

**CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
GRANTEE NEEDS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE**

**March 2004**

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**CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS) GRANTEE  
NEEDS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**I. Introduction**

The events of September 11, 2001, prompted renewed interest in the role of volunteers in promoting the safety and security of American communities. Although many CNCS programs were already engaged in these efforts, the role of volunteers in Homeland Security took on a new level of significance. CNCS was the first Federal agency to provide funding specifically for Homeland Security activities. The agency awarded 43 grants in FY 2003, totaling \$10.3 million, to support volunteer activities. Project TAHS (Technical Assistance for Homeland Security) was funded by CNCS to provide training and technical assistance to Homeland Security grantees and sub-grantees, to ensure that they have the knowledge and resources required to make informed program planning and administration decisions on Homeland Security issues. The Aguirre/Bulow Team conducted this needs assessment to design and implement a training and technical assistance program that is responsive to both the needs of our customers and our clients. Feedback from grantees was collected through focus groups, individual meetings, and telephone interviews. All CNCS programs were represented, with a special concentration on the original 43 grantees. The exact number of individuals who provided feedback for this assessment is difficult to measure because in some of the phone interviews with the grantees, multiple individuals participated. Approximately 50-60 individuals participated. The data was collected between October and December 2003.

**II. Training & Technical Assistance Needs Identified**

Introducing Homeland Security Programming to Grantees

The first theme emerging from the data was the need for a shared understanding of what homeland security means to grantee programming and potentially to communities. Grantees voiced the need for clarification of vision, parameters, and outcomes for the homeland security initiative as it relates to national service. Respondents generally recognized that many members frequently have a lack of understanding about homeland security as it relates to community programs. Grantees would also like to learn ideas and strategies for incorporating homeland security themes into their ongoing programming.

Facilitating Grantee-Community Partnerships in Homeland Security

A second theme expressed by respondents was the need for assistance in identifying, cultivating, and sustaining community partnerships that support CNCS homeland security initiatives. There was a common recognition that a successful homeland security program involves a new set of partners and disciplines - e.g. law enforcement, fire, emergency management, and emergency medical responders. Assistance in developing a specific education for professional and volunteer organizations was identified by respondents as critical to making this happen. Many participants said they simply did not know how to interact with their local emergency sectors or how to “talk their language.” Specifically, respondents would like to target partnerships with key professional agencies responsible for homeland security concerns, or “program champions.” In relation to developing partnerships with these champions, grantees expressed the need to overcome differences between their various organizational cultures; these differences were seen by grantees as a potential obstacle in forming important homeland security partnerships in their communities.

### Supporting the Organizational Needs of Homeland Security Grantees

The final theme from the grantee data was the overall importance of improving and sustaining programs' core capacities in order to support homeland security objectives. In this area, respondents emphasized the importance of a national grantee meeting to review the work since the launch 18 months ago, provide the skill development identified since then and plan strategically for the next 18 months. Many of the grantees interviewed expressed the common sentiment that although the training of members is critical, they are at a loss for ways in which they can maintain volunteer motivation and interest once the training is completed. This is of particular importance to homeland security objectives as it is necessary to have volunteers engaged and ready to immediately mobilize whenever a crisis occurs. In addition, respondents noted that assistance with information management, technology, and establishing forums for discussion and exchange of ideas with peers would also greatly strengthen their ability to provide homeland security programming.

### **III. Early Achievements in Homeland Security**

Grantees were also asked to identify aspects of their programs that they felt had shown signs of success. Many participants reflected that their successes could not be characterized by numbers of volunteers but rather, by the types and quality of partnerships that had been developed. Participants also noted that working on homeland security programs had significantly raised their visibility with the political and civic leadership of their communities. Building upon these early strides and successes in homeland security activities, participants expressed the sentiment that there are many other areas where expansion can occur.

