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FROM:

TRACY FOX

TO:

Donna Hines

SUBJECT/COMMENTS:

AmeriCorps funding

memo - FY1

Food Security
Authority 6

JUN 11 1996

cc: brady
Jan Wilga6/11/96
H. M. L...**SUBJECT:** Funding for AmeriCorps**TO:** Ronald Hill
Assistant General Counsel
Food and Nutrition Division
Office of the General Counsel

This is to request a legal opinion on the use of funds appropriated for the administration of food assistance programs to support related activities of AmeriCorps, the national service organization championed by President Clinton. As described below, the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) has contributed funds in the past, and AmeriCorps now is seeking further financial assistance for fiscal year (FY) 1996.

Background

Description of AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps is a domestic service program that engages Americans of diverse backgrounds in service that fills unmet human, environmental, educational, and public safety needs. Proposed by President Clinton and passed with bipartisan support by Congress, the program involved over 20,000 people in its inaugural year (1994-1995). In exchange for service, AmeriCorps members receive educational awards that can be used to pay for college, job training, graduate school, or to repay student loans.

Most first-year AmeriCorps projects were funded through State commissions appointed by governors and managed by non-profit organizations and local governments. However, a small portion (less than 15 percent) of AmeriCorps positions were managed by Federal agencies in tandem with local groups. The largest Federal agency award was granted to USDA, which the Department used to create public/private partnerships that sponsored AmeriCorps members in over 300 different urban and rural projects in 38 States.

FCS' Past Support of AmeriCorps Projects: Section 17(a) of the Food Stamp Act states, "The Secretary may, by way of making contracts with or grants to public or private organizations or agencies, undertake research that will help improve the administration and effectiveness of the food stamp program in delivering nutrition-related benefits." Section 6(a)3 of the National School Lunch Program Act provides funds for research and technical assistance in child nutrition programs. Under the aegis of these authorities, FCS transferred food stamp research funds (\$100,000 in each of FYs 1994 and 1995), child nutrition technical assistance funds (\$50,000 in FY 1994 and \$250,000 in FY 1995), and Summer Regional Office-Administered Programs State Administrative Expenses money (\$200,000 in FY 1994) to support AmeriCorps initiatives focusing on food and nutrition issues.

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USDA/AmeriCorps Anti-Hunger Project Summaries

Note: The number of Members shown in parentheses indicates the number of Members that are being requested for Year 3. For additional information, please contact Donna Hines, at (202) 690-0693.

Vermont (40 Members)

The only statewide anti-hunger project, and the only one to involve an agency of State government as the subgrantee for this USDA AmeriCorps project, the Vermont Anti-Hunger Corps does an outstanding job of coordinating its activities among five almost-separate regional structures. Although the VAHC was not technically "up and running" until January 1995, the group wasted no time whatsoever in becoming actively integrated into the Vermont communities served by AmeriCorps. Community affirmation of the AmeriCorps philosophy has been strong throughout the program, and most of the projects undertaken by the VAHC are sustainable, in that they have been set up to continue even if AmeriCorps Members are not there to coordinate them. The VAHC works closely with other State agencies, primarily WIC and the Farm to Family program, to promote and enhance the services offered through these State-administered, Federally funded food assistance programs. Significant work is also done in the area of sustainable agriculture. Finally, in addition to initiating and implementing an effective food salvage program with the cooperation of local grocery chains in the Burlington area, the VAHC has expanded one of the most unique cooperative food donation projects of any of the anti-hunger programs: inmates at the maximum security state prison raise and harvest thousands of pounds of fresh produce that is picked up by the truckload by volunteers from a Community Action Agency and then donated to low-income families (mainly senior citizens) in the county. The AmeriCorps team not only helps with this particular project, but has established a positive, receptive environment to extend the concept to other locations throughout the State. Although not technically a gleaning/food rescue operation, this initiative represents the best of such concepts, as previously unused land and (perhaps most important) wasted human resources are converted into productive efforts that benefit everyone involved: the producers, the agency that needs food to distribute to low-income households, and the recipients themselves.

District of Columbia (10 Members)

In spite of the many management problems that eventually overwhelmed the DC Service Corps during the first year of program operation, the USDA anti-hunger team was able to have a positive impact on the lives of thousands of DC residents. For example, nearly 3000 senior citizens were provided with nutrition education as well as nutritional screening and the opportunity to apply for food stamps; nutrition education was also provided to more than 600 elementary school children; and nearly 7,000 school age children received meals through the

