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Closure of the Team

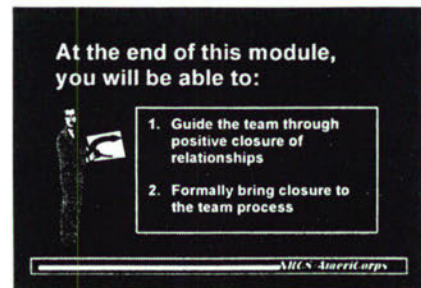
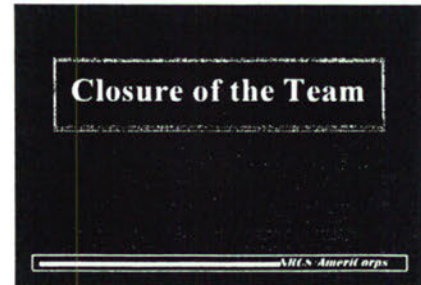


Video roll-in of Corps members with the Chief.



At the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Guide the team through positive closure of relationships
2. Formally bring closure to the team process



Introduction



You have worked together for about nine months and have developed many new relationships within the team. We hope that you have become a real team while working together on your project. In this segment, we will provide some ideas for wrapping up both of these relationships—the interpersonal and the team. Doing a good job in these areas will assist your group in bringing positive closure to your AmeriCorps experience.

Closure of relationships



The goal of the first objective is to help your AmeriCorps members bring a positive ending to the relationships they have developed with each other during this past year. As the project year comes to an end, relationships between individuals will be affected whether your team disbands entirely or some members plan to continue on another year. It is usually helpful to pay some attention to bringing these interpersonal relationships to positive closure—even if members plan to continue their relationships after service is ended. We can use many different techniques to bring a positive end to interpersonal relationships formed during this project. We encourage you to think of your own idea or consult with your project manager



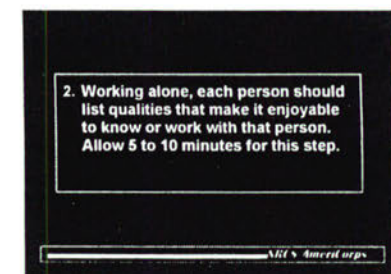
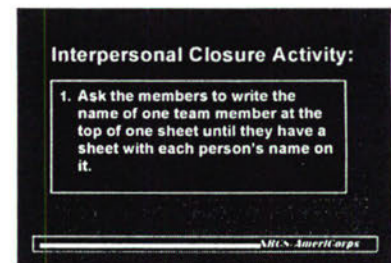
for ideas. We will share one with you that you may use if you think it fits. It is best to do this activity in groups of five to 10 people and it is most appropriate close to the end of your time together.

Here is the idea for bringing interpersonal relationships to a positive ending within a group setting.

The following are instructions for the Interpersonal Closure Activity. You will find a document entitled "Interpersonal Closure Activity" in your packet. Let's take a look at it. Read all of the instructions before starting the activity. Have enough sheets of paper available so each person can have one sheet for each of the other members of the group.



1. Pass out the paper. Ask the members to write the name of a different team member at the top of each sheet until they have a sheet with each person's name on it.
2. Working alone, each person should write down two or three things they like about the member whose name is on the sheet. List qualities that make it enjoyable to know or work



with that person. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this step.

3. Ask each person to write down one characteristic they suggest that person tries to improve or change in order to be a more effective, enjoyable friend or work partner. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this step.
4. Tell members they have the option to sign their name on the sheet.
5. Ask the members to verbally share some of what they wrote—

Choose one member for each of the other members to read one positive quality. The recipient can respond with some form of appreciation (this is good practice for accepting compliments) or ask a question if they would like further clarification.

Move to the next member and ask each of the others to read one of their compliments. Continue this way until each person has received one verbal compliment from each of the others in the team.

6. Ask members to fold the paper in half, write the recipient's name on the outside and pass it to that person.

3. Ask each person to write down one characteristic they suggest that person try to improve or change. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this step.

