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UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

MAINE
AMERICORPS
TEAM USDA

February 16, 1996.

Richard Baird
Program Director
Maine USDA AmeriCorps
5 Godfrey Drive
Orono, Maine 04473

Joel Berg
Director of National Service
Office of Public Affairs
US Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 538A
14th & Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Joel:

Enclosed is a memorandum I thought you might be interested in. The memo was given to each commissioner and the handwritten message on the front is from the Acting Director of the Maine State Commission for Community Service, Maryalice Crofton. This memo epitomizes Maryalice's past and present attitude towards AmeriCorps. This has resulted in lack of support by the commission and has been an ongoing problem for programs in the state of Maine. Everything within our program is going very well -- all of the Maine USDA AmeriCorps members continue to GET THINGS DONE! I will keep you updated on any new developments in the situation here in Maine.

Sincerely,


Richard Baird.

TO STRENGTHEN THE ETHIC OF SERVICE:

THE ROLE OF THE STATE COMMISSION

As this is read, keep in mind that it was written before community-based Learn + Serve awards plus reflects in-part from larger states with greater AmeriCorps allotments. For Maine, the infrastructure & non-AmeriCorps responsibilities are as important and should be given equal weight. "AmeriCorps" could also read "national service" through this.

CORPORATION

FOR NATIONAL

 SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 1995 EDITION

INTRODUCTION

This document represents the culmination of the work of State Commission Executive Directors, Commission Chairs, and staff representing various departments within the Corporation for National Service. It outlines the diverse roles and responsibilities of State Commissions by combining requirements of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and regulations and policies developed by the Corporation for National Service over the past year. It also draws on the experience of many State Commission Executive Directors and Members who have worked tirelessly to advance national and community service in their states.

The partnership between the Corporation for National Service and State Commissions is dynamic and will continue to develop and mature over time. Likewise, this document encompasses a set of objectives and responsibilities that will continually need to be strengthened and updated. In the first year of implementation, the Corporation worked closely with State Commissions to develop their capacity and experience. But now, with a strong, independent network of State Commissions successfully implementing their State Plans and actively supporting the AmeriCorps programs in their state, to the extent allowable by law, the Corporation is eager to continue to shift more responsibility to the states. We hope that together, the Corporation and State Commissions will continually strive to reinvent the federal/state relationship. Clearly, this partnership requires ongoing improvement and we encourage you to share feedback and suggestions for how it can be strengthened.

After a brief section providing some background on State Commissions and the Corporation, this document is divided into three sections which delineate many of the roles and responsibilities of State Commissions. Section I describes tasks related to developing and implementing an expansive vision for service and volunteerism, or "The Big Picture," in a state. The second section, "The Details," focuses on the responsibilities that require the completion of a tangible product (e.g. the State Commission administrative funds application, coordinating the submission of quarterly reports) And finally, Section III, "Supporting your Programs," looks at ways to ensure AmeriCorps programs are of the highest quality.

NOTE: Some have suggested that this document should offer guidance on the proper break down of responsibilities between Commission members and Commission staff. However, given the unique qualities and circumstances of each State Commission, it was determined that decisions of how best to manage Commission responsibilities are more appropriately left in the hands of each Commission. Generally, active and engaged Commission members will foster and articulate an inclusive vision of service, make important policy decisions, and help generate statewide interest and support for national and community service, while Commission staff will implement the vision and manage day-to-

day operations. It is important to note that while Commission staff can make recommendations on policies and program selection, the National and Community Service Trust Act requires that certain actions must be formally ratified by Commission members. For more information on Commission member responsibilities which cannot be delegated to staff, please see the regulations governing State Commissions which are available by contacting the Corporation's Office of the General Counsel.

BACKGROUND

To implement AmeriCorps and other service programs, the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (the Act) provides for the establishment of the Corporation for National Service, an independent federal agency governed by a bipartisan Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and State Commissions for National and Community Service, directed by bipartisan state boards appointed by Governors.

Recognizing that a national ethic of service begins with involved citizens from different backgrounds, State Commissions are intended to reflect each state's diversity of experience within their membership. As a means for ensuring that important constituencies and areas of expertise are represented on State Commissions, the Act authorizes between 15 and 25 voting members and requires representatives from youth programs, community-based organizations, the field of education, local government, labor and business, as well as older adults, young adults and representatives of national service programs. And, just as there is bipartisan support for national and community service, Commissions must also be bipartisan.

