



# **Planning Annual FGP Inservice Training: Models and Resources**

**A Tool for Senior Corps Directors & Staff**



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## I. Introduction

Well-planned training for Foster Grandparents benefits individual volunteers, the children they serve, and improves outcomes for FGP projects. To encourage substantial training for Foster Grandparents, the Corporation for National and Community Service requires a total of 40 hours of orientation (20 hours delivered pre-service) and four hours of ongoing training each month.

A strategic and focused training program can:

- Develop the skills and knowledge of individual Foster Grandparents
- Improve the quality of services to children and youth
- Foster peer learning and self-improving teams
- Provide opportunities for reflection and feedback
- Address challenges
- Improve performance measures

Planning a full year of FGP training may seem difficult at first. Consider using a team approach to establish systems and create relationships that improve training quality and reduce the planning effort each year. Here are some simple approaches:

## II. Create an Annual FGP Training Plan

Begin with a planning team that includes broad representation; consider including an FGP trainee, station site supervisor, advisory council member, key partner, and someone from your project staff.

These individuals will provide different perspectives on training needs and a range of ideas and resources for addressing them. Once your training team is established, work together to:

- Conduct needs assessment to determine skills and knowledge to address
- Organize training needs by topic on a calendar (establish what's needed first/ pencil-in possible topics for later)
- Identify potential trainers and training resources for each topic
- Create a training evaluation plan
- Clarify responsibilities for each training (hosts, budget, staff, etc.)
- Establish a reporting system and feedback loop for the planning team



The remaining sections of this tool provide advice and resources for carrying out each of these steps.

### III. Conduct Needs Assessments

To assess training needs, consider interviewing or surveying:

- School or station staff to determine skills, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge needed by FGPs
- Current FGPs to establish “what they wish they had known or been trained in” when they started to volunteer
- Incoming FGPs for self-assessment of training needs
- Your own project staff, based on past experience with current volunteers
- Program partners (especially those with social service expertise) around special needs or characteristics of children or youth served

Ask each group to identify essential training topics and indicate priorities (what first/what later).

### IV. Organize Training Topics on a Calendar

**Pre-service orientation (20 hours).** Begin planning the required 20 hours of pre-service training. Orientation often begins with a placement interview attended by the project coordinator, and an opportunity for the FGP to observe in the classroom in which he or she will serve. Many FGP project directors recommend scheduling focused pre-service training after these interviews when FGPs first report to service sites, to help establish the reporting routine. Include current FGPs in pre-service orientation to serve as mentors; they often recruit new volunteers, and are known and trusted guides. If you are working with FGPs who have special needs or are not fluent English speakers, it is important to learn about and accommodate these needs in advance.



Pre-service training content can be categorized into four main areas: 1) introduction to the FGP program; 2) orientation to the station or school site; 3) introduction to content of the service assignment; and 4) observation/experiential preparation.

Suggested content for these four categories follows:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Introduction to FGP Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules and regulations</li> <li>• Benefits (meals/ transportation/ leave &amp; holidays/ insurance)</li> <li>• Reporting and attendance</li> <li>• Other expectations (social / rewards / celebrations/peer learning)</li> <li>• All aspects of stipends</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Orientation to station or school site</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in procedures</li> <li>• Site or school calendars</li> <li>• Sick and emergency report procedures</li> <li>• Introduction to station supervisors and staff support</li> <li>• Orientation to classroom or other service sites</li> <li>• Information about school or organization culture</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Introduction to service assignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of skills (assets/special skills/training needs)</li> <li>• Child development characteristics of age group</li> <li>• Specific assignments/expectations</li> <li>• Reporting systems</li> <li>• Communication systems with teachers or other station staff</li> <li>• Clarification of performance measurement systems/expectations</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Observation/experiential preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulations or web-based training with discussion</li> <li>• Videos or other media demonstrations with discussion</li> <li>• Observation of current FGPs at site</li> <li>• Observation of other tutors or mentors (cross-stream opportunities in your area)</li> <li>• Observation of teachers and other professional or para-professional staff</li> </ul>

**Ongoing training calendar.** Once FGPs are in place, provide additional orientation and training around topics that FGPs and supervisors need and request. Topics may include student management, follow-up on procedures and record-keeping, and deepening of content area skills (e.g., tutoring, mentoring).

Throughout the year, four-hour monthly trainings can continue to develop your volunteers, honing their skills and creating self-improving teams. Site coordinators can be important resources for identifying ongoing training needs through their onsite observations and communication with both teachers and FGPs. Site visits can be designed to include notations about training application and identification of training needs. Consider small-group training focused on specific needs in areas like: adolescent literacy, English language learners, or children in foster care. Possible topics follow:

Literacy Topics	Mentoring Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading readiness skills</li> <li>• Pre-reading skills</li> <li>• Reading aloud</li> <li>• Strategies for supporting the five components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension)</li> <li>• Writing activities</li> <li>• Working with English language learners</li> <li>• Literacy games</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive (asset) youth development</li> <li>• Establishing trust and building relationships</li> <li>• Setting goals and boundaries</li> <li>• Dealing with crisis</li> <li>• Serving children with special needs</li> <li>• Cultural responsiveness</li> <li>• Target populations (e.g., children of prisoners, dropouts, teen parents)</li> <li>• Motivating youth</li> <li>• Life skills</li> </ul>
Homework Help Topics	Other Child/Youth Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping students get organized</li> <li>• Subject area strategies</li> <li>• Nonfiction reading strategies</li> <li>• Reinforcing concept vocabulary</li> <li>• Using technology for homework help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling and guidance concerns</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Child development</li> <li>• Behavior management</li> <li>• Diversity/disability training</li> </ul>

Create your own calendar, or use this model to map out your year.  
[www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/seniorcorps/products/FGPcalendar.pdf](http://www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/seniorcorps/products/FGPcalendar.pdf)

## V. Identify Trainers and Training Resources

Once you have identified and prioritized training topics, it's time to determine the expertise required and find the right trainers. Begin by looking at your closest training assets: Do any of your FGPs or staff have the appropriate background, skills, knowledge, and desire to tackle these topics? What training can the school or station provide? Often FGPs are included in professional development offered at their sites. The chart below lists other potential training resources.