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4. Tell members they have the option of signing their name on the sheet.
5. Instruct the members to verbally share some of what they wrote.

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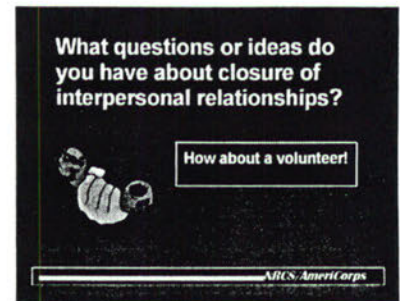
7. As an optional discussion opportunity, ask the group to comment on what they learned about qualities that seem to be most appreciated by others, especially those that are helpful in a teamwork situation.



Q—What questions do you have about this exercise or what other ideas do you have for bringing positive closure to the interpersonal relationships that have developed through this project?



Note to instructor—call on a specific state if there are no voluntary responses. Use the elmo to record responses.



Preparing a name and address sheet is another activity that is helpful in bringing closure to interpersonal relationships and provides an opportunity for continuity. Ask each team member to write down a contact address and telephone number, get the list copied, and provide each member with a copy. Such a list makes it easier for everyone to remember their team members and be able to contact them later if desired.



Closure to the team process



Now we will move to the second objective—formally bringing closure to the team process.



Again, you may have an idea of your own for reaching this objective—an idea that may work better for your particular situation. If so, go with it! Here is one idea which we offer for your consideration.

Note to Team Leader—You will find a document in your packet entitled "Team Closure Activity." Let's take a look at it. The following are instructions for the Team Closure Activity. Read all of the instructions before starting the activity. Have newsprint, blackboard, or posterboard and writing utensils. Prepare, in advance, two columns titled "Characteristics" and "Source."



1. Lead a discussion with your team, asking them to do some thinking and talking together about your team. Explain that the purpose is to identify some of the major characteristics of your team at this time and to figure out how they came to be.

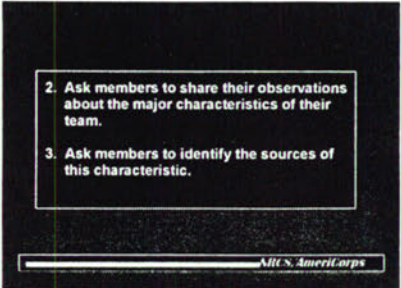
Team Closure Activity:

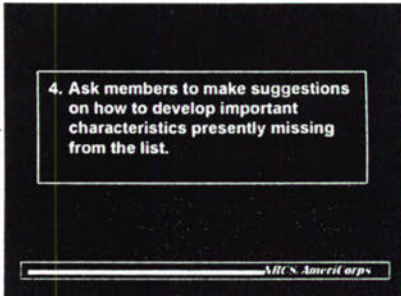
1. Lead a discussion with your team, asking them to do some thinking and talking together about your team.

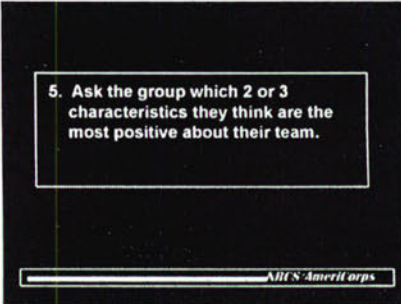
AMCS/Amerit corps



2. After discussing, ask members to toss out their observations about the major characteristics of their team. Use the elmo to write down some possible items—for example, has fun together, well organized, respectful of diversity. Do not allow discussions, just ask for their perceptions of the team—both good and bad.
3. Go back to the top of the list and ask members to identify the sources of this characteristic. Use the elmo to write down some possible items—taught in training, due to leadership of a certain person, team decision, etc.
4. Ask members to think of whether there are any important team characteristics that are missing from the list and to make suggestions about how they might be developed in your team.
5. If there is time, ask the group which 2 or 3 characteristics they think are the most positive about their team.