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Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), largely because of the outreach and promotions done by the USDA/AmeriCorps anti-hunger team. Members also began an active gleaning program through which the anti-hunger team helped collect over 500 bushels of produce that was then delivered to area soup kitchens to be used in the meals prepared and served there. Many of these meals were also prepared and served by USDA AmeriCorps Members. Under a new partnership with the Congressional Hunger Center for the second year, most of the activities have been improved, enhanced, and/or expanded. The team has also initiated community garden projects; established several new Self-Help and Resource Exchange (SHARE) sites in the City; implemented a new-mother nutrition education program in conjunction with Reading is Fundamental, that focuses primarily on women with low literacy or English-speaking skill levels (with a direct impact on the infant mortality rate improvement efforts among Hispanic families); forged partnerships with area high schools to channel student community service hours toward fighting hunger in the District; and researched the overall food security of Ward 2 using the 14-point Hunger Free Community Report outline.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin (38 Members)

Run in partnership with the Milwaukee Community Service Corps, this USDA AmeriCorps anti-hunger project also experienced some unexpected delays in becoming fully operational at the beginning of the program year. Once these difficulties were resolved and a fulltime project director was on board and accountable, events proceeded much more smoothly. The major focus of the Milwaukee anti-hunger team was the network of donated foods provided to low-income area residents. They continue to work hard to improve not only the quality of foods provided through this network, but also facilitate the actual distribution process as well, by repairing and refurbishing many of the food pantries and working to improve the infrastructure of the physical facilities in some 15 food outlets. MCSC has also started several community gardens which benefit area residents in a number of ways besides improving their basic access to nutritious, affordable food, such as reclaiming a previously vacant corner lot that had become a dangerous dumping ground/drug-dealing location. Last spring/summer, the Milwaukee anti-hunger team was instrumental in the successful start-up of Wisconsin's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, by assisting the State and local WIC offices with outreach about the program and food demonstrations at the markets.

Mississippi Delta (20 Members)

Administered in partnership with the Greater Jackson Youth Service Corps during the first year, this project could be considered the most basic of USDA's five AmeriCorps anti-hunger projects. Members worked not in Jackson, but in two of the Delta's neediest areas, Humphreys and Sunflower Counties. Hundreds of flyers promoting USDA's food assistance programs (Food Stamps, School Breakfast/Lunch, Summer Food Service Program, etc) were developed, printed, and distributed by the team Members; some of the Members even made local television and radio appearances to inform area residents about these programs, as well as about the importance of nutrition education and food safety. Several presentations on

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nutrition education were given, particularly in the local schools, and Members established a personalized senior citizens' garden as a pilot project for future efforts. Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE) has now assumed responsibility for the Delta anti-hunger project, and is actively expanding the work that was begun last year. Because of the extremely high levels of poverty in the service area (over 41 percent of the children come from households with incomes well below the poverty line and live in substandard housing conditions more generally associated with third-world countries), the anti-hunger work underway still focuses primarily on food stamp outreach and access issues. Food banks will also be established in each of the targeted counties this summer, in cooperation with the Secretary's gleaning/food rescue program.

Los Angeles (40 Members)

Never afraid or hesitant to try anything new, the Los Angeles Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team set out with the most ambitious agenda, and successfully completes every one of its stated objectives. Administered through the Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition, this group is well placed to implement several spectacular efforts designed to promote nutrition education and the School Breakfast Program, such as the breakfast promotion involving Stevie Wonder and more than 300 elementary students. As the recipient of the largest amount of FCS funds provided to USDA AmeriCorps efforts, five Members are assigned exclusively to improving and enhancing the Summer Food Service Program. Neighborhoods are being reclaimed and revitalized through the Burlington and Esperanza Community Garden projects and the Van Nuys Farmers' Market; literally thousands of homeless - and hopeless - individuals are sheltered, and opportunities for job training or employment provided to them; nearly 6,000 children across the city receive lunches during the summer months; and over 1,000 high school students from every conceivable background join together to attend the annual Youth Anti-Hunger Conferences sponsored by the AmeriCorps team. Special recognition was given to the team's school gardening project by Ellen Haas, Undersecretary of Agriculture for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services in 1995.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Public Affairs

Office of
Intergovernmental Affairs

ASCA
Washington, D.C.
20250

May 6, 1992

MEMORANDUM FOR DONNA BARRON
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

FROM: Gwendolyn T. Bronson, Director *GTB*
Intergovernmental Affairs

SUBJECT; State Briefing Paper for New York (West Chester County)

As a consequence of the urban character of West Chester County, New York, there are very few agricultural issues of significance. The agricultural land that exists supports mainly nursery stock operations and horse farms.

STEWARDSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture have worked cooperatively to implement the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP). This program was authorized as part of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 to stimulate enhanced management of nonindustrial private forest lands. A landholder can own 1000 acres or less of qualifying land to be eligible for SIP. Authorizations may be obtained for exceptions of up to 5,000 acres.

New York has been allocated \$1.6 million for SIP in 1992. Of this amount, \$10,000 will go to landowners in West Chester County.