### **IV. Recommendations for Technical Assistance**

Aguirre/Bulow team recommends the following refinements Project TAHS to directly address the feedback and experiences of the grantees identified in this assessment.

#### *A. CNCS Homeland Security National Workshop*

Consider convening a national workshop in April or May 2004 for all current CNCS homeland security grantees that will focus specifically on the issue areas identified above and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange.

#### *B. Specialized HLS Training and Program Support Materials*

Develop specific training and materials on selected topics to address the issues identified by the grantees such as: overview of homeland security landscape; how to recruit and retain volunteers for homeland security programs; how to develop and market grass roots homeland security programs; how to develop strategic partnerships for homeland security programs; how to foster seniors program in business continuity planning and sustaining programs through good communications.

#### *C. Responsive Technical Assistance*

Provide personal, phone and email TA to grantees for specific issues, problems, or technical referrals.

#### *D. Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Exchange between HLS Grantees*

Provide an on-going mechanism for peer to peer exchange. The primary medium for this will be a web based chat room/bulletin board.

*E. Promising Practices Exchange*

Promising practices will be exchanged in a variety of ways. There will be a location on the Web for the display and discussion of practices. Sharing practices will be a major component of training sessions and webinars will be designed to address particular issues with a sharing of successful practices. Several of the webinars will be led by grantees and will include session on: mutual aid agreements and other mechanisms for working homeland security across jurisdictions; how to work effectively with seniors; making technology work for you; and implementing school homeland safety programs.

*E. Homeland Security Partnership Directory and Training Catalogue*

As part of the proposed Homeland Security Community Resource Network (HSCRN), design and develop a tool-kit/ partnership directory and a training catalogue around homeland security.

We look forward to meeting with CNCS management to review the content of this report and develop a revised work plan that will allow us to meet the needs of the CNCS grantees, CNCS staff and other CNCS partners working toward building safer, more secure and sustainable communities

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## **List of Acronyms**

ARC	American Red Cross
BCP	Business Continuity Planning
CERT	Certified Emergency Response Team
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
ES	Emergency Shelter
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HLS	Homeland Security
HSCRN	Homeland Security Community Resources Network
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
NOFA	Notice of Funds Availability
RSVP	Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs
SVP	Special Volunteer Programs
TAHS	Technical Assistance for Homeland Security
T/TA	Training/Technical assistance
VOAD	Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disasters

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **CNCS Homeland Security Initiative**

The events of September 11, 2001, prompted renewed interest in the role of volunteers in promoting the safety and security of American communities. Although many CNCS programs were already engaged in these efforts, the role of volunteers in Homeland Security took on a new level of significance. CNCS was the first Federal agency to provide funding specifically for Homeland Security activities. The agency awarded 43 grants in FY 2003, totaling \$10.3 million, to support volunteer activities through AmeriCorps, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program(RSVP), and Special Volunteer Programs(SVP). These programs are organized by State Commissions, local governments, first responders, and non-profit organizations not associated with a CNCS program. During 2004 a Learn and Serve Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) has been released along with renewal notice for the FY 2003 grants. In spring 2004, another \$4 million dollars is being made available for grants focusing on homeland security issues.

### **Project TAHS**

In September 2003, CNCS awarded the Aguirre/Bulow Group Team a cooperative agreement to develop Project TAHS (Technical Assistance for Homeland Security) to provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) to homeland security grantees. The intent of the T/TA is to assist new grantees and projects with program start-up, and to help existing grantees improve services associated with homeland security. With that in mind, the T/TA components proposed for Project TAHS include a web page with interactive features, one-on-one remote and on-site assistance, trainings, resource materials, and the development of a Homeland Security Community Resource Network (HSCRN). These services are available to Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve programs, projects and sub grantees. The first priority was to develop and conduct a grantee needs assessment to inform and to ensure that the T/TA provided successfully meets the needs of the grantees.