- 
2. Ask members to share their observations about the major characteristics of their team.
3. Ask members to identify the sources of this characteristic.
- Alt's Americorps

- 
4. Ask members to make suggestions on how to develop important characteristics presently missing from the list.
- Alt's Americorps

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5. Ask the group which 2 or 3 characteristics they think are the most positive about their team.
- Alt's Americorps





One other suggestion for bringing a positive and enjoyable closure for your team is to have a small, informal party at your last meeting. Perhaps someone can make a cake or you could pool money to buy food. Spend a part of your last session eating some “celebration food” and just relaxing together.



Q—What ideas do you have for a Team Closure Activity?



Note to instructor—call on a specific state if there are no voluntary responses. Use the elmo to record responses.



Closure with NRCS and Key Partners



Video roll-in



At the end of this module, the student will be able to:

1. Provide written notification to partners of completion of the team's projects
2. Employ the proper actions to ensure good transition of a project after AmeriCorps members have completed one year of service
3. Gain an awareness of the necessary actions for processing out of AmeriCorps
4. Gain an awareness of options for obtaining feedback from community partners regarding whether expectations were met
5. Explain options for closing out relationships with community partners
6. Assist team members in preparing to "tell their AmeriCorps story"

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Provide written notification to partners of project completion
2. Employ actions to ensure good project transition
3. Gain awareness of actions for processing out of AmeriCorps



NRCS/AmeriCorps

4. Gain awareness of options for obtaining feedback
5. Explain options for closing out partner relationships
6. Assist team members in telling their AmeriCorps story



NRCS/AmeriCorps



The team leader's role in closing out a project



Bringing closure to the working relationships established during the year of service is an important event. Each community service project had clearly defined objectives for the year. The progress made needs to be acknowledged, documented and communicated to others. Identify unfinished business and make plans for what to do next. Work with your partners to make a smooth transition. Make this information accessible to others to show the team's successes and help others to appreciate the program's value.

Projects usually have 3 stages of development:

1. Initiation—developing the service objectives and planning the work to be done
2. Execution—carrying out the plans and establishing partner relationships
3. Termination—bringing closure to the working partnerships and evaluating the results



Stages of project development:

• Initiation

AMCS AmeriCorps

Stages of project development:

• Initiation

AMCS AmeriCorps

Stages of project development:

• Initiation

AMCS AmeriCorps





A few AmeriCorps projects will have a fourth stage—transition. In cases where the project will continue to develop, team members need to participate in :

- assessing the current status,
- identifying what needs to be done to complete the work, and
- providing any documentation or supplies necessary for the people who will continue the work.





We will focus today on the third stage—termination.

As the team leader, what steps can you take to insure the smooth termination of a project?

1. Talk with your team members about the importance of communicating the team's accomplishments. Work with each team member on clearly understanding all of the team's accomplishments, and being able to verbalize those accomplishments to others.
2. As the team leader, you need to know and understand what results can be measured or demonstrated.
3. Document what practices were effective in achieving results.
4. Document other benefits of the team's work about which you are aware.

Termination steps:

- ✓ Talk with team members about importance of communicating accomplishments
- ✓ As the team leader, you need to know and understand what results can be measured or demonstrated

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- ✓ Document practices effective in achieving results
- ✓ Document benefits of the team's work
- ✓ Meet with organization or community served to share accomplishments

Alta's America Corps



5. Meet with the organization or with the community served to share the accomplishments and to share how you personally benefited from the AmeriCorps experience.
6. Send a letter or exit report:
 - outlining accomplishments and tasks that still need to be done;
 - document files or equipment you are leaving; and
 - state if the project is to continue.

Do not make any commitments that have not been agreed to with the project manager.
7. Thank partners, both orally and in writing, for their guidance and support. Let them know what impact the experience has had on you.



Termination of members forms

What is your responsibility for ensuring proper termination of team members?

