 different agencies. However, now that the bill has become law, I believe we should institutionalize our planning group into a cross-agency management team, which will eventually run our Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps, our Rural Development Corps, and our Environmental Corps.

In order to properly run a complex and challenging new program, I believe we need to build a management team comprised of some of the most talented and highly motivated employees from a wide range of USDA agencies. My goal is to make the assignment to the national service management team one of the most prestigious and sought-after jobs in the Department. With your continued support, national service will be a flagship project demonstrating the effectiveness of your "Team USDA."

DECISION # 1:

I recommend detailing six career employees from various USDA agencies to work full-time on developing our national service initiatives. I recommend selecting the detailees after conducting a Department-wide search open to all USDA employees. I recommend that at least three of the six employees will have program experience in nutrition, rural development, and natural resources. I further recommend that you direct the Assistant Secretary for Administration to find office space for at least nine employees to work together. (The six detailees, my assistant, and two full-time, non-paid interns.)

Agree _____

Date 9/30/93

Disagree _____

Discuss with me ✓

DECISION # 2:

I recommend that, by either meeting or memo, you communicate to your Sub-Cabinet and the relevant Agency Administrators that national service is an important priority for both the President and yourself. I recommend that you ask them to give full support for non-reimbursable details for the six employees mentioned above.

Agree to do in a meeting ✓

Date 9/30/93

Agree to do by memo _____

Disagree _____

Discuss with me ✓



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Communications

Washington, D.C.
20250-1300

Decision
Memo

February 14, 1995

To: Dennis Kaplan, Ken Cohen

From: Joel Berg *JB*

Subject: **Revised National Service Decision Memorandum for the Secretary**

On Friday, I met with Acting Secretary Rominger to discuss long-term legal, budgetary, and structural issues regarding the Department's AmeriCorps national service program. He instructed me to revise the decision memorandum on these issues that I had previously submitted to former Secretary Espy, which both your offices had approved.

He asked me to submit the memorandum for his review and potential signature as soon as possible, indicating that these issues should not be kept in limbo until the new Secretary is confirmed.

In most respects, the memorandum is nearly identical to the previous memorandum: it requests the Secretary sign a formal delegation of authority for the program and approve specific staffing and funding levels for the structure coordinating the program for the Department. Unlike the previous memorandum, the revised memorandum does not request the Secretary to ask the sub-cabinet to identify funding sources for actual AmeriCorps project costs, since the agencies have already enthusiastically taken such action. This revised memorandum does, however, include two new recommendations: 1) that the AmeriCorps management functions for the Department be moved from the Office of Communications and into Executive Operations, and 2) that the Secretary propose language for the Farm Bill that would further institutionalize national service at USDA.

Please provide me your comments on this draft as soon as possible, and I will incorporate your comments and get you a final copy for signature immediately by Dewhurst and Kelly.

Thank you for your help.



DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

THROUGH: James Michael Kelly
Assistant General Counsel
Office of General Counsel

THROUGH: Stephen Dewhurst
Director
Office of Budget and Program Analysis

FROM: Joel Berg
Director of National Service
Office of Communications

SUBJECT: **INSTITUTIONALIZING THE USDA AMERICORPS PROGRAM**

ISSUE:

To date, the Office of Communications has coordinated the AmeriCorps national service program for the Department based on the authority of the National and Community Service Act of 1993 and on the instructions --- mostly verbal --- of former Secretary Espy. Thus, there is a need for you to legally formalize and institutionalize the AmeriCorps national service program within the organizational structure of USDA.

This memorandum requests that you: 1) formally delegate authority to manage the AmeriCorps/USDA national service program, 2) decide upon where the Departmental function for managing AmeriCorps should be housed within in the USDA organizational structure, 3) approve a process for staffing the Departmental management function, 4) approve a process for funding the Departmental management function for FY95 and FY96, 5) and decide upon whether or not the Department should propose inclusion of national service language in the 1995 Farm Bill.

BACKGROUND:

In September of 1993, Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which enables a wide variety of entities --- including Federal agencies --- to manage AmeriCorps national service programs. Using the authorities contained in the Act and the existing authorities of USDA programs, I have worked with the Department's agencies a to develop the Department's AmeriCorps program this year. Eleven different USDA agencies --- NRCS, FS, FCS, RHCDS, RBCDS, CFSA, RUS, ARS, CSREES, AMS, FSIS --- are actively involved in supporting AmeriCorps; to the extent permitted by law, some of these agencies are providing funding and staff support while others will be providing critically needed technical assistance.

While my efforts to coordinate our planning efforts with all these sometimes competing agencies have been a difficult challenge, most of the agencies have been ultimately supportive. The manner in which representatives from different agencies have worked together has been extremely encouraging to all those engaged in the process.

This program has provided proof of the viability of the Administration's vision of a reorganized and unified Department acting as "Team USDA." The national service program demonstrates that there are significant benefits to the employees and to the public when we plan and act as a team and not a group of disparate agencies.

My staff and I have been able to function to date within an informal structure based upon both the expressed interest of the former Secretary --- and the current Deputy Secretaries, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries --- and upon the applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Yet due to the great speed at which such a massive and complex program was launched by this Department on behalf of the President, some of the steps normally taken to institutionalize such a program at all levels of the bureaucracy have not yet been taken.

For instance, the Secretary has never formally delegated authority, in writing, for the program's management and the Secretary has never formally decided how and where in the Department the program will be managed. As a result, the program has been managed through the Office of Communications --- mostly because that is the office in which I began work for the Department -- even though the Office of Communications may not be the entity best suited to run such a program.

Thus, there is now an urgent need to take concrete actions to formalize the program legally, make a conscious decision about exactly where in the Department the AmeriCorps management function should be placed, institutionalize management of the program at the Departmental level, and develop long-term solutions for funding the support functions of the program.

Such actions are particularly necessary given the increased scrutiny from the USDA Office of Inspector General of the cooperative agreements the Department has signed to run AmeriCorps

ISSUE # 1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

Both the Office of General Counsel and the Office of Inspector General agree that the USDA AmeriCorps program now needs a formal delegation of authority in order for me or anyone else to continue signing documents on behalf of the program. Specifically, there is a need for one person to be delegated the authority vested in you to oversee and coordinate the efforts of the USDA's agencies in developing and managing national service programs.

Based on my two years of experience in the Department, I am more convinced than ever that we need a strong, non-bureaucratic, but fully empowered mechanism for managing national service at the Secretarial level. This program is too important to the President and too visible to be left to the agencies alone to manage.

Furthermore, the regulations of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees AmeriCorps, require that only one AmeriCorps application be submitted by each Federal department. Since the USDA AmeriCorps program is funded from multiple USDA mission areas, the Departmental application must be submitted at the Secretarial level.

Such a central coordinating role can only be carried out by someone with the authority to establish priorities and to create partnerships between agencies, and who has a clear picture of your vision and the President's vision.

Normally, the delegation of authority would be handled by identifying the organization that will manage the program and then amending the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) containing their existing authorities to add the national service program. However, because the program is operational now there is a need for an immediate delegation of authority to the Director of National Service for the Department. The more formal amendment of the appropriate delegations of authority can be integrated into the revision process being initiated by the overall reorganization of the Department.

OPTIONS For Issue #1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

1. **Do not delegate authority to anyone to oversee centrally, manage and coordinate the USDA AmeriCorps program.**

PRO: The agencies might feel that they were not being burdened by another layer of bureaucracy and will have more freedom to implement national service. Another advantage is that no paperwork would have to be done.

CON: The Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Inspector General would probably not allow me or any other informal designee of the Secretary to sign documents. In addition, it would be difficult to guarantee that the Department's program could be successfully implemented without a such central authority to manage the program.

2. **By Secretary's Memorandum, immediately delegate the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps program to the Director of National Service for the Department, a position I currently hold. Such a memorandum is attached for immediate signature.**

PRO: Such a delegation would only formalize the current role of the Department in the managing the program --- a role which has helped USDA build the largest, most complex, and, I believe, the highest quality program in the Federal government. Furthermore, by approving my appointment as Director of National Service for USDA, President Clinton has indicated his support for ensuring that his national service initiative is managed at the Departmental level.

CON: Again, the agencies might view the establishment of a formal national service group as impinging on their authority.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 1 - Delegating Authority for the AmeriCorps Program:

I recommend you implement option 2 by signing the attached memorandum.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

USDA National Service Program

1 PURPOSE

This memorandum establishes the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and designates the Director of National Service as the manager of the program for the Department.

2 BACKGROUND

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the Public Lands Corps. The intent of the legislation is to engage Americans of varied ages and backgrounds in community-based service. This service addresses the nation's educational, public safety, human, and environmental needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results. In doing so, national service will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. Federal departments are eligible to apply for funds to run national service programs directly or in partnerships with others.

3 POLICY

As the People's Department, it is the responsibility of all USDA agencies to strive for the maximum allowable participation by the USDA in the area of national service. By identifying existing programs that can be used to support national service initiatives or proposing new programs or projects, the Department will strive to the fullest extent possible to use AmeriCorps grants, services, and educational awards to leverage existing resources and to integrate the national service concept more fully into Departmental programs and activities. USDA will run programs in which both the AmeriCorps Members and the managers at every project site will represent a socio-economically diverse group of Americans.

4 DELEGATION

The Director of National service will manage the USDA national service program, and coordinate the Department's national service initiatives, including those involving the Public Lands Corps. The Director is authorized to prepare the Department's annual application to the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Director is further authorized to develop and oversee implementation of detailed guidelines and procedures for agencies to follow in planning, operating, staffing, and funding the program.

5. This Memorandum shall expire in ninety days.

ISSUE # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

To date, the USDA AmeriCorps program has been managed by a staff of three working within the Office of Communications (OC) and working in tandem with staff from multiple USDA agencies. This situation developed mostly by happenstance in that I worked in OC and former Secretary Espy directed me to run the program. Although this structure has worked well to date, it is unclear whether, from a policy standpoint, OC is the entity best suited within the Department to house this function; on general, OC communicates the policies administered by the Department, but does not administer those policies itself. In addition, Congress has continue to focus on cutting both the budget and FTEs for the Office of Communications. As AmeriCorps continues to grow as a program with budgets in the tens of millions and sites in most of the nation's sites, the AmeriCorps management functions place an increasing burden on OC.

In order to continue managing the program with even minimal Departmental coordination, the functions of managing the program should be either moved out of OC or OC should receive some additional resources.

OBPA has suggested that one of the most appropriate places to put this management function would be under the umbrella of Executive Operations, reporting directly to the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary. This would required moving three FTEs and their budgets from Oc to Executive Operations.

OPTIONS For Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. **Place the management functions of AmeriCorps under the umbrella of Executive Operations reporting directly to the Deputy Secretary and the Secretary, moving three FTES and their budget from the Office of Communications.**

PRO: By placing the program under Executive Operations, you would send a clear signal that AmeriCorps is an important priority to both the President, and yourself. This would also reinforce your intention that program is being coordinated at the Departmental level, thereby building "TEAM USDA." This action would also clarify the authority of the Director of national Service to submit one Departmental application to the Corporation for National service that incorporate projects funded by multiple USDA agencies in multiple USDA mission areas.

CON: Such a move would increase the size of the Office of the Secretary by three FTEs, thereby potentially bringing Congressional criticism from opponents of AmeriCorps or those who want to reduce the size of the Office of the Secretary.

2. **Maintain the management functions for the USDA AmeriCorps program within the Office of Communications.**

PRO: Keeping AmeriCorps management functions within the Office of Communications allows the Department to keep a lower profile for such management functions, potentially muting Congressional criticism.

CON: Without increased resources, OC will not be able to indefinitely continue proving such a high level of coordination to the AmeriCorps program.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 1. By placing AmeriCorps under the Office of the Secretary, it will have the stature necessary for one of the President's top initiatives. While such a move might generate opposition from some in Congress -- the fact is that the national and Community service Act was passed with broad bipartisan support, including the 27 Republicans in the House and seven Republicans in the Senate. The USDA program should be highly popular among most Members of Congress because it reinvents government by improving service delivery for less cost. You will be able to point out that, by placing this function under your direct leadership, you are not hiring more staff and you are not spending more taxpayer money, but that you are simply bringing together the efforts of multiple, pre-existing efforts, into one structure for unified program delivery. Moreover, given that fact that the USDA AmeriCorps programs spans so many different USDA mission areas, placing the program directly under the Office of the Secretary creates the best long-term institutional structure for balancing the interests of competing agencies.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by _____

ISSUE # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

At present, my staff includes myself and two other FTES, one at GS-15 and one at GS-12. In addition, my staff includes five other employees on temporary detail to AmeriCorps; I secure such temporary rotating detailees only after lengthy and repeated negotiations with agency administrators. This small and unstable staff is inadequate for running such a large, complex program, geographically diverse, and important program.

While it is difficult to make truly useful comparison to other programs, it provides at limited perspective to note that the USDA EZ/EC initiative --- managing sites in less than a dozen states --- has about 27 employees and is still understaffed. Thus, it is obvious that the AmeriCorps initiative --- managing projects in 38 states --- is highly understaffed with only three permanent employees and five rotating detailees.

Our problem is so acute that, from 3:30 to 7:00 pm., when the one and only support employee on detail to my office has left for the day, I am personally forced to answer our toll-free 800 recruitment line.

OPTIONS For Issue # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. **Approve a specific staffing plan attached for the AmeriCorps national service working group in which three employees work permanently but agencies are directed to provide the 11 specific positions specified in the plan.**

Detailees would still be rotated into the national service support unit to learn the USDA AmeriCorps procedures and policies and then return to their agencies to serve as a resource to manage the agency's individual program(s). However, this approach would provide far greater stability to the process.

PRO: This would formalize a staff for the program that would still be incredibly small, but would be able to carry out the minimal duties inherent in managing such a large program. It would help the Department guarantee that it now only has the largest single AmeriCorps program, but the highest quality AmeriCorps program as well.

CON: Agencies, now facing severe staffing cuts, may resent being required to provide more detailees to a Departmental initiative.

2. **Continue current method of attempting to obtain rotating temporary detailees.**

PRO: This option would impose the smallest burden on the agencies.

CON: This option would hamper the USDA AmeriCorps program by providing little continuity and long-term structure to a very complex initiative. This option may result in agencies giving AmeriCorps less support than is required of a major Presidential and Secretarial initiative. As agencies resources dwindle, AmeriCorps might be one of the first casualties.