As both a leader and partner, State Commissions have front-line responsibility for selecting and supporting AmeriCorps programs within their state, while working closely with the Corporation for National Service to strengthen our nation's commitment to service and volunteerism and to revitalize the ethic of citizenship and civic responsibility. In addition to serving as leaders and partners in these areas, State Commissions act as visionaries, collaborators, facilitators, ambassadors, administrators, advocates, strategic planners, fund-raisers, grant monitors and resource brokers.

I. THE BIG PICTURE

The responsibilities outlined in this section reflect a few basic themes: strengthening the ethic of service among all Americans, the practical and symbolic role AmeriCorps can play in advancing this ethic, the required maintenance of a decentralized national program, and the long-term sustainability of the national and community service movement. While State Commissions will often need to focus on the details of day-to-day implementation, it is important that they keep in mind their long-term vision and continually strive to achieve it.

- **Looking Beyond AmeriCorps.** State Commissions have responsibility for developing and communicating a statewide vision of service. Commissions are in the best position to strengthen a public mandate for encouraging civic responsibility and fostering an ethic of service and volunteerism throughout the state. Rather than viewing AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, the Senior Corps, and traditional volunteer programs as competing with one another, State Commissions, State Departments of Education, Corporation State Offices, State Offices of Volunteerism, and Volunteer Centers have an opportunity to see each other as complementary partners that come together to offer a continuum of service opportunities or "Seasons of Service." State Commissions are uniquely positioned to facilitate this common vision. The State Plan is the vehicle through which Commissions and their partners can articulate this vision and describe the specific strategies which will be pursued to realize it. (For more information on the State Plan see "Developing and Updating a Three-Year State Plan" in section II, "The Details")
- **Expanding Support for AmeriCorps.** If national service is to become an integral means of solving public problems in America, support must come from the full spectrum of American life. Through well-managed statewide and local public relations activities, highly visible service projects, and articulate and knowledgeable Commission Members, State Commissions can be the linchpin for achieving the goals of national service. A Commission's strategy for expanding support for AmeriCorps and other national and community service programs will be an important component of its State Plan. Corporations, foundations, elected officials, the media, and state agencies are essential partners in the national effort to address shared community problems through service. Commissions play a vital role in fostering and maintaining long-lasting relationships with these important sources of support. These relationships can translate into funds raised, bipartisan political support, and public support for national and community service. These important partners can be divided into four categories: Funders, Elected Officials, Media, and other State Agencies.

Funders. State Commissions should help collectively publicize AmeriCorps programs in their state making sure that a diverse group of potential funders understands the basics of AmeriCorps and are aware of the impact that programs are having on local communities. Commission Members and staff should convene meetings and arrange presentations and site visits for local businesses and business associations such as the Chamber of Commerce, foundations and the regional Council on Foundations, as well as other governmental grant-making agencies.

Working with AmeriCorps programs, State Commissions can help build partnerships with funders that will raise funds and in-kind donations to meet or exceed financial match requirements. Commissions can assist and train local programs in research, outreach, the general principles of proposal writing, communication, and partnership building skills. Technical assistance in this area will also be available through Corporation-funded national providers.

In addition to soliciting support for local AmeriCorps programs, State Commissions might also attempt to raise support for state-wide community service events or their own match requirements. In these instances, Commissions should look to expand the funding pool for all their state's AmeriCorps programs, rather than cause programs to compete among themselves for limited resources. Successful fundraising requires diligence and long-term partnership building. Commissions should give considerable thought to these efforts, being sure that fundraising strategies are carefully integrated into their State Plan.

Elected Officials. Commissions can play an important role in building relationships with elected officials and other public servants at all levels and in assisting the Corporation to strengthen bipartisan support for national service. Periodically, the Corporation will provide State Commissions with information concerning its national strategy to build support for national service, and Commissions should give thought to how they can reinforce this strategy at a state level.

It is essential that Commissions (and programs) help elected officials learn more about the many benefits of national service by having them participate in AmeriCorps site visits, state-wide events, and Opening and Graduation Ceremonies. These leaders will become more invested in national service if they see first hand how AmeriCorps Members are *getting things done* in their communities.

