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To: Grant Structure Working Group, Tracy Gray, Shirley Sagawa, Harris Wofford, and Planning and Program Development staff

From: Peg Rosenberry

Subj: Revised Copy of Options Paper

Date: February 16, 1996

Attached is the final draft of the Grant Structure paper. It now includes the budget categories referenced on the second page that were under revision for the state and national 1996 renewal requests.

AmeriCorps State/National Options Paper
Grant Structure
Final Draft, 2/16/96

What would be the effect of eliminating payment of "program support" where the Corporation covers only Member support costs?

This options paper examines models for structuring the Corporation's grants programs and describes various granting structures and their ramifications for Corporation grants management and oversight.

Grant Structure Working Group: Peg Rosenberry, Diana Algra, Judy Karasik Mike Kenefick, Diana London, David Rymph, and Gene Sofer

BACKGROUND

In order to understand the options we need to define both Member and program support and what we would include in each category.

Member Support. We are defining Member support to include all costs directly related to supporting Members:

- Living allowances
- Benefits, including health insurance, worker's compensation, FICA
- Training and orientation
- Transportation and travel of Members
- Educational Award (paid directly from Trust Fund)

Program Support. Program support includes all other costs associated with operating a service program, including:

- Supervision and training of Members
- Training, orientation and travel of staff
- Supplies and equipment for service projects
- Management and oversight of the program
- Evaluation
- Liability insurance specific to the AmeriCorps program
- Office costs, including space, phone, materials, copying, etc.
- Administrative costs, including accounting, auditing, executive oversight

CURRENT GRANT STRUCTURES

AmeriCorps State and National. Under the current grant structure, programs can apply for funds to cover both Member and program support. In many cases, Members are placed in teams or groups with existing CBOs to enhance the specific mission of the organization, such as low-income housing construction (Habitat for Humanity) or environmental enhancement (EPA). In other cases, Members are part of a program in which service by Members is the primary mission and Members provide their service through a network of CBOs and government agencies in which they are placed, such as the East Bay Conservation Corps or City Year. The Corporation negotiates budgets with each program and a grant awarded based on allowable costs included in the negotiated budget.

Because grants include both Member and program support costs, the cost per Member can be calculated from the grant amount. Categories of allowable costs in grants are:

Member Support Costs: Living allowance and benefits
Other Member Support Costs: Training and education
Staff
Operational: Transportation, supplies, equipment
Internal Evaluation
Administration: limited to 5% of Corporation request

AmeriCorps VISTA. Under AmeriCorps VISTA, organizations apply to the Corporation State Director for placement of a Member(s) in their organization to meet specific goals and objectives which are approved and negotiated by the State Director. The State Director also coordinates recruitment, selection, training and orientation of the Members. In most cases, the sponsor organization receives no funds directly. However, about 25% of the organizations are given very small amounts - usually no more than $2,000 - for other costs, such as part-time supervision, on-the-job travel for VISTAs, etc.

The Corporation pays Members through a national system and the federal government is essentially the "employer" of the VISTA, handling payroll, health benefits, pre-service orientation, relocation travel and worker's compensation, if needed. In this way, Corporation, state and headquarters staff provide certain elements of management. The project sponsor is expected to provide direct supervision, office space, project support, on-the-job travel and all other support costs for VISTAs serving in the organization.

Under the VISTA system, the costs associated with the Corporation state offices include some program support costs that are included in grants under AmeriCorps state and national. To calculate a true cost per VISTA Member, some of the Corporation office costs should be included. The Corporation's finance office estimates that figure to be between $17,000 and $18,000. The educational award is included in this figure.

OPTIONS FOR GRANT STRUCTURE

Option 1: Provide grants for Member Support Only - (No national payroll)

This scenario assumes that the Corporation would make grants to organizations for Member Support only. The organizations would be given grants just for those costs and would payroll the Members through their own systems.

Advantages
- Grant negotiating process would be simplified.
- Costs per Member of grants directly to programs would be lower.

Disadvantages
- Members could not be placed in teams or groups in organizations, because the grants could not cover the direct supervision and other costs associated with large group placements.
- Programs would need more technical assistance and support from the Corporation.
- Small, struggling community-based organizations that don't have strong institutional support would not be able to compete because they would not have the resources to cover all other costs.
- Programs located in rural areas that have few other sources of funds for program support would find it difficult to raise the additional support needed to be eligible.
- A larger federal bureaucracy would be needed to assume some management functions currently performed by program staff through the grants. This also leads to decreased local control.

Option 2: Provide support for Member costs only and establish a national payroll system.

This scenario assumes that the Corporation would make grants to organizations for Member Support only and would payroll the Members through the federal system. In this way, the program would operate much as

VISTA currently does with federal staff managing recruitment, training and other support for Members not provided by the programs through more comprehensive grants that include program support costs.

Advantages

- Decreases the need for grants administration because most organizations would not receive any funds directly.

- Cost per Member would be a set figure.

- Cost per Member would seem lower because most program support would be provided by federal staff and would not show in grants as a cost to add to the per Member calculation.

- Central payroll may lead to greater recognition by the Members that they are part of a national system.

Disadvantages

- Members could not be placed in teams or groups, because the grants could not cover the direct supervision and other costs associated with large group placements.

- Programs would need more technical assistance and support from the Corporation because they would receive no funds for staff. State staff would have to assume a similar role for AmeriCorps State as they do for AmeriCorps VISTA.

- Small, struggling community-based organizations without strong institutional support would not be able to compete because they would not have the resources to cover all other costs.

- Programs located in rural areas which have fewer sources of funds for program support than urban areas would find it difficult to raise the additional support needed to be eligible.

- The Corporation becomes the employer and would need to increase the size of its administrative staff to handle the payroll and other activities associated with tracking payroll, taxes and benefits.

- Role of the state commissions and local communities would be diminished, because program support would be managed more directly by the Corporation.

Option 3: Grants allowing both Member and Program Support

This scenario assumes the Corporation would provide grants for both Member and Program Support. Grants would vary by state and cost per member would vary by grant. This is the system currently in place for AmeriCorps State and National grants.

Advantages

- The program network could be operated with more control at the site level and fewer federal staff at the national and state levels.

- Control of the program is given to the state commissions and the programs themselves because they hire the staff and are responsible for all aspects of operating the program following guidelines published by the Corporation.

- Supports participation by programs in rural areas and those operated by small organizations that can't support all program costs through other sources.

- Allows flexibility to programs to cover the costs of team supervision and placement.

- Allows flexibility for programs to adjust to local conditions and needs.

Disadvantages

- Cost per Member appears higher than Member support only grants because grants include a higher percentage of the actual costs.

- Requires more negotiation with programs if guidelines for specific line items are not very prescriptive.

- Requires more grants administration oversight.

- Programs and states could view the headquarters office as more intrusive because budgets would need to be scrutinized more carefully.

Option 4: Provide grants for both Member and Program Support, but cap each line item of the budget.

Advantages

- Grant negotiating process would be simplified.

- Cost per Member could be set annually and calculated easily.

- Participation by some smaller, less-well-established programs would be increased because they could get program support.

- Encourages more local government, business and foundation support because needs for match in each line item would be clear.

Disadvantages

- Doesn't allow for regional differences in costs or differences in costs in urban and rural areas.

- Members might be able to be placed in teams or groups. However, if the amount allowed in a staff line item is not sufficient to support team leaders and local sources cannot make up the difference, the program model might need to change to single or small group placement.

- Can be perceived by the states and programs as more prescriptive by federal government

Option 5: Fix the program grants at a certain amount per member, but do not specify line item distribution.

Under this scenario, programs would apply for a certain number of Members, the Corporation would set the amount of the grant by that number, and not specify in which line items the funds could be spent. The basic requirements of the program would have to be met (such as 1700 hours, getting things done) and grant oversight would be focused on ensuring attainment of quality standards.

Advantages

- The program network could be operated with more control at the state and program level and fewer federal staff at the national and state levels.

- Federal government would not have to ensure a specified match, nor audit the program, nor require accounting and financial management systems as a measurement of program quality. (Corporation would not need to monitor the financial systems of small non-profits.)

- Greater control of the program is given to the state commissions and the programs themselves.

- Allows greater flexibility to programs for team supervision and placement.

- Allows greater flexibility to programs to adjust to local conditions.

- Allows programs flexibility to secure the local share in any line item.

Disadvantages

- Might still limit participation by small and rural organizations that have fewer resources for raising their share.
- Might increase potential for abuse.

Option 6: Fix the grants at a certain average amount per member by state. Do not specify line item distribution and do not require every program in the state to be fixed at that amount as long as the state average meets it.

Under this scenario, each state's average cost would be set, but programs within the state could vary. The Corporation would set the amount of the state grant by the number of Members, and not specify in which line items the funds could be spent. Currently the average cost per slot of Corporation funds across all the programs is about $11,000. This does not include the state and local match. If we include the cost of the State Commissions in this number, it rises to approximately $12,000 and adding the educational award brings the total to $16, 475.

Advantages

Same as Option 5 and:

- Allows the states more flexibility to support programs in certain higher costs areas of the state that may need a higher per Member cost.
- Allows the states more flexibility to support programs just getting started that may need more support until they have been operating for a year or two.
- Allows the states more flexibility to support programs in areas of the state where a local share is harder to get.

Disadvantages

- Increases potential for abuse.

The recommendation of the members of the group working on the grants structure issues is to explore Options 5 and 6 further. It may be useful to ask for input from the states on the issue without specifying the options delineated here. The background and issue could be posed to them for discussion.

Shirley

AGENDA FOR DRAFT OPTION PAPERS MEETING
February 15, 1996 (10:00am)

Room 9520

1. Rationale for papers

2. 5 minute overview of papers

   I. **National Identity** (Mike Russell)

   II. **Matching Requirements** (Mike Russell)

   III. **AmeriCorps Member Selection** (Bruce Cohen)

   VI. **Centralized Payroll System** (Carolyn Kari)

   V. **Volunteer Generator Model** (Lance Potter)

   VI. **Program Administration** (David Rymph)

   VII. **Grants Structure** (Peg Rosenberry)

   VIII. **Training and Technical Assistance** (Jim Ekstrom)

3. Suggested changes and revisions

Drain align-
See Item no. 6
David Rymph

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

FROM: Shirley Sagawa
Tracy Gray

SUBJECT: AmeriCorps State/National Option Papers

DATE: December 8, 1995

In an effort to inform our discussions on many of the fundamental assumptions and issues related to AmeriCorps State/National, we propose that a series of option papers be drafted for Harris' view. There are several basic issues which have surfaced repeatedly during the past weeks, all of which are related to the fundamental question: How do we decrease per member costs but deliver quality service? **Each paper will provide background information on the issue under discussion and identify a series of options for consideration.** The papers will be drafted by a small team of cross-department staff who will meet with Harris to seek his views on each of these issues. The names of the lead staff person is underlined below and he or she will contact you about forthcoming planning meetings. These papers should be five to seven pages in length and with a discussion on Background, followed by three pages of options which include a discussion of the pros and cons of each option. The last page should contain the staff recommendation(s) based upon all the available information and fact finding efforts. They should be as succinct and concise as possible. References to other documents should be made where relevant but not fully discussed in these papers. **The first drafts are due to Tracy Gray by COB, Thursday, December 21.**

1 <u>National Identify</u>

(Q) **How do we help members and communities understand that they are a part of AmeriCorps and a larger national service movement? What elements of national identity are most important for AmeriCorps?**

Focus will be on building national identity for Members rather than assignments. Information will be gleaned from our experiences in the field, evaluation data, feedback from training and technical assistance contractors and recipients.

Team: <u>Mike Russell</u>, Shirley Sagawa, Trish Thomson, David Rymph, Margaret McLauglin, J. Toscano, Melinda Hudson, Javier LaFianza.

2. <u>Matching Requirements</u>

(Q) **What is the maximum amount in-cash and in-kind non-federal, non-Corporation funds that an AmeriCorps sponsor can be expected to raise to ensure that at least 75% of current sponsors could continue to participate in AmeriCorps? What is a realistic period of time to reach these goals?**

Information will be gathered from a survey of AmeriCorps sponsors, state, local and private sector funders. Attention will focus on how the Corporation would actually track and verify contributions and propose options for draw down of Federal dollars.

Team: Mike Russell, Mark Feldman, Tracy Gray, Mike Kenefick, Diana Algra, Lance Potter, Terry Russell, Hank Oltmann

3. Ameri**Corps Member Selection**

(Q) What is the appropriate role of the Corporation in selection of Members for AmeriCorps sponsors?

Focus will be on requirements necessary to administer the selection process, examples from other agencies (e.g., Peace Corps and VISTA), survey of field reaction and cost of operation.

Team: Bruce Cohen, Gene Sofer, David Rymph, Diana Algra, Jim Scheibel, Gina Fulbright-Powell, Pat Booker, Sherry Squire, Lisette Nieves

4. Centralized Payroll System

(Q) How would we administer a system in which living allowances for all AmriCorps Members was paid centrally?

Focus will be on requirements necessary to administer a payroll system for at least 25,000 Members, cost to Corporation, time necessary for system development and survey of field reaction.

Team: Carolyn Kari, Gary Kowalczyk, Terry Russell, Diana London, Guy Cavallo, Barbara Agresti, Tracy Gray

5. Volunteer Generator Model

(Q) Should priority be given to AmeriCorps sponsors that generate and help deploy effectively unpaid volunteers? What are the realistic goals for additional volunteers and number of volunteer hours that must be leveraged per Member per sponsor?

Information will be analyzed from AmeriCorps quarterly reports and annual accomplishment survey data and survey of field reaction.

Team: Lance Potter, Diana London, Peter Heinaru, Tom Endres, Jennifer Tabola, Tracy Gray

6. Program Administration

(Q) How can we assure national identity and high quality AmeriCorps sponsors under a more decentralized system with fewer grant provisions?

Focus will be on ways to ensure that Members develop a sense of national identity and have the opportunity to participate in well run national service projects which are monitored minimally by Corporation staff.

Team: David Rymph, Mike Russell, Terry Russell, Diana Algra, Simon Woodard, Jim Scheibel, Trish Thomson, Jewel Bazilio, Gretchen Van Der Veer, Peg Rosenberry

7. **Grant Structure**

(Q What would be the effect of eliminating payment of "program support" where the Corporation covers only Member support costs?

Attention would focus on how the Corporation would restructure its grants program, potential effect on current and future grantees, and management needs to administer a substantial increase in Members.