### **Grantee Needs Assessment**

In order to design a T/TA program that is responsive to both the needs of our customers and our clients, the Aguirre/Bulow team conducted a broad-based data collection effort. Feedback from grantees was collected through focus groups, individual meetings, and telephone interviews. All CNCS programs were represented, with a special concentration on the 43 initial grantees and their subs.

An agreed upon protocol of questions was used in each of these venues and was made available to grantees through an email request. Grantees were encouraged to respond to the questions by participating in an oral interview, calling a toll-free number, or in writing to an email address established for the new project. A summary of the respondents and data collection methods are included in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of Data Collection for Needs Assessment**

Agency and Respondents	Focus Groups	Phone Interview	Email Questionnaire	Dates of Focus Groups
<b>Senior Corps</b>				
RSVP Grantees	X	X		FEMA/Region VI Conference 11/03, NC/SW Director's Conference, 12/03
Special Volunteer Program Grantees	X	X	X	FEMA/Region VI Conference 11/03, NC/SW Director's Conference, 12/03
Foster Grandparents		X		
<b>Learn &amp; Serve</b>				
HLS Grantees	X			2003 Grantee Conference, 12/03
<b>AmeriCorps</b>				
Program Directors	X	X		FEMA/Region VI Conference 11/03, NC/SW Director's Conference, 12/03
<b>State Commission Representatives</b>				
	X	X		FEMA/Region VI Conference 11/03, NC/SW Director's Conference, 12/03
<b>CNCS</b>				
Headquarter staff		X		
Field Staff	X	X		FEMA/Region VI Conference 11/03, NC/SW Director's Conference, 12/03

*Focus Groups*

Three focus groups were conducted for this study. These sessions included approximately 30 participants in total, lasted approximately two hours each, and were held during CNCS and HLS related conferences. A focus group guide (shown in Appendix A) was used to provide structure for each group.

- AmeriCorps North Central/Southwest Cluster Program Directors' Conference**  
 New Orleans, LA (December 5, 2003) Also included RSVP grantees.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VI Volunteers in Homeland Security Conference**  
 Austin, TX (November 5, 2003) Included participants from RSVP, Special VP HS grantees, and State Commission representatives.
- Learn & Serve America 2003 Grantee Conference**  
 Washington, D.C. (December 8, 2003)



These focus groups were held during already scheduled meetings/workshops. The intent of the focus group was announced and people were asked to participate if they were current HLS grantees, working in the HSL arena (though not a direct grantee), or were exploring how to get involved. The majority of the participants at the AmeriCorps Cluster Conference and the FEMA Region VI conference were current CNCS HLS grantees. The Learn and Serve participants were those interested in incorporating HSL into their programs. Focus groups were facilitated by Project TAHS homeland security experts experienced in conducting focus groups. Groups were either worked into the existing conference schedule or held after sessions were over.

#### *Phone Interviews*

In order to reach a greater cross-section of CNCS grantees, phone interviews were conducted with participants representing a wide range of CNCS programs including Senior Corps, AmeriCorps\*VISTA, and AmeriCorps\*State/National Direct. The majority of these interviews were with 1-3 individuals (i.e., group interview). Over 20 phone interviews were conducted. The following list provides representative examples of the interview participants:

- Special Volunteer Program grantees in FL, NC, WA, WI, OH, OK, NY
- Senior Corp/RSVP grantees in WA, MA, FL, OK, TN
- Foster Grandparent grantees in NC, ME, FL
- Learn & Serve America grantees in ME, NH, MA, KY, NY, MT, MS
- State Commission representatives
- CNCS Headquarters and field staff

Phone interview respondents ranged from individuals with extensive expertise in homeland security, safety and disaster response (including emergency services directors and Red Cross staff) to volunteer managers who were new to homeland security issues. The same protocol of questions was used for both the focus group sessions and the phone interviews. The interview sessions were semi-structured and respondents were encouraged to go beyond the interview questions and to provide additional comments.