Media. State Commissions share responsibility for increasing the visibility of the AmeriCorps programs in their state. State Commissions will want to design a statewide strategy to increase public awareness and support for all AmeriCorps and other service programs in their state including any National Direct or programs funded through the Indian Tribe set-aside. Commissions are encouraged to work with local media to highlight the accomplishments of AmeriCorps Members and programs. For consistency and visibility, all press releases and press conferences should identify the program as part of the AmeriCorps national service network and participants identified as AmeriCorps Members. Outreach to national press should be coordinated with the Corporation's Public Affairs Office. Copies of all local press coverage should be sent to your Corporation program officer so that there can be a central repository of AmeriCorps press clippings.

When major media events or site visits are taking place, State Commissions will want to inform the Corporation's Congressional/Intergovernmental Affairs and/or Public Affairs offices through their Corporation program officer. The Corporation may be able to provide the Commission with additional assistance.

Other State Agencies. State Commissions can also develop relationships with state agencies that address human services, K-12 and higher education issues, job-training/vocational education, natural resources, rehabilitation, finance, administration and justice. These relationships can lead to the sharing of resources, the provision of technical assistance, and the coordination of related state policy (e.g. AFDC, worker's compensation, and child care).

- **Promoting the AmeriCorps National Identity.** To gain the benefits of a national program, we must work together to build a national identity beyond that of grants administration and program requirements. When implemented correctly, national identity allows for programs to maintain their important local identities while they benefit from and contribute towards the name recognition and positive reputation of the national AmeriCorps program. To this end, it is essential that State Commissions help to foster national identity among all the AmeriCorps programs in their state (including AmeriCorps*National programs, those funded through the set-aside for Indian Tribes, and, working with their Corporation State Director, AmeriCorps*VISTA). To this end, all AmeriCorps programs should share a common look and language. The AmeriCorps identity will develop as community members see the AmeriCorps logo at project sites where Members serve, on the uniforms of Members themselves, and on recruitment brochures and posters. Language also plays an essential role in

creating a single AmeriCorps identity, and State Commissions should promote the use of a shared vocabulary among Commission members, Commission staff, program staff and AmeriCorps Members.

In addition to a shared vocabulary, the Corporation has developed a strategy to highlight local AmeriCorps programs nationally on a few key dates during the year. State Commissions and AmeriCorps programs in their states are asked to host or participate in these national recognition days at either a statewide or local level. When appropriate, Commissions should work with Corporation State Offices to organize the following (and other) activities that will help build esprit de corps among Members and enhance the visibility of AmeriCorps.

National Opening Ceremony (this year October 12, 1995)

State Commissions are the primary organizers of these ceremonies in which all AmeriCorps programs should plan on participating each year. The Corporation will be available to provide support, coordination, and technical assistance.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday (January)

State Commissions are encouraged to work with the Corporation and their state Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission to commemorate Dr. King's commitment to service. Event coordination for this day will come from both state and local levels.

National Day of Service (National Volunteer Week in April)

Throughout this week, State Commissions and local programs are asked to coordinate regional or statewide service project(s) that will bring together AmeriCorps Members from different programs to celebrate the impact AmeriCorps is making in communities around the state.

- **Overseeing National Skills Activities.** As part of the effort to build national identity among AmeriCorps Members, the Corporation has identified a set of skills and trainings that should be a part of all programs in the national service network. It is expected that all AmeriCorps Members will receive training in three national skills areas—CPR/first aid, communication, and conflict resolution—and that they may also have opportunities to participate in one or more other training or projects that reinforce an ethic of responsibility. These topics are HIV/AIDS awareness, citizenship education, and environmental audits. State Commissions can help programs identify local resources to support training in these areas. Some Commissions may want to coordinate regional or statewide training programs to assist AmeriCorps programs in fulfilling these important requirements.

- **Coordinating Activities.** State Commissions should partner with their State Education Agency (SEA), which subgrants Learn and Serve America funds for school-based service-learning programs, and Corporation State Offices, to coordinate AmeriCorps with Learn and Serve America activities and other federally operated service programs such as AmeriCorps*VISTA, and the National Senior Service Corps. These entities should work together to ensure that their services complement, not duplicate, one another. Where appropriate, Learn and Serve America Higher Education grantees should also be included in State Commission activities. To the extent possible and as part of their broad inclusive vision of service in the state, State Commissions should also include traditional service and volunteer programs in their activities.