Team: Peg Rosenberry, Mike Kenefick, Diana Algra, Gene Sofer, Judy Karasik, David Rymph, Diana London

8, **Training and Technical Assistance**

(Q) How can we design a system for training and technical assistance that delivers more and costs less and is responsive to the needs of the field?

Information will be analyzed from evaluations of current technical assistance providers, survey of grantees and state Commissions, and other technical assistance models from Peace Corps and other agencies.

Team: Jim Ekstrom, Shirley Sagawa, J Gretchen Van Der Veer, Marlene Zakai, Tess Scannell, Peter Heinaru

Distribution:

Bruch Cohen
Jim Ekstron
Carolyn Kari
Lance Potter
Peg Rosenberry
Mike Russell
David Rymph

I

NATIONAL IDENTITY
AmeriCorps Options Paper

The team which compiled this Option Paper included Mike Russell (chair), Melinda Hudson, Javier La Fianza, Margaret McLaughlin, Lance Potter, David Rymph, Rhonda Taylor, Trish Thomson and J Toscano. (The issue of National Identity also is under consideration by the Program Decentralization Working Group, chaired by David Rymph.)

The group's charge is to answer the following questions:

> *How do we help members and communities understand that they are a part of AmeriCorps and a larger national service movement? What elements of national identity are most important for AmeriCorps?*

BACKGROUND

This Options Paper responds to the request by the CEO to recast 'national identity' as 'ethic of service' and 'unity'. This paper also responds to issues raised by the Hill and the field.

A key consideration in developing and fostering the national identity of AmeriCorps is to balance the ability of AmeriCorps programs to maintain their important local identities with the benefit they derive from name recognition and positive reputation of the national AmeriCorps program.

WHAT IS NATIONAL IDENTITY?

National identity of AmeriCorps affirms service as one of America's cultural norms. American citizens -- regardless of race, age, education or socio-economic background -- value caring for each other. Identifying with a national group of service members adds the term "service" to a long list of American attributes such as bravery, industriousness, ingenuity and creativity. Over time, the AmeriCorps logo could become one of the national icons such as apple pie, the stars and stripes, and front porches. Thus, whenever and wherever world citizens think of America, service comes to their minds' eyes as symbolic of this culture -- a part of America's own national identity.

AmeriCorps identity has at least three major components: (1) fostering an ethic of service and unity; (2) identification *of* AmeriCorps by the public; and (3) identification *with* AmeriCorps by its present and former Members. It comprises the following:

- Ethic of service
- Unity
- Getting Things Done
- Name recognition
- Common mission
- Shared publications
- Shared events
- Planning that considers the "whole"
- Logo
- Logo on all materials
- Identification with the Corporation and other CNS programs
- Connection with other affiliates
- Affinity by members
- Common issue areas
- Common training
- National evaluation
- Ability to produce documents for the field (exemplary programs)

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

I. Conveys ethic of service and promotes unity as a way of life and as an American value. It also emphasizes the centerpiece of the ethic: Getting Things Done.

II. In order to attract broad public, private, and non-profit support, AmeriCorps programs need to be easily identified and well known. Fostering a strong national identity in AmeriCorps Members and the non-profits they support is essential if these AmeriCorps programs are to be well know.

III. In order to recruit participants from a broad spectrum of backgrounds (including those who are not already inclined to engage in community service), AmeriCorps programs need to be well known. Again, creating a strong national identity in AmeriCorps Members and the non-profits they support is a must if these programs are to be easily identified and well known.

IV. Members who join in part to be part of a national movement appear to be more impacted by their AmeriCorps experiences (as reported by the CNS Evaluation Office).

V. A life-long commitment to service will be bolstered if a sense of identity and loyalty to a national movement is created in current and former Members. (*See* Appendix I for a discussion of the life-long identification with service in the Peace Corps and the Marines.)

VI. Programs and State Commissions want the Corporation to create a national identity and believe the Corporation is already doing this well.

VII. National identity elevates service as a cultural norm of every American.

RELATED DATA

I. Public Awareness

A recent Gallup poll sponsored by the CNS Office of Evaluation reflected the public awareness of VISTA and AmeriCorps as follows:

> VISTA -- 55% (and only 32% of 18-34 year olds)
> AmeriCorps -- 33% (33% of 18-34 year olds)

The relatively low public awareness of VISTA after 30 years may be one of the key reasons why it has maintained flat support on the Hill and has not grown substantially. The host programs in the field are not specifically associated with VISTA. This may limit the Corporation's ability to attract large numbers of recruits and limit the visibility and subsequent public support.

II. Diverse Members

- Surveys reflect that AmeriCorps Members state that being part of a national movement is the fourth most cited reason for joining AmeriCorps (behind receiving an educational scholarship, helping others, and exploring future job options).
- Surveys reflect that based on self-reported income, about a quarter of Members who come from well-to-do households join AmeriCorps to be part of a national movement. (This number is about 17 percent for middle-class and poor households).
- Although survey data have not been collected on "motivation to join" versus "inclination to serve," the argument is that youth who are generally not inclined to serve their community and who do not need a 'job' or the educational scholarship, might join AmeriCorps if it is part of

a national movement. These may be the very individuals where there is the most to gain in terms of developing a sense of civic responsibility.

III. Participant experience

Early findings based on the exit forms received to date by the Evaluation Office indicate that for Members who joined to be part of a national movement, AmeriCorps has had more of a positive impact on both educational and community service plans. Similarly, Members who joined to be part of a national movement indicated a slightly higher level of satisfaction. Finally, overall more than 62 percent of Members reported that being part of a national movement was one of the major benefits they received from AmeriCorps.

IV. Life-long commitment to service

Although survey data have not been collected on this issue, it is anticipated that, similar to service in the Peace Corps and the military, a rewarding experience and a positive national identity would contribute to a long term commitment to service on behalf of AmeriCorps Members.

V. Programs' desire for national identity

A recent poll conducted by the Office of Evaluation of AmeriCorps programs found that they believe the Corporation plays an important role in "fostering national identity" and "providing a vision of national service" Both of these factors rated 3.4 on a scale of 4. Programs also indicated that the Corporation was doing a good job in both these areas (in fact, the poll reflected that programs were more satisfied with the work the Corporation was doing in these two areas than in any other).

VI. State Commissions' desire for national identity

A focus group of State Commission Executive Directors identified the following:

- national identity is important and lends credibility to local efforts
- national identity is "one of the strongest pieces" of AmeriCorps
- T-shirts are valuable; they look professional and command respect
- some commissions believe CNS guidance is too restrictive and programs would like additional flexibility to promote their local names

- one executive director believed that three program designations (A, S and L) are confusing in the field, and a single AmeriCorps designation is preferable
- national identity is important to Members; there is excitement when they recognize each other by their designations
- T-shirts and uniforms help
- required trainings are expensive and not necessarily helpful

CURRENT CORPORATION POLICIES

The Statute

The National Service and Community Trust Act of 1993 addresses national identity as follows:

> The Corporation may support the development and dissemination of materials, including training materials, and arrange for uniforms and insignia, designed to promote unity and shared features among programs that receive assistance under the national service laws.[1]

AmeriCorps Requirements

The booklet, *National Identity: Requirements & Resources*,[2] outlines the Corporation's current policy on national identity which was developed by a task force and refined after a year's experience. The policy includes the following elements:

Common Ethic. Getting Things Done is the centerpiece of the AmeriCorps ethic; the other aspects are strengthening communities, providing opportunity, and encouraging civic responsibility. The application included goals in each of these areas, and the Corporation encourages programs to reinforce this framework through orientation, training, and activities.[3]

Common Application. The Corporation 'strongly encourages' programs to use the 'model' AmeriCorps application in screening and selecting AmeriCorps Members.[4]

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1 42 USCA § 12653(o)

2 *National Identity: Requirements and Resources*, AmeriCorps National/State Programs 1995 [hereinafter referred to as *National Identity*].

3 *See National Identity* at 2.

4 *See id.*

Common Orientation. In an effort to help ensure that orientations have some similarity across programs, the Corporation encourages programs to do the following: have staff and Members view CNS videos, explain how the local program fits into the AmeriCorps National Service Network, fill out AmeriCorps entrance forms, and distribute AmeriCorps Handbooks.[5]

Common Pledge. The Corporation has developed an AmeriCorps Pledge and advises programs that "Members should be asked to take the AmeriCorps pledge or affirmation."[6]

Common Skills. The Corporation encourages programs to train AmeriCorps Members in three basic skills: communication, conflict resolution and CPR/first aid. The Corporation provides training and curriculum materials to programs.[7]

Common Projects. The Corporation sponsors three common national projects -- citizenship, HIV/AIDS, and environmental audits -- to enhance national impact and visibility.[8]

Common Events. Special events which bring AmeriCorps Members together from different programs help remind Members that they are part of a national program. Such events include Opening Ceremonies, Martin Luther King Day, National Day of Service, and AmeriCorps Graduation.[9]

Common Connections. The Corporation encourages or sponsors opportunities for individuals from different parts of the country to connect with AmeriCorps programs outside of their home communities. These opportunities include national recruitment, AmeriCorps Leaders, Issue Groups and Forums, and state and local gatherings.[10]

Common Language. To help reinforce common objectives and clarify the identity of AmeriCorps for the public, the Corporation encourages consistent use of basic terms, including AmeriCorps Member (not volunteer), Sponsor (not program), Assignment (not placement), and Living Allowance (not stipend or salary).[11]

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5 *Id.*
6 *Id.* at 3.
7 *Id.*
8 *Id.*
9 *Id.* at 4.
10 *Id.*
11 *See id.* at 5.

Common Identification. For easy identification of individuals as Members of AmeriCorps, the Corporation implements a uniform policy and encourages the use of signs, logos on stationery, brochures, fax cover sheets and newsletters.[12]

AmeriCorps Public Affairs

A vital way in which the Corporation and local AmeriCorps sponsors promote national identity is through the media. As outlined in the CNS publication, *AmeriCorps: A Guide to Working with the Media,* the Corporation encourages discussion of AmeriCorps by local sponsors in press reports.[13] To assist local sponsors, the Corporation provides advice on reaching the media, developing a media plan, planning effective press conferences, communicating through public service announcements, and involving elected officials.[14]

ISSUES

1. Some programs may feel that CNS directives are too prescriptive (*e.g.*, size and location of program logo)

2. Some Members of Congress and key congressional staff have expressed the following concerns regarding national identity:
   - leads to political indoctrination
   - new federal standards
   - top down directives
   - potential politicization and advocacy
   - drop training in diversity, citizenship, and AIDS

3. Congressman Hoekstra expressed the following concerns regarding national identity: "We have members being relocated into communities wearing nationally identifiable uniforms, using common language and definitions and handing out palm cards to promote the national organization. It is a national army of sorts rather than the individualized local volunteer program focused solely on local solutions."[15]

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12 *Id.* at 6.

13 *Id.*

14 *A Guide to Working with the Media,* Office of Public Affairs, Corporation for National Service (1995).

15 Statement of Congressman Pete Hoekstra, *quoted in Hearing on AmeriCorps,* Unofficial Transcript, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Economioc and Educational Opportunities (October 17, 1995) at 8.

The Congressman also cited the Corporation's publication, *National Identity Requirements and Resources,* during the October 1995 subcommittee hearing as reflecting the creation of a "national entity" which conflicted with his prior vision from when AmeriCorps "was going to be locally focused."[16]

4. Some believe that the initial emphasis on national identity developed into an identification with AmeriCorps State and National programs. This raises the need to unify national identity *within* the Corporation as well as the issue regarding how to present unified streams of service to the field.

OPTIONS

The options for consideration are presented to address three goals:

1. Fostering an ethic of service and unity
2. Identification *of* AmeriCorps by the public
3. Identification *with* AmeriCorps by its Members.

Fostering an ethic of service and unity

Identification of AmeriCorps by the public

Option #1: Continue general Corporation policies with some modifications.

- recast 'national identity' as 'ethic of service' and articulate its principles.
- the Corporation would move from 'strongly encouraging' to 'suggesting' that programs to follow specific guidance (to be developed).
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[16] *Id.* at 46.

Option #--: Replace the Corporation's current' national identity' policy with a new policy describing an 'ethic of service' with general principles to be considered for implementation by the local sponsors.

- Primacy of the AmeriCorps logo over the local sponsor's logo is replaced by the tag line, "An AmeriCorps Sponsor" (with a small AmeriCorps logo), *following* the sponsor's name and logo.

- Agreement by the sponsor to follow a general set of principles presented by the Corporation. These could include:

  >
  >
  >

<u>**Identification with AmeriCorps by its Members**</u>

Option #1: Continue general Corporation policies with some modifications.

- the Corporation no longer would stress training in required skills, but rather defer to the AmeriCorps sponsor for training content.

Option #--: Replace the Corporation's current 'national identity' policy with a new policy describing an 'ethic of service' with general principles to be considered for implementation by the local sponsors.

- Agreement by the sponsor to follow a general set of principles presented by the Corporation. These could include:

  >
  >
  >

<u>**Training**</u>

Option #1: Continue general Corporation policies with some modifications.

-

Option #2: Drop CNS requirements for common skills building (diversity, citizenship, AIDS). Replace with a package of recommended, but not required, training modules. Support identification of model trainings and transfer of information among states and sponsors.

Option #3: Provide guidelines on model training curricula and support a national repository of information, such as model practices. Sponsors have discretion regarding the content of their training.

Uniforms

Option #1: Continue general Corporation policies with some modifications. The goals are to maintain an AmeriCorps 'look' and limit the Corporation's investment.

Option #2: Drop references to "uniforms" and drop requirement for their use. Replace with "Service Gear" (or other name selected by CNS leadership) and make available, although not required, by the Corporation.

Option #3: Provide guidelines on use of the AmeriCorps logo only. Sponsors and funders have discretion regarding how to apply the AmeriCorps logo to their existing apparel.

Common Service Activities

Option #1: Continue general Corporation policies with some modifications.

Option #2: Change names and degree of emphasis on national activities. Change 'opening day' to 'Make a Difference Day'; CNS would not coordinate opening ceremonies. Change 'National Day of Service' to a series of focus days within a 'National Week of Service' to highlight service by youth, volunteers and seniors.

Option #3: Drop all national activities required by CNS, such as the National Day of Service and Martin Luther King Day. Provide guidelines on how states can sponsor and coordinate unified service activities. States and sponsors have discretion regarding when and how to coordinate a unified service activity.