Staffing
for
USDA National Service Group

POSITION ¹	NAME	GRADE ²	ORG ³	STATUS
Director	Joel Berg	ES-01	OC	Permanent
Deputy Director	TBD	TBD	TBD	Detailee
Coord. of Communications	Katherine Gibney	GM 13/14	OC	Permanent
Administrative Coord.	Ron De Munbrun	GM 15	OC	Permanent
Office Manager	Denise Bennet	GS 6/4	CFSA	Detailee
Anti-Hunger Coordinator	Donna Hines	GM 13/1	FCS	Detailee
RHCDS Agency Liaison	Jim Coyne	GM 12/7	RHCDS	Detailee
EZ/EC and RBCDS Liaison	David Gibson	GM 14	RBCDS	Detailee
Extension Service and 4-H Liaison	TBD	TBD	ES	Detailee
Forest Service State and Private Forestry Liaison	TBD	TBD	FS	Detailee
Evaluation Coordinator	TBD	TBD	TBD	Detailee
Resource/Grants Coordinator	TBD	GS 9/11	TBD	Detailee
Technology Support	TBD	GS 9/11	CSREES	Detailee
Clerical Support/Office Automation	TBD	GS 8	TBD	Detailee

¹ Some positions may be filled on a part time basis or they may filled on a rotating basis. This can be worked out between the Director and the agencies.

² Some grade levels are dependent on the grade of the current incumbent. Grade levels may increase or decrease as new personnel are rotated through the group and as requirements change.

³ The organization is determined by the subject matter of the position and/or the willingness or desire of an agency to lend support to the TEAM USDA national service group.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 3 - Staffing the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 1 by approving a specific staffing pattern for the Department's AmeriCorps management structure. This structure will allow us to institutionalize the program for the remainder of the Administration, and also build important structures to ensure that this critical program survives and prospers in future Administrations. Because staff would work for the program for a year on detail before returning back to their agencies, this would combine the benefits of central management while reducing the burden on agency resources and, in fact, enhancing those resources through the training of agency personnel.

Still, the eleven Member staff I have proposed will still be one of the smallest staffs in the Federal government for a program so large and complex. Furthermore, because all new employees will only be on detail, we will still be able to truthfully tell Congress and the media that our program only has three permanent employees managing it.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by _____

ISSUE # 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Function:

The central management function of the USDA AmeriCorps program has virtually no operating budget whatsoever provided by the Office of Communications other than Greenbook costs and than the salaries for the three FTES. In addition, for both policy and political reasons, I have chosen to take virtually no funds from the \$2.6 million grant to the Department from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Out of that grant, \$2.3 million is transferred directly to our anti-hunger sub-grantees, \$270,000 is transferred to NRCS, FS, RHCDS, RBCDS, and ARS, and only about \$30,000 was retained my by office.

Thus the central management function has virtually no money for the critical tasks of recruitment, project oversight, AmeriCorps Member Development, evaluation, or the support of Secretarial or sub-cabinet travel.

I now spend a great deal of my time literally begging agencies to fund small items on a rotating basis. For instance, every time we want to mail a wave of application to young people who have called our 800 line, we have to call various agencies just to obtain the envelopes and mailing labels. The problem is so severe that we cannot now obtain a phone line (Costing \$700) for a second fax machine we have already obtained. (To give you some idea of the vast volume of our work, I point out that we typically receive over 100 pages and send over 50 pages of faxes each day.)

Early start-up costs -- such as funding for travel and applications, copying the public service announcement you taped, and printing recruitment posters and brochures -- have been paid for primarily from the Office of Communications with some contributions from NRCS and FS. As we move towards expanding the Team USDA AmeriCorps, it is important to fund the formal management structure we have proposed to support the program.

OPTIONS for Issue 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Group:

1. Do not fund the central management group.

PRO: This will cause the least burden on the agencies.

CON: Without even minimal funding or staffing, it will be nearly impossible to continue management the program at the Departmental level. It will extremely difficult to continue coordinating a coherent set of operational guidelines, recruitment, training, and management procedures, and program objectives. In addition, many of the requirements of the CNCS involve interaction at the Departmental level. If a central organization is not funded to perform this role it would be necessary to create various task forces throughout the year to coordinate the agencies' efforts to evaluate programs, recruit participants, and submit an application to CNCS for a grant.

02/07/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 96 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$5,500
(800) Phone Number	\$14,400
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total:	\$41,648
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PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$0
Software	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total:	\$39,351
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AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total:	\$40,851
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EVALUATION

Travel	\$10,954
Materials	\$5,500
Photography	\$6,191
Video	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total:	\$42,892
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SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$10,954
Photography and Video	\$3,097

Sub-Total:	\$14,051
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TOTAL:	\$178,793
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Total number of AmeriCorps members in the USDA AmeriCorps program:	1211
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Average cost per participant of the National Service Director's budget:	\$148
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02/07/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 96 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SECTION I -----	OPERATING PLANS	ACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	PROJECTED COMMITMENTS	PROJECTED FOR YEAR	VARIANCE FROM PLAN
1100 Salaries:					
Salaries	0	0	0	0	0
Overtime	0	0	0	0	0
Awards	0	0	0	0	0
Lump Sum Payment	0	0	0	0	0
1200 Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL, SECTION I	0	0	0	0	0
SECTION II -----	OPERATING PLAN	ACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	COMMITMENTS THROUGH	OBLIGATION/ COMMITMENTS	UNOBLIGATED AS OF
2100 Travel	43,815	0	0	0	43,815
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000	0	0	0	2,000
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:					
Leases	0	0	0	0	0
Mail/Communications	14,400	0	0	0	14,400
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	14,400	0	0	0	14,400
2400 Print, Reproduction:					
Printing	6,000	0	0	0	6,000
Photography	9,300	0	0	0	9,300
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	15,300	0	0	0	15,300
2500 Other Services					
Training	0	0	0	0	0
Design	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Video and Film	0	0	0	0	0
Repair and Maintenance	1,300	0	0	0	1,300
Electronic Conferences	16,300	0	0	0	16,300
Contractors/Agreements	11,000	0	0	0	11,000
	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0
Fees	3,000	0	0	0	3,000
Other Ser., Subtotal	36,600	0	0	0	36,600
2600 Supplies/Materials					
Subscript/Public	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550	0	0	0	2,550
ADP Software	0	0	0	0	0
Gasoline	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	2,550	0	0	0	2,550
3100 Equipment:					
Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
ADP Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
Equipment, Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0	0	0	0	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140	0	0	0	64,140
	0	0	0	0	0
Reserve	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	178,805	0	0	0	178,805
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	178,805	0	0	0	178,805

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SECTION II

OPERATING
PLAN

2100 Travel	43,815 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	14,400 1,200 month for 800 number (12 mo) = 14,400
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	14,400
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	1,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter once a year
	5,000 Miscellaneous printing
	6,000
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event
	0
	0
	0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	9,300
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	0
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860
	12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,800 5 pagers X \$30 month X 12 months
	3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc.
	6,000 (internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	0 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
Other Ser., Subtotal	36,600
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	0
Gasoline	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	2,550
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	0
Equipment, Subtotal	0
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
	0
Reserve	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,805
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,805
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02/07/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 95 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$4,750
(800) Phone Number	\$10,800
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total:	\$38,784
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PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$7,988
Software	\$3,150
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total:	\$47,703
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AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total:	\$38,065
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EVALUATION

Travel	\$6,682
Materials	\$4,750
Photography	\$2,197
Video	\$2,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total:	\$37,862
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SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$6,682
Photography and Video	\$3,599

Sub-Total:	\$10,280
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TOTAL:	\$172,696
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Total number of AmeriCorps members in the USDA AmeriCorps program:	1211
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Average cost per participant of the National Service Director's budget:	\$143
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NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 95 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SECTION I -----	OPERATING PLANS	ACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	PROJECTED COMMITMENTS	PROJECTED FOR YEAR	VARIANCE FROM PLAN
1100 Salaries:					
Salaries	0	0	0	0	0
Overtime	0	0	0	0	0
Awards	0	0	0	0	0
Lump Sum Payment	0	0	0	0	0
1200 Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL, SECTION I	0	0	0	0	0
SECTION II -----	OPERATING PLAN	ACTUAL OBLIGATIONS	COMMITMENTS THROUGH	OBLIGATION/ COMMITMENTS	UNOBLIGATED AS OF
2100 Travel	26,726	0	0	0	26,726
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000	0	0	0	2,000
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:					
Leases	0	0	0	0	0
Mail/Communications	10,800	0	0	0	10,800
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	10,800	0	0	0	10,800
2400 Print, Reproduction:					
Printing	4,500	0	0	0	4,500
Photography	3,300	0	0	0	3,300
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	7,800	0	0	0	7,800
2500 Other Services					
Training	0	0	0	0	0
Design	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Video and Film	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Repair and Maintenance	1,300	0	0	0	1,300
Electronic Conferences	16,300	0	0	0	16,300
Contractors/Agreements	8,950	0	0	0	8,950
	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	3,996	0	0	0	3,996
Fees	3,000	0	0	0	3,000
Other Ser., Subtotal	43,546	0	0	0	43,546
2600 Supplies/Materials					
Subscript/Public	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550	0	0	0	2,550
ADP Software	3,150	0	0	0	3,150
Gasoline	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	5,700	0	0	0	5,700
3100 Equipment:					
Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
ADP Equipment	12,000	0	0	0	12,000
Equipment, Subtotal	12,000	0	0	0	12,000
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0	0	0	0	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140	0	0	0	64,140
	0	0	0	0	0
Reserve	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,712	0	0	0	172,712
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,712	0	0	0	172,712

SECTION II

OPERATING
PLAN

2100 Travel	26,726 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	10,800 1,200 month for 800 number (9 mo) = 10,800
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	10,800
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	3,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter 3 times a year 1,500 Miscellaneous printing 4,500
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event 0 0 0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	7,800
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	5,000 Write and film two promo videos at \$2,500
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860 12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,250 5 pagers X \$30 month X 8 months 3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc. 4,500 (internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	3,996 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
Other Ser., Subtotal	43,546
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	3,150
Gasoline	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	5,700
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	12,000 3 PC's at \$4,000 - FAX modem 250, printer 1500, software 500, PC 1750
Equipment, Subtotal	12,000
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
Reserve	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,712
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,712

2. **Provide limited funding to the Departmental AmeriCorps function by assessing small amounts of funds from all the agencies involved in running the program.**

Attached is a suggested \$172,696 budget for the remainder of FY95 and a suggested \$178,793 budget for FY96. Each agency would be "assessed" by OBPA for an amount to cover a portion of the cost for the national support structure. Departmental initiatives such as MAP are already funded in this manner. The amount of the assessment would be based on the size of the organization's existing programs and those planned for the next year which must be worked on during the current fiscal year.

The budget sheets are broken down into five categories that better demonstrate the specific programmatic needs: recruitment, project oversight, AmeriCorps Member development, evaluation, and costs of staff travel associated with Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel. Given that six different USDA agencies have a major role in running AmeriCorps, such coordinating functions are best performed at the Departmental, not an agency, level. Such Departmental coordination is critical to ensure that our programs meet both the President's vision of AmeriCorps and the Secretary's visions of "Team USDA."

PRO: The program is managed centrally for the Secretary. No new organization has to be created. No separate budget has to be submitted. Yet the Department would have at least minimal funds with to manage the program.

CON:

Again agencies may feel they are "losing" dollars. However, if the Secretary is to be guaranteed consistent and accountable management of the Team USDA national service initiatives, this money is a necessary expense associated with implementing national service.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 4 - Funding a National Service Group:

I recommend you implement option 2, provide an extremely low management budget for the program. The \$172,696 for the remainder of FY95 and the \$178,793 for FY96 would equal only about \$145 per Member per year to manage central functions relating to recruitment, project oversight, Member education and development, Member and staff training, evaluation, and support of Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel. This exceedingly low overhead percentage is highly defensible to the Congress, the media, and the general public.

It is important to note that most of the funds requested are already being expended by our agencies and this decision memorandum would simply clarify the ability of the Department to target and prioritize such spending.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

ISSUE # 5 - Proposing National Service Language for the Farm Bill

While the National and Community Service Act of 1993 clearly grants authority to Federal agencies to run national service programs, it leaves many questions unanswered about technicalities of how Federal agencies in general -- and USDA is particular -- can run such programs.

Furthermore, the Act's authorization expires in 1996, and if Congress fails to re-authorize it, USDA will no longer be able to run AmeriCorps programs.

Therefore, including AmeriCorps and national service in the Farm Bill could potentially be a vital way to institutionalize and expand the program at USDA.

If enacted, such language could accomplish three goals:

- A) Institutionalize the Secretary's ability to run national service programs, regardless of the status of the re-authorization of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.
- B) Increase the Department's flexibility in finding creative ways to use appropriated funds to support national service.
- C) Create a new non-profit foundation --- similar in structure and legal status to the National Forest Foundation, the National Parks Foundation, and the Friends of the National Arboretum -- to legally and ethically raise money from the private sector.

OPTIONS for Issue 5 - Proposing National Service Language for Farm Bill:

1. **Propose Farm Bill language to clarify the legal authority of USDA to run national service projects.**

PRO: Such language would greatly aid and support every aspect of the Department's AmeriCorps program and build a firm institutional structure that would last for at least five years.

CON: Members of Congress who oppose AmeriCorps might oppose such language

2. **Propose Farm Bill language to create the USDA National Service Foundation with the legal authority to raise private money to support USDA national service programs.**

PRO: Some Members of Congress who normally oppose AmeriCorps might nevertheless support our efforts to obtain private funds to support the program that might eventually supplant Federal funds.

CON: There are still some Members of Congress that are so opposed to AmeriCorps that they might oppose any attempts to aid AmeriCorps, even if such attempts are based on the conservative idea that such programs should be funded with private, not public, funds.

3. **Propose Farm Bill language on both of the above matters.**

I would work with Bill Galston at the White House, with the USDA Office of General Counsel, and with the Corporation for National Service to draft such language.

PRO: This comprehensive approach would simultaneously signal the Administration's desire to expand AmeriCorps while eventually lessening the program's dependence on Federal funds.

CON: The more comprehensive the AmeriCorps proposals, the higher visibility target it becomes for opponents who want to harm either AmeriCorps or the Administration's other Farm Bill proposals.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 5 - Proposing National Service Language for the Farm Bill

I recommend option three, which would be to propose both types of national service language in the Farm Bill. While it is uncertain whether Congress would accept such language, such a proposal would likely to be popular with the public, which overwhelmingly supports AmeriCorps. If, at any time whatsoever in the legislative process, such proposed national service language threatens to hamper the progress of the rest of the Farm Bill, such national service could immediately be dropped.

I believe both the White House and the Corporation for National and Community Service would embrace this proposal. Bill Galston, who is heading up the Farm Bill planning for the White House, was my supervisor on the Presidential Transition Team and is an enthusiastic supporter of AmeriCorps.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____



DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM:

Joel Berg *JB*
Director of National Service
Office of Communications

SUBJECT:

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE USDA AMERICORPS PROGRAM

ISSUE:

Since June 1994, the Office of Communications has coordinated the AmeriCorps national service program for the Department based on the authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and on the instructions --- mostly oral --- of former Secretary Espy. Thus, there is a need for you to legally formalize and institutionalize the AmeriCorps national service program within the organizational structure of USDA.

This memorandum requests that you: 1) formally delegate your authority to manage the AmeriCorps/USDA national service program to the Director of National Service; 2) decide upon where the Departmental function for managing AmeriCorps should be housed within the USDA organizational structure; 3) approve a process for staffing the Departmental management function; and 4) approve a process for funding the Departmental management function in FY95 and FY96.