II. THE DETAILS

This section provides an overview of State Commission responsibilities than can be associated with a tangible product which a Commission will need to produce and submit to the Corporation (e.g. the state's package of AmeriCorps proposals or the State Plan). Obviously there will be significant overlap between developing the long-term vision for service in a state as described in Section I and the development of a State Plan as described below. Where possible we have tried to cross reference these sections to reinforce their connectedness.

- **Preparing Applications for Administrative Funding.** In addition to pushing most decision-making authority out to the states, the Corporation makes funds available to each state (using a population-based formula) to establish and maintain a State Commission. Each is expected to develop a strong capacity to manage its grants. Each fall, State Commissions must prepare applications describing how they plan to utilize the administrative funds in compliance with all legislated requirements. Commissions must maintain complete fiscal records in the manner described in the grant agreement. For the 1995-1996 program year and beyond, State Commission administrative funds will be contingent on the submission of a satisfactory State Plan or annual update of a State Plan (see below).
- **Developing and Updating a Three-Year State Plan.** One of the most important duties of every State Commission is to create and implement a broad vision for national and community service in the state (as described in Section I). Through an open and public process, Commissions develop this vision and describe it in an annually updated three-year plan which details the state's long-term strategies for making the vision a reality. Components of the plan include: the demonstration of an inclusive process; the articulation of a broad, expansive vision; and the development of goals and strategies for expanding support, strengthening infrastructure by coordinating the streams of service, promoting national identity, ensuring administrative capacity, improving program quality, and delivering training and technical assistance. State Commission members were selected because of their varied backgrounds and significant community experience, thus enabling them to be important contributors to the development of the State Plan. As mentioned above, for the 1995-1996 program year and beyond, Commission administrative funds will be tied to the annual submission of an updated or revised State Plan.
- **Selecting Grantees / Preparing State Application.** State Commissions are also responsible for administering a competitive process to select AmeriCorps program proposals to be included in their state application. At least initially, Commissions should develop a comprehensive outreach strategy to reach and inform all potential applicants, including grassroots organizations and

those in rural areas. This is an important first step toward generating interest and support for national and community service. Once applications are issued, Commissions are required to provide application assistance to potential applicants. This aid will be essential in ensuring the Commission receives high quality proposals.

Once proposals are submitted, State Commissions will select potential grantees using an application review process which avoids any real or perceived conflicts of interest. After proposals have been evaluated at the state level, and Commission members have approved the package of proposals, the package will be submitted to the Corporation for both formula and competitive funds. The National and Community Service Trust Act stipulates that all new AmeriCorps program proposals be peer reviewed at the national level. Corporation staff reviews the results of the peer review process and works with each state to ensure the quality of formula-funded programs. The Corporation then selects programs from among the pool of proposals competing for funds nationally. Once decisions and grant negotiations are finalized, the Corporation makes an aggregate grant to the state for formula and competitive programs and Commissions in turn subgrant funds to individual AmeriCorps programs. Commissions will also notify unsuccessful applicants and provide them with additional information and assistance if requested.

- **Preparing the PDAT proposal.** One of a State Commission's most important responsibilities is to provide program development assistance and training (PDAT) to the AmeriCorps programs in its state. Funds are available from the Corporation to assist Commissions' efforts in this area. These funds represent the Corporation's commitment to investing in and empowering State Commissions as the front-line providers of technical assistance. To access PDAT funds, State Commissions submit a proposal and budget to the Corporation detailing the state's strategy for using these funds to support their programs. In 1995-1996, the application for PDAT funds has been incorporated into the 1995 State Commission Application, which also includes the annual update of the State Plan and the request for State Commission administrative funds. (For more information on PDAT please see "Providing Program Development Assistance and Training" in "Section III Supporting Your Programs.")
- **Preparing Learn and Serve America Community-Based Application.** State Commissions are encouraged to prepare and submit a community-based Learn and Serve America application to support service-learning programs for school-aged youth. These grants are awarded competitively. As part of the application, states develop a three year plan describing how the state will manage such an initiative and how it will be integrated into the overall state service plan. Commissions will coordinate with the state education agency in the development of the application. States that receive such funds will then

be responsible for conducting a state subgrant process to select local partners. Commissions must provide the same degree of outreach and application assistance to potential Learn and Serve programs as is required for AmeriCorps (see above). Unlike the AmeriCorps*State application process, pre-selection of programs to receive Learn and Serve funding is not required. However, Commissions must clearly describe the selection process and criteria that will be used should the plan be funded.