APPENDIX I

Peace Corps and the Marines: Lifelong Identification with Service
Based on a paper prepared by Dr. David Rymph
October 31, 1995

Peace Corps

The path to becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer has always been arduous and selective. Only a few of those who ask about opportunities to join the Peace Corps make it to swearing in. Each year approximately 100,000 inquiries become 6,000 Volunteers. Along the way they complete extensive written applications and medical exams. The screening and interviewing process are complex and time consuming. This beginning phase endes when Peace Corps issues an invitation to enter training, which consists of several weeks of in-country training.

It is only at the end of this long process that the individual is sworn in and becomes a Peace Corps Volunteer. Currently, attrition during training is about 10 percent. Another 20 percent may not finish the two-year assignment. One way of looking at this year or more between application and swearing in is that each step in this process is loaded with value for the individual. This value is created by the applicant's effort and by the selectivity of Peace Corps. At the end of this part of the journey, upon swearing in, the applicant/trainee rises to a new, more exalted status, of Volunteer.

The United States Marine Corps

The identity that former Marines have with their service experience is as strong or stronger than that of Peace Corps. There are no ex-Marines; there are only former Marines. It shares many characteristics with Peace Corps. Membership is highly selective, or at least, the Corps portrays it that way. "We are looking for a few good men." "The few, the proud, the Marines." The eight weeks of boot camp are arduous, and drill instructors make sure that recruits know that they are not Marines until they get through boot camp.

Former Marines share a bond that other branches of the service do not create in their members. Probably more often than others, Marines will carry the service emblem, the globe and anchor, and confidence created by their training and service into civilian life. In a few words, the experience marks Marines for life.

Rites of Passage

Arnold van Gennep was not the first student of human society to note the importance of rituals. He did, however, give us a way to understand the critical importance of the rituals that mark those times when people become something new and radically different from what they were. He called them rites of passage. They occur with major shifts in status or membership. Commonly experienced rites of passage include weddings, funerals, baptisms, and graduation.

van Gennep understood the pattern of these rites and identified three phases: rituals of separation, a liminal (in-between phase), and rituals of reincorporation. Research by countless scientists since his time has confirmed the universal nature of this sequence.

Rituals of separation mark the beginning of a transition from one status to another. In the Peace Corps the rituals of application, medical screening, and staging are all aspects of separation. The trainee leaves the status of student or worker and entering into the possibility of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. In the first week of boot camp, Marines have their heads shaved and are dressed in identical uniforms.

A liminal, or in-between, phase usually occurs after separation from the old status. Peace Corps Volunteers travel overseas and enter several weeks of training, which often is physically and psychologically demanding. Marines go through the boot camp experience. In both cases, some time elapses in which a lot of pressure is placed on the trainee and boot, but these are not permanent statuses. They are only the path to the goal.

At the end of the liminal phase come the **rituals of reincorporation.** They may be extensive or abbreviated, but they mark the end of the in-between phase and the death of the old status with the emergence of the new status. The Peace Corps Volunteers and the Marine Corps members are sworn in and take an oath. In both cases, the participants have completed a specific journey and have entered a status that they will treasure their whole lives.

By the time they are sworn in, much of the Volunteers' and Corps members' identification is fixed with the host country and institution, respectively. This identity is confirmed and reinforced by subsequent experiences, of course, but the foundation is laid in selection, training or boot camp, and then full membership.

Implications for AmeriCorps

Obviously AmeriCorps does not and, given our resource levels, cannot equal the Peace Corps or the Marines when it comes to selection and training experiences. At the same time, however, there are lessons from these other corps and from van Gennep's model that challenge our way of doing things. Here are some aspects of AmeriCorps that are in contrast to the Marine Corps and Peace Corps:

* Recruitment materials for AmeriCorps do not portray the opportunity as special and selective. We may be saying that anybody can be in AmeriCorps.

* AmeriCorps members are sworn in the first day of their term of service, before training.

* The investment of AmeriCorps in training is much less than the other corps. Of course, this varies by program. AmeriCorps*NCCC invests more in training for each member, while AmeriCorps*VISTA's investment is small.

* The physical and psychological demands on AmeriCorps members may be less, but there are good reasons for this. We are not trying to fit individuals into a closed, total institution. Nor do our work sites require as much cross-cultural adaptation as needed in the Peace Corps.

* AmeriCorps has many (approx. 30 percent) part-time members whose service commitments are half-time or less. Peace Corps has no part-time opportunities. Marine Corps has a reserve force that is part-time, but it begins with a full-time period of service.

In essence, van Gennep's model suggests that AmeriCorps does very little to mark the transition from citizen to AmeriCorps member. We have no significant rites of passage that say being a part of AmeriCorps puts the member in a new and markedly different status.

Questions about AmeriCorps Suggested by the Rites of Passage Model

1. What can we do to make those who join AmeriCorps feel special?

2. How can we signify (symbolize, portray, celebrate) that service in AmeriCorps is much more than a job?

3. What rituals can we develop to mark the transition from citizen to AmeriCorps member?

4. Can we portray admission to AmeriCorps as selective and competitive?

5. Would there be any benefit in setting an induction period for AmeriCorps members, with swearing in coming 45-60 days into the term of service?

6. Should we invest more resources (time and staff) into the initial, training phase of service?

7. Are our programs asking for enough effort and commitment from Corps Members? If not, how could they ask for more?

8. How can we portray in a compelling way the level of effort and commitment of Corps members?

9. Can part-time participants build a strong identity with AmeriCorps when they experience no major shift in status, changing a small portion of their total time and effort when they join?

II

MATCH REQUIREMENTS
AmeriCorps Option Paper

The team which compiled this Option Paper included Mike Russell (Chair), Diana Algra, AnnMaura Connolly, Mark Feldman, Mike Kenefick, Hank Oltmann, Lance Potter, and Terry Russell.

The group's charge is to answer the following questions:

> *What is the maximum amount in-cash and in-kind non-federal, non-Corporation funds that an AmeriCorps sponsor can be expected to raise to ensure that at least 75% of current sponsors could continue to participate in AmeriCorps? What is a realistic period of time to reach these goals?*

BACKGROUND

As conveyed in a recent memorandum on match options, '[c]urrently, there are two required matches in the statute. Programs must pay at least 15% of the living allowance (and any amount that exceeds 85% of the average living allowance of $7,945) and at least 15% of health insurance (which costs $1,200). This amount must be from nonfederal funds and be in cash. Currently, state programs are averaging from 20 to 30% matches on the living allowance, but about half of state programs pay only the minimum match.

"The other match is on program costs. Programs must pay at least 25% of program costs in cash or in kind, and may count other federal funds toward the match. The current average is from about 45% to 50%, although 80 state and 7 national direct programs pay less than 30%.

"It is often assumed that the majority of AmeriCorps*State/National programs raise private sector funds. In fact, only one-third have cash contributions from businesses or foundations, and the median investment was only $7,500."[1]

How does the FEC & corp in Public broadcasting measure compliance re the challenge grant?

youth corps
rural
new
small grants

111 Memorandum of January 25, 1996, from Executive Director Shirley Sagawa to Chief Executive Officer Harris Wofford, Corporation for National Service.

CURRENT MATCH REQUIREMENTS

The Statute

The National Service and Community Trust Act of 1993 addresses the match issue as follows:

> **(1) Requirements**
> Except as provided in section 12594 of this title [living allowances], the Federal share of the cost of carrying out a national service program ... may not exceed 75 percent of such cost.[2]
>
> **(2) Calculation**
> In providing for the remaining share of the cost of carrying out a national service program, the program -- (A) shall provide for such share through a payment in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, or services; and (B) may provide for such share through State sources, local sources, or other Federal sources (other than the use of funds made available under the national service laws).[3]
>
> **(3) Cost of health care**
> In providing a payment in cash ... as part of providing for the remaining share of the cost of carrying out a national service program, the program may count not more than 85 percent of the cost of providing a health care policy ... toward such share.[4]

The statute also requires that the annual living allowance which AmeriCorps Members receive "shall not exceed 85 percent of the total average annual provided to VISTA volunteers ...."[5]

Although the Corporation does not currently operate a Challenge Grants program (discussed in the Options section below), the statute specifically authorizes such an approach.[6] The statute authorizes a one to one match:

> A challenge grant under this subsection may provide not more than $1 of assistance ... for each $1 in cash raised by the national service program from private sources in excess of amounts required to be provided by the program to satisfy matching funds requirements ....[7]

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[2] 42 USCA § 12571(e)(1).
[3] *Id.* at (2).
[4] *Id.* at (3).
[5] *Id.* § 12594(a)(2).
[6] *Id.* § 12576(c)(1).
[7] *Id.* at (c)(3).

In a challenge grant program, the Corporation is required to establish a ceiling on the amount of assistance which would be provided.[8]

AmeriCorps Requirements

Living Allowance: ***85 (CNS) - 15 (sponsor).*** In 1995, the Corporation advised programs that they "must provide a living allowance between $7,945 and $15,890 per year to their full-time Members."[9] The Corporation's share "may not exceed 85% of the minimum living allowance, which equates to approximately $6,753."[10] The sponsor must meet a minimum of 15% non-Federal cash match.[11]

Health Care: ***85 (CNS) - 15 (sponsor).*** The Corporation pays up to 85% of the cost of a sponsor's policy that meets CNS requirements. There is an available AmeriCorps health policy which costs $1,200 (a maximum of $1,080 for the CNS share and $120 for the grantee share).[12] The sponsor must provide a cash match.[13] (The use of other Federal funds is allowable in this line item.)

Operational Costs: ***75 (CNS) - 25 (sponsor).*** The sponsor is required to provide a match of "at least 25%"[14] for other Member support costs, staff and operational expenses (travel, transportation, supplies, equipment, administrative, uniforms, training, education, and other allowable costs). The sponsor's match can be cash, in-kind, other Federal funds, State funds, or other funds.[15]

Education Award: ***100 (CNS) - 0 (sponsor).*** The Corporation provides an education award of $4,725 for full-time Members and $2,362.50 for part-time Members who successfully complete their terms of service.

Child Care: ***100 (CNS) - 0 (sponsor).*** The Corporation funds child care directly for income-eligible Members and will pay up to the local market rate for child care services.[16] (The Corporation follows established state guidelines.)

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8 *Id.*
9 *AmeriCorps State Guidelines for 1995 Applicants* at 20.
10 *Id.* at 21.
11 *Id.* at 28.
12 *Id.* at 22.
13 *Id.* at 30.
14 *Id.*
15 *Id.*
16 *See* AmeriCorps®CARE Child Care Benefits Program Fact Sheet

PROPOSED MATCH REQUIREMENTS: 1996 STATE APPLICATIONS

[insert]

CURRENT PROGRAM MATCH LEVELS

In a recent review of match levels conducted by Mike Kenefick and his staff, the following data were compiled:

Program Type	Required Match	Average Match
State Formula		
Living Allowance	15%	20-24%
Operating Costs	25%	45-51%
State Competitive		
Living Allowance	15%	24-30%
Operating Costs	25%	45-48%
National Non-profits		
Living Allowance	15%	35-40%
Operating Costs	25%	53-55%

(based on proposed FTE level and proposed match as reflected in the 1995 applications.)

Cost per FTE

Program Type	Average Cost/FTE (excluding ed awards)
State (Formula and Competitive)	$12,184

106 out of 364 over $13,800

Directs (44)	$10,071

25 over $13,800, including:
- 4 -- 13,801 - 14,000
- 8 -- 14,000s
- 4 -- 15,000s

ISSUES

- What level of matching funds can be reached over a period of years?
- What will the funders "buy" for their investments?
- Would raising the match requirement reduce or eliminate indirect service programs because they are not as quantifiable (*e.g.*, linking doctors with health clinics)?
- Would raising the match requirement favor those programs with a fundraising infrastructure, strong boards, and more sophisticated public relations capability?
- Will raising the match at the same time federal funds are withdrawn have a disproportionate impact on some programs?
- What is the impact on those programs which may lose 30 to 50 percent of their match when the federal funds are withdrawn?
- Is there a disproportionate impact on certain grassroots programs which raise money over time versus local public agencies (police departments) which have public funds up front?
- To what extent does the match depend on the program model (*e.g.*, centralized payroll)?
- The impact of raising the match will vary across program type -- national non-profits, grassroots organizations, public agencies.

CNS/AMERICORPS ROLES

- Provide a clear federal presence
- Organize high-profile events
- Provide Training and Technical Assistance
- Recruit Members with specialized skills
- Convene fora in issue areas
- Manage volunteers
- Identify and provide information on cutting issues

SOURCES OF MATCHING FUNDS

- Corporations
- Corporate Foundations
- Local businesses
- Foundations
- Federal government (other agencies)
- State government
- Local government
- Non-profit organizations
- Individuals
- Fee for service

- United Ways
- Product development

Based on an internal staff review, the majority of matching funds are not being raised, but rather "traded" (provided by public agencies as part of their annual budgets or by individual host sites which pay for living allowances through one fiscal agent).

According to the GAO report, the percentage of private money raised for the match is small. The GAO reports that only 12 percent of matching funds is raised from private sector sources.[17] The GAO also analyzes the sources of total program funds ($351 million in 1994 **???)** as follows:

• $260 million	Federal ($150m -- AmeriCorps; $110 million from other federal programs
• $50 million	State & local governments
• $41 million	Non-governmental (corporate, foundations, religious, education, and non-profit)

As outlined above, more of the matching funds comes from public rather than private sources. The fact that many AmeriCorps programs are sponsored by public agencies (police departments, district attorneys, city agencies) raises the following implications:

- the programs have the money up front when they apply
- the applicant, in some cases, may have greater capacity to obtain and expand funding from the same source by inclusion of the program in its budget and/or reprogramming agency funds.

The advantages of public sponsors include:
- secure funding
- ability to meet payroll.

The main disadvantage is that the source of funds is taxpayers' dollars.

The working group believes that the private sector could be encouraged to support:

1) sponsorship of teams of AmeriCorps Members or individual Members
2) training
    a) to do service
    b) leadership training

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17 General Accounting Office Report at 6.

c) program materials
d) curriculum development
3) equipment to perform service
4) uniforms (with corporate logo, similar to Olympics uniforms)
5) computer support.
6) printed materials (program manuals, brochures, stationery)
7) team sponsorships and other creative arrangements
8) volunteer generation activities.