#### *Email Questionnaire*

In addition to conducting focus groups and group phone interviews, 17 Special Volunteer Program grantees were individually contacted via email and requested to complete a questionnaire. Respondents were asked to provide additional information about homeland security issues, by emailing Project TAHS. Four individuals who were originally contacted for a phone interview but did not have time, agreed to complete the email questionnaire. To date, 2 questionnaires were returned and used for this needs assessment.

As a whole, the individuals contacted to participate in this needs assessment were eager to discuss their experiences and most were able to provide extensive information. A small number of the individuals contacted (4) said they were too busy to participate in the needs assessment but appreciated the invitation; 3 individuals declined participating in the assessment and were somewhat skeptical as to the purpose of the data collection. Overall, individuals expressed a willingness to provide information and feedback that would help shape T/TA in the area of homeland security. Appendix A includes a copy of

the protocol and questions used during the focus group, phone interviews and email questionnaire to collect data.

Data collected through this needs assessment were primarily qualitative and anecdotal in nature. Notes from the focus groups were transcribed and interviews along with the responses to the email questionnaires were reviewed and general themes identified. Findings from the data collected assessment are presented in the next section.

## **II. TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS IDENTIFIED**

In general, the findings confirmed assumptions underlying the development of the NOFA for the T/TA. Grantees added expected specificity to their expressed needs and wants as detailed below.

### **Introducing Homeland Security Programming to Grantees**

The first theme was that homeland security is a new concept and a shared understanding of what it means in relation to CNCS programming has yet to be established. This will assist the programming efforts as it is developed.

#### *Clarifying CNCS's Vision for Homeland Security*

Respondents generally recognized that many members, most notably the senior citizens, have a lack of understanding about homeland security as it relates to community programs. Several individuals suggested that they would like assistance in presenting the concepts of Homeland Security in such a way as to 'demystify' the intent and promote homeland security as a positive community building initiative, as opposed to simply reacting to instances of disasters and terrorism. The respondents reiterated that as a new concept, homeland security is still ambiguous and confusing to the majority of people - including program staff, volunteers and community members as a whole. This lack of clarity has resulted in the prevalence of skepticism about the objectives and outcomes of CNCS's homeland security initiatives for communities.

One respondent discussed how new vocabulary needs to be developed to describe or further define homeland security functions.

*We try to explain homeland security as helping us be better prepared for a hurricane or flood...we say homeland security is really hometown safety.  
(CNCS Grantee)*

An alternative name for homeland security, "hometown safety," has been used effectively in Florida to mobilize volunteers. There were also a number of strong suggestions that marketing materials are needed to explain homeland security to CNCS grantees, sub grantees and volunteers in a manner that is not political or terrorism oriented.

One participant from an RSVP described a peer education program that they used to overcome this skepticism called “Kitchen Table Experts,” where volunteers are trained to talk to senior peers individually or at workshops. (The program currently has 83 senior volunteers who have reached over 10,000 other seniors in the last 3 years; the program is considered effective).

Learn and Serve respondents were particularly frustrated over the lack of clarity around homeland security. In general, their feeling was that unless the broadest interpretation of homeland security prevailed, it was going to be very difficult to get volunteer support for their constituencies. Interview participants recognized the need for a common terminology and a common curriculum.

Statewide programs in Florida, Ohio and North Carolina are addressing this issue by integrating the discussion of homeland security into their overall disaster management activities, as just another hazard. Their projects stress those preparedness, response and recovery activities that are common to any disaster. They can then highlight the unique characteristics that need to be considered under a homeland security program such as the need for large scale decontamination or quarantine should a widespread biological release occur in a community or region.

#### *Incorporating Homeland Security Activities into Existing Programs*

The respondents contacted for this needs assessment stated that they are seeking clarification and help on how homeland security can be better incorporated into their on-going program activities. Many grantees are working with sub grantees to assist them in incorporating HLS needs and activities into already strong programmatic areas. They requested assistance in helping program managers think through how homeland security activities and efforts can be included while maintaining the value of the current program.

