

MOSAICA

The Center for Nonprofit Development
and Pluralism

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★ SERVICE

TrainingBriefs

Guest Trainers: Ensuring Success

Member and volunteer training and development are a shared responsibility between AmeriCorps and other National Service program staff, site supervisors, training coordinators, and trainers.

TrainingBriefs are designed to provide these individuals with useful information and innovative ideas for training and development.

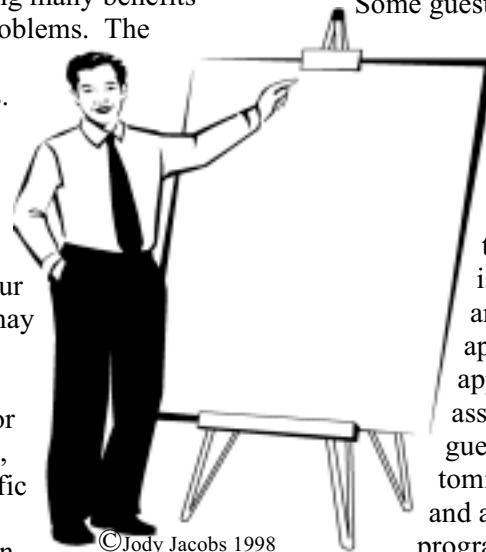
The training needs of National Service members and volunteers throughout the program year are so varied, and the program demands so great, that programs frequently bring in guest trainers. Using guest trainers can bring many benefits but also can create problems. The key to success lies in managing the process.

process. Take every opportunity to offer guidance and support. Discuss and agree on the following:

Participant backgrounds and needs.

Some guest trainers use a standard speech or “canned” training.

Like most adult learners (*Starting Strong*, p. 193–196), members and volunteers want training that is geared to their needs and provides practical approaches that they can apply to their project assignments. Effective guest trainers will customize their lectures and activities for your program.



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Guest trainers provide variety — a different style and focus — from your staff trainers. They may bring professional expertise and share helpful perspectives or approaches to service, and teach skills specific to a service site or community population.

Guest trainers also provide networking opportunities with professionals outside the program, and more important, in the community.

At the same time, bringing in guest trainers complicates planning for training. For example, guest trainers may not fully understand the needs of the participants. They may not be familiar with your training style and the approaches favored by National Service programs. As a result, members may find their training ineffective, irrelevant, or just plain boring.

To ensure successful experiences with guest trainers, be up-front about program needs and assertive about managing the

To Do: Give the guest trainer background information on the members and their assignments, including prior familiarity with the topic, educational level, age, race/ethnicity, specific responsibilities, etc. and ask how the trainer will gear the training to their needs. Emphasize the need for practical lessons and skills, and discuss what the trainer plans to offer.

Clear learning objectives. Without clear objectives, training is likely to be unfocused or irrelevant to participants.

To Do: Jointly develop clearly defined learning objectives for the unit or activity in which the guest trainer will participate. Do this well before the training session to allow time to resolve any unclear expectations.

This is the seventh in a series of *TrainingBriefs* produced by MOSAICA, under Cooperative Agreement #CA 95-15 with CNS. This *TrainingBrief* was written by Training Specialist Dan Balón 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 *TrainingBriefs* 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 <diane@mosaica.org>, website <http://www.mosaica.org>, telephone (202) 887-0620, fax (202) 887-0812.

Toll-Free Training Assistance

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

Appropriate training approaches and activities. Training in National Service programs is based heavily on interactive and experiential learning, with activities that emphasize demonstration, practice, and peer teaching.

To Do: Let the trainer know that you expect experiential learning techniques (*Starting Strong*, p. 85), and be very clear that this means more than simply question and answer time after lecture. Ask the guest trainer how much time will be spent on lecture and how much on training activities. Go over the session agenda, and discuss specific training approaches. Feel free to specify how many activities you want included in the session, and to suggest topics or focus areas.

Scope of training. Sometimes guest trainers try to cram in too much information, which can lead to information overload and reduce time for experiential learning.

To Do: Work with the guest trainer to identify a few major points to be made or skills to be presented and practiced. Ask him/her to develop those few points with experiential activities and to provide a list of supplemental reference materials for additional information.

ROLES FOR GUESTS WHO ARE NOT TRAINERS

Guests are often invited to assist with sessions based on their expert knowledge, relationship to the program, past support, or reputation — even though they may not have training skills. Because these individuals are important to your program and your participants, consider carefully how to involve them. Include them in meaningful and appropriate roles such as having them:

- ☞ Co-facilitate a session with an experienced trainer
- ☞ Participate in an informal roundtable
- ☞ Give advice about training content
- ☞ Serve on a moderated panel with other experts
- ☞ Hand out awards during graduation
- ☞ Give welcome greetings before a training session
- ☞ Provide reference materials

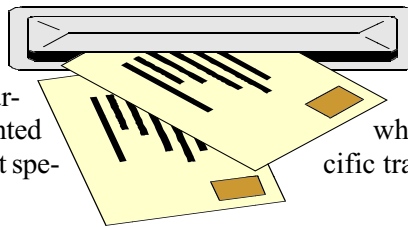
ACTIVITY: PERSONAL LETTER ACTION PLAN

Purposes:

To give participants the opportunity to set goals. To encourage participants to incorporate presented material into practical applications in their project sites.

Instructions:

At the end of a training session, have participants addressed to themselves about the training topic. two or three months in the future. In the letter, participants should write to reflect on how they implemented training. Also facilitate participant discussion about specific skills, and attitudes each of them has attained.



write a one-page letter
This letter will be dated
participants should imagine
what they learned during
specific training-related knowledge,

For example, consider a diversity training session with learning objectives focused on developing respectful relationships with an economically and racially diverse immigrant community for a literacy-based program. Encourage individuals to write about an imaginary tutoring visit they will have carried out with the relevant population and how diversity played a role in developing relationships. Have them describe what happened, what they did, what they thought and felt, and how the training — through knowledge, skills, and attitude development — helped them deal with the situation.

To process this activity, have participants share responses in small groups or in a structured large group discussion. Facilitate group reflection based on the stories people choose to share. This activity helps participants learn to plan how they will apply what they learned in training as well as identify what they may still need to learn related to the training topic.

Follow-up:

Seal the letters in self-addressed envelopes, and keep them. A month later, pass out the envelopes during a meeting or training session. Facilitate a discussion that compares their reflections with their actual experiences and relates them to program or individual goals.