- **Coordinating the Submission of Quarterly Reports.** Quarterly Reports provide an opportunity for State Commissions, the Corporation, and the programs themselves to assess progress made toward achieving objectives. Programs also have the chance to raise issues of concern, and highlight areas in which the programs and Members have been successful. State Commissions are responsible for ensuring that individual programs comply with reporting requirements and that their reports assess their own performance and summarize data collected from their programs. When compiling their programs' quarterly reports to submit to the Corporation, it is important that Commissions analyze the information and include candid assessments of their programs' progress to date and recommendations for technical assistance. This analysis should be included in the State Commission quarterly report. After the Corporation has received and analyzed quarterly reports, program specific feedback will be shared with Commissions. Commissions should share this feedback with their programs with any comments or recommendations of their own.
- **Participating in CNS Sponsored Meetings and Conferences.** The Corporation may sponsor a number of meetings and conferences each year. State Commission staff and/or AmeriCorps program directors are expected to attend all Corporation-sponsored national or regional meetings which pertain to them (approximately two to four meetings annually for Commission staff, fewer for program directors).
- **Administering Disabilities Funding.** State Commissions will receive an allotment of funds based upon the number of AmeriCorps Members in their state funded through State Competitive and National Direct grants. Unfortunately, the current legislation contains an error which does not permit these funds to be expended on State Formula programs. This will be corrected during reauthorization efforts. Nonetheless, once you have established a plan for helping your programs include people with disabilities, formula-funded programs can be included in these activities, including the provision of training or technical assistance. State Commissions will determine the most effective ways to expend these funds to involve individuals with disabilities in AmeriCorps. Examples include:

- reasonable accommodation of AmeriCorps Members;
- development of materials in alternative formats;

- consultants to assist with outreach, recruitment, or technical assistance;
- meeting costs; and
- other costs associated with outreach, recruitment, or reasonable accommodation requests for retention of people with disabilities.

- **Participating in Other Corporation Activities.** State Commissions are often asked to participate in other Corporation activities which are difficult to predict. Examples of activities which require the completion of a product include: the national evaluation, customer satisfaction surveys, external studies, and other feedback mechanisms.

III. SUPPORTING YOUR PROGRAMS

It has been said many times that ultimately the success of AmeriCorps rests squarely on the strength and quality of local AmeriCorps programs. One of the most important responsibilities of State Commissions is to support local AmeriCorps programs and to work with them to ensure they are of high quality. Listed below are several ways that Commissions can help AmeriCorps programs succeed.

- **Monitoring Programs and Administering Grants.** Program monitoring is perhaps the most critical function that State Commissions perform in their efforts to ensure the quality of AmeriCorps. State Commissions have front-line responsibility for holding State Commission-funded programs accountable for high quality management and service projects, development of national identity, and compliance with legal and grant requirements. State Commissions may use many tools to monitor programs—regular telephone or other contact with program staff, review of quarterly reports, periodic meetings with groups of AmeriCorps Members and program directors, and program site visits. Monitoring should be both forward and backward looking—How is your program doing? Are there signs that problems may emerge? How has the program dealt with problems in the past? Through monitoring, State Commissions can assess programs' needs for technical assistance or other resources. Ultimately, monitoring allows renewal decisions to be made based upon more than just a written proposal.

As Commissions become more established, responsibility for program quality has been and will continue to be shifted to State Commissions. The Corporation's monitoring efforts are designed to support and supplement Commissions efforts, not to replace them, and it is likely that State Commissions will be asked to coordinate joint site visits for Commission and Corporation staff.

There are two types of information that Commissions will want to share with their Corporation program officer as soon as it is known: 1) notable examples of program success, and 2) significant problems. An example of the former is the completion of a major service project—a house built, a life saved, a significant goal achieved; an example of the latter is a high member dropout rate, service projects that may appear to involve prohibited activities or are of limited impact, an inability to raise matching funds, poor management, or the inappropriate use of funds. Program success stories will be used to bring positive attention to the local program, while information about problems will enable the Corporation to respond appropriately with assistance or other action.