One grantee discussed a successful Foster Grandparent program that could be expanded with the right materials.

*I have a very strong Foster Grandparent program, I need ideas on how can we add something to this program on homeland security. (CNCS Grantee)*

Multiple training opportunities for members were seen as a critical issue to successfully integrate homeland security activities. Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) training and CPR training (specifically by AmeriCorps members) were commonly noted as being especially beneficial as “homeland security-related” opportunities. Establishing connections with the emergency management community and working towards volunteer participation in FEMA or State and local exercises, were also seen by respondents as possible ways in which grantees could incorporate homeland security activities into programs; these activities would also define the type of training that would be beneficial to their members.

## **Facilitating Grantee-Community Partnerships in Homeland Security**

Another general theme from the respondents was that grantees need assistance in identifying, cultivating, and sustaining community partnerships that support CNCS Homeland Security Initiatives.

### *Creating New Partnerships in Homeland Security*

Homeland security programs often involve establishing a network of partnerships between various agencies and disciplines - e.g. law enforcement, fire, emergency management, and emergency medical responders. Although there are currently a substantial number of volunteer fire departments across the United States, most public agencies consist solely of professionals.<sup>1</sup> In general, respondents from the first responder community were found to be reluctant to depend on, or even to marginally involve, CNCS program volunteer support. Respondents expressed varying degrees of success and frustration in trying to establish partnerships with community emergency agencies. One respondent expressed the initial barrier in establishing communication between professional agencies and volunteers:

*How do we get the volunteer world and first responder community talking together? (CNCS Grantee)*

The need for help in understanding and educating professional and volunteer organizations was identified by respondents as critical to making this happen. Many participants said they simply did not know how to interact with their local emergency sectors or how to “talk their language.” A respondent explained:

*We need help to understand the core things we need to know to work with these new groups. For example, what are the systems and structures that the police use and how do we deal across the structures? (CNCS Program Director)*

Many respondents also voiced the opinion that homeland security could provide a focus for creating new partnerships with non-governmental groups not usually part of the volunteer equation, and in particular the private sector. Many of the interviewees saw opportunities to engage the private sector but expressed the need for help in designing programs or activities that incorporated small business concerns, continuity planning and risk assessment for businesses, and disaster mitigation and recovery.

A current practice addressing this area was mentioned by Volunteer Florida. The grantees have established structured activities to educate and facilitate the use of volunteers in disaster/homeland security operations. They have found that this provides a great opportunity for peer-to-peer support in which grantees with promising practices can help guide and support other grantees.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Volunteer firefighter” is really a misnomer that typically refers to professionally trained firefighters who are not paid.

*Engaging Homeland Security Champions*

During the focus groups and phone interviews, there were a number of discussions among respondents about key agencies that are responsible for homeland security concerns, or potential “program champions.” These champions identified by the respondents range from the Federal to local level agencies and included the following:

- *Am. Association of Retired Professionals (AARP)*
- *American Red Cross*
- *Emergency Management Offices*
- *FEMA Regional Offices*
- *Governors’ Offices*
- *Law enforcement (police, sheriff)*
- *Local VOAD*
- *RSVP*
- *Senior Connections*
- *Senior Service Corps*
- *Statewide, high level focus FEMA*
- *Volunteer Fire Departments*
- *Work Force Centers*

Respondents frequently discussed the need for ways in which they could more effectively present their “story” to these other agencies, groups, and foundations, in order to achieve support on a consistent basis. The participants questioned the gaps which exist between themselves and the homeland security champions and in what niche the grantees could best place themselves. Respondents also expressed a strong interest in learning about how other grantees recruited and utilized their local homeland security champions. Several respondents offered ideas about how to access these champions. The use of expeditors - or people who understand the language and structure of both the volunteer organization and the homeland security champions - was a suggestion for building successful partnerships. The need for help in building “bridges” was also a common sentiment expressed by grantees and there was a general consensus that many opportunities currently exist for new grantee/champion relationships, but assistance is needed in order to fully take advantage of such opportunities. Examples of the innovative sources of partnerships mentioned by respondents include the movie industry as well as mental health services. Assistance in how to market their programs and activities to attract new champions who could help sustain their activities was also mentioned by respondents as a way to building these partnerships.