SURVEY RESULTS: SPONSORS AND STATE COMMISSIONS

[underway -- insert]

ISSUES RAISED BY CONGRESS

1. *Senator Grassley*

In 1995 during Senate consideration of the FY 1996 VA-HUD appropriations bill, a possible Grassley Amendment was expected (but never offered) which would have "require[d] grantees to provide a 50% private sector match and prohibit[ed] grantees from using any other federal funds to support AmeriCorps programs."[18]

On October 24, 1995, Senator Grassley testified before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and expressed his concern that "instead of a partnership with the private sector, the taxpayers are having to meet 92 percent of the cost"[19] of AmeriCorps programs. The Senator referred to his August 1995 letter to the President in which he urged specific reforms of AmeriCorps be adopted, including "to make sure that the private sector contributed the amount of money that the program ... intended that the private sector contribute."[20]

In conclusion of his testimony, Senator Grassley stated, without being definitive at that point, that "at a minimum, if we can get this cost down to $17,000 per participant, and if we can have 50 percent of it come from the private sector, I think that the administration will well be on the road to my support for the reauthorization of this program."[21]

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[18] Expected Amendment by Senator Grassley to the FY 1996 VA-HUD appropriations bill (1995).
[19] Statement of Senator Charles Grassley, *quoted in Hearing on AmeriCorps*, Unofficial Transcript, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Economioc and Educational Opportunities (October 17, 1995) at 19 [hereinafter cited as House Hearing].
[20] *Id.* at 20-21.
[21] *Id.* at 22.

2. *House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*

Congressman Hoekstra, who chaired the House subcommittee hearing in October 1995, expressed concern regarding the cost per AmeriCorps Member.[22]

In response to a question posed by Congressman Scott, CEO Harris Wofford discussed a propoasl by former Governor George Romney's son, Mitt, who proposed that the match be increased from approximately 15 to 50 percent over a five year period. Mr. Wofford testified that the Corporation would "look and see to what extent and how fast"[23] the match can be increased. While in general agreement with the notion of raising the match, nevertheless, Congressman Scott cautioned that "we don't want to make the local share so high that we start losing programs because they can't afford it."[24]

3. *Senator Kassebaum*

In 1993, Senator Nancy Kassebaum introduced national service legislation which authorized the following match requirements:

- *Operating costs:* (1) Operating programs would be responsible for a 40% match; (2) federally operated programs would be responsible for a 50% match; and (3) planning and replication programs would be responsible for a 25% match. The match in each of these categories could comprise federal, state and/or other cash and/or in-kind sources.

- *Living Allowance:* Programs would be responsible for a 15% match which must be from non-federal sources (CNS and other federal agencies). The entire federal share could not exceed the lesser of the prevailing minimum wage in the area where the program is conducted and 85% of the annual living allowance as established by the program. (However, if the local prevailing minimum wage is less than the federal minimum wage, then the federal level is used.)[25]

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22 *Id.* at 6.

23 *Id.* at 72.

24 *Id.*

25 Conversation of January 29, 1996, with Myung Lee, Office of General Counsel, Corporation for National Service.

4. Congressional Staff

Youth Service America and the Coalition for National and Community Service recently convened a panel of Republican congressional staff members to disucss the future of national service. The staff member from the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee identified as a key question for reauthorization: "How are matches made? What % is private, what % is public?"[26] Similarly, a Senator Grassley's staff member referenced "increasing the private sector match" as a major issue,[27] Congressman Chris Shays' representative indicated that "[t]he federal matching requirements could be changed,"[28]and the panel's wrap-up concluded that "the match issue is central."[29]

OPTIONS

Option #1: Status quo with increased match for program and living allowance. The policy question is how much should the match in each of the two categories be raised?

Pros:

Cons:

Option #2: Develop only one match. The policy question is how much should the match be raised?

Pros:

Cons:

Option #3: Fund the total living allowance and require some match from programs.

Pros:

Cons:

---

26 Statement by Ms. Mary Elizabeth Larson, *referenced in National Service: A Republican Perspective,* a Panel Discussion on 1/19/96, January Minutes, Working Group on National and Community Service Policy, Hosted by Youth Service America and the Coatlition for National and Community Service at 3.

27 Statement by Mr. Dean Zerbe, *referenced in id.* at 5.

28 Statement by Ms. Katy Anderson, *referenced in id.* at 6.

29 Statement by Dr. Roger Landrum, *referenced in id.* at 12.

Option #4: Convert to a challenge grant mechanism and require the match up front.

Pros:

Cons:

Option #5: "Modified Kassebaum" -- [insert]

Pros:

Cons:

Option #6: "Ed Awards Plus" -- Provide education awards and require a match of a certain percentage per Member.

Pros:

Cons:

Option #7: "Ed Awards Only" -- Provide education awards; sponsors are responsible for all other program costs.

Pros:

Cons:

APPENDIX I

Survey of the Field

To obtain input from the field, a survey of selected programs and commissions was conducted. The sample included AmeriCorps*State programs from each of the five clusters, a few Directs, urban and rural programs, urban and rural youth corps, and selected State Commissions from each of the five clusters.

Below is a summary of the survey's major findings.

State Commissions

Percentage of programs currently meeting their match requirements.

All state commissions contacted reported that all of their programs are meeting their match requirements, except two in one state (one new program and one large, complex program).

Percentage of programs which are over-matched.

Many of the state programs are exceeding their match. (Several in California, over 50% in Washington, 100% in Kansas, 75% in Georgia, 100% in Massachusetts, and 95% in Maryland.)

Some sponsors have a higher match on the living allowance, but the larger extent of the over-match is in-kind.

Characteristics of those programs having difficulty meeting their match.

Community based non-profit organizations.

Extent of Federal and other public funds in the match.

The extent of the use of other non-CNS federal funds varies (from 1/3 of programs in California to very few in Kansas). The commissions report that the traditional sources of federal funds are diminishing -- Forest Service, JTPA. Many programs, however, have a significant level of matching funds from state and local public sources. In a number of cases, the programs have a 100% match from these sources.

Potential difference in impact on types of programs from an increased match.

The commissions advise that any increase in match will have a greater impact on the following types of programs: corps, sponsors in economically less developed communities, rural programs (away from metropolitan centers, foundations, corporations), smaller communities, new start-up programs, and community-based non-profit organizations.

Maximum amount of match increase (cash and in-kind) which continues 75 percent of existing AmeriCorps sponsors.

While the numbers vary across state commissions, the general conclusion is a minimal increase in cash and 30-50% increase in operating (including in-kind).

Calif.	15% cash; 30% in-kind (in first year). provide challenge grants.
Georgia	up to 40% cash and in-kind.
Kansas	50% cash; 50% in-kind.
Maryland	35% cash; 35% operating with at least 10% cash (phase up to 50%)
Mass.	15% cash; 30% in-kind.
Wash.	20% cash; 50% in-kind and cash (over 5 years).

Most realistic timeframe for reaching the new match levels.

Most commissions advise that sponsors could reach an increase in the match in the first year, but suggest that three to five years be provided for meeting a higher level, such as 50%.

Calif.	Year One -- 30% (in-kind).
Georgia	3 years for urban programs; sliding scale up to 5 years for rural and new programs.
Kansas	50% cash; 50% in-kind.
Maryland	2 years.
Mass.	1-2 years to reach 40%.
Wash.	up to 50% over 5 years.

Additional steps to increase private sector support.

Suggestions provided by the commissions to increase private sector support include: institute an incentive/challenge approach (Calif.); decrease politicization which drives big foundations away; CNS to build strong public-private partnerships; CNS to bring foundations together; push for long-term (10 year) commitments; assist sponsors target major companies in rural areas;

clarification of fundraising rules (allow staff who are paid, in part, by local funds to fundraise on that time; allow Members to fundraise on their own time without uniforms); CNS to improve its promotion of what it does (change to one program, not different 'streams of service' which confuses the public); CNS should not compete against states or local programs for foundation funding; CNS to work with state commissions on developing relationships with funders at the state and national levels; commissions to designate a staff member for 'resource development and sustainability'; and CNS to prepare a basic packet for local sponsors on resource identification.

<u>AmeriCorps Sponsors (State and National Directs)</u>

Maximum amount of match increase (cash and in-kind) which continues 75 percent of existing AmeriCorps sponsors.

> <u>Answer</u>: 18-20% cash; 45-50% cash and in-kind [Note: this is a rough approximation based on the survey data summarized below and discussion with Grants staff; it is not scientific. These levels would have a more negative impact on certain programs, such as grassroots organizations, youth corps, and rural/low income communities.]
>
> <u>Survey findings</u>

The majority of programs surveyed advised that they could absorb an increase in their matching requirements, but stressed the need to include in-kind contributions. Some programs which have strong private sector support, especially from foundations, currently are over-matched and could meet a limited increase in the cash match, as well.

Below are potential match requirements recommended by programs, their suggested phase-in period, and a brief description of their sources of support.

- 25% living allowance (cash); 45% operating (cash and in-kind) -- 1 year -- foundation, corporate and United Way
- 30%; 30% -- 1 year -- foundation and local public support
- 25%; 50% -- 2 years -- all municipal
- 15%; 33% -- 2 years -- rural youth corps; shrinking JTPA
- 30%; 50% -- 2 years -- foundation, corporate
- 25%; 25% -- 2-3 years -- foundations, some corporate, local public

- 25%; 50% -- 1 year -- corporate foundation, family foundation, community foundation, non-profit's general fund

- 50% cash and in-kind -- 3-5 years -- corporate, foundations

- 25%; 50% -- 3 years -- corporate, grants

- 25%; 40% or 50% (25:25 cash to in-kind) -- 1 year -- substantial local public, United Way

- 15%; 30% -- 1 year -- rural youth corps.

Special considerations

The AmeriCorps sponsors provided the following insight and recommendations as the Corporation considers changes in the match requirements.

- an increase in the living allowance match places a higher value on service and may generate more local buy-in

- rural corps will find it difficult to raise additional dollars, especially at the same time when JTPA money is limited. As the match increases, at some point a corps could no longer participate in AmeriCorps because it would take too much time and money to raise funds.

- Programs in certain rural states would have more difficulty. For example, one sponsor advises that New Hampshire is 7th among states in per capita income, but last in charitable contributions.

- Some companies and foundations are not interested in supporting AmeriCorps programs because of the federal connection, the controversy or the reported uncertainty regarding its future.

- A phase-in period for a higher match is very important, because raising cash takes time.

- Clarification of the CNS fundraising restrictions would be helpful. Is there any way that ACorps Members can help, even in a limited capacity (*not* collecting in uniforms)?

- New programs have a more difficult time raising the match. If programs have a track record and are making an impact, it's easier.

- Combine both match categories -- makes accounting easier.

- Expedite CNS awards, especially to those programs which operate on school district calendars.

- It's easier for a sponsor to 'sell' the living allowance of an AmeriCorps Member in its fundraising efforts.

DRAFT

Tracy Gray

III

AMERICORPS MEMBER SELECTION

BACKGROUND

In the spirit of the legislation that created the Corporation for National Service and its network of AmeriCorps grantees, the national referral system was established to allow all Americans who are interested in joining, access to the numerous and varied state and national programs. Unlike the two national AmeriCorps programs run by the Corporation, VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and the NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps), the grantees were delegated full control over the selection and placement of their members with no role given to Corporation staff.

After two years of operating under a totally decentralized selection system, the Corporation has asked our group to re-examine this decision and consider other options. By changing to either a totally centralized system or some middle ground we discussed the following potential benefits:

1) Members would have a greater affiliation with AmeriCorps rather than simply identifying with the local grantee. If the Corporation played a role in selecting Corps members, those selected would realize early on that they were part of a larger movement.

2) Consistent selection criteria would assure a higher quality process. With over four hundred grantees and the current hands-off approach, we have no assurances of consistency or objectivity in the assessment of potential members.

3) Improved ability to correct the view that we are a jobs program or simply a scholarship program. If the Corporation were involved in selection of Corps members, these misunderstandings could be addressed more directly and before Members come on board, similar to the selection of the grantees themselves.
4) Dollar and Personnel savings that could result from economies of scale. By involving Corporation staff, it is

hoped that individual grantees would be freed from tying up the current level of their staff and money and use these limited resources to address other concerns.

Note: Without having had the opportunity to discuss the selection issue with Senior staff, the group admits that there may be other perceived benefits. We solicit your input.

Before beginning a discussion of different selection models, the group was reminded by Gene Sofer, Diana Algra, and Lisette Nieves of others factors that must not be ignored:

1) Political cost- The current political climate is one of state and community control and a minimal, if not hands off approach from the federal government. Having begun AmeriCorps with the full delegation of selection authority to the programs, it would run contrary to political acceptability to try a reversal or intrusive modification. Programs would resist this change and the Congress would see it as a contradiction of our community driven objective.

2) Different views of resource allocation- While one could argue a global view of cost savings- in both personnel and dollars- by centralizing selection, adding federal positions and a supplemental HQ budget to pay for this approach would be unacceptable to the mandate to shrink big government. Local program staff that perform selection functions are not federal employees and the cost of their work is buried in the overall grant.

Other Models of Selection

Balancing the "political realities" with potential benefits the group proceeded by contacting Peace Corps and Big Brothers/Big Sisters to look at their selection processes and asking A*NCCC and A*VISTA to describe their own: See attachments.

Options available to the Corporation

I. **Total centralization:** This is the Peace Corps model and was unanimously rejected by the group. Without having the time to accurately estimate and project how many staff would be required in Washington and what size operating budget would be needed to establish a central office of selection, the group felt that the "political realities" of the times combined with the potential bureaucratic problems involved with all programs sending their member applications to Washington made this option undesirable. The Peace Corps emphasis on academic credentials and/or vocational skills - as a prime component of the selection process - is not consistent with the highly varied needs of AmeriCorps grantees.

II. **Some Corporation staff involvement:** This is the A*VISTA model where the local sponsors have the option of doing all their own recruitment and selection or doing some and allowing the A*VISTA office to also fill some of the positions- with the final approval of even these applicants still in the hands of the sponsor.

Discussions with Pat Booker focused on: a) the difficulty of getting local programs to buy into this mixture of local and national placement b) how to determine an appropriate percent for the national component 3) how to guarantee that programs will actually reserve "X" percent for national placement- without establishing quotas, and 4) finding staffing and operating dollar resources at the headquarters level to support this type of operation. The group agreed that the political realities far outweighed the potential benefits for this option to succeed.

III. **Some Corporation involvement (non-staff):** This is the Big Brothers/Big Sisters model. The national office establishes general selection criteria that must be followed by all local offices but the local offices are then free to add any additional criteria and are expected to do selection and placement without any staff assistance or involvement from the national office.