BACKGROUND:

In September 1993, the Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which enables a wide variety of entities --- including Federal agencies --- to manage AmeriCorps national service programs. Using the authorities contained in the Act and the existing authorities of USDA programs, I have worked with the various USDA agencies to develop the Department's AmeriCorps program this year. Eleven different USDA agencies --- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Forest Service (FS), Food and Consumer Service (FCS), Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCDS), Rural Business & Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS), Consolidated Farm Service Agency (CFSA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), Agricultural Research Service (AMS), and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) --- are involved in supporting AmeriCorps.

While my efforts to coordinate our planning with all these sometimes competing agencies have been a difficult challenge, most of the agencies have been ultimately supportive. The manner in which representatives from different agencies have worked together has been extremely encouraging to all those engaged in the process.

This program has provided proof of the viability of the Administration's vision of a reorganized and unified Department acting as "Team USDA". The national service program demonstrates that there are significant benefits to USDA employees and to the public when we plan and act as a team and not as a group of disparate agencies. Our first quarterly report (summary attached) documents our remarkable accomplishments throughout the country.

To date, my staff and I have been able to function within an informal structure based upon both the expressed intent of the former Secretary --- and the Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries --- and upon the applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Yet due to the great speed with which such a massive and complex program was launched by this Department on behalf of the President, some of the steps normally taken to formalize such a program at all levels of the bureaucracy have not yet been taken.

For instance, the Secretary has never formally delegated authority, in writing, for the program's management nor formally decided how and where in the Department the program will be managed. The White House did, however, appoint me as the Director of National Service for USDA. As a result, the program has been managed by me as the Director of National Service through the Office of Communications --- mostly because that is the office in which I began work for the Department --- even though the Office of Communications may not be the entity best suited to run such a program.

Thus, there is now an urgent need to take concrete actions to formalize the program legally, make a conscious decision about exactly where in the Department the AmeriCorps management function should be placed, institutionalize management of the program at the Departmental level, and develop long-term solutions for funding the support functions of the program.

ISSUE # 1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

Both the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of the Inspector General agree that the USDA AmeriCorps program now needs a formal delegation of authority in order for me as the Director of National Service or anyone else besides the Secretary to continue signing documents on behalf of the program. Specifically, there is a need for one officer to be delegated the authority vested in you to oversee and coordinate the efforts of the USDA's agencies in developing and managing national service programs.

Based on my two years of experience in the Department, I am more convinced than ever that we need a strong, non-bureaucratic --- but fully empowered --- mechanism for managing national service programs. AmeriCorps is too important to the President and too visible to the public to lack strong direction at the Secretarial level. Furthermore, the regulations of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees AmeriCorps, require that only one AmeriCorps application be submitted by each Federal department. Since the USDA AmeriCorps program is funded from multiple USDA mission areas, the Departmental application must be submitted at the Departmental level.

The delegation of your authority to manage this program to the Director of National Service will allow the Director to submit the application on behalf of the Department to the Corporation, to sign necessary agreements relating to the USDA AmeriCorps Program, and to provide direction and management to all USDA agencies concerning the program. Such a central coordinating role can be carried out only by someone with the authority to establish priorities and to create partnerships between agencies, and who has a clear picture of your vision and the President's vision.

Your approval of this memorandum will function to formally delegate your authority over the USDA National Service Program to the Director of National Service.

OPTIONS For Issue #1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

1. **Do not delegate authority to anyone to oversee, centrally manage and coordinate the USDA AmeriCorps program.**

PRO: The agencies might feel that they were not being burdened by another layer of bureaucracy and will have more freedom to implement national service. Another advantage is that no paperwork would have to be done to establish the formal delegation.

CON: The Director of National Service would not have the authority to sign documents or make policy decisions on behalf of the Secretary relating to the USDA National Service Program. The Secretary would be required to sign personally all such documents. In addition, it would be difficult to guarantee that the Department's program could be successfully implemented without such management by a Director of National Service.

2. By Secretary's Memorandum, immediately delegate the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps program to the Director of National Service for USDA. Such a memorandum is attached for immediate signature.

PRO: Such a delegation would only formalize the current role of the Director of National Service in managing the program --- a role which has helped USDA build the largest and I believe, the highest quality national service program in the Federal government. Furthermore, by previously approving my appointment as Director of National Service for USDA, President Clinton has indicated his support for ensuring that his national service initiative is managed effectively at the Departmental level. Your delegating this authority to the Director of National Service will affirm your support for this important initiative.

CON: The agencies might view the establishment of a formal national service group as impinging on their authority.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 1 - Delegating Authority for the AmeriCorps Program:

I recommend you implement option 2 by signing the attached memorandum.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program

1 PURPOSE

This memorandum establishes the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and delegates the authority to manage the program for the Department to the Director of National Service.

2 BACKGROUND

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the AmeriCorps and Public Lands Corps Programs. The intent of the legislation is to engage Americans of varied ages and backgrounds in community-based service. This service addresses the Nation's educational, public safety, human, and environmental needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results. In doing so, national service will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. The Act authorizes the CNCS to provide assistance to private organizations, States, and Federal departments to conduct national service programs. The Act further authorizes Federal departments to run national service programs directly or in partnerships with others.

3 POLICY

As the People's Department, it is the responsibility of all USDA agencies to strive for the maximum allowable participation by USDA in the area of national service. By identifying existing programs that can be used to support national service initiatives or by proposing new programs or

projects, the Department will strive to the fullest extent possible to use assistance from the CNCS to leverage existing resources and to integrate the national service concept more fully into Departmental programs and activities. USDA will run programs in which both the AmeriCorps members and managers at every project site will represent a socio-economically diverse group of Americans.

4 DELEGATION

The Director of National Service is hereby delegated the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program, including the Public Lands Corps, and coordinate the Department's national service initiatives. The Director is authorized to prepare the Department's annual application to CNCS and to execute on behalf of the Department agreements with the CNCS and other entities concerning the USDA National Service Program.

The Director is further authorized to develop and oversee implementation of detailed guidelines and procedures for agencies to follow in planning, operating, staffing, and funding the program.

5 EXPIRATION

This memorandum shall expire after one year.

DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary

ISSUE # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

To date, the USDA AmeriCorps program has been managed by a staff of three working within the Office of Communications (OC) and working in tandem with five staff on detail from other USDA agencies. Although this structure has worked well to date, it is unclear whether, from a policy standpoint, OC is the entity best suited within the Department to house this function; in general, OC communicates the policies administered by the Department, but does not administer those policies itself. In addition, Congress has continued to focus on cutting both the budget and FTEs for OC. As AmeriCorps continues to grow as a program with a budget in the tens of millions and numerous sites across the nation, the AmeriCorps management functions will place an increasing burden on OC.

In order to continue managing the program with even minimal Departmental coordination, the functions of managing the program should either be moved out of OC or OC should receive some additional resources.

OPTIONS For Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. Maintain the management functions for the USDA AmeriCorps program within the Office of Communications.

PRO: Keeping AmeriCorps management functions within the Office of Communications allows the Department to keep a lower profile for such management functions, potentially muting Congressional criticism.

CON: As the OC budget is reduced through Congressional action and through the Secretary's reorganization efforts, the dedication of three FTE to the management of national service will pose an increasingly greater burden on OC. In addition, OC is not a line organization and possess little experience in running programs.

2. Place the management functions of AmeriCorps under the Assistant Secretary for Administration reporting to the head of the personnel function, moving three FTES and their budget from the Office of Communications.

PRO: By placing the AmeriCorps management function in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration you avoid increasing the size of the Office of the Secretary. There is also the potential to utilize the greater resources of the Assistant Secretary.

CON: By placing AmeriCorps in the same structure as the Office of Personnel, under an Assistant Secretary with no program functions, this action would reinforce the completely erroneous view that AmeriCorps is a jobs program, which could cause severe repercussions on the Hill and the White House. This action also would give the appearance of changing AmeriCorps from a line function to a support or administrative function, which is inconsistent with the nature of AmeriCorps programs.

3. **By Secretary's Memorandum, place the management functions of AmeriCorps directly in the Office of the Secretary, moving three FTEs and their budget from the Office of Communications. Such a memorandum is attached for immediate signature**

PRO: By placing the program within the Office of the Secretary, you would send a clear signal that AmeriCorps is an important priority to both the President and yourself. This would also reinforce your intention that the program is being coordinated at the Departmental level, thereby building "TEAM USDA." This action would also clarify the authority of the Director of National Service to submit one Departmental application to the Corporation for National and Community Service that incorporates projects funded by multiple USDA agencies in multiple USDA mission areas.

CON: Such a move would increase the size of the Office of the Secretary by three FTEs, thereby potentially bringing Congressional criticism from opponents of AmeriCorps or those who want to reduce the size of the Office of the Secretary.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 3. By placing AmeriCorps under the Office of the Secretary, it will have the stature necessary for one of the President's top initiatives. Even though their AmeriCorps programs are smaller than that of USDA, other Federal agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency, have placed the AmeriCorps management function within the Office of the Secretary or the Administrator. While such a move might generate opposition from some in Congress --- the fact is that the National and Community Service Trust Act was passed with broad bipartisan support, including 27 Republicans in the House and seven Republicans in the Senate. The USDA portion of AmeriCorps should be highly popular among most Members of Congress because it reinvents government by improving service delivery for less cost. This view seems to have been borne out by the fact that although there is a substantial amount of rhetoric coming from some in Congress concerning the need to cut national service in general, there does not appear to be a highly visible effort to attack the USDA program. This would seem to confirm that there is a base of support for USDA national service programs, in particular because of their effectiveness as relayed to Members of Congress through their constituents. Thus, the external risk to AmeriCorps that might be posed by moving the management function seems to be far outweighed by the tremendous internal benefits of such a move.

You will be able to point out that, by placing this function under your direct leadership, you are not hiring more staff and you are not spending more taxpayer money, but that you are simply bringing together the efforts of multiple, pre-existing efforts, into one structure for unified program delivery. Moreover, given the fact that the USDA AmeriCorps programs spans so many different USDA mission areas, placing the program directly under the Office of the Secretary creates the best long-term institutional structure for balancing the interests of competing agencies.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by _____

ISSUE # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

At present, my staff includes myself and two other FTES, one at the GS-15 and one at the GS-12 level. In addition, my staff includes four other employees on temporary detail to AmeriCorps; I secured such temporary rotating detailees only after lengthy and repeated negotiations with agency administrators. This small and unstable staff is inadequate for running such a large, complex, geographically diverse, and important program.

While it is difficult to make truly useful comparisons to other programs, it is interesting to note that the USDA EZ/EC initiative --- managing sites in less than a dozen states --- has about 27 employees and is still understaffed. Thus, it is obvious that the AmeriCorps initiative --- managing projects in 38 states --- is highly understaffed with only three permanent employees and four rotating detailees.

Our problem is so acute that, from 3:30 to 7:00 pm., when the one and only support employee on detail to my office has left for the day, I am personally forced to answer our toll-free 800 recruitment line.

OPTIONS For Issue # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. **Continue current method of attempting to obtain rotating temporary detailees.**

PRO: This option would impose the smallest burden on the agencies.

CON: This option would hamper the USDA AmeriCorps program by providing little continuity and long-term structure to a very complex initiative. This option may result in agencies giving AmeriCorps less support than is required of a major Presidential and Secretarial initiative. As agencies resources dwindle, AmeriCorps might be one of the first casualties.

2. **Approve a specific staffing plan attached for the AmeriCorps national service working group in which three employees work permanently but agencies are directed to provide the 11 specific positions specified in the plan.**

Detailees would still be rotated into the national service support unit to learn Team USDA AmeriCorps procedures and policies and then return to their agencies to serve as a resource to manage their agency's individual program(s).

PRO: This would formalize a staff for the program that would still be incredibly small, but would be able to carry out the minimal duties inherent in managing such a large program. This approach would provide far greater stability to the process. It would help the Department guarantee that it not only has the largest single AmeriCorps program, but also the highest quality AmeriCorps program as well.

CON: Agencies, now facing severe staffing cuts, may resent being required to provide detailees to a Departmental initiative.

Staffing
for
USDA National Service Group

POSITION ¹	NAME	GRADE ²	ORG ³	STATUS
Director	Joel Berg	ES-01	OC	Permanent
Deputy Director	Elizabeth Jones	GS 12/13/14	FSIS	Detaillee
Coord. of Communications	Katherine Gibney	GS 12/13/14	OC	Permanent
Administrative Coord.	Ron De Munbrun	GS 15	OC	Permanent
Office Manager	Denise Bennet	GS 6/4	CFSA	Detaillee
Anti-Hunger Coordinator	Donna Hines	GS 13/1	FCS	Detaillee
RHCDS Agency Liaison	Jim Coyle	GS 12/7	RHCDS	Detaillee
EZ/EC and RBCDS Liaison	David Gibson	GS 14	RBCDS	Detaillee
Extension Service and 4-H Liaison	TBD	TBD	CSREES	Detaillee
Forest Service State and Private Forestry Liaison	TBD	TBD	FS	Detaillee
Evaluation Coordinator	TBD	TBD	ERS	Detaillee
Resource/Grants Coordinator	TBD	GS 9/11	TBD	Detaillee
Technology Support	TBD	GS 9/11	CSREES	Detaillee
Clerical Support/Office Automation	TBD	GS 8	TBD	Detaillee

¹ Some positions may be filled on a part time basis or they may filled on a rotating basis. This can be worked out between the Director and the agencies.

² Some grade levels are dependent on the grade of the current incumbent. Grade levels may increase or decrease as new personnel are rotated through the group and as requirements change.

³ The organization is determined by the subject matter of the position and/or the willingness or desire of an agency to lend support to the TEAM USDA national service group.

TBD = To Be Determined

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 3 - Staffing the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 2 by approving a specific staffing pattern for the Department's AmeriCorps management structure. This structure will allow us to institutionalize the program for the remainder of the Administration, and also build important structures to ensure that this critical program survives and prospers in future Administrations. Because staff would work for the program for a year on detail before returning back to their agencies, this would combine the benefits of central management while reducing the burden on agency resources and, in fact, enhancing those resources through the training of agency personnel.

Still, the eleven member staff I have proposed will be one of the smallest staffs in the Federal government for a program so large and complex.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____ Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by _____

ISSUE # 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Function:

The central management function of the USDA AmeriCorps program has virtually no operating budget whatsoever provided by the Office of Communications other than Greenbook costs and the salaries for three FTES. In addition, for both policy and political reasons, I have chosen to take virtually no funds from the \$2.6 million grant to the Department from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Out of that grant, \$2.3 million is transferred directly to our anti-hunger sub-grantees, \$270,000 is transferred to NRCS, FS, RHCDS, RBCDS, and ARS, and only about \$15,000 was retained by my office.

Thus the central management function has virtually no money for the critical tasks of recruitment, project oversight, member development, evaluation, or the support of Secretarial or sub-cabinet travel.