*Overcoming Differences in Organizational Cultures*

A related issue mentioned by respondents was the concern that public service groups with different membership characteristics (such as Medical Reserve Corps, Citizen Corps, and Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disasters (V OAD) could be culturally incompatible, and may ultimately resist cooperation with grantees. Cultural conflicts between groups like Medical Reserve Corps members and AmeriCorps members may be a potential obstruction in partnership building. Stressing the importance of collaborating in homeland security activities was seen as a key emphasis in overcoming any organizational conflicts. One individual suggested the use of retreats and other ‘active’ approaches to solve the problem; and another mentioned ‘peer-to-peer’ visits and exchanges to allow programs to learn about each other. It was also stressed that funding

for these types of partnership-building activities would ultimately be necessary for their success.

### **Supporting the Organizational Needs of Homeland Security Grantees**

The final theme appearing in the data was the overall importance of improving and sustaining the programs' core capacities in order to support homeland security objectives. All expressed the desire to meet with other grantees in Homeland Security to share successes, challenges, and strategically plan for the next 2 years of strengthening programmatic efforts. Many mentioned the initial launch of the initiative with a conference and requested the opportunity to come together again to review, refresh and strengthen efforts.

#### *Sustaining Program Efforts*

A frequent comment by grantees was that they were continually challenged by the need to keep members busy and motivated throughout the year. Many of the grantees interviewed expressed the common sentiment that although the training of members is seen as critical, they are searching for ways in which they can maintain volunteer motivation and interest once training is completed.<sup>2</sup> The importance of having volunteers engaged and ready to immediately mobilize when a crisis occurs was seen as equally challenging. While the value of disaster response as a recruitment tool was recognized by respondents they also expressed frustration with other responding groups for not significantly including national service volunteers in key roles during an actual disaster event.

A related issue mentioned by many of the respondents was the need to expand partnerships and integrate volunteer support as an essential part of their ongoing operations. Grantees explained that these tasks require education, communications, and the building of long term-partnerships. Further, grantees felt that they are so pressed with daily activities and requirements that something like a long-term strategic analysis, which is ultimately needed for program sustainability, is simply a luxury. Sustaining their program funding or finding additional volunteer/partner support usually takes the top priority in their time management. Respondents expressed the sentiment that they would appreciate training and assistance in more long-term planning and the development of sustainability strategies for their programs.

Several grantees mentioned that the lack of public awareness and support can become an obstacle in sustaining their programs, unless there is an ongoing campaign to keep their work visible at the local level.

#### *Training to Increase Relevant Homeland Security Skills*

The need for training was also mentioned by respondents as critical to the success of their program, with the grantees focusing training as a key to the enhancement of the volunteer skill base and as a volunteer incentive. Although appropriate training is critical to almost

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<sup>2</sup> One participant mentioned that Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) training may be an exception.

any volunteer program, for homeland security programs training and preparedness is important because of the new partners and language it involves, the cultural sensitivities of many of the issues and the scope of the potential problem. The use of program alumni was suggested as a way to pass on industry knowledge and experience to new program participants; the revival of the CNCS ‘State Leaders’ program was also mentioned as an effective method to educate volunteers about the homeland security component. A number of respondents suggested that a list of potential training contacts (specific to homeland security issues) would be a valuable resource for their programs and that it would be readily used if available. Grantees also mentioned that there is a need for information related to training or career advancement that they could in turn present to their members.