Selection Group Recommendation

With a unanimous vote we recommend the third option. By establishing detailed selection criteria rather than simply the current guidelines, potential benefits two and three (higher quality with consistency and de-emphasizing a jobs or scholarship program as primary motivation) are achieved. Potential benefit one- greater affiliation with a large movement- is better met through improved training than involving Corporation staff in member selection.

Final note: An informal survey of some State Commissions reflected strong opposition to any change in who does selection of AmeriCorps members. Lisette and Diana are willing to share specific quotes upon request.

AmeriCorps*NCCC Recruitment, Selection, Placement Overview

(for AmeriCorps Member Selection Working Group)
December 18, 1995

The following are A*NCCC statutory requirements: residential; work in teams; 16-24 years; high school graduates or not; ensure that participants are from economically, geographically, and ethnically diverse backgrounds; to the extent practicable, at least 50% of the participants in the national service program shall be economically disadvantaged youth.

Recruitment

A*NCCC aims to recruit, select and place 850 Corpsmembers on four campuses, with the first campus opening 9/3/96.

Application deadline: May 3, 1996. A*NCCC campuses have a once a year intake of corpsmembers.

AmeriCorps*NCCC Members must be: 18-24 years of age; citizens of the US, US Nationals or Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens of the US; free of illegal drug use; adaptable, flexible and willing to learn; committed to serving and improving their communities and country; capable of and willing to function as team players; ready and willing to participate in a residential program.

Target audiences: economically disadvantaged; males and females; all ethnicities; all levels of education; US Citizen or equivalent; residents of every state and US territory; 18-24 years (inclusive); committed to service; persons with disabilities.

Methods of recruitment:
Corps Ambassador Program (CAP). CAP is designed to give Corpsmembers the opportunity to represent AmeriCorps*NCCC in a recruitment capacity. CAP enables AmeriCorps*NCCC to utilize individuals with personal knowledge of local communities and AmeriCorps*NCCC experience to maximize outreach efforts while maintaining program costs. All CAPPERS are required to complete a two hour CAP training session as well as a four hour media/communications training.

Community Placement Coordinators (CPC). There is a CPC on each campus who is responsible for serving in a recruitment / outreach function for all AmeriCorps programs. CPC's manage the CAP program; plan visits/presentations for CAPPERS or staff while on SPIKE; engage in telephone follow-up for mailing and inquiry lists; and work with the HQ recruitment, selection and placement to ensure that recruitment goals are being reached. Additionally, CPC's participate in application reading and scoring as well as telephone interviews.

Selection (assumes receipt of 5,000 applications)**

Selection Boards: At least two trained staff read and score each eligible application.

How	Why	Time / Cost
• Standardized score sheet based on application and essential CM functions	• Determine suitability of CMs	• 11 people, three weeks • 30 apps. per 8hr, day

Telephone interviews: Approximately 2,000 of the top scoring applicants will be invited and scheduled for a 1/2 hour telephone interview.

How	Why	Time / Cost
• Standard interview based on application and essential CM functions	• Determine suitability, non-suitability of CMs • Give CM better idea of what to expect	• 8 people, 31 days • 8, 1/2 hour interviews per interviewer per day (15 min. between interviews)
• Date and time of interview, name and phone number are downloaded to Selective Service • Selective Service merges, prints, stuffs and sends packets	• A*NCCC does not have resources (human, time, or technical) to efficiently orchestrate task. • SSS is extremely efficient and cost effective	• 2/95 - 8/95; approximately $17,000 (includes all mailings, programming of letters, postage)

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUNTEER DELIVERY SYSTEM

The Volunteer Delivery System (VDS) is the process by which Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) receives requests for trainees from overseas posts, converts the requests into Electronic Quarterly Update (EQU) information for Recruiters in Regional Offices (ROs) to use in nominating candidates, qualifies applicants through the Evaluation Division and invites applicants through the Placement Skill Desks to become trainees. The process is outlined in greater detail below.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER REQUEST AND DELIVERY CYCLE FROM REQUEST TO OVERSEAS

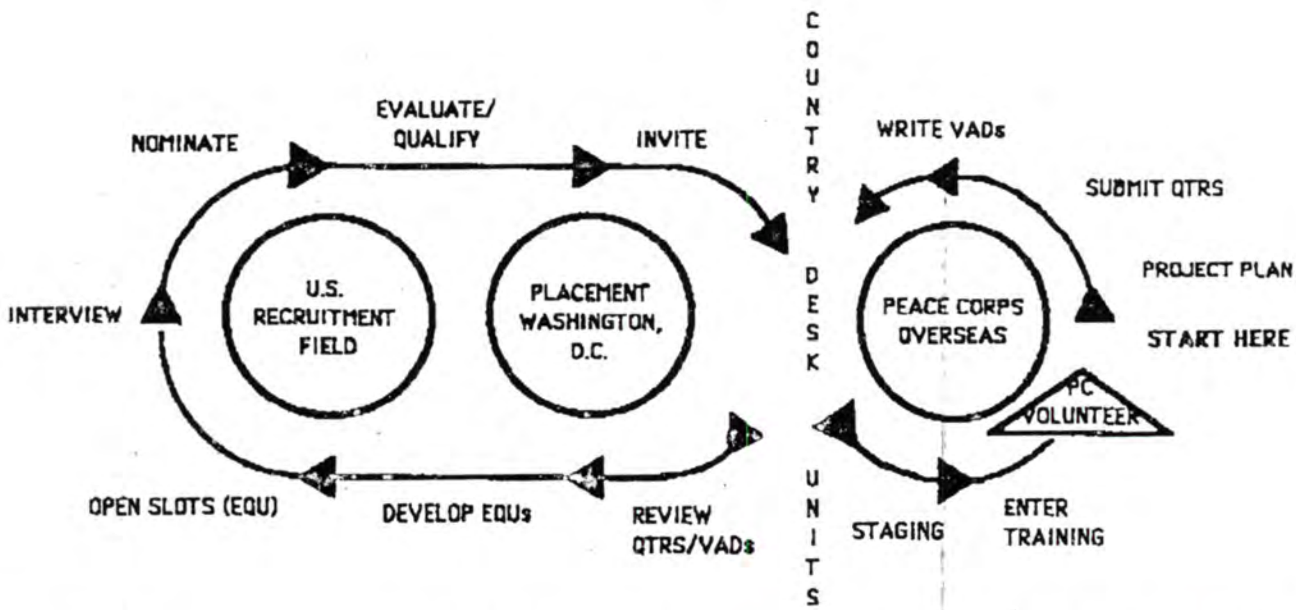


Figure 1: The Volunteer Delivery System. The Volunteer delivery process generally takes 6-9 months from the submission of an application to arrival of the trainee in the country of assignment.

The Office of Placement serves as a liaison between overseas posts and Regional Offices throughout the United States. At the beginning of each quarter, Placement Officers review the trainee requests for the next four quarters which are submitted by countries via the Quarterly Trainee Request Summary (QTRS). From the QTRS, an EQU is prepared which tells the Regional Offices the number of nominees needed in each Assignment Regional (AA) by specific skill components and language requirements. For the last two quarters on the QTRS, Recruiters will nominate only scarce skill applicants and minorities in order to give these candidates priority processing.

Volunteer Assignment Descriptions (VADs) are submitted to the Country Desk Units (CDUs) six months prior to the quarter in which the Staging begins. The Office of Placement uses the VADs and the information on the QTRS to project on the number of trainees that will likely enter on duty and to allocate trainees among countries with scarce skill requests. VADs are also forwarded to applicants when they are invited to specific programs. After accepting an invitation, an applicant must complete any remaining medical or legal screening before attending Staging and beginning pre-service training.

Recruitment

There are 12 Regional Offices located throughout the United States. The Regional Offices recruit applicants, targeting scarce skill areas and performing the initial screening for eligibility for Volunteer service.

Marketing activities include:

- community campaigns
- campus campaigns
- information sessions
- targeted mailings
- advertising
- attendance at conventions
- public service announcements (PSAs)

The first step to becoming a Volunteer is to complete the Peace Corps application. Each year Peace Corps receives between 10,000 and 15,000 applications. Recruiters review applications and interview those applicants with skills requested by countries. Interviews may be conducted by phone; however, more than 70% of all applicants are interviewed in person. Applicants who are deemed qualified and suitable for Peace Corps service can be nominated to a recruitment slot available on the EQU. Approximately 5,000 - 7,000 applicants are nominated annually to fill 3,500 - 4,200 trainee requests.

Evaluation

Once applicants are nominated, the Regional Offices forward their applications to the Evaluation Division of the Office of Placement in Washington. Four references are requested from each applicant. Evaluators use the following assessment dimensions to determine whether the candidates are qualified for Peace Corps service:

<u>Productive Competence</u>

- Does the applicant have the skills required?
- Does the applicant have the ability to use and transfer these skills?
- Does the applicant show consistency and success in these endeavors?

<u>Motivation/Commitment</u>

- Does the applicant have a range of reasons for joining Peace Corps?
- Does the applicant have realistic expectations about Peace Corps?
- How does the applicant handle the complex, bureaucratic application process?
- How has the applicant shown commitment to other endeavors?

<u>Emotional maturity</u>

- Does the applicant take responsibility for his/her own actions?
- Does the applicant have a healthy attitude about him/herself?
- How does the applicant tolerate stressful and/or ambiguous situations?
- How does the applicant cope with being separated from familiar support systems?

- Has the applicant dealt forthrightly with the important people in his/her life about joining Peace Corps?
- Is the applicant using Peace Corps as a vehicle to get away from a situation with which he/she cannot cope?

Social Sensitivity/Cultural Awareness
- Does the applicant show appropriate interpersonal skills in interactions with Peace Corps staff?
- Has the applicant displayed interest in people different from him/her self?
- Does the applicant display sensitivity in dealing with a wide range of people?

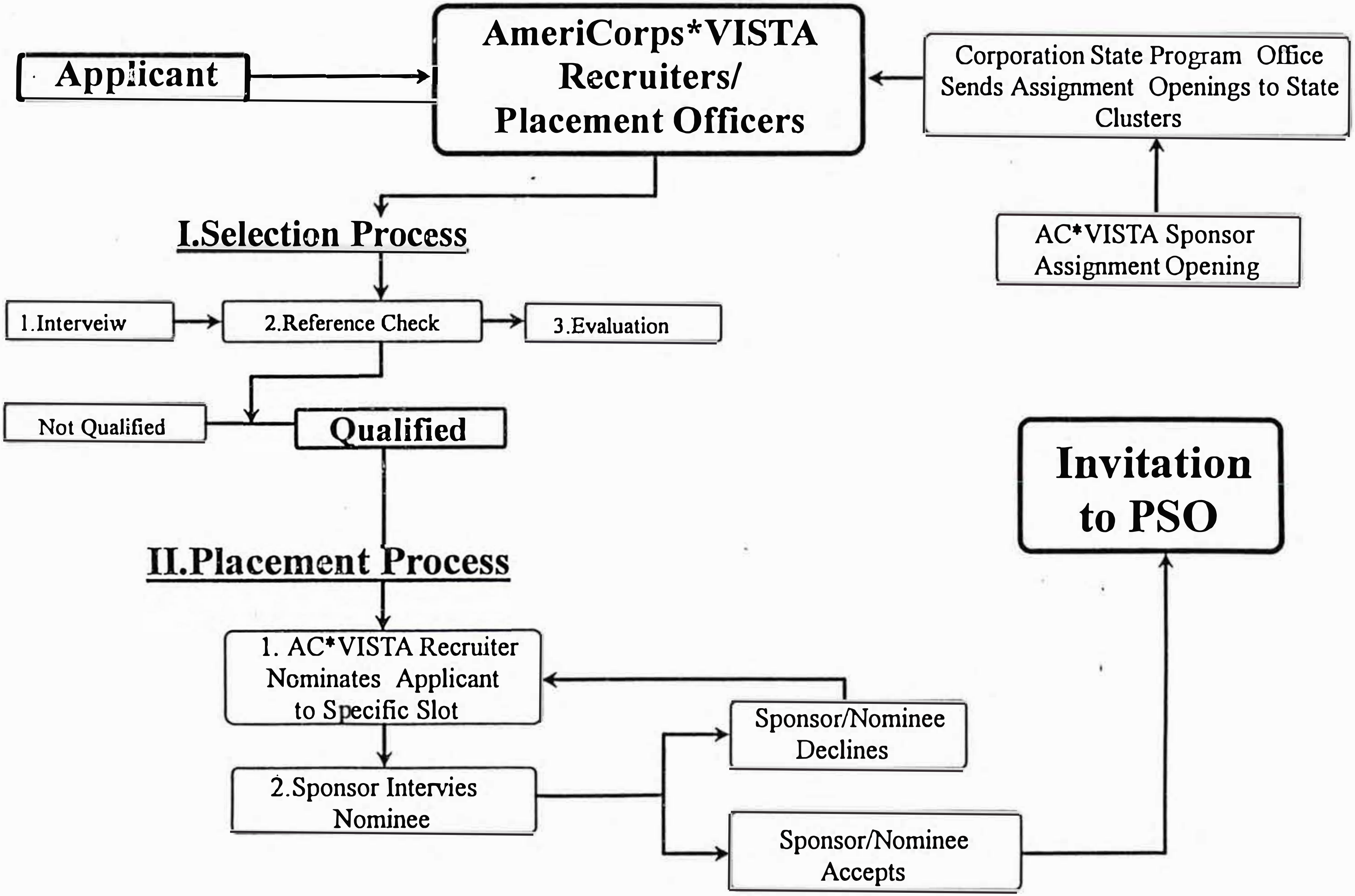
In determining the eligibility of an applicant, Evaluators will use the application, the Recruiter's evaluation, references, transcripts, skill addenda and any personal contact with the applicant. Approximately 85% of all applicants are flagged for a medical condition and must be cleared by the Office of Medical Services before invitation. The Evaluation Division qualifies over 5,000 applicants annually. An applicant may not qualify for Volunteer service due to medical or legal issues, inappropriate skills, or unsuitability based on the assessment dimensions. An applicant may also withdraw for personal reasons.

Placement

Once an applicant is determined qualified for Volunteer service by the Evaluation Division, the file is forwarded to the Office of Placement Skill Desks. Placement Officers review the file for placement options. They also clarify any unresolved issues. Legal issues must be cleared by the Legal Eligibility Specialist, and applicants placed on medical hold must be qualified by the Office of Medical Services before Placement can extend an invitation. Placement Officers monitor the medical and legal processes and handle status calls made by the applicants.