While State Commissions do not have responsibility for monitoring AmeriCorps*National or AmeriCorps*Indian Tribe sites in their state, they often become aware of key successes or problems these programs may be experiencing before word gets back to the Corporation. It will be important for State Commissions to keep their AmeriCorps*State program officer up to date on this information so that it can be shared with the AmeriCorps*National program officer responsible for the program.

- **Providing Program Development Assistance and Training.** State Commissions have responsibility for providing program development assistance and training (PDAT) to programs within their state. This assistance should be available to AmeriCorps State programs, National Direct local sites, and programs operated by Indian Tribes located within the state. Commissions may also want to include Learn and Serve America K-12 and Higher Education grantees in T/TA activities and look to them for assistance in providing T/TA, especially in the area of service-learning.

The Corporation believes that State Commissions are in the best position to work primarily with Commission-funded programs, and to a limited extent with National Direct sites, to identify their T/TA needs and broker the assistance of qualified local T/TA providers. This year Commissions were eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 to support a State Commission's PDAT efforts. Commissions were asked to assess the needs of all AmeriCorps programs operating in the state and develop a proposal which was submitted to the Corporation, designating a lead person to coordinate the state's efforts. It is anticipated that the Corporation will make additional PDAT funds available to Commissions each year. (For more information on PDAT please see "Preparing the PDAT Proposal" in "Section II The Details.")

- **Acting as Convenors.** In order to ensure high quality service programs, State Commissions are encouraged to convene working groups of AmeriCorps program directors. By bringing together program directors, State Commissions can develop a peer support network to share lessons learned, promote a sense of esprit de corps, and receive specialized training. Networks can also be formed among AmeriCorps Members through meetings which allow Members from different programs (including AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*NCCC) to share their experiences, discuss common issues facing their communities, strengthen national identity, and provide input to the State Commission on how AmeriCorps programs are being implemented in the state and how they might be improved.

Commissions may also want to convene at least one annual meeting of program practitioners across the various streams of service (e.g. AmeriCorps*State/Direct, AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*NCCC, National Senior Service Corps, K-12 and higher education Learn and Serve

America). When appropriate, Commissions should partner with the Corporation State Offices and State Education Agencies in these efforts.

- **Assisting Local Sites of National Direct AmeriCorps Programs.** State Commissions are uniquely positioned to encourage collaboration and resource sharing between AmeriCorps*State programs and AmeriCorps*Direct sites in their state (including programs funded through the set-aside for Indian Tribes). While State Commissions are not required to oversee or monitor National Direct sites, it is critical that they incorporate all national service programs into their state service network.

Commissions should include National Direct sites in their regular communication networks, in training and technical assistance (PDAT) activities, and in all statewide and regional events. In turn, Direct programs are responsible for working closely with State Commissions to identify their own technical assistance needs and to participate in opportunities for statewide information exchange. Through this interaction, AmeriCorps program directors (and Members where appropriate) can share their experiences, learn from each other, and respond to local and regional needs more effectively.

State Commissions can also help Corporation program officers improve National Direct program quality by sharing any issues that come to their attention.

- **Evaluating Programs.** During the program selection and negotiation process, Commissions should work with prospective programs to develop appropriate program objectives that are outcome-based, rather than process-focused. As one element of program monitoring, Commissions should ensure that their programs develop systems to measure progress toward their annual objectives, and that the programs make progress toward those objectives.

Commissions should encourage programs to establish mechanisms for obtaining and utilizing "stakeholder" feedback to continuously improve program quality (stakeholders include AmeriCorps Members, community residents, community leaders, and business leaders). Other suggestions for assessing progress and identifying areas to be strengthened can be found in the "Handbook for Continuous Improvement" which has been provided to each State Commission and AmeriCorps program. (Commissions will also want to develop systems to monitor their own progress, and collect and utilize their own stakeholder feedback.)

Commissions can also facilitate the sharing of evaluation resources within a state and develop state-wide evaluations. If appropriate, these evaluations can be modeled after the Corporation's national evaluation with modifications and additions made as dictated by state-specific circumstances.

Finally, the Corporation is relying on State Commissions to ensure that programs submit required evaluation-related forms, such as enrollment forms, exit forms, and operating site information forms, by important deadlines.