1. Each team member must complete two forms at the end of their service: Member exit form and National Service Trust End. Your Project Manager must work with you and each team member to ensure proper completion of the forms. These forms are in your packet. Let's take a look at them now.



Note to instructor—use the elmo to go over the key points of the forms.

Q—Any questions?



2. Make sure team members know how to follow up on receiving their education award.

Note to instructor—This process is not described in these lesson plans. Please be prepared to discuss.



The project manager's role in closing out a project



It is time to decide the future status of your AmeriCorps projects. Note—this year, states will be informed of the status of their applications by July 1st.



What options are there for projects?

1. Some projects will be accepted for a second year renewal.
2. Some projects will have been completed during the first year.
3. Some projects will not be renewed to receive AmeriCorps members.

Project Options

- ✓ Some projects will be accepted for a second year renewal
- ✓ Some projects will have been completed during the first year
- ✓ Some projects will not be renewed to receive AmeriCorps members



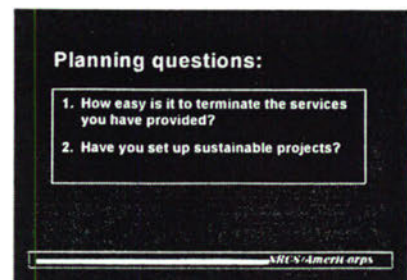
Planning for Project Termination



Next year, and in the years to follow, pay attention to project termination needs during the planning process. Listed are questions to ask yourself as you plan for termination:



1. How easy is it to terminate the services you have provided?
2. Have you set up sustainable projects? The ability for a community to sustain the efforts initiated by AmeriCorps is a priority for involvement in this program.



Preparing the community and partners for transition

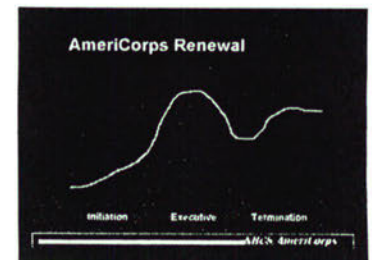
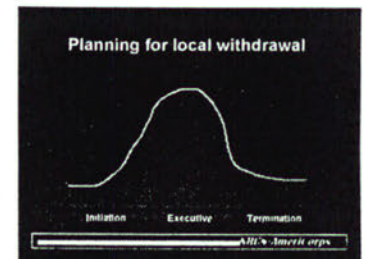
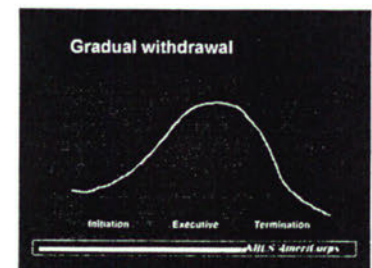
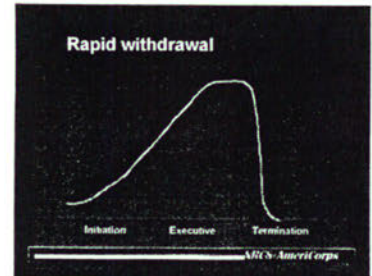


Project leaders need to avoid a rapid withdrawal of resources from a community. Short notice to partners and the community may result in insufficient preparation and organization by the local entities.

A gradual withdrawal provides the opportunity for better preparation. Earlier notice allows for processes to be used for closing out activities and making the smoothest transition possible.

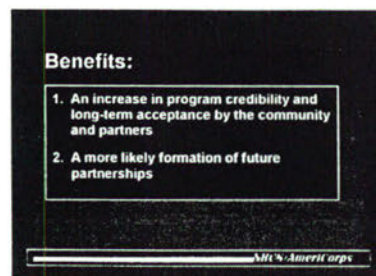
When you do adequate planning and preparation, the local organization can provide the resources necessary to maintain the effort. Projects are able to recover rapidly when additional resources become available. Both the team leader and project manager can play an important role in facilitating the community in meeting needs. You can eliminate, or at least minimize, opposition from affected citizen groups.