Placement Officers match applicants' skills with requests from countries. Invitations for each season open four months prior to the beginning of the quarter during which pre-service training starts. Placement Officers will invite applicants until the program is full or until the Close of Invitation (COI) date. In 1994 over 4,300 invitations were issued to specific assignments resulting in 3,520 trainees reporting to Staging.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Application Process



PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:

SERVICE DELIVERY Adopted October, 1986

❧ The agency's conduct in delivering services shall enhance the image of the agency as a professional social service organization.

❧ The agency shall develop a casework manual which details the service delivery system used by the agency.

INQUIRY

❧ The client inquiry process used by the agency shall provide the opportunity for the agency and the parent/guardian of a potential client to decide if applying for service is appropriate.

❧ The volunteer inquiry process used by the agency shall provide an opportunity for the agency and the volunteer to decide if applying to become a Big Brother or Big Sister is appropriate.

INTAKE

❧ The client intake process used by an agency shall assess the client's eligibility for program services based upon written eligibility criteria.

❧ The client intake process shall elicit necessary information upon which to base matching recommendations.

❧ The client intake process shall include procedures for periodically reviewing the case status of clients on the waiting list.

❧ The volunteer intake process used by the agency shall assess the volunteer's suitability for program service based upon written criteria for acceptance.

❧ The volunteer intake process shall elicit necessary information upon which to base matching recommendations.

❧ The volunteer intake process shall include procedures for periodically reviewing the case status of volunteers on the waiting list.

MATCHING

❧ The agency shall determine an appropriate match based upon the volunteer's ability to help meet the needs of the client.

❧ The professional staff shall be responsible for initiating the match relationship in a manner which facilitates a positive beginning and establishes rapport with all parties.

MATCH SUPERVISION

❧ The professional staff shall maintain regular supervisory contact with volunteer, parent/guardian and client, in order to foster and maintain the growth of the relationship and meet the client's needs.

❧ The professional staff shall evaluate the match to determine if it is meeting the goals of the match as defined in the case plan.

MATCH CLOSURE

❧ The agency shall use a closure process which ends the match relationship.

❧ For those clients and volunteers who desire a new match, the agency shall establish a process to assess whether or not the individual should be recommended for re-match.

CASE RECORDS

❧ The case records shall document that each procedure required by the agency's service delivery process has been followed.

❧ The case records shall document that all required agency forms have been completed.

❧ The case records shall provide sufficient data to support the conclusions drawn.

CONFIDENTIALITY

❧ The agency shall develop a policy regarding the management of confidential information.

STANDARDS

For ONE-TO-ONE® Service

- Introduction
- Corporate Management
- Program Management

BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS OF AMERICA
230 N. Thirteenth Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-1510
Telephone (215) 567-7000 FAX 567-0394

INTRODUCTION:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters' services are provided at the local level for children and their families by adult volunteers, primarily on a ONE-TO-ONE basis, under professional supervision. The children and youth enrolled in Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs are those whose needs exceed the support and nurturing available from their families, schools, churches, or neighborhood organizations.

While each Big Brothers/Big Sisters agency develops priorities for client selection, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America's Standards for Affiliated Agencies provide the framework within which agencies establish their service practices and procedures.

In a dispersed service network, a uniform and consistent service delivery system is maintained when all agencies have the same expectations and information. The Standards establish Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America's minimum requirements for their affiliates' corporate management and program management components.

This brochure is divided into three sections for ease of reference. Those sections are: CORPORATE MANAGEMENT: Big Brothers/Big Sisters Agencies Operating Independently, which puts forward those standards appropriate for stand-alone agencies; CORPORATE MANAGEMENT: Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs Operating Within A Sponsoring Organization, which contains standards for those Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs created as part of an existing social service organization; and PROGRAM MANAGEMENT, which contains program standards pertinent to service delivery in both of the above types of agencies.

If you have any questions regarding this material, please contact your Field Manager, or the Director of Field Operations at Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America at (215) 567-7000.

This brochure was made possible through the support of the Allstate Foundation.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters Agencies Operating Independently - Adopted October, 1986

- The agency operates in compliance with applicable laws.
- The agency shall be governed effectively by a volunteer Board of Directors, hereafter referred to as the board.
- The agency establishes the overall mission of the organization and plans and evaluates the work of the agency in accordance with that mission.
- The agency shall monitor its service delivery system on an annual basis.
- The agency shall establish a Public Relations and Recruitment Program designed to increase public awareness and resources.
- The board properly develops and manages financial resources for the agency.
- The agency shall employ an Executive Director who is responsible to the board for the overall administration of agency operations.
- The agency shall develop personnel policies and practices which facilitate staff recruitment, retention and effective performance.
- The agency shall provide facilities and working conditions which are conducive to accomplishing the operation of the agency.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs Operating Within A Sponsoring Organization: (A Sponsoring Organization is defined as a non-profit corporation.) - Adopted June, 1989

- The Sponsoring Organization operates in compliance with applicable laws.
- The Sponsoring Organization shall ensure the integrity of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program by establishing a Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity which shall advise the direction of the program.
- The Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity plans and evaluates the work of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program in accordance with the mission statement approved by the Sponsoring Organization.
- The Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity shall monitor its service delivery system on an annual basis.
- The Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity shall develop a Public Relations and Volunteer Recruitment Plan designed to increase public awareness and resources, in accordance with the approved mission statement.
- The Sponsoring Organization shall ensure the financial integrity of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program by working with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity in developing and allocating financial resources for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program.
- The Sponsoring Organization, with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer entity, shall develop Personnel Policies and Practices which facilitate staff recruitment, retention, and effective performance.
- There shall be a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program director employed to be responsible to the Sponsoring Organization within its personnel system.
- The Sponsoring Organization shall provide facilities and working conditions which are conducive to accomplishing the mission of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program.

IV

DRAFT

Centralized Payroll System

Description

Currently, AmeriCorps members receive living allowance payments from one of three sources. Approximately 3,500 AmeriCorps*VISTA members receive a check from the U.S. Treasury after their time, benefits and allotments have been processed by an internal living allowance system (VMS). Approximately 850 AmeriCorps*NCCC members receive a check from the U.S. Treasury after their time, benefits and allotments have been processed through an external government payroll system (National Finance Center system). And, approximately 20,000 AmeriCorps*National and State members receive a check from their local sponsor after their time, benefits, and allotments have been processed through their local sponsor's payroll system. This "options paper" team was asked to consider the feasibility of consolidating all three methods of payment.

We looked at essentially three courses of action. These are: Corporation will act as a central payroll office for all AmeriCorps members, an outside agency will act as a payroll office for all AmeriCorps members, or the Corporation will continue to assume the current decentralized payroll methods.

1. Corporation Acts as Central Payroll Office

Under this option the Corporation would handle all processing required to produce a bi-weekly check and simply send the earnings statement information to the U.S. Treasury for check issuance. In order to do this, the Corporation would need to purchase and maintain new hardware and communication software, build an entirely new database system and require staff to process all payroll data information. In order to process payroll records for the large volume of members (25,000) the team recommended that the bulk of the data entry be done either at expanded state offices or at the service centers. This would require the purchase of additional computers for those offices with corresponding communications hardware at Headquarters. Additionally, a new database system would need to be designed and built to accommodate the complexities of individual members' assignments. The current VISTA Management System is an exception-based system with requirements reflecting AmeriCorps*VISTA program specific policies. It would not be advisable to modify this system to accommodate the full-time or part-time requirements of the AmeriCorps*National/State or the AmeriCorps*NCCC programs which both require documentation of hours served.

Cost Estimate:

Capital: $3 million initial cost for purchase of hardware, software, and building of new database system

Additional operational: $1.8 million annual cost

$1.2 million to cover salaries and benefits for 30 additional staff at $40,000 each in field offices

to handle data entry
$600,000 to cover salaries and benefits for 9 headquarters staff to handle Automation hardware and software maintenance as well as system administration functions

2. An external agency acts as payroll office for Corporation

Under this option the Corporation would use a computer payroll system of an external agency, like the National Finance Center, to process all information required to produce a bi-weekly check. The external agency would maintain the link to the U.S. Treasury so that the checks are issued from the Treasury. The Corporation would not need to build any system but may need to build an interface between VMS and the external agency. Additional computers and communication software would still need to be purchased so that Corporation staff could key payroll data into the external system. The Corporation would need to pay a service fee charged by the external agency for the use of their system.

Cost Estimate:

Capital: $600,00 initial cost for purchase of hardware, software, and building of VMS interface

Additional operational: $4.1 million annual cost

$1.2 million to cover salaries and benefits for 30 additional staff at $40,000 each in field offices to handle data entry
$400,000 to cover salaries and benefits for 6 headquarters staff to handle Automation hardware and software maintenance as well as system administration functions
$2.5 million to cover a $100 per member service fee for 25,000 members

3. Corporation will continue to assume the current decentralized payroll methods

Under this option the Corporation will continue to operate with the three current methods. There would be no additional costs to the current ones.

Reasons Not to Change Current Methods

1. Current Method Works Fine

The most compelling reason given by the team not to change from our current methods was that the current methods are operating fairly smoothly. The vast majority of AmeriCorps members are being paid from a variety of existing payroll systems operated by the local sponsors. This is one area where headquarters has heard very few complaints either from the members themselves or the grantees. Members' payroll records have been integrated smoothly into the sponsor's existing staff payroll system. Members are being paid in a timely manner with all the proper deductions, etc. As far as AmeriCorps*VISTA is concerned, the transition period to the new VMS system is over and bugs have been worked out. AmeriCorps*NCCC have also worked out a successful method with the National Finance Center.

2. Corporation would be taking on another major administrative function

Although the Corporation already has the legislative responsibility for the direct payroll of AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*NCCC members, the addition of 20,000 members greatly increases this administrative function. The processing of net bi-weekly payroll amounts involves the tracking of proper federal and state taxes, childcare and health insurance deductions, court levied deductions, reimbursements, travel allowances, etc. While 95% of payroll checks are usually correct, the amount of time spent on researching and reconciling the 5% of errors is significant. To handle these problems training and education of the staff would need to be done.

3. Payroll function is kept with local program management

The Corporation has stressed the strengths of local program management with the grant programs. In keeping with this philosophy, it is logical to keep this fiscal relationship between the member and the program at the local level.

Reasons to change to centralized payroll system

1. Promotes some aspect of national identity and uniformity

A centralized payroll system does provide some aspect of national identity in the sense that all members will know in a more concrete way that their living allowance comes from the U.S. Treasury. This may be overemphasized however in the age of direct deposit.

2. Provides an administrative function for local sponsors

A centralized payroll system would relieve this administrative function from local sponsors, especially those who do not have the staff or equipment necessary to maintain a payroll system.

3. Facilitates communications between Corporation staff and local sponsors

A centralized payroll system would facilitate and enhance communication between Corporation staff and local sponsors. The required biweekly payroll reporting required between local sponsors and the state offices would provide a framework that most likely foster other types of program communication.

Recommendation

Given the current uncertain budget constraints, our recommendation is to maintain the current methods of paying the AmeriCorps* members.

Members of Centralized Payroll Option Team

Carolyn Kari, Chair
Gary Kowalczyk
David Spevacek
Tracy Gray
Don Cohen
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Linus Adler
Guy Cavallo

February 12, 1996

V

Option Paper:
On the Roles of Volunteer Leveraging and Volunteer Generator Programs in AmeriCorps

The Volunteer Generator Option Group consisted of: Mal Coles, Tom Endres, Tracy Gray, Peter Heinaru, Diana London, Lance Potter (chair), and Jennifer Tabola.

Introduction

Within the community service sector, recruiting volunteers is widely practiced to increase the capacity of service agencies. The purpose of this paper is to explore options for restructuring AmeriCorps*state/national programs with respect to their use of leveraged volunteers. Although this paper considers options primarily for state/national programs, much of the discussion is relevant to AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*NCCC. In assembling information, our group drew upon the experiences of programs in all the streams of CNS service, including Seniors and Learn & Serve programs.

60% young people

Definition of volunteer generating

In practice, volunteer leveraging varies widely. We use the term broadly, to refer to the practice of recruiting uncompensated persons to perform tasks. A "volunteer generator" program is one in which the primary activity of the full-time or compensated staff is to recruit volunteers. By this definition, for example, RSVP is a volunteer generator program.

Value of volunteer generating in AmeriCorps programs

There are many reasons to encourage the development of a volunteer leveraging component in AmeriCorps programs. Volunteers increase the capacity of AmeriCorps to achieve or expand its service mission. Moreover, engaging more citizens in service is consistent with our mission to provide opportunities to serve and to foster the ethic of service. Research from the Independent Sector survey[1] indicates that individuals who are exposed to volunteering through their families, or as youth, are more likely to volunteer as adults.

Individual programs that draw local citizens into volunteer service are likely to broaden their base of support in the community, thus enhancing their long-term sustainability. From a monitoring perspective, the ability of a program to stimulate community participation should certainly be considered evidence that the program is addressing community members' interests.

Availability of volunteers

Volunteers are a resource that is both valuable and, at least potentially, available. The Independent Sector's research indicates that less than half of citizens volunteer regularly, leaving an untapped wealth of citizens who could serve. And while the percentage of citizens volunteering has declined in recent years, Independent Sector reports that people are four times as likely to volunteer if asked to do so, suggesting the feasibility of actively generating volunteers. Data from other studies suggest that more citizens could be persuaded to volunteer if opportunities were structured to meet their needs and interests.[2]

In addition, many organizations with whom CNS sponsors have relationships already possess considerable expertise and resources in the area of volunteer leveraging. The City Cares network, the Association of Volunteer Administrators, The United Way all have expertise that could be employed to assist AmeriCorps programs to develop their volunteer component. We believe that many volunteer organizations would be very willing to become involved with AmeriCorps programs. United Way, for example, is involved with AmeriCorps in several ways, and the AVA has publicly supported national service.

Programmatic considerations

Successful utilization of volunteers in AmeriCorps programs will require careful planning and, in many cases, programmatic modifications. Based on many year's experience employing volunteers in CNS programs, the following observations about volunteer programming should be incorporated into any plan for expanding the leveraging component of AmeriCorps programs.

Programs will vary in their capacity to use volunteers

A good match between the needs of the program and the needs of the volunteer is essential to successful use of leveraged citizens. From the program's perspective, the appropriateness of employing volunteers varies with the type of service being provided by the program. For example, programs that have substantial requirements for physical labor (e.g., housing construction, graffiti removal, environmental cleanup) can, with careful planning, efficiently use large numbers of volunteers. Other service programs, for example, a VISTA economic development project or an AmeriCorps*state program doing case management, might be less well-suited to incorporating volunteers.