Specific training mentioned by respondents included “Spontaneous Volunteer Development”, debris clearance, GIS mapping and new technologies, communication, outreach and marketing to different audiences, particularly seniors. Respondents noted that this outreach would also publicize to the community how volunteers were assisting in local homeland security activities. One respondent mentioned that diversity and sensitivity training had been performed in their jurisdiction with great success; the participant added that they had used an Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator to provide the training. Another grantee stated that it would be useful if volunteers were trained so they could assist other organizations, such as the Red Cross, manage their own volunteers (e.g., classes in volunteer recruitment and deployment).

A drawback for long time volunteers highlighted by respondents was that they typically exhaust their training opportunities early on. Opportunities for advanced training was seen by respondents as something that would be especially beneficial to these established volunteers. Participants also noted that a list of CNCS member development classes and/or opportunities would be valuable and that training would best be performed by local experts if available, as they could most appropriately match local needs and learning styles. Many of the respondents reiterated that any training would need to be inexpensive to be sustainable.

#### *Providing Technical Assistance to Support Programs*

Grantees addressing homeland security issues face many of the same concerns as other CNCS grantees. Assistance in addressing these issues in ways which address the unique Homeland Security context will be appreciated. Grantees identified the following content areas as priorities for resources, guidance, specialized training, and resource materials to support homeland security activities and volunteer efforts:

- Business continuity planning/risk assessment
- Communications planning
- Database development and management
- Liability and legal issues
- Marketing including marketing to the new baby boom senior citizens
- School safety
- Small businesses
- Strategic planning

- Strategic partnerships
- Working with the private sector
- Liability and other legal issues

*Assisting with Information and Technology Needs*

Specific information and technology needs noted by the respondents included:

- Networking resources (within AmeriCorps, specifically);
- Glossary of homeland security acronyms (many would like to have more clarity in regards to the use of emergency response specific (vocabulary and concepts to minimize confusion);
- Mapping resources;
- ‘AmeriCorps Google’ search engine; and a
- Website with “good links” (this website could also be used as a recruitment tool).

Representatives also said that they would like to see technology updates for their outdated equipment and suggested that donated equipment could be used to fulfill these needs. Microsoft Power Point and other software training were seen as areas where more attention could be focused.

Database software availability and training was cited as a concern, specifically in regards to volunteer management. The AmeriCorps database of prospective volunteers was described as problematic, especially in regards to finding appropriate volunteer/community matches and updated information. JASON received mixed reviews – two participants had successfully located a volunteer each, while a third participant failed to locate a volunteer after two attempts. Online volunteer registration was seen as a possible improvement to the current system, with the VISTA website touted as an example of a successful online system.

One group interviewed expressed the sentiment that an over-reliance on technology as an information resource is detrimental. All the individuals in the interview felt however, that multiple modes of information (including personal interaction) would be the most successful. While CDs are a good format for transferring information, the respondents also felt that there needs to be a ‘consultant’ or similar person available to grantees from which information could be directly obtained, that is the first ‘connection’ should be a human one followed by the technology. A national meeting of grantees was requested this year to exchange information and address newly identified skills development needs.

Very few of the study’s participants stated that they had the capacity, or the interest, to join video conferencing. Conference calls were seen as ‘okay’ as long as they were kept small and were controlled. Participants were interested in the idea of webinars, but were concerned that, like conference calls, they needed to be small to be effective. (Webinars are a specially focused technology driven training tool that allows for communications and interaction between participants.) The use of webinars for “how to” sessions among grantees was fielded during the focus groups and interviews and participants were generally open to this approach; especially if the sessions were very focused, topic



specific, user friendly and short in duration. Participants expressed an interest in the 'hands-on aspects' of the webinar technology.