I now spend a great deal of my time literally begging agencies to fund small items on a rotating basis. For instance, every time we want to mail a wave of applications to young people who have called our 800 line, we have to call various agencies just to obtain the envelopes and mailing labels. The problem is so severe that we cannot now obtain a phone line (costing \$700) for a second fax machine we have already obtained. (To give you some idea of the vast volume of our work, I point out that we typically receive over 100 pages and send over 50 pages of faxes each day.)

Early start-up costs -- such as funding for travel and applications, copying the public service announcement Secretary Espy taped, and printing recruitment posters and brochures -- have been paid for primarily from the Office of Communications with some contributions from NRCS and FS. As we move towards expanding the Team USDA AmeriCorps, it is important to fund the formal management structure we have proposed to support the program.

OPTIONS for Issue 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Group:

1. **Do not fund the central management group through transfers from agencies.**

PRO: This will cause the least burden on the agencies.

CON: Without even minimal funding, it will be nearly impossible to continue management the program at the Departmental level. It will be extremely difficult to continue coordinating a coherent set of operational guidelines, recruitment, training, and management procedures, and program objectives. In addition, many of the requirements of the CNCS involve interaction at the Departmental level. If a central organization is not funded to perform this role it will be necessary to create various task forces throughout the year to coordinate the agencies' efforts to evaluate programs, recruit participants, and submit an application to CNCS for a grant.

2. **Provide limited funding to the Departmental AmeriCorps function by executing separate cost-reimbursement agreements between the organizational entity in which the national service function is placed through the decision reached in issue # 3 and each of the agencies involved in running the program.**

Attached is a suggested \$172,696 budget for the remainder of FY95 and a suggested \$178,793 budget for FY96. The Office of the Secretary (or other organizational entity determined in issue # 3) would enter into separate cost-reimbursable agreements pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2263, providing for each agency to advance the funds to the organizational entity housing the national service function for the costs of the national service support structure reasonably related to the respective agencies' national service programs. The amount of the reimbursement would be based on the size of the organization's existing programs and those planned for the next year which must be worked on during the current fiscal year.

The budget sheets are broken down into five categories that better demonstrate the specific programmatic needs: recruitment, project oversight, member development, evaluation, and costs of staff travel associated with Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel. Given that six different USDA agencies have a major role in running AmeriCorps, such coordinating functions are best performed at the Departmental, not agency level. Such Departmental coordination is critical to ensure that our programs meet both the President's vision of AmeriCorps and the Secretary's vision of "Team USDA."

PRO: The program is managed centrally for the Secretary. No new organization has to be created. No separate budget has to be submitted. Yet the Department would have at least minimal funds with which to manage the program. It is also important to note that most of the funds requested are already being expended by our agencies and this decision memorandum would simply clarify the ability of the Department to target and prioritize such spending.

CON: Again agencies may feel they are "losing" dollars. However, if the Secretary is to be guaranteed consistent and accountable management of the Team USDA national service initiatives, this money is a necessary expense associated with implementing national service programs.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 4 - Funding a National Service Group:

I recommend you implement option 2, provide an extremely low management budget for the program. The \$172,696 for the remainder of FY95 and the \$178,793 for FY96 would equal only about \$145 per Member per year to manage central functions relating to recruitment, project oversight, Member education and development, Member and staff training, evaluation, and support of national service related Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

Assignment of the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program

1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to the formal establishment of the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and delegation of responsibility for management of the program to the Director of National Service, USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program functions were performed within the Office of Communications. Given the need for Department level management of this vital program, it is necessary and in the interests of economy and efficiency to transfer to the Office of the Secretary the activities, operations, personnel, funds, and staff currently performing these functions within the Office of Communications.

2 ACTIONS ORDERED

All activities, operations, functions, personnel, and funds of the staff performing USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program duties within the Office of Communications are hereby ordered transferred to the Office of the Secretary.

3 INCIDENTAL TRANSFERS

The Assistant Secretary for Administration and the Director, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, are authorized to approve such transfers of funds, personnel, employment authority, space, records, property and incidentals as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this Memorandum.

4 EXISTING DIRECTIVES

Prior delegations of authority, administrative regulations, and other directives not inconsistent with the provisions of this Memorandum shall remain in full force and effect.

5 EFFECTIVE DATE

The provisions of this Memorandum are effective immediately.

6 EXPIRATION

This memorandum shall remain in effect for ninety days or until such earlier time as published delegations or authority have been revised to incorporate its provisions and all actions ordered herein have been accomplished.

DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary

04/26/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 95 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$4,750
(800) Phone Number	\$10,800
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$38,784

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$8,000
Software	\$3,150
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$47,715

AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$38,065

EVALUATION

Travel	\$6,682
Materials	\$4,750
Photography	\$2,200
Video	\$2,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$37,865

SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$6,682
Photography and Video	\$3,600

Sub-Total: \$10,281

TOTAL: \$172,712

Total number of AmeriCorps members in the USDA AmeriCorps program:	1211
---	------

Average cost per participant of the National Service Director's budget (Does not include Salary costs):	\$143
---	-------

FY 95 DETAILED COST BREAKDOWN

SECTION II -----	OPERATING PLAN
2100 Travel	26,726 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	10,800 1,200 month for 800 number (9 mo) = 10,800
-----	-----
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	10,800
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	3,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter 3 times a year 1,500 Miscellaneous printing 4,500
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event 0 0 0
-----	-----
Print/Repro, Subtotal	7,800
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	5,000 Write and film two promo videos at \$2,500
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860 12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,250 5 pagers X \$30 month X 8 months 3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc. 4,500 (internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	3,996 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
-----	-----
Other Ser., Subtotal	43,546
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	3,150
Gasoline	0
-----	-----
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	5,700
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	12,000 3 PC's at \$4,000 - FAX modem 250, printer 1500, software 500, PC 1750
-----	-----
Equipment, Subtotal	12,000
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
Reserve	0
-----	-----
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,712
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,712
=====	

04/26/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 96 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$5,500
(800) Phone Number	\$14,400
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$41,648

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$0
Software	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$39,351

AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$40,851

EVALUATION

Travel	\$10,954
Materials	\$5,500
Photography	\$2,200
Video	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$38,901

SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$10,954
Photography and Video	\$1,100

Sub-Total: \$12,054

TOTAL: \$172,805

Total number of AmeriCorps members in the USDA AmeriCorps program:	1211
---	------

Average cost per participant of the National Service Director's budget (Does not include Salary costs):	\$143
---	-------

FY 96 DETAILED COST BREAKDOWN

SECTION II	OPERATING PLAN
2100 Travel	43,815 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	14,400 1,200 month for 800 number (12 mo) = 14,400
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	14,400
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	1,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter once a year 5,000 Miscellaneous printing 6,000
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event 0 0 0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	9,300
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	0
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860 12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,800 5 pagers X \$30 month X 12 months 3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc. 6,000 (internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	0 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
Other Ser., Subtotal	36,600
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	0
Gasoline	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	2,550
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	0
Equipment, Subtotal	0
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
Reserve	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,805
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,805

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Executive Secretariat
Official Clearance Sheet

(Control Number)

	DRAFT	REWRITE	FINAL
AGENCY CCO: (Signature) (Date)			
AGENCY HEAD: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>Joe Berg</i> 4/24/95
OES: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
OGC: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>James Michael Kelly</i> 4/24/95 James Michael Kelly Associate General Counsel
OBPA: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>Stephen B. Dewhurst</i> (note) STEPHEN B. DEWHURST Director, Office of Budget and Program Analysis
OCR: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
SUB-CAB CCO: (Signature) (Date)			
SUB-CAB: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
ADDT'L CLEAR: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
EXEC. ASST:			
SEC/AUTOPEN:			



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY/DEPUTY SECRETARY

FROM: Stephen B. Dewhurst
Director

APR 28 1995

SUBJECT: USDA AmeriCorps Decision Memorandum

We have cleared the attached memoranda requesting decisions on the following issues and the corresponding recommendations as listed below.

- (1) Delegation of authority for managing the USDA AmeriCorps programs
--recommends that the authority be delegated to the Director of National Service.
- (2) Placement of the USDA AmeriCorps management function
--recommends that the staff of AmeriCorps be moved from the Office of Communications to the Office of the Secretary.
- (3) Staffing of the management function
--recommends that specific agencies be directed to supplement the current permanent staff of three FTE's with eleven detailees whose salaries and benefits would be paid by the donating agency.
- (4) Funding the management function
--recommends the transfer of about \$180,000 from the agencies involved in the program for the AmeriCorps staff to meet oversight costs, such as teleconferences, travel, publications, and other administrative costs.

The Director of National Service for USDA has been managing the program without any formal delegation from the Secretary. We agree that the program would be more efficiently and effectively managed if the Secretary officially delegates such authority to the Director.

On the other issues, we do not have a specific recommendation, but we suggest that a few points be kept in mind. If the AmeriCorps function is moved out of the Office of Communications, Congress should be notified. The Department has a long tradition of advising Congress when we are making organizational changes. In fact, the Department has recently run into some difficulty for not advising Congress of all the changes underway as part of the reorganization. In addition, if the decision is made to put the AmeriCorps function in the Immediate Office of the Secretary, the Secretary's

office would be in the position of having eleven detailees. There has been in the past some Congressional concern about supplementing the Office of the Secretary with detailees. Moreover, while such a move would not entail an increase in staffing for the Office of the Secretary, it may raise--fairly or unfairly--questions about the Department's commitment to streamlining.

We suggest that the policy officials whose agencies are supporting AmeriCorps projects be made aware of the proposal to require them to support the central office with funds and details. A decision on funding and details could be deferred until the FY 1997 Budget process begins this summer to provide for a review of the total operation of USDA's AmeriCorps program.

Attachment

(File)

Decision
MEMOS

AMERICORPS DECISION MEMO
SYNOPSIS

Leogant

Givens: OGC has determined that:

1. It is legal to have a National Service Program.
2. Agency appropriated funds can be used to support national service programs.
3. The Director of National Service can be delegated the authority to enter into agreements regardless of the director's organizational placement (OSEC, OC, etc.).
4. It is legal for agencies to fund a Departmental National Service management function through cost-reimbursable agreements.
5. It is legal to augment a permanent Departmental National Service staff with detailees from the agencies.

Issue 1. Delegate authority to the Director of National Service via a Secretary's Memorandum.

Issue 2. Place the AmeriCorps function directly in the Office of the Secretary, moving 3 FTE from the Office of Communications.

Issue 3. Staff the AmeriCorps management function through the use of detailees from the agencies.

Issue 4. Fund the AmeriCorps management function through cost-reimbursement agreements under 7 U.S.C. § 2263.

Transfer legal authority to transfer
§§

Take out the Farm Bill
Clarify the Staff Difference
in Staff

Clarify OSE C | Versus Executive
Operations
Administration

USDA AMERICORPS ACTIVITIES

(Dollars in Thousands)

Project Areas -----	FY 1994 -----		Estimated FY 1995 -----		Estimated FY 1996 -----	
	Funding Level -----	Number of Particips. -----	Funding Level -----	Number of Particips. -----	Funding Level -----	Number of Particips. -----
FOREST SERVICE (FS):						
Public Lands & Envir. Corps	\$368	65	\$6,300	281	\$9,500	500-550
Rural Development Corps	293	25	4,000	74	500	30-50
Subtotal, FS	661	90	10,300	355	10,000	530-600
NATURAL RESOURCES						
CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS):						
Public Lands & Envir. Corps	0	0	\$3,198	291	\$3,500	250
Rural Development Corps	0	0	4,645	280	5,000	350
Subtotal, NRCS	0	0	7,843 a/	571	8,500 b/	600
FOOD AND CONSUMER SERVICE (FCS):						
Summer Food Service Program	200		0		0	
Food Stamp Program	100		0		0	
Child Nutrition	50		0		0	
Subtotal, FCS	350		0 c/		0 d/	
RURAL HOUSING AND COMMUNITY						
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE (RHCDS):						
Subtotal, RHCDS	2,100	125	0	0	0	0
Total, USDA AmeriCorps Activities	3,111	215	18,143	926	18,500	600

a/ Includes \$2,884,000 from emergency supplemental funding. No funding from the National Service Corps was received.

b/ Assumes funding from National Service Corps of \$2.5 million.

c/ AmeriCorps funds are shown as being received in FY 95 because that is the project year for which they are to be used. In addition, these funds do NOT include the amount of any post service education award granted by the Corporation for National and Community Service to participants in USDA programs. The amount of such awards granted for the FY 95 project year is \$5,670,000. This money is not under USDA control.

d/ AmeriCorps funds for FY 96 can not be estimated because RHCDS has not submitted a proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service for that year.



(F:10)

April 10, 1995

**DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION,
AND CONSUMER SERVICES**

FROM: Joel Berg *JB*
Director of National Service

SUBJECT: FNCS' Participation in AmeriCorps/USDA for 1996

ISSUE:

First, I would like to thank you for your tremendous support of the Department's AmeriCorps program during Fiscal Year 1995. The five Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment projects have been extremely successful so far, particularly in promoting nutrition education for schoolchildren. I have just completed a visit to the anti-hunger project site in Mississippi (Humphreys and Sunflower Counties), where it is graphically evident that USDA's AmeriCorps Members are performing critical community services based on mainstream values supported by both parties.

We are now in the process of planning our second year of AmeriCorps USDA operations, and the time has come to finalize commitments from the participating agencies, such as yours, for both cash and staff contributions for Fiscal Year (FY) 1996.

Because the Department's AmeriCorps application is due to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) on April 28, a decision needs to be made within a week about funding next year's anti-hunger program.

BACKGROUND:

I would like to share with you one of the more dramatic examples of the Anti-Hunger Teams' success and effectiveness: a young pregnant woman in rural Mississippi, who was dangerously losing weight during her pregnancy because she could not afford the food or the prenatal care she needed, was turned away from the local food stamp office when she went in to apply for assistance. (We are also investigating, through the appropriate channels, the circumstances that empowered the local caseworker to refuse to take this young woman's application based on that caseworker's personal bias against the Food Stamp Program in general.)

Fortunately, Members of the AmeriCorps/USDA Anti-Hunger Team were able to provide the young woman with referrals to both WIC and Food Stamps, and she was then able to start receiving benefits. Her physician told her that the intervention of AmeriCorps/USDA Members essentially saved the life of the young woman's unborn child.

Obviously, not every AmeriCorps activity is going to be a life-saving event, but this example does bear out our conviction that all 150 AmeriCorps Members working in the anti-hunger projects have grasped, and been very successful in, spreading the message to low-income families that there is a great deal more involved in fighting hunger than simply enrolling people in the Food Stamp Program. In fact, the majority of projects underway in these five sites have focused primarily on improving the nutritional status of low-income Americans through a variety of methods, such as nutrition education, promotion of the School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Programs, WIC referrals, Earned Income Tax Credit outreach to eligible recipients, and school/urban gardening initiatives. They have actively supported and promoted the FNCS goals through school-based nutrition education presentations and gardening projects, such as the one that you visited in Los Angeles last December. We also plan to involve the Anti-Hunger Teams in FCS' Children's Nutrition Campaign in the very near future.