### Who knows about...

<p><b>Learner relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School counselors</li> <li>• Teachers, including special education teachers</li> <li>• Staff from youth and social service agencies</li> <li>• Juvenile justice staff</li> <li>• Child and mental health specialists</li> <li>• Mentoring project staff</li> <li>• Higher education faculty</li> </ul>	<p><b>School or site culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School principals or other administrators</li> <li>• School clerical and support staff</li> <li>• Classroom teachers</li> <li>• School specialists (reading, psychologists, librarians, counselors)</li> <li>• Parent organization members</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project operation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project directors and coordinators</li> <li>• Board members</li> <li>• Staff from other national service projects</li> <li>• Volunteer association or organization staff</li> <li>• Corporation State Office</li> <li>• Training and technical assistance providers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School or district teachers and reading coaches</li> <li>• Title I reading specialists</li> <li>• Higher education faculty</li> <li>• Retired teachers</li> <li>• Graduate students in education</li> <li>• School or city librarians</li> <li>• State and local councils (e.g., literacy)</li> <li>• Professional organizations (for specific subjects, i.e., math, computers, history)</li> </ul>



Selecting a trainer and planning training requires attention to principles of adult learning. In an initial conversation with a prospective trainer, explain your training needs, obtain detailed information about the trainer's availability, and fully describe your audience. Because your training needs may change, avoid scheduling trainers too far in advance unless a high-demand presentation requires it. When you are ready to schedule, establish the training date in a phone call, reviewing the agreed-upon details in a follow-up letter or e-mail that includes: time, date and place; detailed description of the audience (age, gender, special needs, language considerations, education/economic profiles, etc.); and room set-up and available equipment. You may also want to ask questions that communicate possibilities for collaboration on training design:



- How will the trainees provide input about their needs?
- Can you collaborate on establishing training objectives?
- How will the trainer assess what trainees already know and what they need to know?
- Will there be opportunities to learn through experience or practice?
- Will activities include collaboration and team building?
- Will the training activities address a variety of learning styles?
- How will the trainer check for feedback and incorporate trainee input?
- Will the trainer support your evaluation plan, providing feedback on the trainer's skill, the overall design, and assessment of learning?

Ask trainers to provide extra copies of materials, so that FGPs can share them with classroom teachers. If your group is very large, training content can also be e-mailed directly to teachers.

## VI. Create a Training Evaluation Plan

Training evaluation should be systematic. Written evaluation forms, collected immediately after the training, gather feedback from all participants and create a record of the work. Follow-up evaluation surveys, after a month or two, can help establish whether trainings have introduced new strategies, knowledge, or skills that are changing and improving FGP practice over time. These questions can be integrated into site visit reports. Useful feedback can also be gathered in weekly meetings, during follow-up phone conversations, and in a variety of other forms, including:



- Reflection activities
- Informal questions, feedback, and discussion
- Pre- and post-session "tests" of participant skills or knowledge
- Self-assessment checklists

## VII. Clarify Responsibilities for Scheduled Training

Identify, as part of your training plan, who will accept the following responsibilities for each event:

- Hosting agency (room, room set-up, budget support)
- FGP volunteer organizer (communication, welcoming, rewards, transportation)
- Staff organizer (trainer needs, promotion, evaluation, and reporting)

Once a planning team is identified, the unique planning needs of each event will emerge. A team approach will help ease the planning burden and provide cross checks on important details that will make the training a success. Over time, your teams may develop a planning checklist to use for future events.

## VIII. Establish a Reporting System and Feedback Loop

The team (or core members) who put together the FGP training calendar will be most effective if they agree to meet quarterly, reviewing past training evaluations to make needed improvements throughout the year.

If the planning team establishes clear reporting requirements and deadlines, assigned to individuals in charge of each training event, they will have adequate information for making judgments and recommending improvements. Important reporting categories include:

- Attendance
- Written evaluation results
- Site visit reports
- Staff impressions of the event
- Feedback from the trainer
- Post-training or end-of-year follow-up surveys to assess training application and determine the most useful sessions



Reflecting on the success of training events and planning improvements for subsequent years will lead to an increase in training effectiveness.

## IX. Capacity Building Approaches to FGP Training

Over time, team planning can lead to routines and extended partnerships that serve the community in a variety of ways. Examples of high-end development of FGP training may include:

- An established course in tutoring skills, offered by a local community college in partnership with volunteer programs
- Shared training programs across national service streams, creating intergenerational learning and maximizing resources
- Mentoring and shadowing programs capitalizing on skills of the most highly trained and experienced volunteers
- Shared training with PTAs and parents, developing parent skills to support student learning

## X. Training Resources

Look for additional LEARNS training resources at: [www.nwrel.org/learns](http://www.nwrel.org/learns)  
This site provides Web Based Tutor Training, other resources specifically for Senior corps, ready-to-use training activities, downloadable resources for tutoring and mentoring projects, *the Tutor* newsletter, and information about ordering videos that will support your training efforts.

Additional training resources can also be found at:

[www.nationalserviceresources.org/topics/index.php](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/topics/index.php)

The index at the Corporation's National Service Resource Center also provides a key to further reading, resources, and guides to good training practice.