Being aware of the impact that you have had on a community and making an effort at smooth transition both lead to benefits such as:





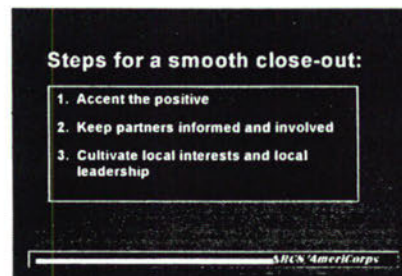
1. an increase in program credibility and long-term acceptance by the community and partners
2. a more likely formation of future partnerships



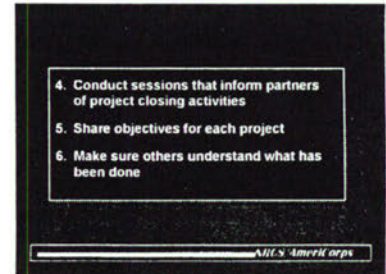
What steps can a team leader and project manager take to better ensure a smooth close-out between NRCS and key partners?



1. accent the positive and focus on improvements made
2. keep partners informed and involved
3. cultivate local interests and local leadership



4. conduct sessions that keep partners informed of project closing activities
5. share objectives established for each project
6. summarize progress made and make sure others understand what has been done



The more successful you have been, the harder it may be to leave a project!

Work with your project manager and partners to explore opportunities to gain additional support for the work you have started.

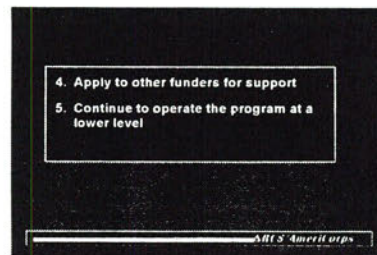


Some suggestions are:

1. partners can apply to the State Commissions for AmeriCorps project support



2. project managers can apply again with USDA for the next fiscal year
3. utilize volunteers to continue the work
4. apply to other funders for support
5. continue to operate the program at a lower level

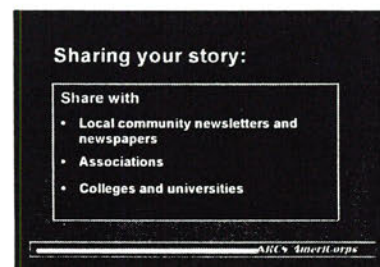


Telling the AmeriCorps story



Share the AmeriCorps story in conversation as well as in writing.

Work with your project manager to plan activities.



Share stories with newsletters and newspapers of local communities, associations and colleges and universities.

National press policy has been established. Guidance needs to be consistent with NRCS policy for AmeriCorps. A press packet has been prepared for project managers.



Member Development— Present and Future

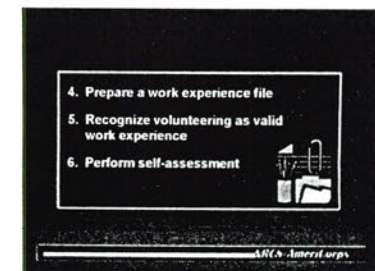
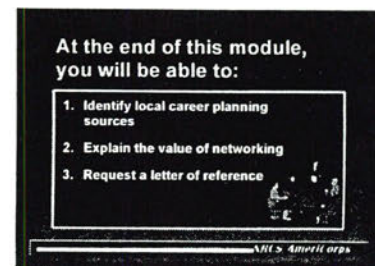
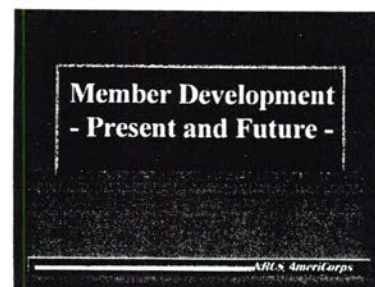