Based on the site visits that both Donna Hines (the Food and Consumer Services' AmeriCorps liaison and Anti-Hunger Project Coordinator) and I have made, as well as the accomplishments detailed in the first quarter reports, I am more convinced than ever that **AmeriCorps is an important tool in building public, Congressional, and media support for USDA's food assistance programs.** Additionally, AmeriCorps/USDA anti-hunger projects have been extremely effective in building bridges between the Department and grass-roots community organizations dedicated to fighting hunger in America, and have also helped to fill some of the gaps that exist in local food assistance offices where the existing infrastructures are no longer sufficient to cope with the current demands for services.

In spite of the fact that FCS' matching contribution to USDA's AmeriCorps Program was relatively small (\$350,000) for the first year of operation, the five anti-hunger projects received \$2.3 million of the total \$2.6 million grant from CNCS this fiscal year. USDA's AmeriCorps anti-hunger Teams have clearly demonstrated that they can --- and do --- play a vital role in fighting hunger in America while furthering the mission and objectives of FCS. We have also recently learned that AmeriCorps Members working with the Department's Rural Development Teams across the country are actually performing some anti-hunger work as well. In fact, the Rural Development Team has requested training in the basics of USDA's food assistance programs so that they can provide accurate referral information to those families who are in need.

I do understand that the funding structure of FCS is one that does not allow for a great deal of latitude in how appropriated funds are disbursed; however, it is essential that FCS provide continued evidence of your support for this Presidential initiative in order for the Department be able to continue the AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger projects. As a point of reference, other agencies are contributing over \$25 million, including about \$10 million each from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service. Consequently, the senior managers in these agencies have called for a more equitable distribution of Corporation monies in FY 1996. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that Corporation funds continue to be very limited.

Regardless of the level of cash funding FCS is able to provide, it is extremely important that the full-time staff person (Donna Hines) continue to be assigned, as a GS-13, to work with USDA's National Service for the rest of FY 1995 and the entirety of FY 1996. Please keep in mind that, in addition to her duties related to oversight of the Department's anti-hunger projects, Donna also serves as the FCS liaison to other USDA agencies, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and all of the "outside" groups, organizations, and individuals who are interested in any aspect of the AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger program. In-kind support, i.e., occasional supplies and a minimal, reasonable amount of travel funding is also essential to the successful oversight of the AmeriCorps/USDA Anti-Hunger projects. NRCS and the other agencies involved in the Department's National Service operations have all assigned multiple staff to work with AmeriCorps, and while I am satisfied with the work that Donna is doing, I must point out once again that FCS is receiving the bulk of the monetary support while providing only minimal support in terms of both cash and staffing.

Given that, in the past few weeks, President Clinton has consistently reinforced his belief that AmeriCorps is a vital centerpiece of his Presidency, I hope we can count on your continued or expanded support for this critical initiative. Funding options are listed below.

I am available to discuss this matter with you in greater detail, at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to contact me, at 720-6350. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

OPTIONS:

1. FCS will provide \$350,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation and support of the five existing AmeriCorps/USDA anti-hunger projects in Vermont, the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, the Mississippi Delta, and Los Angeles during FY 1996.
2. FNS will provide \$700,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation of the five existing projects listed in Option 1, plus the addition of one new project (in a location to be determined through a fair and open competition) during FY 1996.
3. FNS will provide \$1,000,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation of the five existing projects listed in Option 1, plus the addition of two new projects (in a location to be determined through a fair and open competition) during FY 1996.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICES:

Approve Option #1 _____

Approve Option #2 _____

Approve Option #3 _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Date _____

cc. William Ludwig



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Communications

Washington, D.C.
20250-1300

(File) NRCS

April 12, 1996

To: Paul Johnson, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service JB

Subject: Decision Memorandum on Regional Facilitators

I have just received a copy of the attached March 20 decision memorandum asking Under Secretary Lyons to oppose the AmeriCorps facilitator positions. I was unaware that the memorandum existed until yesterday, when your staff learned that I would be meeting with Tom Hebert on this and related matters.

Unfortunately, the memorandum contains a number of inaccurate or misleading statements that were provided to you by your staff.

1) The memorandum implies that the Forest Service opposes the facilitators, when, in fact, the Forest Service supports the facilitators. The only original hesitation from the Forest Service was over whether the Forest Service should supply and pay for any of the facilitators, not over whether the positions should exist. The current Forest Service AmeriCorps Coordinator --- as well as many Forest Service staff with whom I have visited in the field --- strongly support the position and personally attest to how the facilitators have greatly improved all USDA AmeriCorps projects. In the one case in which there was greatest conflict between the facilitator and the NRCS staff --- in Minnesota --- the Forest Service field staff agreed with the facilitator and stated that the NRCS staff had acted improperly.

2) The memorandum implies that NRCS never agreed to the facilitators and states that "it was unclear what the role of facilitators would be." This is untrue. Attached are the two pages from the USDA AmeriCorps manual --- which were approved and subsequently printed by NRCS --- which specifically provide a flow chart and narrative representing the duties of the facilitators. Please also note my November 29, 1994 memo --- which was approved personally by Lloyd Wright --- further clarifying the duties of the facilitators.

3) The memorandum states that "only one State has expressed this arrangement as beneficial." This is also incorrect. Throughout my site visits across the country, many line NRCS staff involved in AmeriCorps have attested to the benefits provided by the facilitators. Please note the attached letter from the State Conservationist in Kansas to a facilitator, stating that "Your help in recruiting and arranging details for initial program implementation has been invaluable. In fact, we could not have done it without you."

4) The memorandum incorrectly states that the facilitators are full-time jobs costing taxpayers \$1.25 million. In fact, few of the facilitators are working on AmeriCorps full-time --- most only spend between 5%-35% of their time on AmeriCorps; therefore, the true cost to taxpayers is, at most, a few hundred thousand dollars.

5) The memorandum states that the facilitators have provided "micromangement." In truth, the facilitators have reported serious, sustained -- and often uncorrected problems --- with NRCS AmeriCorps sites, as well as problems with RECD, FCS, and FS sites. However, while the other agencies found this constructive criticism to be helpful to their efforts at continuous improvement of their sites, some in NRCS responded by "blaming the messenger" instead of attempting to resolve the problems.

6) The memorandum implies that the Corporation for National and Community Service finds the facilitators unnecessary. In fact, as you know from your meeting with Meg Maguire, the Corporation is very concerned that we have too little, not too much, structural support for many NRCS AmeriCorps projects. Please note the letter signed by both Meg Maguire and myself outlining joint activities for the facilitators and the Corporation's state directors. While the Corporation will not take a stand on the internal issue of whether the facilitators exist, the Corporation has continuously expressed the need for the **functions of the facilitators to be carried out**. The fact is that currently, many NRCS project managers do not receive the AmeriCorps information they need from the NRCS Washington office. Both the Corporation and I agree that is absolutely critical to improve the two-way flow of information between AmeriCorps Members, their local project managers, the state contacts, and Washington. My November 29, 1994 memo outlines the specific ways that the facilitators are improving that flow of information. In fact, many of your field staff have told me directly that they get their best information from the facilitators, not from the NRCS Washington office. Thus, the decision memorandum never addresses the basic issue: if the facilitators were eliminated, who would perform their duties?

7) The memorandum also implies that the facilitator reports are secret reports given only to me; that is also false --- I provide copies of the reports each week to every agency. In addition, as clarified in my November memorandum, all the reports are prepared collaboratively by all the agencies involved.

I do not want to seem confrontational with your staff, but I believe you deserve to know that you received misleading information, which easily could have been corrected had the memorandum been shared with me **before** it was presented to you. If you have any additional questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at any time. I am fully confident that, working together, we can promote a "Team USDA" approach to collaboratively managing AmeriCorps that also respects the unique structures of each USDA agency.

CC: Tom Weber, Lloyd Wright



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Soil
Conservation
Service

OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

of pages **4**

To **Joel Berg**

Dept./Agency

From **Paula Jones**

Phone #

720-1853

Fax # **720-4614**

Fax #

690-0639

NSN 7540-01-317-7300

5010-101

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

**DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR JAMES R. LYONS, UNDER SECRETARY
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

FROM: Paul W. Johnson
Chief
Natural Resources Conservation Service

MAR 20 1995

SUBJECT: AmeriCorps Program Delivery and Facilitator Positions

ISSUE:

The existing facilitator positions of the AmeriCorps projects of the NRCS are not needed and are not considered a wise use of existing resources.

DISCUSSION:

The existence of 25 USDA AmeriCorps facilitators has created both micromanagement of the program and conflict within USDA. On-site instructions are being provided from two directions: (1) through the facilitators and (2) through the NRCS line and staff structure.

In FY 94, NRCS prepared for full involvement in the USDA AmeriCorps program. We planned to implement AmeriCorps through a structure that utilizes the agency's existing delivery system. This delivery system was offered as one of the strengths of NRCS in carrying out community service work. We also expressed the importance of integrating AmeriCorps into the operations of USDA agencies as a means of institutionalizing this program.

Joel Berg, Director for National Service, USDA, proposed that facilitators be included in the structure for implementing AmeriCorps. This proposal was met with resistance from both NRCS and the Forest Service. We were concerned that we could not run a project with two people providing directions. Both agencies decided not to detail employees to this assignment. With reorganization and downsizing, we decided we had sufficient resources committed to AmeriCorps, and that the facilitators were not really needed. As this issue was discussed, it was unclear what the role of facilitators would be. It was also pointed out that the proposed role could result in conflicts, and that these positions should not be used to go around the chain of command of the agencies that had accepted the responsibility for funding and administering AmeriCorps members and project sites.



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
Department of Agriculture

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The Corporation for National and Community Service approved 1200 slots for the proposed USDA AmeriCorps programs. The 1200 slots were allocated to agencies as follows:

571	NRCS	
334	FS	
66	RDA	
66	FmHA	
150	FNS	
13	CFSA	(CFSA did not host any of the 1200 slots.)

Each participating State Conservationist has designated an AmeriCorps project director to coordinate the activities in the State and to be the point of contact with the national NRCS office. Each project site has an AmeriCorps project manager. In most cases, they are District Conservationists or RC&D coordinators. NRCS also has facilitators trained in Total Quality Management, teambuilding and problem solving and the technical, administrative, and public information staff support.

FACILITATORS

In August 1994, a group of ten facilitators were assembled to provide support in the midwest flood States. This number has since increased to 25 facilitators nationwide. Twenty-three of the facilitators are CFSA employees. Only one State has expressed this arrangement as beneficial. We have received complaints from some States due to conflicts in perceived authorities. Although most States have established a working relationship, most of the NRCS employees have expressed a preference for eliminating the facilitator position.

If we look at it in terms of cost, on the conservative side, 25 facilitators at an average cost for GS-11 at \$50,000 each makes this an additional program cost of \$1,250,000. This is the equivalent of 78 AmeriCorps Rural Development members or 119 Public Lands and Environment Corps members. It has been stated that one objective of the AmeriCorps program is to avoid building another bureaucracy. The Corporation for National and Community Service has been given the flexibility to apply AmeriCorps to a wide range of organizational settings. This is a USDA choice, not a requirement of the program.

Micromanagement has been the result of this arrangement. We do not need an additional 25 people to manage the program. With the scrutiny this program is receiving and will continue to receive, we need to deliver AmeriCorps in a cost-effective manner. The presence of facilitators also creates a potential weakness in that agencies need to be fully capable of managing AmeriCorps, should the level of support change from the USDA office.

The network of facilitators became a serious issue around November 1994, when it was exposed that the facilitators had been asked to submit weekly reports to the USDA Director for National

Service. These reports were being compiled without the input of NRCS and were not being shared with NRCS. It was assumed that the facilitators were being used as a parallel structure for the AmeriCorps program to be managed from the USDA office rather than managed fully through the agency's management system.

It is important to recognize where we are on the learning curve during this start up phase in the AmeriCorps program. In the first year, we have gone from a few people with little knowledge of AmeriCorps, to employees in 35 States and the national office with experience in designing and managing AmeriCorps projects. The needs in the second year of the program are not the same as they were for the first year. This capability needs to be factored into the decision about whether or not facilitators are needed. All agencies involved should be engaged in a process of evaluation and program improvement.

We are making the following improvements to strengthen the NRCS participation in AmeriCorps.

1. The NRCS Community Assistance and Resource Development Division will work with the Quality Management and Program Evaluation Division to develop a plan for the evaluation and improvement of NRCS AmeriCorps projects.
2. Applications from State offices to participate in AmeriCorps are to be submitted with proposed sites for teams of AmeriCorps members with no less than five members located together. This policy helps us to better meet the Corporation's requirement for AmeriCorps members support and national program identity.
3. Each AmeriCorps team, including the Public Lands and Environmental Corps and the Rural Development Corps, will have a team leader who is an AmeriCorps member. We are currently working with employees in State and field offices who are managing AmeriCorps projects to determine the skills needed for the team to be effective. The NRCS national Employee Development Staff is working with us to design leadership training. We will use distant learning to deliver some of this training to the States through satellite downlink.
4. Consistent with the six newly organized NRCS regions, we will work with our Regional Conservationists to have persons designated as Regional AmeriCorps Coordinators. They will have experience with AmeriCorps and will function to improve communication, coordination, and monitoring at the local level.

OPTIONS:

1. Eliminate all facilitators and allow agencies to be responsible for full implementation at the State and or local level. Self-directed teams can be established locally to facilitate interagency coordination and support for AmeriCorps projects or other methods as agreed to by the agencies involved.

