

Training Briefs

Low-Cost Training Resources: Your Members

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Member training and development are a shared responsibility between national service program staff, site supervisors, training coordinators, and trainers. *Training Briefs* are designed to provide these individuals with useful information and innovative ideas for member training and development.

This is the sixth in a series of *Training Briefs* produced by MOSAICA, under Cooperative Agreement #CA95-15 with CNS. This *Training Brief* was written by Training Specialists Dan Balón and Marilyn Noguera and Organizational Development Specialist Joan Deschappelles, and designed by LaTosha Joseph. This material represents the opinion of MOSAICA, and does not necessarily represent official CNS policy.

To begin or stop receiving MOSAICA's *Training Briefs* by fax, or find out about training and other available assistance, contact: Diane Cabrales, Project Director, MOSAICA, 1000 16th Street, NW, Suite 604, Washington, DC, 20036, e-mail mosaica@ix.netcom.com, website <http://www.mosaica.org>, telephone (202) 887-0620, fax (202) 887-0812.

The variety of member backgrounds, skills, experiences, and interests can present a challenge when planning training for AmeriCorps programs, and it can be a great training resource as well. Members bring experience and expertise to the program. They may possess advanced degrees, training certificates in a particular topic (e.g., literacy or CPR), or significant training and mentoring experiences. Some members may have extensive cross-cultural experience or familiarity with a particular neighborhood or client population. College students may have been Resident Advisors/ Assistants, and high school students may have been involved in peer mediation training or service learning projects. Older members may have years of practical experience in teaching, health care, or community work. Other members may possess practical skills such as tutoring, construction, or child care.



Well-planned and effective training reflects member needs, builds on member expertise, and also works to meet broader program goals. Trainers and program staff can tap into the resources members bring to training in a number of ways.

Assess member knowledge and needs

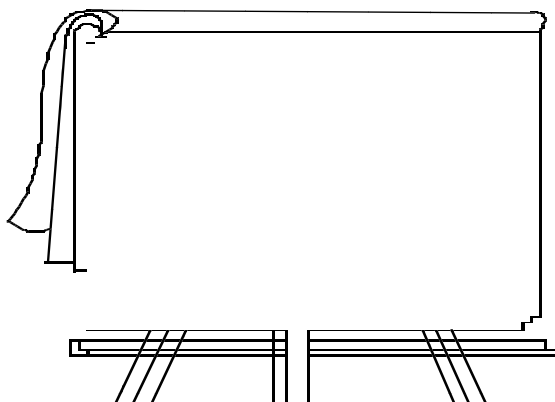
Before designing training, assess the members' needs and wants. Consider giving members a pre-training questionnaire (See *Starting Strong*, p. 167) or use another assessment technique. Several times during the program year, ask members what they already know, what they want to know, and what they can and want to share with others. Information gained through regular assessments of members at their sites can help programs provide timely training, meet needs as they arise, and keep member development focused and relevant.

Involve members in planning

An excellent way to find out what training topics to offer is to ask returning members, those who have been in national service the longest. Find out what training they found most useful, what was least useful, and how training can be improved. Include returning members in planning sessions and have them lead training workshops. Their input and involvement will ensure training is highly relevant to member needs.

Involve members in developing training materials

Member experiences can be the subject for rich and relevant training materials. Returning members know the daily realities and challenges of their diverse service assignments. Input from members can help you develop realistic scenarios and case studies. For example, a training on organizational culture and norms can benefit from member input on problems encountered at their sites. Use that information to draft relevant role plays, scenarios, or case studies. (For more information on role plays, scenarios, case studies, and other training techniques, see *Starting Strong*, p. 122).



Let members train

Vary training by having members give a presentation, participate in a panel discussion, or facilitate a game, activity, or session. For example, members might facilitate a series of role plays that expose new members to likely site situations. Trainers who incorporate small group work into the training design can form groups with both returning members and new members. Involving members as trainers can empower them as well as help keep training practical and relevant.

Besides developing rapport among all members, involving members as resources in training provides them with leadership, training, and personal skills development opportunities. Take advantage of these excellent — and willing — resources!

Resources Members May Bring to Training

Member Knowledge

- Familiarity with a community or culture
- Understanding of a particular service site
- Technical expertise (e.g., immigrant needs, HIV/AIDS)
- Formal education and training

Member Skills

- Peer training
- Educational programming
- Cross-cultural communication
- Developing teamwork
- Specialized capacities (e.g., counseling, teaching)

Member Experiences

- Living and interacting in a diverse environment
- Traveling to or growing up in other countries
- Past employment, volunteer, or military service
- Hardships, crises, personal barriers

Activity: Training Talk Show

Purpose:

To use returning members in training new members, while building a sense of team among new and returning members, and involving all members in the training process.

Instructions:

Chose a host, either the trainer, a returning member, or a new member, and select three to five returning members to be “guests.” The talk show “audience” will be the new members. The host will facilitate a discussion on a particular topic about which the “guests” are knowledgeable, such as the ethics of volunteerism, service challenges, rewarding experiences, project accomplishments, or the factors that facilitated or hindered their adjustment to their service site during their first three months of service. Before the talk show begins, have the “audience” members reflect on the training topic, and each write three relevant questions they want to ask the guests of the talk show. The host uses questions from the “audience” to guide the discussion during the show. Allowing the talk show “audience” to provide written questions will ensure their interaction and inclusion of information relevant to them.



Variations:

During in-service training, create a panel of members of different experience levels to address “questions from the field.” Members in the “audience” can prepare questions about challenges or problems they are having at their service site. The host should facilitate the discussion as the “guests” discuss how they have handled similar situations and allow comments from the larger group.

Need Help?

MOSAICA

provides telephone technical assistance free of charge to all CNS-funded programs about their training concerns. Call Diane Cabrales or Dan Balón at (888) 409-2600.



A Useful Resource

MOSAICA developed *Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training* to help AmeriCorps programs plan and deliver effective pre-service training. Its user-friendly approach is perfect for staff with limited training experience. The manual explains in detail how to design effective training and provides 35 sample training activities (also included on disk) that can easily be modified to reflect programs needs.

Request a copy from the NSRC at ETR. Contact Jennifer Ryan by e-mail at jennifer@etr-associates.org or fax at (408) 438-3618.