Video roll-in



At the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. identify local sources for career planning
2. explain the value of networking
3. request a letter of reference
4. prepare a work experience file
5. recognize volunteering as ongoing community service and a valid work experience
6. lead the team in performing a self-assessment of the AmeriCorps experience



Introduction



After this training, we anticipate that you will be ready to facilitate discussion and planning with your AmeriCorps team members. You will help prepare them to make maximum use of this experience to find a job or apply for further education. Objectives one through four help individuals decide their next career step, five assists them to continue volunteering in the future, and six helps members reflect upon how to apply this experience to their future.

Local sources for career planning

As team leader, one of the simplest and most effective things you can do to assist your team members in planning for their future is to direct them to accessible resources. Let's take a look at a few.



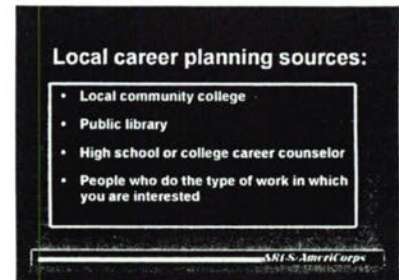


Sources include:

- local community college
- public library
- high school counselor or college career counselor
- people who do the type of work in which you are interested



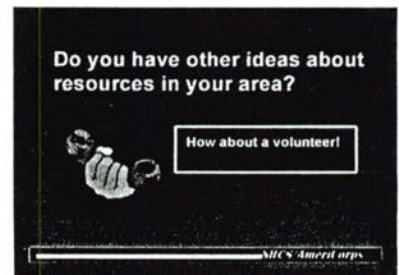
If appropriate, you might want to contact your NRCS project manager concerning the possibility of getting guidance from an NRCS human resource specialist on job fairs, work/study positions, student trainee positions, and realistic possibilities for Federal employment.



Q—Do you have other ideas about resources in your area?



Note to instructor—call on a specific state if there are no voluntary responses. Use the elmo to record responses.



After generating a list of available resources, encourage your group members to go and talk with one. You could even set it up so that everyone will report on a contact at the next team meeting.





Value of networking



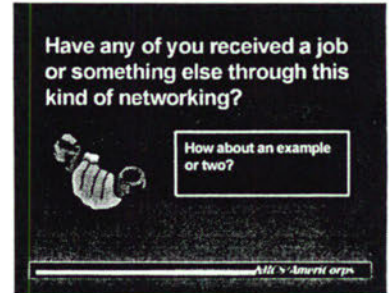
Often you obtain a job or are accepted for college through the assistance of networking. This means that the applicant works on building a network, or set of connections, between the people contacted about jobs. The applicant asks everyone for suggestions on where and how to look, requesting names where possible. The applicant may say, "Julie Smith mentioned you and suggested I contact you." You can then ask the new person who else and where else to try. Ask relatives, teachers, coaches, or job supervisors for ideas. Taking this approach usually multiplies the possibilities for obtaining a job because the networking expands the group helping and utilizes personal contacts. If it seems appropriate, the applicant could even ask if the person making a suggestion would be willing to call the other and ask them to see or consider the applicant.





Q—Have any of you received a job or something else through this kind of networking? How about an example or two?

Note to instructor—call on a specific state if there are no voluntary responses.



The idea here is that you explain the networking idea to your team and perhaps have some discussion about it. This way you can plant the idea as a helpful approach to seeking a job.

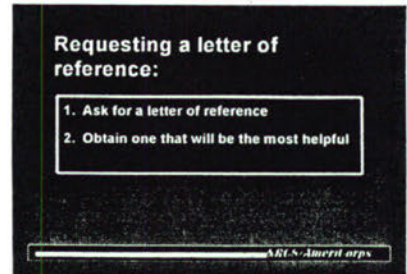




Requesting a letter of reference

The intent of this topic is to prepare members to:

1. ask for a letter of reference from this experience
2. obtain one that will be the most helpful possible from the situation



A basic message to convey to all members is the value in obtaining the most positive reference letter possible, for every paid and volunteer experience, near the end or immediately after the experience ends. In this way, each member can gradually build up a file of reference letters to draw upon in seeking jobs, entrance to school, scholarships, etc.