2. Make no changes to the current USDA structure for AmeriCorps.

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish self-directed teams during FY 95 and completely eliminate facilitators by the start up of FY 96 projects, which is scheduled for September 1995.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Date _____

Reviewed by _____

Regional Facilitators

Facilitators are responsible for

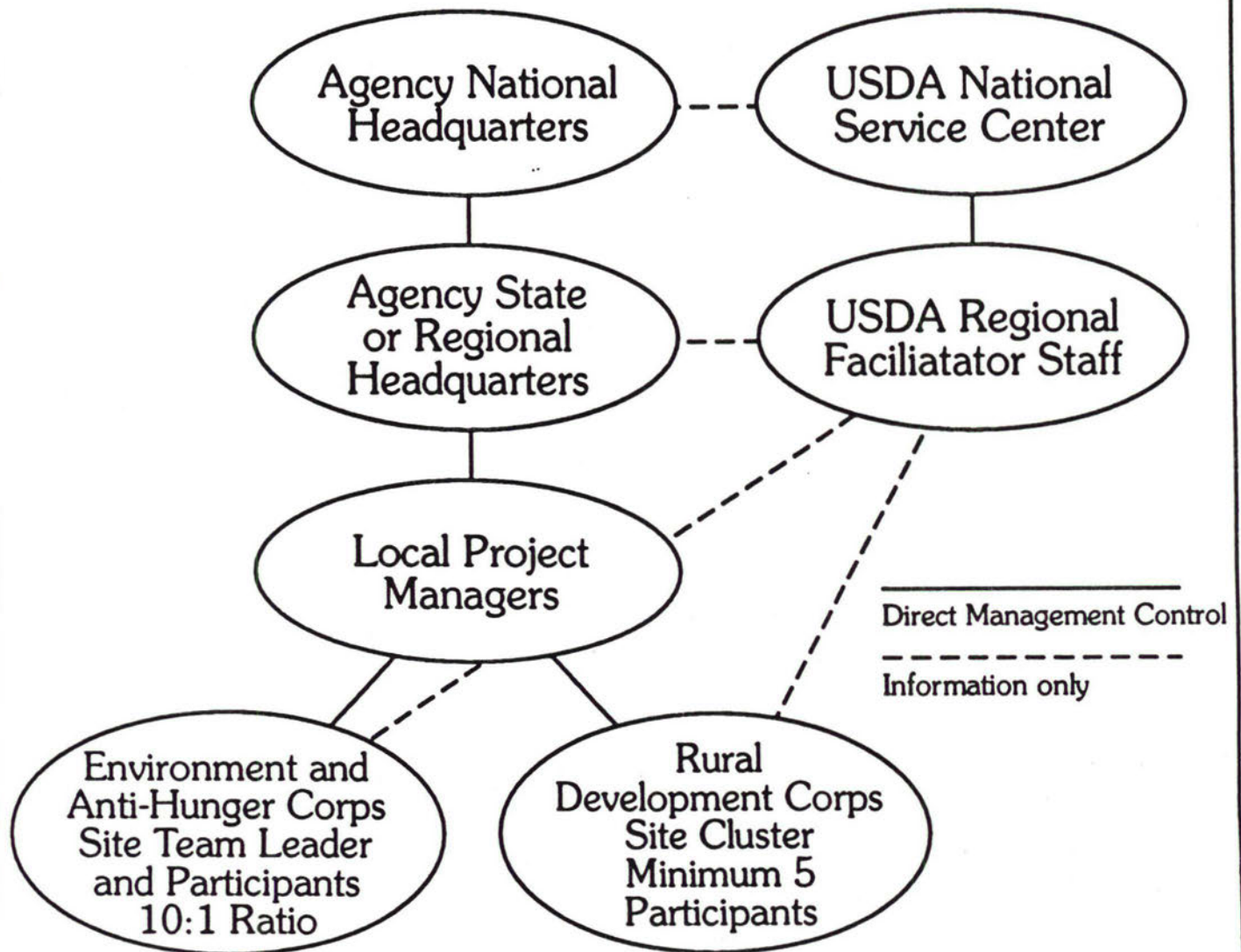
- planning and managing regional training and orientation programs,
- planning and developing regional communications activities,
- helping to ensure USDA/AmeriCorps members establish a national identity,
- providing coordination with Anti-Hunger and Public Lands and Environment Corps where appropriate,
- providing leadership in developing Internet capabilities,
- participating in identifying and recommending methods and criteria to improve USDA/AmeriCorps procedures,
- participating in planning for future USDA/AmeriCorps activities and projects, and
- consulting with state and/or regional offices and facilitating cluster meetings.

Members

Members are responsible for

- completion of assigned work plan and tasks;
- coordinating with designated community leaders; and
- attending training and AmeriCorps meetings as scheduled.

Team USDA AmeriCorps—Management Structure Public Lands and Environment Corps Rural Development Corps Anti-Hunger Corps





DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

November 29, 1994

To: USDA/AmeriCorps Project Managers and Regional Facilitators

From: Joel Berg, Director of National Service *JB*

Subject: Weekly Duties for AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators

Many project managers and facilitators have asked for clarification of the specific duties of facilitators. While the responsibilities are listed on page 31 of the USDA/AmeriCorps Operations Manual, this memorandum specifies concrete tasks that the facilitators should complete each week:

- 1) Help plan and execute the equivalent of a day a week in which all Members of each Rural Development Team Cluster physically get-together for training, project planning, critical reflection, or a joint service project. If once per week is too rigid, perhaps every other week they can get together for two days in a row. If weather emergencies or other rare circumstances occur that prevent a weekly meeting in person, you should schedule a conference call between the members.
- 2) Implement at least one "spirit building" activity --- in addition to the cluster meeting --- in at least one site weekly in the region. Some suggested activities are provided in the attached memorandum "A Dozen Things You Can Do To Build the 'AmeriCorps Spirit'."
- 3) Prepare a weekly report for the region that is shared with all the agencies and with myself. These reports should be prepared in consultation with all the agencies involved. The reports will be due to my office, at fax # (202) 720-4614, by COB each Thursday. These regional reports will be then compiled by my office into a weekly national newsletter sent to the Secretary's office, other key USDA policy-makers, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. This newsletter report will be made available each Friday to Members and staff via USDA computer bulletin board, Internet, and in paper copies. The reports should be general summaries of weekly highlights in each region and do not need to include every single item from every single site. In most cases, the information can be communicated from the project managers to the facilitators in brief phone conversations and should require little or no weekly paperwork. The reports should relate major developments, if they occur that week, in any of these areas:

- A) Progress towards meeting community service objectives
- B) Any major staff, structural, or service changes made
- C) List of any new members joining or quitting
- D) Primary accomplishments of our projects
- E) Primary challenges or problems at our sites
- F) Primary training, technical assistance, and equipment needs
- G) Copies of media coverage
- H) Other documentation such as photos or thank-you letters
- I) Other data occasionally requested -- such as computer inventory
- F) Plans for future team-building activities
- G) Recommendations for improving our programs
- H) Feedback from AmeriCorps Members

Again, I stress that every report does not need to have every one of the above items from any or all sites. Most reports should be, at most, two or three pages long for the entire region.

4) Visit with staff, Members, and project sponsors at service sites. Each state facilitator should generally visit one site each week, and every site at least once a month. Every regional facilitator should generally visit at least two states a month, and visit every site in the region at least four times in the year. Facilitators should spend significant blocks of time working side-by-side on the field with AmeriCorps Members, not just meeting with them in offices.

5) Work with agency public affairs personnel to set-up media events and site visits by elected officials. However, no USDA staff should speak with any members of the media before they are thoroughly trained on the philosophy and details of all our programs.

6) After consulting with agencies about their prior contacts, the facilitators should serve as the principle contacts with both the executive directors of state commissions on national service and the state staff of the Corporation for National and Community Service. It is critical that we keep both entities in each state apprised of our activities. (Contact names will be provided on request.)

7) Once computer needs are clarified in the next two weeks, facilitators will help implement our Internet communications. (Details will be provided soon).

Please also note that we want to continue building trust, respect, and cooperation between project managers and facilitators. Thus, no project manager or facilitator should exclude the other from any AmeriCorps meetings. Additionally, any reports prepared for Washington offices should be made available to all USDA agencies involved.



USDA/AmeriCorps
Soil Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, KS 67401-4642
(913) 823-4500
FAX (913) 823-4540

October 20, 1994

Mr. James D. Meisenheimer
AmeriCorps Facilitator
Agricultural Stabilization and
Conservation Service
1117 1/2 West U.S. Highway 24
Osborne, Kansas 67473

Dear Jim:

Jim, I want to thank you for your special efforts in getting the Kansas/USDA AmeriCorps projects up and running. Stepping in at the last moment to serve as emcee at the Kanopolis Lake kickoff is only one example of the special effort and excellent manner of how you have assisted the USDA Team in implementing the AmeriCorps program in Kansas.

Your help in recruiting and arranging details for initial program implementation has been invaluable. In fact, we could not have done it without you.

We appreciate you very much, Jim. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James N. Habiger'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J'.

James N. Habiger
State Conservationist

cc:

Adrian Polansky, State Executive Director, ASCS, Manhattan, KS
Richard Herrman, District Director, ASCS, LaCrosse, KS
Paula Jones, AmeriCorps Program Manager, Community Assistance and Resource
Development Division, Washington, DC
Joel Berg, USDA, Washington, DC
Charles Simms, ASCS, Washington, DC



The Soil Conservation Service
is an agency of the
United States Department of Agriculture

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



February 24, 1995

AmeriCorps National Service

CORPORATION

FOR NATIONAL

★ SERVICE

To: USDA AmeriCorps Regional Facilitators
CNS State Directors

From: Meg Maguire, Senior Program Officer, National Directs, CNS
Joel Berg, Director of National Service, USDA

Subject: Partnership to Strengthen USDA Rural Program

This memorandum is to establish a working relationship between USDA AmeriCorps Rural Programs and the Corporation for National Service (CNS) state offices in 35 states. We have worked closely with Mal Coles to insure that this partnership builds on the needs and strengths of both USDA and CNS.

The USDA AmeriCorps Rural Program, representing 1200 AmeriCorps Members serving in over 200 sites in 38 states and the District of Columbia, is the largest joint effort involving CNS and another federal agency. The Program has three components -- Anti-Hunger and Empowerment, Public Lands and Environment, and Rural Development.

Anti-Hunger and Public Lands/Environment Members typically operate in teams of ten or more; Rural Development AmeriCorps Members meet regularly in clusters of at least five, but on a daily basis they often serve alone in remote areas. Rural Development Program activities include boosting local economies by developing economic development plans, finding alternative uses for resource products, improving rural housing, protecting watersheds, promoting heritage tourism, preserving cultural and historic resources, and advancing sustainable agriculture.

Given the capacity of Corporation State Offices to support development and enhancement of service programs, we believe that a partnership between the USDA Rural Development and CNS field staff will strengthen the entire AmeriCorps Program. Attached please find:

- 1) Roster of 25 USDA regional facilitators for 30 states (sent only to CNS)
- 2) Roster of the Directors of the CNS State Offices (sent only to USDA)
- 3) List and map of counties in which USDA AmeriCorps Members from all 3 programs are located

1201 New York Avenue, N.E.
Washington, DC 20525
Telephone 202-606-5000

Getting Things Done.
AmeriCorps, National Service
Learn and Serve America
National Senior Service Corps

We strongly encourage you to contact each other, but we have no specific formula for action. Activities might include:

- An initial meeting to discuss USDA Rural Development program needs and to explore opportunities to link with other CNS-sponsored efforts, including AmeriCorps* VISTA and National Senior Service Corps projects;
- A limited number of site visits to provide technical assistance or to familiarize CNS State staff with USDA programs, especially where these visits dovetail with other CNS in-state travel;
- Joint training and technical assistance;
- Peer exchange between AmeriCorps* VISTA and USDA AmeriCorps* Members; and
- Review and refinement of field program design incorporating both the Principles of High Quality Programs (previously distributed to all CNS offices) and previous experience with VISTA rural programming.

As we capitalize on the tremendous knowledge and resources of our field offices, we welcome your observations about the results of the new partnership. In late June, we will assess this joint effort. We will also keep you posted about particularly effective strategies as they develop.

You do not need to report to us on all that you are doing, but feel free to call us with any questions or comments.

Meg Maguire - (202) 606-5000 - x441
Joel Berg - (202) 720-6350

We look forward to working with you to realize the full potential of the USDA AmeriCorps program for rural America.

cc. Shirley Sagawa
Diana R. Algra
Mal Coles
Hank Oltmann



April 10, 1995

**DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION,
AND CONSUMER SERVICES**

FROM: Joel Berg *JB*
Director of National Service

SUBJECT: FNCS' Participation in AmeriCorps/USDA for 1996

ISSUE:

First, I would like to thank you for your tremendous support of the Department's AmeriCorps program during Fiscal Year 1995. The five Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment projects have been extremely successful so far, particularly in promoting nutrition education for schoolchildren. I have just completed a visit to the anti-hunger project site in Mississippi (Humphreys and Sunflower Counties), where it is graphically evident that USDA's AmeriCorps Members are performing critical community services based on mainstream values supported by both parties.

We are now in the process of planning our second year of AmeriCorps USDA operations, and the time has come to finalize commitments from the participating agencies, such as yours, for both cash and staff contributions for Fiscal Year (FY) 1996.

Because the Department's AmeriCorps application is due to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) on April 28, a decision needs to be made within a week about funding next year's anti-hunger program.

BACKGROUND:

I would like to share with you one of the more dramatic examples of the Anti-Hunger Teams' success and effectiveness: a young pregnant woman in rural Mississippi, who was dangerously losing weight during her pregnancy because she could not afford the food or the prenatal care she needed, was turned away from the local food stamp office when she went in to apply for assistance. (We are also investigating, through the appropriate channels, the circumstances that empowered the local caseworker to refuse to take this young woman's application based on that caseworker's personal bias against the Food Stamp Program in general.)

Fortunately, Members of the AmeriCorps/USDA Anti-Hunger Team were able to provide the young woman with referrals to both WIC and Food Stamps, and she was then able to start receiving benefits. Her physician told her that the intervention of AmeriCorps/USDA Members essentially saved the life of the young woman's unborn child.

Obviously, not every AmeriCorps activity is going to be a life-saving event, but this example does bear out our conviction that all 150 AmeriCorps Members working in the anti-hunger projects have grasped, and been very successful in, spreading the message to low-income families that there is a great deal more involved in fighting hunger than simply enrolling people in the Food Stamp Program. In fact, the majority of projects underway in these five sites have focused primarily on improving the nutritional status of low-income Americans through a variety of methods, such as nutrition education, promotion of the School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Programs, WIC referrals, Earned Income Tax Credit outreach to eligible recipients, and school/urban gardening initiatives. They have actively supported and promoted the FNCS goals through school-based nutrition education presentations and gardening projects, such as the one that you visited in Los Angeles last December. We also plan to involve the Anti-Hunger Teams in FCS' Children's Nutrition Campaign in the very near future.

Based on the site visits that both Donna Hines (the Food and Consumer Services' AmeriCorps liaison and Anti-Hunger Project Coordinator) and I have made, as well as the accomplishments detailed in the first quarter reports, I am more convinced than ever that **AmeriCorps is an important tool in building public, Congressional, and media support for USDA's food assistance programs.** Additionally, AmeriCorps/USDA anti-hunger projects have been extremely effective in building bridges between the Department and grass-roots community organizations dedicated to fighting hunger in America, and have also helped to fill some of the gaps that exist in local food assistance offices where the existing infrastructures are no longer sufficient to cope with the current demands for services.

In spite of the fact that FCS' matching contribution to USDA's AmeriCorps Program was relatively small (\$350,000) for the first year of operation, the five anti-hunger projects received \$2.3 million of the total \$2.6 million grant from CNCS this fiscal year. USDA's AmeriCorps anti-hunger Teams have clearly demonstrated that they can --- and do --- play a vital role in fighting hunger in America while furthering the mission and objectives of FCS. We have also recently learned that AmeriCorps Members working with the Department's Rural Development Teams across the country are actually performing some anti-hunger work as well. In fact, the Rural Development Team has requested training in the basics of USDA's food assistance programs so that they can provide accurate referral information to those families who are in need.