- **Sharing Information.** State Commissions are responsible for disseminating key information to AmeriCorps programs, and, if appropriate, to Commission members, other service and volunteer programs, and key supporters. Periodically the Corporation sends State Commissions and National Direct umbrella organizations "updates" which include policy memos, recent news about AmeriCorps, and examples of best practices by Commissions and programs. It is important that Commissions distribute these updates to their programs in a timely manner.
- **Assisting Programs with Recruitment.** State Commissions, in cooperation with Corporation State Offices, are responsible for making information about AmeriCorps and other service opportunities widely available to potential applicants. This might take the form of developing their own statewide recruitment database as well as actively using the National Referral System. State Commissions also assist programs develop a recruitment strategy to recruit Members with diverse backgrounds and experiences and to ensure that the program fills all available positions.

To the extent possible, Commissions should coordinate their state recruitment efforts with the Corporation's National Referral System. To ensure that potential AmeriCorps Members in the national database are properly directed to local programs, State Commissions will work with the Corporation to compile the most up-to-date information in the AmeriCorps Program Directory. Commissions should also educate programs within their state about the National Referral System, provide technical assistance on how the database can be accessed, and encourage program directors to utilize it.

The National Referral System can be used to recruit locally as well as nationally; some individuals listed in the database will live within the general vicinity of a program, while others may live outside the geographic area. In 1995-1996 the Corporation had planned to provide up to \$500 per qualified nationally recruited Member both at the start and at the successful completion of the term of service. The recent rescission of \$30 million from the AmeriCorps budget has necessitated a change in this policy for this year. Instead of the planned policy, each State Commission has been awarded \$1,000 to divide as equitably as possible among AmeriCorps*State programs that may need it to offset relocation expenses of Members. Please continue to provide the Corporation with feedback on how the National Referral System can be improved.

CONCLUSION

This document has been a long time coming and we apologize for the delay. It is our sincere hope that it remains useful to the Members and staff of State Commissions as you outline your goals and strategies for the years ahead.

You will notice that this version of the document is marked "September 1995 Edition." This paper will undoubtedly need to be refined and updated as we continually refine and update the relationship between the Corporation and State Commissions and the role of State Commissions in the broader scheme of national and community service. We look forward to receiving your input.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this document. The original drafters, Aulani Wilhelm, Chris Murphy, and all the Corporation staff who represented their departments, wrote and wove together a myriad of pieces into a comprehensive document. Craig Bowman deserves thanks for his neutral translation of hundreds of comments into a revised document. And most important were the State Commission representatives, Bill Basl, Jim Brower, Frank Dirks, Linda Forsyth, John McDonald, and Kate Mehr, who reviewed this document countless times, never failing to provide thoughtful suggestions for its improvement.

From: Pat Kells <pkells@smtpgw.ksbe.state.ks.us>
To: Joel Berg <OCNET.OC-POST.JBERG@SIES.WSC.AG.GOV>
Date: 1/29/96 11:00am
Subject: Re: Update on Status of Fede

Reply to: RE>Update on Status of Federal-Agency Run AmeriCorps Projects

Joel - Thanks so much for your update. It is my sincere hope that Congress does not eliminate your funding either through a CR or in reauthorization. For a person who was less than enthusiastic when the statute included funding federal agencies, your Kansas programs and you as a leader have made a believer out of me. Best wishes. Pat

Date: 1/25/96 5:03 PM
To: Pat Kells
From: Joel Berg
in Your State

Dear State Service Commission Executive Director:

Greetings from the national staff of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) AmeriCorps program! As you are aware, USDA is currently sponsoring an AmeriCorps program in your state -- most likely in rural areas.

One of our goals this year is to dramatically improve our communications to -- and coordination with -- state commissions. Thus, beginning today, we intend to regularly send you electronic messages keeping you apprised of important developments regarding our program. We will also send our weekly newsletter produced for our AmeriCorps Members. If for some reason you do not want this information, please let us know and we will remove your commission from our mailing list. We also welcome your suggestions and/or comments. We can be reached at: jberg@usda.gov.

You might be interested to know that -- even as Congressional leaders have indicated their willingness to restore funding for the overall AmeriCorps program -- a concerted effort is still being made to specifically eliminate all Federal agency-run AmeriCorps projects, including all of the projects we sponsor in YOUR state. Appropriations language eliminating such programs may be passed by Congress in the next few days.