We encourage you to devote some time soon in one of your team meetings to this topic of reference letters. Explain the value of obtaining a reference letter for this experience and the importance of requesting it soon. Supervisors are usually willing to do it for current employees. It is typically harder to get a reference letter after you leave an organization. This experience should provide an opportunity for a very specific and positive reference letter if the member has worked hard on the project and learned from it. You could ask your members to think about who they would like to ask for a reference letter and to plan on doing so within a week or two. Then at the meeting following that date, you can ask members to share their experience.



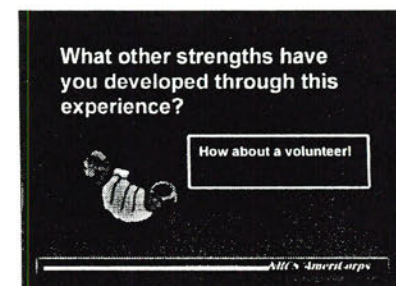
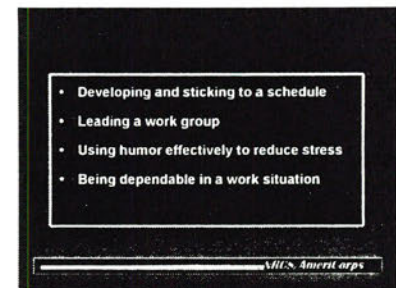
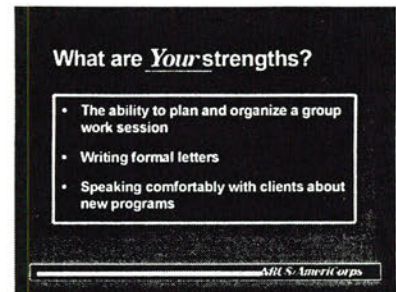
The second aspect is the role the person requesting can have in ensuring the best possible reference letter. Ask the members to take a few minutes to think about what new knowledge and skills they have developed from this experience in addition to their especially strong and perhaps already developed characteristics, such as:



- the ability to plan and organize a group work session
- writing formal letters
- speaking comfortably with farmers about new programs
- developing and sticking to a schedule
- leading a work group
- using humor effectively to reduce stress
- being dependable in a work situation

Q—What are some other strengths you can think of that members might have developed or exhibited through this experience?

Note to instructor—call on a specific state if there are no voluntary responses.





After your team members write down several of their personal strengths, explain how to ask the reference writer to mention these qualities or experiences. Reminding the writer about specific activities you did or led, and some of your strongest abilities and characteristics can actually help him or her produce a better reference letter. (I know because some of my students have followed this advice and as a result gotten better reference letters from me than they would have without the memory prompting!)

Q—Does any one have a suggestion about who to request a reference letter from?

Note to instructor—record answers on paper to use with elmo. (Some possible answers: site supervisor, SWCD or RC&D leadership, representative of partner organizations, customers satisfied with services, etc.)

Q—What other questions or comments do you have on reference letters?

Note to instructor—answer questions from the audience.





Preparing a work experience file



This is a good topic to discuss soon in one of your team meetings. Many of the members may not yet have developed such a file. Encourage those in college to develop their file with the college career office, as it is usually free or very low cost to students. However, any person can do it themselves with a little planning and work.

The basic item, of course, is the personal resume. It would be helpful for you to obtain an example or two of a good resume to show the group as a model. Perhaps there are other ways to assist your members in creating or updating a resume. For example, you could invite a local expert to meet with your team to give helpful ideas on developing or improving resumes.