I do understand that the funding structure of FCS is one that does not allow for a great deal of latitude in how appropriated funds are disbursed; however, it is essential that FCS provide continued evidence of your support for this Presidential initiative in order for the Department be able to continue the AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger projects. **As a point of reference, other agencies are contributing over \$25 million, including about \$10 million each from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service.** Consequently, the senior managers in these agencies have called for a more equitable distribution of Corporation monies in FY 1996. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that Corporation funds continue to be very limited.

Regardless of the level of cash funding FCS is able to provide, it is extremely important that the full-time staff person (Donna Hines) continue to be assigned, as a GS-13, to work with USDA's National Service for the rest of FY 1995 and the entirety of FY 1996. Please keep in mind that, in addition to her duties related to oversight of the Department's anti-hunger projects, Donna also serves as the FCS liaison to other USDA agencies, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and all of the "outside" groups, organizations, and individuals who are interested in any aspect of the AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger program. In-kind support, i.e., occasional supplies and a minimal, reasonable amount of travel funding is also essential to the successful oversight of the AmeriCorps/USDA Anti-Hunger projects. NRCS and the other agencies involved in the Department's National Service operations have all assigned multiple staff to work with AmeriCorps, and while I am satisfied with the work that Donna is doing, I must point out once again that FCS is receiving the bulk of the monetary support while providing only minimal support in terms of both cash and staffing.

Given that, in the past few weeks, President Clinton has consistently reinforced his belief that AmeriCorps is a vital centerpiece of his Presidency, I hope we can count on your continued or expanded support for this critical initiative. Funding options are listed below.

I am available to discuss this matter with you in greater detail, at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to contact me, at 720-6350. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

OPTIONS:

1. FCS will provide \$350,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation and support of the five existing AmeriCorps/USDA anti-hunger projects in Vermont, the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, the Mississippi Delta, and Los Angeles during FY 1996.
2. FNS will provide \$700,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation of the five existing projects listed in Option 1, plus the addition of one new project (in a location to be determined through a fair and open competition) during FY 1996.
3. FNS will provide \$1,000,000 in agency funds in order to sustain the participation of the five existing projects listed in Option 1, plus the addition of two new projects (in a location to be determined through a fair and open competition) during FY 1996.

DECISION BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICES:

Approve Option #1 _____

Approve Option #2 _____

Approve Option #3 _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Date _____

cc. William Ludwig



DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM:

Joel Berg *JB*
Director of National Service
Office of Communications

SUBJECT:

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE USDA AMERICORPS PROGRAM

ISSUE:

Since June 1994, the Office of Communications has coordinated the AmeriCorps national service program for the Department based on the authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and on the instructions --- mostly oral --- of former Secretary Espy. Thus, there is a need for you to legally formalize and institutionalize the AmeriCorps national service program within the organizational structure of USDA.

This memorandum requests that you: 1) formally delegate your authority to manage the AmeriCorps/USDA national service program to the Director of National Service; 2) decide upon where the Departmental function for managing AmeriCorps should be housed within the USDA organizational structure; 3) approve a process for staffing the Departmental management function; and 4) approve a process for funding the Departmental management function in FY95 and FY96.

BACKGROUND:

In September 1993, the Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which enables a wide variety of entities --- including Federal agencies --- to manage AmeriCorps national service programs. Using the authorities contained in the Act and the existing authorities of USDA programs, I have worked with the various USDA agencies to develop the Department's AmeriCorps program this year. Eleven different USDA agencies --- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Forest Service (FS), Food and Consumer Service (FCS), Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCDS), Rural Business & Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS), Consolidated Farm Service Agency (CFSA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), Agricultural Research Service (AMS), and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) --- are involved in supporting AmeriCorps.

While my efforts to coordinate our planning with all these sometimes competing agencies have been a difficult challenge, most of the agencies have been ultimately supportive. The manner in which representatives from different agencies have worked together has been extremely encouraging to all those engaged in the process.

This program has provided proof of the viability of the Administration's vision of a reorganized and unified Department acting as "Team USDA". The national service program demonstrates that there are significant benefits to USDA employees and to the public when we plan and act as a team and not as a group of disparate agencies. Our first quarterly report (summary attached) documents our remarkable accomplishments throughout the country.

To date, my staff and I have been able to function within an informal structure based upon both the expressed intent of the former Secretary --- and the Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries --- and upon the applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Yet due to the great speed with which such a massive and complex program was launched by this Department on behalf of the President, some of the steps normally taken to formalize such a program at all levels of the bureaucracy have not yet been taken.

For instance, the Secretary has never formally delegated authority, in writing, for the program's management nor formally decided how and where in the Department the program will be managed. The White House did, however, appoint me as the Director of National Service for USDA. As a result, the program has been managed by me as the Director of National Service through the Office of Communications --- mostly because that is the office in which I began work for the Department --- even though the Office of Communications may not be the entity best suited to run such a program.

Thus, there is now an urgent need to take concrete actions to formalize the program legally, make a conscious decision about exactly where in the Department the AmeriCorps management function should be placed, institutionalize management of the program at the Departmental level, and develop long-term solutions for funding the support functions of the program.

ISSUE # 1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

Both the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of the Inspector General agree that the USDA AmeriCorps program now needs a formal delegation of authority in order for me as the Director of National Service or anyone else besides the Secretary to continue signing documents on behalf of the program. Specifically, there is a need for one officer to be delegated the authority vested in you to oversee and coordinate the efforts of the USDA's agencies in developing and managing national service programs.

Based on my two years of experience in the Department, I am more convinced than ever that we need a strong, non-bureaucratic --- but fully empowered --- mechanism for managing national service programs. AmeriCorps is too important to the President and too visible to the public to lack strong direction at the Secretarial level. Furthermore, the regulations of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees AmeriCorps, require that only one AmeriCorps application be submitted by each Federal department. Since the USDA AmeriCorps program is funded from multiple USDA mission areas, the Departmental application must be submitted at the Departmental level.

The delegation of your authority to manage this program to the Director of National Service will allow the Director to submit the application on behalf of the Department to the Corporation, to sign necessary agreements relating to the USDA AmeriCorps Program, and to provide direction and management to all USDA agencies concerning the program. Such a central coordinating role can be carried out only by someone with the authority to establish priorities and to create partnerships between agencies, and who has a clear picture of your vision and the President's vision.

Your approval of this memorandum will function to formally delegate your authority over the USDA National Service Program to the Director of National Service.

OPTIONS For Issue #1 - Delegating Authority for Managing the AmeriCorps Program

1. **Do not delegate authority to anyone to oversee, centrally manage and coordinate the USDA AmeriCorps program.**

PRO: The agencies might feel that they were not being burdened by another layer of bureaucracy and will have more freedom to implement national service. Another advantage is that no paperwork would have to be done to establish the formal delegation.

CON: The Director of National Service would not have the authority to sign documents or make policy decisions on behalf of the Secretary relating to the USDA National Service Program. The Secretary would be required to sign personally all such documents. In addition, it would be difficult to guarantee that the Department's program could be successfully implemented without such management by a Director of National Service.

2. By Secretary's Memorandum, immediately delegate the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps program to the Director of National Service for USDA. Such a memorandum is attached for immediate signature.

PRO: Such a delegation would only formalize the current role of the Director of National Service in managing the program --- a role which has helped USDA build the largest and I believe, the highest quality national service program in the Federal government. Furthermore, by previously approving my appointment as Director of National Service for USDA, President Clinton has indicated his support for ensuring that his national service initiative is managed effectively at the Departmental level. Your delegating this authority to the Director of National Service will affirm your support for this important initiative.

CON: The agencies might view the establishment of a formal national service group as impinging on their authority.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 1 - Delegating Authority for the AmeriCorps Program:

I recommend you implement option 2 by signing the attached memorandum.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program

1 PURPOSE

This memorandum establishes the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and delegates the authority to manage the program for the Department to the Director of National Service.

2 BACKGROUND

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the AmeriCorps and Public Lands Corps Programs. The intent of the legislation is to engage Americans of varied ages and backgrounds in community-based service. This service addresses the Nation's educational, public safety, human, and environmental needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results. In doing so, national service will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. The Act authorizes the CNCS to provide assistance to private organizations, States, and Federal departments to conduct national service programs. The Act further authorizes Federal departments to run national service programs directly or in partnerships with others.

3 POLICY

As the People's Department, it is the responsibility of all USDA agencies to strive for the maximum allowable participation by USDA in the area of national service. By identifying existing programs that can be used to support national service initiatives or by proposing new programs or

projects, the Department will strive to the fullest extent possible to use assistance from the CNCS to leverage existing resources and to integrate the national service concept more fully into Departmental programs and activities. USDA will run programs in which both the AmeriCorps members and managers at every project site will represent a socio-economically diverse group of Americans.

4 DELEGATION

The Director of National Service is hereby delegated the authority to manage the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program, including the Public Lands Corps, and coordinate the Department's national service initiatives. The Director is authorized to prepare the Department's annual application to CNCS and to execute on behalf of the Department agreements with the CNCS and other entities concerning the USDA National Service Program.

The Director is further authorized to develop and oversee implementation of detailed guidelines and procedures for agencies to follow in planning, operating, staffing, and funding the program.

5 EXPIRATION

This memorandum shall expire after one year.

DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary

ISSUE # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

To date, the USDA AmeriCorps program has been managed by a staff of three working within the Office of Communications (OC) and working in tandem with five staff on detail from other USDA agencies. Although this structure has worked well to date, it is unclear whether, from a policy standpoint, OC is the entity best suited within the Department to house this function; in general, OC communicates the policies administered by the Department, but does not administer those policies itself. In addition, Congress has continued to focus on cutting both the budget and FTEs for OC. As AmeriCorps continues to grow as a program with a budget in the tens of millions and numerous sites across the nation, the AmeriCorps management functions will place an increasing burden on OC.

In order to continue managing the program with even minimal Departmental coordination, the functions of managing the program should either be moved out of OC or OC should receive some additional resources.

OPTIONS For Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. **Maintain the management functions for the USDA AmeriCorps program within the Office of Communications.**

PRO: Keeping AmeriCorps management functions within the Office of Communications allows the Department to keep a lower profile for such management functions, potentially muting Congressional criticism.

CON: As the OC budget is reduced through Congressional action and through the Secretary's reorganization efforts, the dedication of three FTE to the management of national service will pose an increasingly greater burden on OC. In addition, OC is not a line organization and possess little experience in running programs.

2. **Place the management functions of AmeriCorps under the Assistant Secretary for Administration reporting to the head of the personnel function, moving three FTES and their budget from the Office of Communications.**

PRO: By placing the AmeriCorps management function in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration you avoid increasing the size of the Office of the Secretary. There is also the potential to utilize the greater resources of the Assistant Secretary.

CON: By placing AmeriCorps in the same structure as the Office of Personnel, under an Assistant Secretary with no program functions, this action would reinforce the completely erroneous view that AmeriCorps is a jobs program, which could cause severe repercussions on the Hill and the White House. This action also would give the appearance of changing AmeriCorps from a line function to a support or administrative function, which is inconsistent with the nature of AmeriCorps programs.

3. **By Secretary's Memorandum, place the management functions of AmeriCorps directly in the Office of the Secretary, moving three FTEs and their budget from the Office of Communications. Such a memorandum is attached for immediate signature**

PRO: By placing the program within the Office of the Secretary, you would send a clear signal that AmeriCorps is an important priority to both the President and yourself. This would also reinforce your intention that the program is being coordinated at the Departmental level, thereby building "TEAM USDA." This action would also clarify the authority of the Director of National Service to submit one Departmental application to the Corporation for National and Community Service that incorporates projects funded by multiple USDA agencies in multiple USDA mission areas.

CON: Such a move would increase the size of the Office of the Secretary by three FTEs, thereby potentially bringing Congressional criticism from opponents of AmeriCorps or those who want to reduce the size of the Office of the Secretary.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 2 - Placement of the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 3. By placing AmeriCorps under the Office of the Secretary, it will have the stature necessary for one of the President's top initiatives. Even though their AmeriCorps programs are smaller than that of USDA, other Federal agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency, have placed the AmeriCorps management function within the Office of the Secretary or the Administrator. While such a move might generate opposition from some in Congress --- the fact is that the National and Community Service Trust Act was passed with broad bipartisan support, including 27 Republicans in the House and seven Republicans in the Senate. The USDA portion of AmeriCorps should be highly popular among most Members of Congress because it reinvents government by improving service delivery for less cost. This view seems to have been borne out by the fact that although there is a substantial amount of rhetoric coming from some in Congress concerning the need to cut national service in general, there does not appear to be a highly visible effort to attack the USDA program. This would seem to confirm that there is a base of support for USDA national service programs, in particular because of their effectiveness as relayed to Members of Congress through their constituents. Thus, the external risk to AmeriCorps that might be posed by moving the management function seems to be far outweighed by the tremendous internal benefits of such a move.

You will be able to point out that, by placing this function under your direct leadership, you are not hiring more staff and you are not spending more taxpayer money, but that you are simply bringing together the efforts of multiple, pre-existing efforts, into one structure for unified program delivery. Moreover, given the fact that the USDA AmeriCorps programs spans so many different USDA mission areas, placing the program directly under the Office of the Secretary creates the best long-term institutional structure for balancing the interests of competing agencies.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve

_____ Date _____

Disapprove

Discuss with me

Reviewed by

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM _____

Assignment of the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the formal establishment of the USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program and delegation of responsibility for management of the program to the Director of National Service, USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program functions were performed within the Office of Communications. Given the need for Department level management of this vital program, it is necessary and in the interests of economy and efficiency to transfer to the Office of the Secretary the activities, operations, personnel, funds, and staff currently performing these functions within the Office of Communications.

ACTIONS ORDERED

All activities, operations, functions, personnel, and funds of the staff performing USDA AmeriCorps National Service Program duties within the Office of Communications are hereby ordered transferred to the Office of the Secretary.

INCIDENTAL TRANSFERS

The Assistant Secretary for Administration and the Director, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, are authorized to approve such transfers of funds, personnel, employment authority, space, records, property and incidentals as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this Memorandum.

4 EXISTING DIRECTIVES

Prior delegations of authority, administrative regulations, and other directives not inconsistent with the provisions of this Memorandum shall remain in full force and effect.

5 EFFECTIVE DATE

The provisions of this Memorandum are effective immediately.

6 EXPIRATION

This memorandum shall remain in effect for ninety days or until such earlier time as published delegations or authority have been revised to incorporate its provisions and all actions ordered herein have been accomplished.

DAN GLICKMAN
Secretary

ISSUE # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

At present, my staff includes myself and two other FTES, one at the GS-15 and one at the GS-12 level. In addition, my staff includes four other employees on temporary detail to AmeriCorps; I secured such temporary rotating detailees only after lengthy and repeated negotiations with agency administrators. This small and unstable staff is inadequate for running such a large, complex, geographically diverse, and important program.