Programs, in turn, must be sensitive to the substantial differences that exist among volunteers. For example, most volunteers prefer short-term service. This limits the types of activities that will be appropriate for them, and, in particular, makes them less than ideal as a supplement for many of the tasks addressed in full-time service. Programs in which the continuity of personnel relationships is essential to effective service may find that many volunteers do not meet their needs.

Employing volunteers requires expertise and resources—

For programs to recruit and retain volunteers requires both expertise in volunteer management and adequate staff resources to devote training and supervision. Poorly trained volunteers are unlikely to provide valuable service to those we seek to serve and could easily do real harm. Moreover, individuals who feel unprepared to complete their assignments are denied the benefits of a satisfying service experience.

Programs must also commit to regular supervision of volunteers. Particularly if programs are utilizing short-term volunteers whose capacities are relatively unknown, adequate supervision is prerequisite to quality service. As the complexity of the service assignment increases, so must the responsibility of the program to provide meaningful training and substantial supervision.

It is noteworthy that an analysis of the volunteer activities reported by the Independent Sector suggests that relatively few volunteers engage in direct service activities of the type that most AmeriCorps programs are involved in.[3] The greatest proportion are engaged in administrative, infrastructural or "informal" activities. This underscores the need for careful training and supervision of volunteers asked to undertake challenging assignments, such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling.

Volunteers should perform meaningful service

Although, as is mentioned above, there can intrinsic value in engaging citizens in volunteering, that value will not be realized unless the service provided by volunteers is important and substantive. Programs should take care to avoid displacing existing volunteers or duplicating the efforts of on-going volunteer efforts. Programs should design their volunteer components by assessing their needs and capacity and should not seek to generate volunteers for the sake of doing so.

The effectiveness of volunteer efforts should be evaluated on the basis service impact. Where volunteers perform capacity building or administrative activities, their efforts should be evaluated for their benefit to the service organization or host-site served. Leveraging volunteers is a means to the goal of providing meaningful service or increasing our capacity to do so. It should not be viewed as an end in itself. The mission of Corporation programs is to address unmet needs and programs should be held to that standard whether they use stipended Members or leveraged volunteers.

Programs should take steps to ensure that leveraged volunteers have positive, rewarding experiences. The volunteer experience should encourage people to provide more service, and programs must accept the responsibility for ensuring that it does.

Current status of volunteer leveraging in Corporation programs

To provide perspective on our agency's current relationship to volunteer leveraging, this section briefly summarizes how each program stream incorporates nonparticipant volunteers.

*AmeriCorps*state/national*

These AmeriCorps programs have been encouraged to employ leveraged volunteers, but no requirement exists that they do so. A small number of programs are volunteer generators (e.g., Volunteer Maryland!), others employ volunteers as a regular element of their service, and many engage nonMembers for single events or service activities. Record-keeping about volunteer activity is improving but still inconsistent, however, it is certain that state and national direct programs leveraged in excess of 100,000 volunteers in their first year.

*AmeriCorps*NCCC*

Many NCCC projects incorporate the efforts of nonMember participants, both in single-event activities and within longer-term projects. As with state/national programs, record keeping on leveraged volunteers is improving. NCCC campuses reported involving over 24,000 nonMember volunteers in projects in the 1994-95 program year.

*AmeriCorps*VISTA*

Many VISTAs serve in organizations for which leveraged volunteers are a key element of program design. In turn, leveraging volunteers for their host organizations is the primary responsibility of many VISTAs. In 1994, VISTAs recruited and an estimated 76,000 volunteers to assist in the operation of service organizations; trained thousands of tutors and mentors for literacy and related education projects, and recruited thousands of volunteers to participate in community safety organizations.

Senior Service Corps

The Corporation's largest program, RSVP, is essentially a volunteer generator, but rather than having members that recruit other volunteers, the stations recruit the RSVP volunteers. Currently, nearly 450,000 citizens are RSVP volunteers. Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions do not, in general, leverage volunteers into service.

Learn & Serve

Both Learn and Serve programs are, in a sense, volunteer generators as currently configured. The participants serve without compensation and engage in a variety of direct service and capacity building activities. Some Learn and Serve programs also recruit additional community members to voluntary service, but in general, it is not a significant component of most service learning programs.

Options and recommendations for inclusion of volunteer generating in AmeriCorps programs

In this section, we outline six options for the role of volunteer generation within AmeriCorps*state/national programs. We have attempted to include a range of options, consistent with our knowledge of the field and our programs. The options are organized, roughly, from smallest to greatest degree of change, which coincides, again roughly, with least to greatest cost implications. Following the options, we identify those options that we believe to be most desirable to explore further.

Option One: Maintain the existing status of volunteer leveraging in AmeriCorps programs

A possible conclusion is that our current position with respect to volunteer leveraging is optimal. Stipended programs are aware that the Corporation views leveraging of volunteers favorable, but we place no administrative requirements upon them regarding it. At the same time, large numbers of volunteers are being generated by CNS programs (perhaps as many as 1.5 million in 1994-'95, counting RSVP and Learn and Serve).

Option Two: Encourage/require association with existing volunteer leveraging organizations

Three important goals of AmeriCorps programs could be furthered by encouraging them to have formal relationships with volunteer organizations. First, programs would be able to make use of volunteers to expand the their capacity to provide service; second, more citizens would have opportunities to serve; finally, AmeriCorps would become better integrated into the existing voluntary service network. We believe that organizations such as AVA, City Cares, VACs, and others would respond positively to the idea of formal partnerships with AmeriCorps programs.

We would suggest interpreting the notion of a "volunteer organization" broadly so that programs could create partnerships with, for example, RSVP stations, learn&serve programs, and the community affairs offices of local corporations; in effect, any local organizations that could organize and supply the AmeriCorps program with volunteers.

A stronger version of this option would be to *require* programs to have such relationships, however, we do not believe that this alternative is practical. Many programs are located in areas where such relationships could be difficult to develop, and some may prefer to generate their own volunteers for a variety of reasons.

Option Three: Within the existing model, establish a minigrant program that provides for a part-time volunteer generator positions.

A challenge that programs must overcome in developing a volunteer component is the staff time required to recruit, screen, train, and supervise volunteers. Stipended Members must also be trained to work effectively with or supervise volunteers. A minigrant program would address this staffing issue by providing funds for the hiring of a part-time staff member responsible for development of a volunteer component. The program could then hire a staff person specifically for this capacity-building role. A program of this sort was operated by RSVP in recent years and proved very successful. The program could be structured as demonstration grant, an innovation grant, or a challenge grant.

Option Four: Create "Volunteer Generator" positions within AmeriCorps programs.

Like Option three, this option acknowledges the reality that effective use of volunteers requires both resources and expertise. One means of addressing this problem would be to designate a certain proportion of AmeriCorps slots to be "volunteer generator" positions. Individuals in these positions, rather than providing service directly to others, would recruit, train and supervise leveraged volunteers. All other Members would continue to provide direct service as they currently do.

One version of this Option could be to designate a proportion of AmeriCorps slots (perhaps 1 in 20) as "generator" slots. These slots could be recruited separately to obtain a person well-suited to volunteer development work. As in Option Two, such a restructuring could be made optional or requisite.

Another way of implementing this Option would be to allow AmeriCorps*state/national programs to receive a VISTA volunteer. The VISTA volunteer, consistent with VISTA's mission, would serve to build the volunteer component of the state/national program. This option would have the added advantage of knitting together two streams of AmeriCorps service more closely. We have not explored what regulatory or legislative barriers may exist to implementation of this idea.

Option Five: Open a separate national priority for programs that generate volunteers.

A strong commitment to volunteerism could be demonstrated by establishing a funding stream dedicated to volunteer generator programs. The Corporation would have to establish guidelines for the structure and purposes of programs that qualified for this money. Presumably, such programs would complete only against other volunteer generators. Within the current structure, this would be among the fastest ways to increase the number of volunteers AmeriCorps generates and to increase AmeriCorps's involvement in the voluntary sector. Care would have to be taken in the drafting of guidelines for such funding to ensure that CNS encouraged the development of new volunteer-creating enterprises or the expansion of existing ones, rather than simply providing support for existing efforts. Similar care would need to be given to ensuring that volunteers performed meaningful service and believed that they had.

Option Six: Restructure AmeriCorps as a volunteer generator program.

The most extensive shift toward volunteer generating would be achieved by rewriting the regulations and application to fund only programs that specialize in recruiting, training and placing volunteers. The challenges faced by Option Six mirror those described for Option Five, albeit on a larger scale.

Both Options Five and Six would significantly change the structure of the individual programs funded by AmeriCorps*state/national. In general, state/national would likely come to resemble AmeriCorps*VISTA more than it does today (i.e., small numbers of Members placed in service agencies, supervised by the service agency staff.) Implementation of an all volunteer-generator AmeriCorps at its current size (c. 22,000 Members) would present a significant challenge to quality control, in part because the program would be substantially more decentralized than it is at present. Therefore, reorganizing AmeriCorps*state/national in this fashion would need to be done over a series of years, perhaps be using other Options as intermediate steps.

Although the topic of volunteer leveraging is relatively free of political dimensions, it is worth briefly considering one political aspect of the volunteer generator model. According to the Independent Sector, almost 90 million adult Americans volunteer annually, serving 19-20 billion hours. The scale of these figures dwarfs the leveraging efforts of AmeriCorps*state/national, which provided perhaps .001% of the total volunteer pool and an infinitesimally small proportion of the total volunteer hours.

These proportions are not of consequence at present, however, because leveraging volunteers is not a primary mission of AmeriCorps*state/national. Central to AmeriCorps*state/national's value is its ability to tackle problems that require a high-intensity, sustained effort, i.e. full-time, direct service. As we have noted, many of this country's thorniest societal problems are not easily addressed by the typical volunteer, and thus, in its present configuration, AmeriCorps can claim a unique role in addressing unmet needs.

Were generating volunteers to be the key mission of AmeriCorps, it would be tempting for the program's critics to calculate AmeriCorps' contribution to volunteering nationally, leading, almost certainly, to the conclusion that AmeriCorps was doing little more than adding a minute increment to what already exists, at a cost of hundreds of millions of federal dollars.

Recommendations of the Volunteer Generator Option Group:

Certain of the observations made in this paper the basis for our recommendations regarding the Options described above. Without adding further detail, we reiterate those key points here:

- most volunteers prefer short-term, short duration assignments and most are engaged in administrative activities
- not all types of service activities are conducive to engaging large numbers of volunteers.
- volunteer generating should be a means to an end (service impacts) and not a goal *per se*
- volunteer generator programs should be evaluated on the basis of the service impacts produced by the volunteers
- volunteers generated by AmeriCorps should have a positive experience and feel that their efforts were worthwhile
- numerical goals (e.g., the number of volunteers generated) should remain secondary to program impacts

Recommendations

We recommend exploration of Options Two, Three and Four, individually or in combination, over the next several program years. Once more is known about the parameters of successful and effective volunteer leveraging within AmeriCorps*state/national programs, implementation of Option Five could be considered.

Option One overlooks opportunities to more rapidly integrate AmeriCorps into the service networks of AmeriCorps communities, as well as the value of the opportunity to engage more citizens in service. Option Six fails to recognize the limitations of unstipended volunteer service, the loss of impact that would likely result from an all-volunteer-generator program, and the difficulty of mounting large-scale volunteer generator programs. We do not believe that either would serve AmeriCorps well.

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[1] Independent Sector. 1994. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States.* p12. Washington, DC

[2] Older Volunteers: A Fact Sheet. National Senior Service Corps. Corporation for National Service. 1996.

[3] opcit. p.26

DRAFT

VI

The Impact of Increasing Decentralization on the Administration of AmeriCorps Programs

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DRAFT

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BACKGROUND

Introduction

This is one in a series of options papers being prepared for Harris Wofford. This task was inspired by the question, "How do we decrease per member costs but deliver quality service?" The specific topic of this paper concerns program administration with a more decentralized system. The specific question as framed in the charge to the team is: **"How can we assure national identity and high quality AmeriCorps sponsors under a more decentralized system with fewer grant provisions?"** For the purpose of this paper, the team decided to rephrase the term "national identity" to focus on Corps Members' commitment to service, both during enrollment and life-long. Centering our attention on commitment to service better represents our goals for participants than does the more amorphous term that it replaces.

We are assuming that a "more decentralized system" implies one in which major responsibilities devolve to the State Commissions. One proponent of giving the States more responsibility has been Sen. Nancy Kassebaum. When the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was being debated in the Senate, Sen. Kassebaum submitted an alternate bill, S. 1212, which was co-sponsored by Sens. Cochran, Hatfield, Stevens, and Thurmond, that laid out her vision of service and addressed her major concerns about the President's proposed legislation. In this legislation, she included proposals to (Kassebaum 1995)[1]: (a) consolidate "most existing full-time national service and part-time federally funded volunteer programs . . . into a single federal entities" providing "uniform benefits and service commitments" [She seems to imply that full-time and part-time would be treated as separate programs]; (b) grant funds to local entities based on "individual state plans"; and (c) give greater control to the States. Two of the means proposed for giving a larger role to the States were: (a) have local programs meet state-specific priorities, not nationally designed one; and (b) give the states more flexibility in the membership of the commissions.

On another front, Sen. Kassebaum is a leader on proposed work force legislation. In this body of proposed law, not unlike national service legislation, Sen. Kassebaum seeks to centralize control at the state level. This is to suggest that decentralization or devolving authority to the States may, from a local program or governmental entity point of view, may only mean centralization at a different level. In all of this, Sen. Kassebaum has a strong reputation for her concern about the quality of programs.

We should state that, in many regards, the Corporation is doing much of what Sen. Kassebaum proposed in 1993. For example, States may set their own priorities for their formula

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1 Kassebaum, Sen. Nancy Landon. National Service: A Watchful Concern. IN: National Issues in Education: Community Service and Student Loans. John F. Jennings, ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa and the Institute for Educational Leadership. Pp. 31-70.

programs, subject to review by the Corporation. Most States have, in fact, adopted the national priorities.

This option paper will look at the impact of these types of changes on commitment to service and program quality in AmeriCorps. In any shift toward decentralization, we should not lose sight of the fact that our current approach has produced high quality programs and done a great deal of significant work in American communities. While we may find opportunities for improvement while devolving more authority to the States, it is our strongly held belief that much of the strength of AmeriCorps is the result of having a strong, well-staffed central office in Washington that works in partnership with State Commissions and local programs. And, we can continue to have quality programs with a strong, highly competent central office if we look closely at the functions and roles of the central staff.