A specific and appropriate topic for part of a meeting is how to write the experience into your resume. Information from the Program Review we discussed earlier can be helpful here. Ask each person to experiment with writing up one or two sentences describing the major points of the experience to use on a resume. Then at the same or a later meeting, ask members to share their "resume statement on the AmeriCorp experience" and thus gain ideas from each other.

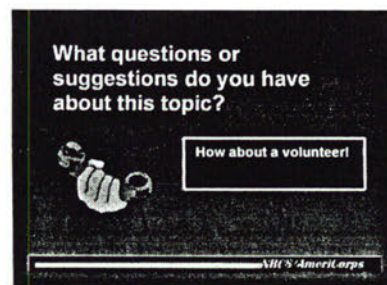
In addition to this resume work, you could suggest to the group that their work experience file include the original copy of any reference letters given them, or the name, address and telephone number of people who have agreed to be references or have submitted a confidential reference letter. Keep all of this work-related material in a safe place and updated with every new work or volunteer experience.



Q—What questions or suggestions do you have about this topic?



Note to instructor—answer questions from the audience.





Recognizing volunteering as ongoing community service and a valid work experience



One of the goals of AmeriCorps is to encourage young Americans to develop the volunteer ethic and carry it with them through their life experiences. The expectation is that service as members will likely lead to continued service in the future, in their future hometowns and communities, or in other parts of the world.

However, this transfer is more likely to occur if those involved do some active thinking and planning in this direction. Thus we encourage you to lead a discussion with your group about this topic.

Following are some questions you might ask. Before starting, explain that you are counting this year of involvement with AmeriCorps as a volunteer experience even though there is a stipend and an educational award involved.



You might want to have newsprint or blackboard available so that you or someone else could write down some of the ideas offered by group members. Ask one of the group members to be the recorder. If desired, copy these lists so all could have the ideas. In your packet, you will find a document entitled "Valuing Volunteering." Let's take a look at it.



Note to instructor—use the elmo to discuss questions.





Valuing Volunteering

1. What have you learned about volunteering from this experience?
2. In what ways is volunteer service important for the positive functioning of a community?
3. What are some of the things which volunteers can do which might not otherwise get done?
4. What types of volunteer work do you feel especially interested in doing in the future?
5. What do you think of the idea of making a personal commitment to do volunteer work regularly in the future?
6. What amount of time per week do you think would be a good goal?
7. Have you considered joining another program specializing in volunteer service, such as the Earth Team, VISTA or the Peace Corps?
8. How or where would you be able to obtain information about volunteer service opportunities in the future?
9. How is volunteer experience helpful in getting a job?
10. What other questions do you team leaders and program managers think might promote some good discussion of future volunteer service?



Leading team members in performing self-assessments of the AmeriCorps experience



To accomplish this objective, we would like you to use a set of questions located in your packet entitled "Self-Assessment of AmeriCorps Experience" asking each member (including yourself) to complete them. After they have time to do this (probably best during a group session), then you could lead a discussion that asks the team members to share some of their written responses.



Self-assessment of AmeriCorps Experience

Note to instructor—use the elmo with the following list of questions for review.





Self-assessment of AmeriCorps Experience

1. What were your personal goals for this experience?
2. How far did you get in reaching your goals?
3. If not, why were you not able to fully reach all of your goals?
4. What did you learn about working in a team?
5. What new knowledge and skills did you gain?

6. What did you learn about working with community groups?
7. What attitude changes do you see in yourself as a result of this experience?
8. Has this experience changed your career plans at all? If so, briefly explain the change.
9. What are you going to do next?





Now it's time to summarize what we have covered in this segment. We've talked about:

1. Value of networking
2. Requesting a letter of reference
3. Preparing a work experience file
4. Recognizing volunteering as ongoing community service and a valid work experience

We hope you as Team Leader will take this information back and spend 1 or 2 team meetings sharing it with your members. Focusing on these member development activities will help them effectively transfer this AmeriCorps experience into their future lives.

Note to instructor—Make concluding remarks now. Take any final questions.