While it is difficult to make truly useful comparisons to other programs, it is interesting to note that the USDA EZ/EC initiative --- managing sites in less than a dozen states --- has about 27 employees and is still understaffed. Thus, it is obvious that the AmeriCorps initiative --- managing projects in 38 states --- is highly understaffed with only three permanent employees and four rotating detailees.

Our problem is so acute that, from 3:30 to 7:00 pm., when the one and only support employee on detail to my office has left for the day, I am personally forced to answer our toll-free 800 recruitment line.

OPTIONS For Issue # 3 - Staffing of the AmeriCorps Management Function:

1. **Continue current method of attempting to obtain rotating temporary detailees.**

PRO: This option would impose the smallest burden on the agencies.

CON: This option would hamper the USDA AmeriCorps program by providing little continuity and long-term structure to a very complex initiative. This option may result in agencies giving AmeriCorps less support than is required of a major Presidential and Secretarial initiative. As agencies resources dwindle, AmeriCorps might be one of the first casualties.

2. **Approve a specific staffing plan attached for the AmeriCorps national service working group in which three employees work permanently but agencies are directed to provide the 11 specific positions specified in the plan.**

Detailees would still be rotated into the national service support unit to learn Team USDA AmeriCorps procedures and policies and then return to their agencies to serve as a resource to manage their agency's individual program(s).

PRO: This would formalize a staff for the program that would still be incredibly small, but would be able to carry out the minimal duties inherent in managing such a large program. This approach would provide far greater stability to the process. It would help the Department guarantee that it not only has the largest single AmeriCorps program, but also the highest quality AmeriCorps program as well.

CON: Agencies, now facing severe staffing cuts, may resent being required to provide detailees to a Departmental initiative.

Staffing
for
USDA National Service Group

POSITION ¹	NAME	GRADE ²	ORG ³	STATUS
Director	Joel Berg	ES-01	OC	Permanent
Deputy Director	Elizabeth Jones	GS 12/13/14	FSIS	Detaillee
Coord. of Communications	Katherine Gibney	GS 12/13/14	OC	Permanent
Administrative Coord.	Ron De Munbrun	GS 15	OC	Permanent
Office Manager	Denise Bennet	GS 6/4	CFSA	Detaillee
Anti-Hunger Coordinator	Donna Hines	GS 13/1	FCS	Detaillee
RHCDS Agency Liaison	Jim Coyle	GS 12/7	RHCDS	Detaillee
EZ/EC and RBCDS Liaison	David Gibson	GS 14	RBCDS	Detaillee
Extension Service and 4-H Liaison	TBD	TBD	CSREES	Detaillee
Forest Service State and Private Forestry Liaison	TBD	TBD	FS	Detaillee
Evaluation Coordinator	TBD	TBD	ERS	Detaillee
Resource/Grants Coordinator	TBD	GS 9/11	TBD	Detaillee
Technology Support	TBD	GS 9/11	CSREES	Detaillee
Clerical Support/Office Automation	TBD	GS 8	TBD	Detaillee

¹ Some positions may be filled on a part time basis or they may filled on a rotating basis. This can be worked out between the Director and the agencies.

² Some grade levels are dependent on the grade of the current incumbent. Grade levels may increase or decrease as new personnel are rotated through the group and as requirements change.

³ The organization is determined by the subject matter of the position and/or the willingness or desire of an agency to lend support to the TEAM USDA national service group.

TBD = To Be Determined

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 3 - Staffing the AmeriCorps Management Function

I recommend you implement option 2 by approving a specific staffing pattern for the Department's AmeriCorps management structure. This structure will allow us to institutionalize the program for the remainder of the Administration, and also build important structures to ensure that this critical program survives and prospers in future Administrations. Because staff would work for the program for a year on detail before returning back to their agencies, this would combine the benefits of central management while reducing the burden on agency resources and, in fact, enhancing those resources through the training of agency personnel.

Still, the eleven member staff I have proposed will be one of the smallest staffs in the Federal government for a program so large and complex.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve

_____ Date _____

Disapprove

Discuss with me

Reviewed by

ISSUE # 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Function:

The central management function of the USDA AmeriCorps program has virtually no operating budget whatsoever provided by the Office of Communications other than Greenbook costs and the salaries for three FTES. In addition, for both policy and political reasons, I have chosen to take virtually no funds from the \$2.6 million grant to the Department from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Out of that grant, \$2.3 million is transferred directly to our anti-hunger sub-grantees, \$270,000 is transferred to NRCS, FS, RHCDS, RBCDS, and ARS, and only about \$15,000 was retained by my office.

Thus the central management function has virtually no money for the critical tasks of recruitment, project oversight, member development, evaluation, or the support of Secretarial or sub-cabinet travel.

I now spend a great deal of my time literally begging agencies to fund small items on a rotating basis. For instance, every time we want to mail a wave of applications to young people who have called our 800 line, we have to call various agencies just to obtain the envelopes and mailing labels. The problem is so severe that we cannot now obtain a phone line (costing \$700) for a second fax machine we have already obtained. (To give you some idea of the vast volume of our work, I point out that we typically receive over 100 pages and send over 50 pages of faxes each day.)

Early start-up costs -- such as funding for travel and applications, copying the public service announcement Secretary Espy taped, and printing recruitment posters and brochures -- have been paid for primarily from the Office of Communications with some contributions from NRCS and FS. As we move towards expanding the Team USDA AmeriCorps, it is important to fund the formal management structure we have proposed to support the program.

OPTIONS for Issue 4 - Funding the AmeriCorps Management Group:

1. **Do not fund the central management group through transfers from agencies.**

PRO: This will cause the least burden on the agencies.

CON: Without even minimal funding, it will be nearly impossible to continue management the program at the Departmental level. It will be extremely difficult to continue coordinating a coherent set of operational guidelines, recruitment, training, and management procedures, and program objectives. In addition, many of the requirements of the CNCS involve interaction at the Departmental level. If a central organization is not funded to perform this role it will be necessary to create various task forces throughout the year to coordinate the agencies' efforts to evaluate programs, recruit participants, and submit an application to CNCS for a grant.

2. **Provide limited funding to the Departmental AmeriCorps function by executing separate cost-reimbursement agreements between the organizational entity in which the national service function is placed through the decision reached in issue # 3 and each of the agencies involved in running the program.**

Attached is a suggested \$172,696 budget for the remainder of FY95 and a suggested \$178,793 budget for FY96. The Office of the Secretary (or other organizational entity determined in issue # 3) would enter into separate cost-reimbursable agreements pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2263, providing for each agency to advance the funds to the organizational entity housing the national service function for the costs of the national service support structure reasonably related to the respective agencies' national service programs. The amount of the reimbursement would be based on the size of the organization's existing programs and those planned for the next year which must be worked on during the current fiscal year.

The budget sheets are broken down into five categories that better demonstrate the specific programmatic needs: recruitment, project oversight, member development, evaluation, and costs of staff travel associated with Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel. Given that six different USDA agencies have a major role in running AmeriCorps, such coordinating functions are best performed at the Departmental, not agency level. Such Departmental coordination is critical to ensure that our programs meet both the President's vision of AmeriCorps and the Secretary's vision of "Team USDA."

PRO: The program is managed centrally for the Secretary. No new organization has to be created. No separate budget has to be submitted. Yet the Department would have at least minimal funds with which to manage the program. It is also important to note that most of the funds requested are already being expended by our agencies and this decision memorandum would simply clarify the ability of the Department to target and prioritize such spending.

CON: Again agencies may feel they are "losing" dollars. However, if the Secretary is to be guaranteed consistent and accountable management of the Team USDA national service initiatives, this money is a necessary expense associated with implementing national service programs.

RECOMMENDATION for Issue # 4 - Funding a National Service Group:

I recommend you implement option 2, provide an extremely low management budget for the program. The \$172,696 for the remainder of FY95 and the \$178,793 for FY96 would equal only about \$145 per Member per year to manage central functions relating to recruitment, project oversight, Member education and development, Member and staff training, evaluation, and support of national service related Secretarial and sub-cabinet travel.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve _____

Date _____

Disapprove _____

Discuss _____

Reviewed by _____

04/24/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 95 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$4,750
(800) Phone Number	\$10,800
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$38,784

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$8,000
Software	\$3,150
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$47,715

AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$6,682
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$38,065

EVALUATION

Travel	\$6,682
Materials	\$4,750
Photography	\$2,200
Video	\$2,500
Administrative	\$21,734

Sub-Total: \$37,865

SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$6,682
Photography and Video	\$3,600

Sub-Total: \$10,281

TOTAL: \$172,712

Total number of AmeriCorps members in the USDA AmeriCorps program:	1211
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Average cost per participant of the National Service Director's budget (Does not include Salary costs):	\$143
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FY 95 DETAILED COST BREAKDOWN

SECTION II	OPERATING PLAN
2100 Travel	26,726 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	10,800 1,200 month for 800 number (9 mo) = 10,800
Rent/Etc., Subtotal	10,800
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	3,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter 3 times a year 1,500 Miscellaneous printing 4,500
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event 0 0 0
Print/Repro, Subtotal	7,800
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	5,000 Write and film two promo videos at \$2,500
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860 12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,250 5 papers X \$30 month X 8 months 3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc. 4,500 (internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	3,996 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
Other Ser., Subtotal	43,546
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	3,150
Gasoline	0
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	5,700
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	12,000 3 PC's at \$4,000 - FAX modem 250, printer 1500, software 500, PC 1750
Equipment, Subtotal	12,000
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
Reserve	0
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,712
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,712

04/24/95

NATIONAL SERVICE GROUP
FY 96 BUDGET
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Materials	\$5,500
(800) Phone Number	\$14,400
Meeting Fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$41,648

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Equipment	\$0
Software	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$39,351

AMERICORPS MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT

Travel	\$10,954
Electronic Conferences	\$8,150
Meeting fees	\$1,500
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$40,851

EVALUATION

Travel	\$10,954
Materials	\$5,500
Photography	\$2,200
Video	\$0
Administrative	\$20,248

Sub-Total: \$38,901

SUPPORT OF SECRETARIAL
AND SUB-CABINET
SITE VISITS

Travel (national service group only)	\$10,954
Photography and Video	\$1,100

Sub-Total: \$12,054

TOTAL: \$172,805

Total number of AmeriCorps members
in the USDA AmeriCorps program: 1211

Average cost per participant of the
National Service Director's budget
(Does not include Salary costs): \$143

FY 96 DETAILED COST BREAKDOWN

SECTION II -----	OPERATING PLAN
2100 Travel	43,815 See Travel estimating sheet
2200 Transportation of Things	2,000 100 packages at \$20
2300 Rent, Comm, Utilities:	
Leases	0
Mail/Communications	14,400 1,200 month for 800 number (12 mo) = 14,400
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Rent/Etc., Subtotal	14,400
2400 Print, Reproduction:	
Printing	1,000 10,000 copies 8 page newsletter once a year 5,000 Miscellaneous printing 6,000
Photography	3,300 Photo coverage of 11 events X \$300 per event 0 0 0
-----	-----
Print/Repro, Subtotal	9,300
2500 Other Services	
Training	0
Design	5,000 Design 3 newsletters and 2 pamphlets a 22 hours each X \$45 per hour
Video and Film	0
Repair and Maintenance	1,300
Electronic Conferences	4,300 20 person audio conference 6 times a year X \$860 12,000 Teleconference 2 times a year X \$6,000
Contractors/Agreements	1,800 5 pagers X \$30 month X 12 months 3,200 Miscellaneous contracts, interpreters, etc. 6,000 (Internet 500 mo.)
Labor Employment	0
Miscellaneous	0 Move furniture, reserve, etc.
Fees	3,000 10 meetings X \$300 each
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Other Ser., Subtotal	36,600
2600 Supplies/Materials	
Subscript/Public	0
Supplies/Materials	2,550 envelopes, printer cartridges, labels, etc.
ADP Software	0
Gasoline	0
-----	-----
Supplies/Mat., Subtotal	2,550
3100 Equipment:	
Equipment	0
ADP Equipment	0
-----	-----
Equipment, Subtotal	0
4100 Prompt Payment Act	0
Greenbook Costs	64,140
-----	-----
Reserve	0
-----	-----
TOTAL, SECTION II	172,805
TOTAL, SEC. I & II	172,805
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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Executive Secretariat
Official Clearance Sheet

(Control Number)

	DRAFT	REWRITE	FINAL
AGENCY CCO: (Signature) (Date)			
AGENCY HEAD: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>Joe Berg</i> 4/24/95
OES: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
OGC: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>James Michael Kelly</i> 4/24/95 James Michael Kelly Associate General Counsel
OBPA: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			<i>Stephen B. Dewhurst</i> (note) STEPHEN B. DEWHURST Director, Office of Budget and Program Analysis
OCR: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
SUB-CAB CCO: (Signature) (Date)			
SUB-CAB: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
ADDT'L CLEAR: (Signature) (Title) (Date)			
EXEC. ASST:			
SEC/AUTOPEN:			



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY/DEPUTY SECRETARY

FROM: Stephen B. Dewhurst
Director

APR 28 1995

SUBJECT: USDA AmeriCorps Decision Memorandum

We have cleared the attached memoranda requesting decisions on the following issues and the corresponding recommendations as listed below.

- (1) Delegation of authority for managing the USDA AmeriCorps programs
--recommends that the authority be delegated to the Director of National Service.
- (2) Placement of the USDA AmeriCorps management function
--recommends that the staff of AmeriCorps be moved from the Office of Communications to the Office of the Secretary.
- (3) Staffing of the management function
--recommends that specific agencies be directed to supplement the current permanent staff of three FTE's with eleven detailees whose salaries and benefits would be paid by the donating agency.
- (4) Funding the management function
--recommends the transfer of about \$180,000 from the agencies involved in the program for the AmeriCorps staff to meet oversight costs, such as teleconferences, travel, publications, and other administrative costs.

The Director of National Service for USDA has been managing the program without any formal delegation from the Secretary. We agree that the program would be more efficiently and effectively managed if the Secretary officially delegates such authority to the Director.

On the other issues, we do not have a specific recommendation, but we suggest that a few points be kept in mind. If the AmeriCorps function is moved out of the Office of Communications, Congress should be notified. The Department has a long tradition of advising Congress when we are making organizational changes. In fact, the Department has recently run into some difficulty for not advising Congress of all the changes underway as part of the reorganization. In addition, if the decision is made to put the AmeriCorps function in the Immediate Office of the Secretary, the Secretary's

office would be in the position of having eleven detailees. There has been in the past some Congressional concern about supplementing the Office of the Secretary with detailees. Moreover, while such a move would not entail an increase in staffing for the Office of the Secretary, it may raise--fairly or unfairly--questions about the Department's commitment to streamlining.

We suggest that the policy officials whose agencies are supporting AmeriCorps projects be made aware of the proposal to require them to support the central office with funds and details. A decision on funding and details could be deferred until the FY 1997 Budget process begins this summer to provide for a review of the total operation of USDA's AmeriCorps program.

Attachment