Commitment to Service

This paper chooses to consider commitment to service from the point of view of the AmeriCorps participants, asking what such a commitment should mean to an individual Corps Member. In our group, we have identified three components. First, the participant adopts fully an ethic of service in which there is a strong commitment to serve one's community and one's country. The participant should come to believe and act on the belief that service is a necessary part of being a good citizen. Second, the participant should feel part of an important, national movement. This sense of belonging should inculcate in the participant a feeling that being an AmeriCorps member is a primary, defining, and lifelong characteristic of self. In addition, the public should recognize and respect membership in AmeriCorps. We also recognize that member loyalty will form regarding the local program. We understand the dual nature of this process and would like to find ways that our Corps Members fell a member of the local program, AmeriCorps, and the national service movement.

Program Quality

There are many components of program quality (Note: Again, there is a separate task force working on defining standards for program quality that cut across all Corporation programs. If their work is ready in time, we will incorporate it here.) There are three aspects of program quality, however, that stand out as central to our consideration of the impact of decentralization. First, and let us never forget, quality programs get things done. Our programs are not, essentially, about feeling good or building self-esteem. They are about achieving demonstrable results that communities appreciate and in which they take pride. Second, quality programs provide challenging and worthwhile service opportunities to their members. AmeriCorps service should stretch and push its participants into doing much more than the minimum. Third, quality programs attack important community problems and strengthen communities. We abhor trivial, mundane, and unimportant tasks.

The challenge is a decentralized system is how to continue to fund and support programs that get things done in ways that challenge participants and solve important community problems.

Optional Approaches to Decentralization

Within the recent historical experience of the Corporation, its predecessor agencies ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service, and the Peace Corps, there are several national service programs that display a range of administrative control from highly centralized to decentralized. These programs are: the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), the Peace Corps, VISTA, AmeriCorps*National and State, and the Commission on National and Community Service. In addition there are other Federal block grant programs whose experience may be instructive. In the following material we will briefly summarize the characteristics of each of these programs concerning centralization, identity, and quality.

National Civilian Community Corps

* NCCC is managed and operated directly by the Corporation through a small central staff in headquarters
* Recruitment, selection, and placement are managed in central headquarters.
* Operations occur on four regional campuses with responsibility for day-to-day management of service activities.
* Supporting a strong commitment to service is very high with central control on recruitment, training curricula, uniforms, and program goals.
* Program content and quality are the responsibility of each campus staff with some oversight from central headquarters.

Peace Corps

* Although service activities are dispersed throughout the world (now serving ninety-four countries), Peace Corps is a highly centralized institution.
* Headquarters centrally manages recruitment, selection and placement of Peace Corps Volunteers.
* Operations are planned and managed in each country following broad guidelines set by regional administrations based in Washington.
* The commitment to serve as a Volunteer with the Peace Corps is created and maintained through a national recruitment system, a pre-service event before going overseas, and then extensive in-country training.
* Program quality is primarily in the hands of in-country staff who plan, carry out, and monitor program activities.

VISTA

* AmeriCorps*VISTA headquarters staff provides policy, planning, program, training, and budget guidance and oversight to a decentralized field structure. Corporation State Offices are responsible for planning VISTA activities, developing and approving new programs, monitoring, and technical assistance.
* Headquarters decides annually how many VISTA Volunteers each state will receive. Recruitment is managed at the State level with assistance from VISTA Placement Officers and a headquarters-based recruitment staff.
* Project sponsors plan operations with Corporation State Office staff. Each sponsor provides supervisory oversight to the Volunteers.
* Promoting a strong commitment to service as part of a national movement within AmeriCorps*VISTA is improving, thanks to an increasing number of national recruits, a revised pre-service orientation, and the celebration of the 30th anniversary of VISTA. Simultaneously, VISTA Volunteers form a strong bond to the local organization that serves as their sponsor.
* Each local project sets time-phased, measurable goals, and assignment descriptions for members. State Offices review project progress reports, conduct site visits, and provide technical assistance.

AmeriCorps*National and State

* Administration of AmeriCorps*National and State is provided by a partnership between national headquarters and state commissions on national service. In the National Directs, applicants for funding apply directly to headquarters which has final approval on the programs and their project sites. State programs are developed and approved, first at the State level, under the direction of the state commissions. States submit their plans to headquarters which has final authority on the state package of programs.
* Recruitment and training are done by individual grantees. Corporate headquarters provides referrals of potential members upon request, but local programs recruit most Members locally.
* Local program operations are planned locally and at the State-level to meet four, nationally defined program priorities. States can define their own priorities for formula programs. The content of programming is negotiated by the local grantees with the State Commissions and headquarters-based program officers.
* Promoting service as a national movement is done with standards set in headquarters for a basic AmeriCorps uniform to be worn by all members and through participation in joint training and service days with members from other programs.
* The Corporation has defined a set of standards in its "Principles of High Quality Programs." These standards form the basis for program selection and renewal. Some monitoring is conducted by headquarters staff, while State Commissions carry most of the responsibility for site visits to ensure high program quality. The

Corporation has invested in a large, well-funded network of national, technical assistance providers. In addition, State Commissions receive Program Development and Training (PDAT) funds from the Corporation which they may use to support training and technical assistance in their states. All AmeriCorps* National and State programs must set direct and demonstrable outcome goals.

Commission on National and Community Service

* The Commission programs were very much like AmeriCorps* National and State, divided into Subtitle D (National Direct) and Subtitle C (State) funds. The Commission had a direct role in program design, monitoring and oversight with Subtitle D funds, but played a less hands-on role with the Subtitle C programs.
* Recruitment of members was strictly a local program operation with no involvement of the Commission.
* Under Subtitle D, programs had to meet a variety of grant provisions, but did not have to set outcome goals. Subtitle C programs had different quality standards were required to set outcome goals.
* There was little or no interest by the Commission is creating a national movement for service among the participants in its programs, but the Commission did want to promote an ethic of service among program participants.

General Characteristics of Block Grants

* Block grants are often a strategy to reduce federal funding.

* Programs tend to be sustained under a shift to block grants if their prior funding was a joint Federal and State responsibility.

* Block grants are supposed to give States more flexibility in program design and operation.

* Block grants work best where performance/outcome objectives are specified at the Federal level and the States have some flexibility in how to meet the objectives.

* States are more willing to fund block grant programs that are popular.

Effects of Decentralization

Given our experience with our own programs and the characteristics of other block grant programs, we believe that using a more decentralized approach to AmeriCorps would make it more difficult to maintain program quality and promote a commitment to service. The principal problems we would have to overcome included:

1. **How can we ensure that AmeriCorps programs attract and keep high quality participants?**

2. **How can we structure the AmeriCorps experience so that there is a solid foundation of common, shared experiences among Corps Members?**

3. **How can we support and enhance the efforts of AmeriCorps local program staff to make them partners in our quest for program quality?**

4. **How can we restructure AmeriCorps so that it is readily defined and understood by the public?**

5. **How can we recognize and celebrate local program successes if we do not fund them directly?**

6. **How can we ensure the accuracy and efficiency of the Education Trust Award system?**

OPTIONS

We know the problems we would face under a more decentralized system. How can we make the best of what may come? What follows are several, broadly framed options that the Corporation may with to consider as we work to find solutions to these five problems.

Assumptions:

(1) Several of our options use the term "require." Some concern may surface about increasing requirements in a decentralized context regarding issues that until now have been optional. One way of looking at this is to consider that these proposed requirements would take effect as a much larger corpus of regulations was eliminated. In any event, the extent to which these options should be required or suggested is open to debate.

(2) We understand that many of these options may face opposition from Congressional critics.

(3) There are serious cost implications for these options that will need to be considered at some point, but we gave not as yet moved into that level of analysis.

1. **How can we ensure that AmeriCorps programs attract and keep high quality participants?**

Maintain a national referral system. This could be a system much like we have now, but with an increased emphasis on AmeriCorps as selective, challenging, and productive both for participants and communities.

Use a national application form. All AmeriCorps programs would be required to accept this universal application form.

Require local telephone listings for AmeriCorps information. Each State would be responsible for placing a telephone listing under "AmeriCorps" in local phone directories.

Encourage statewide recruitment. Currently there is a wide variation in what types of recruitment and referral systems are supported by State Commissions. They range from states that do nothing to help local programs to recruit to states that publish program directories and support 800 numbers. The quality of recruitment and selection is greater in those states that invest in the process.

Promote AmeriCorps as challenging, selective, life transforming, and valuable to local communities. We could change the marketing approach for AmeriCorps now in use to make the perception of AmeriCorps more like the Peace Corps or the Marine Corps. By this we mean, promoting AmeriCorps as hard to get into, challenging once in, and life changing as a result. In addition, the value of AmeriCorps to solving significant human problems would need continuing emphasis.

2. **How can we structure the AmeriCorps experience so that there is a solid foundation of common, shared experiences among Corps Members?**

Develop and require a standard orientation to AmeriCorps as part of pre-service training. The VISTA PSO sets the example for this. Every VISTA Volunteer in the country receives the same introduction to the program. This is creating a shared understanding of the history and meaning of VISTA.

Require a probationary period for AmeriCorps. Under the present system, every AmeriCorps member (except those in NCCC) is sworn in on the very first day. We should consider beginning a probationary period of thirty to forty-five days in which an AmeriCorps trainee has to prove her merit before being sworn in to AmeriCorps.

Support in-service training, joint service projects, and participant conference across programs. Bringing Corps Members together from different programs reinforces the idea that their service is part of something larger than their local setting.

Require that service assignments be challenging, even arduous. Many of us know from our own service experiences, in the Peace Corps, VISTA, a branch of the military or elsewhere, that we cherish the memory of having taken on seeming impossible tasks and overcome them. Make work or humdrum assignments do little to build identification and pride.

Promote the standards for earning the education trust award as a national award. Making use of award ceremonies, certificates, and media, we can invest the trust award with national significance. The question, "Did you earn the national service trust award?", would in future years be posed by children to their parents much like an earlier generation asked, "What did you do in the war, Daddy?"

Continue (increase?) support for the AmeriCorps Alumni Association (ACAA). This will promote continuing interest in service and support for the program.

3. **How can we support and enhance the efforts of AmeriCorps local program staff to make them partners in our quest for program quality?**

Building on the Presidio model, enlarge and maintain a national training program for local program staff. Currently, only a fraction of AmeriCorps program staff gets to train at the Presidio. We will need to design, launch, and support training processes that reach out to every local staff member in the country. Training could be done regionally and regularly with built in certification for service leaders.

Support customer choice in purchasing technical assistance and training. Give States or local programs a larger share of the budget for training and technical assistance. While maintaining a set of nationally-endorsed training and technical assistance contractors, allow local programs and states to shop among them, using their grant funds as they choose.

Develop quality standards for training and technical assistance.

Publish a regular newsletter for all programs. Invest in a professional, frequently appearing newsletter that would become the voice and spokesperson for the national service movement.

Fund regional and national conferences for AmeriCorps program staff. Bring service leaders together regularly to share ideas, meet national leaders, solve problems, and build solidarity.

4. **How can we restructure AmeriCorps so that it is readily defined and understood by the public?**

Allow only full-time service and eliminate part-time participation. By eliminating part-time participation, there would be no confusion about the degree of commitment involved in national service with AmeriCorps. Upon joining, the participants, their families, and their communities would know that a major life choice has been undertaken. This would decrease any confusion in Members or the public about what this service means.

*Erase distinctions between VISTA and AmeriCorps*National and State.* Make the service opportunities, requirements, and benefits uniform across all AmeriCorps programs. In other works, broaden the set of characteristics which all AmeriCorps programs have in common and set uniform quality standards across all programs. This would mean dealing with restrictions on activities like fund raising (permitted in VISTA, but not AmeriCorps*National and State) and direct service (the heart of AmeriCorps*National and State, but discouraged in VISTA). It would also require dealing with the living allowance as income counting against other benefits.

5. **How can we set standards for program quality and content if we do not fund programs directly?**

Recognize and celebrate local program successes. We could award an AmeriCorps Exemplary Service Program Seal of Approval. Like Good Housekeeping or United Laboratories, establish standards for exception program and make national awards. Identify and establish incentives for programs to seek this level of approval. The Corporation could identify and celebrate a program of the month, program of the year, the All-American program. Patterned after the All-American City award, we would periodically make awards to the best programs. Have a national recognition day in Washington. Have the President of the United States give the award and make it worth something in monetary terms. We could even rate programs for quality from one to four stars. Like a Michelin or Mobil travel guide, AmeriCorps programs would receive ratings from one to four stars. The Seal of Approval programs meeting minimum standards would get one star. The All-American Programs would get four stars. Potential participants, corporate donors, foundations and others would use the guide to select programs to join, partner with, and support. Programs would work to improve their ratings.

Set performance-based, outcome standards that States would have to meet with their programs. Funding, especially for renewals would be based on the States performance on clearly defined performance measures based on both process (how they operated their programs) and outcome (what got done). We should set the standards low initially, that is simply defined and easy to meet. We might consider reinforcing the standards by giving the States incentives to meet them. States would also have the option of adding to the standards. Over time we would raise the performance standards as we and the States grow in our experience with them.

Note: There are costs associated with decentralization that should be addressed. For example, if we require standards of performance for commissions, we can only assess what is going on once a year. During the year, the Commission could do what it wants and allow really lousy programs to exist, without us being able to do much. We would have to bear the political repercussions, without any ability to deal with the issue.

Narrow the range of permitted service activities that receive federal funding. Performance-based measures of quality are much harder to define in programs that permit a wide-range of activities. With a narrow range of permitted activities is much easier to define and measure performance-based outcomes. But, this is not an easy task. At one extreme of this, we could have every program doing immunizations, which are easy to monitor and count. At the other extreme would be every State setting its own priorities and range of permitted activities. This would make it next to impossible to define performance-based measures. Seeking a middle ground on permitted activities would be difficult, but possible.

Negotiate program quality standards with the States. Working with the States as partners, we would negotiate a set of outcome measures for each State, based on resource levels using local and national priorities. In these "performance partnerships" the Corporation and the States would work together to design programs and set priorities.

6. **How can we ensure the accuracy and efficiency of the Education Trust Award system?**

[Insert text here]

RECOMMENDATIONS

[INSERT TEXT HERE]