Given that the vast majority of funds for the USDA AmeriCorps program come from our Department's own internal budget and not from the Corporation for National Service, elimination of our funding will NOT likely lead to an increase in funding for state commissions. Such a move would only decrease overall Federal funding for AmeriCorps.

Please feel free to make the above information available to anyone in your state particularly interested in the status of our program. If you have any questions about these or any other issues regarding our program, do not hesitate to reply via e-mail or call me at (202)720-5746.

Sincerely,

Joel Berg
Director of National Service, USDA

----- RFC822 Header Follows -----
Received: by smtpgw.ksbe.state.ks.us with SMTP;25 Jan 1996 16:59:30 U
Received: from USDAHQ-Message_Server by SIES.WSC.AG.GOV
with Novell_GroupWise; Thu, 25 Jan 1996 17:59:26 -0500

From: <MARLISM@nh1.nh.pdx.edu>
To: Joel Berg <OCNET.OC-POST.JBERG@SIES.WSC.AG.GOV>
Date: 2/1/96 1:59pm
Subject: Re: Update on Status of Federal-Agency Run AmeriCorps Projects

Joel: Thanks for the update. I look forward to regular updates and information from you ... and the chance to "communicate" even if it is only electronically. I hope you know that I have been working with our delegation and others concerning the appropriation. The USDA programs in Oregon are some of our strongest, and we want to do everything we can to avoid losing any of them. It has been frustrating for us to have Mindy Martin's program in a holding pattern for so long (but, of course, not nearly as frustrating as it has been for Mindy).

These programs are integral to the environment to Oregon, which, as you know, Oregonians describe the environment and environmental issues as one of the fundamental reasons to "BE" an Oregonian.

Anyway ... enough rambling! I look forward to hearing from you. And, please let me know if there is ANY way I can help you. Our new Senator (Ron Wyden) is a BIG supporter of AmeriCorps and has more involved than anyone else in our delegation ... it can only help having him in the Senate now, although we will lose his voice in the House.

When are you coming to Oregon again? reasons

Date: Thu, 25 Jan 1996 17:48:26 -0500
From: Joel Berg <OCNET.OC-POST.JBERG@SIES.WSC.AG.GOV>
To: adov@aol.com, ncncs@aol.com, okcom@aol.com, Tennserve@aol.com, PROGRAM.AMERICORPS@budget.mailnet.state.NY, LFORSYTH@CA.OCDE.GOV, marlism@clas.pdx.edu, DALGRA@CNCS.gov, SUSANS@CNCS.gov, KV01@Columbia.edu, 1021072315@compuserve.com, 76702.224@compuserve.com, fwbowen@dotsob.kytrans.kytc.state.ky.us, tabatha-burn-mcmahon@flcomsrtc.win.nat, jambrose@GATEWAY.wnwd.wvnet.edu, Lori.Azim@HQ.DOE.GOV, jgross@ided.state.ia.us, mkelly@ihl.state.ms.us, DWD_UI.Amy_Warner_@ima.isd.state.in.us, sschad@mail.state.mo.us, kernem@mail.state.wi.us, cncs@mindspring.com, tdupree@MWHITE.MV.COM, BillB@OFM.WA.GOV, KHOUSTON@OSBE.ST.ID.US, pkells@smtpgw.ksbe.state.ks.us, mccs@state.me.us, MARYJO.RICHARDSON@STATE.MN.US, commish@txcns.state.tx.us, ms247@vmail.vmd.edu

Subject: Update on Status of Federal-Agency Run AmeriCorps Projects

in Your State

Dear State Service Commission Executive Director:

Greetings from the national staff of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) AmeriCorps program! As you are aware, USDA is currently sponsoring an AmeriCorps program in your state -- most likely in rural areas.

One of our goals this year is to dramatically improve our communications to -- and coordination with -- state commissions. Thus, beginning today, we intend to regularly send you electronic messages keeping you apprised of important developments regarding our program. We will also send our weekly newsletter produced for our AmeriCorps Members. If for some reason you do not want this information, please let us know and we will remove your commission from our mailing list. We also welcome your suggestions and/or comments. We can be reached at: jberg@usda.gov.

You might be interested to know that -- even as Congressional leaders have indicated their willingness to restore funding for the overall

AmeriCorps program -- a concerted effort is still being made to specifically eliminate all Federal agency-run AmeriCorps projects, including all of the projects we sponsor in YOUR state. Appropriations language eliminating

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