#### *Facilitating Communication between HLS Grantees*

Many of the respondents discussed the need for grantees to talk about issues and ideas around their homeland security programs. An online forum of communication and information distribution was discussed by the grantees in both the focus groups and interviews. The discussions included the use of email or a list-serve for communication among members as well as other partners, and which could supplement regional meetings. (Some of the participants vented their frustration with list-serves, stating that they were often overwhelmed with information, preventing them from being able to filter through to find what is appropriate for them). The majority of the participants identified the need for the equivalent of a "chat room" where they can talk with each other and exchange information in real time to resolve problems or issues they are facing. Grantees want this type of discussion to be facilitated without the glut of information that comes through a list-serve. In general, participants were supportive of using a web-based medium but said they are often inundated with materials and do not have time to "constantly check a website."

Many participants stated that they would like to see a support network developed that would help with volunteer management. Support of this kind could provide a good opportunity for an exchange of information between grantees on what is currently available, what works and what does not, and how to go about developing an approach to manage volunteers.

The creation and regular distribution of a newsletter (aimed at the needs of customers) was also suggested by several of the respondents. However, some of the participants were concerned with the idea of a newsletter, because they felt that many grantees do not receive the newsletters that are currently published by Senior Corps and NSSC. They also felt that a newsletter would be more effective if it were "cluster specific." One of the groups in particular was very favorable to the idea of a reader-friendly, magazine-style newsletter, via email, with national information that also focused on the clusters.

#### *Other Feedback from Respondents*

Participants were unclear about the role of CNCS involvement, its initiative, and its future plans. They would like more direction on funds that are available to them and who specifically are drawing from the homeland security 'pie of resources'. They would also like to have more information about other programs that are currently active within and outside of CNCS (presumably from which to draw partners and ideas).

Concern was also raised by the respondents about 'double-dipping'. Participants were interested in learning how multiple programs could work together, such as AmeriCorps and RSVP in capacity building, without competing for the same funds or volunteers. They were concerned that the Corporation has set up a 'competitive arena,' where hours could be double counted. Respondents noted that technical assistance in grant management would be appreciated.

### III. EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS IN HOMELAND SECURITY

In addition to collecting feedback regarding grantees' emerging needs for technical assistance, respondents were also asked to identify aspects of their programs that they felt had shown signs of success. Participants reported that they enjoyed success in various areas of their local programs; however, many participants reflected that these successes could not be characterized by numbers of volunteers but by partnerships and relationships that had been developed. Another achievement commonly noted by participants was that working on homeland security programs significantly raised their visibility within the community and with the political and civic leadership of their communities. The following are just a few examples of early grantee achievements in HLS activities:

- One grantee's HLS program was approached by Fire and EMS to perform neighborhood CERT training, something volunteers truly enjoyed – this improved their opportunities for the volunteers to become involved in the neighborhood response to a disaster or event, should it be necessary.
- Law enforcement volunteers have prevented/foiled crime – one jurisdiction funded a car used by Senior Corps members for patrol.
- Senior Corp volunteers in one community ensured that (emergency) shelters were surveyed and ready for activation.
- Public Service Announcements were used to attract volunteers, most notably a higher-than-normal percentage of male volunteers.
- The use of Citizen Corps created much wider-reaching community partnerships.
- A program was able to increase their volunteer retention by 50%.
- The Director of the State Commission in Ohio was asked to join the Governor's Cabinet.
- Another program gained public recognition within the business community that volunteers can provide valuable services in disasters.
- Another program was also publicly recognized and put in charge of spontaneous volunteer programs for disasters.

Respondents also reported that they have begun to involve their volunteers in homeland security activities and were happy to share their ideas for year-round or other long-term volunteer participation. They included:

- Assist with regular patrols performed by fire/police/sheriff's departments
- Damage assessments
- Emergency Shelter (ES) and ES Agreement status monitoring/help the American Red Cross (ARC) run shelters
- Further recruitment and training conducted by volunteers/conduct CERT training
- Help security and safety staff at special events
- School programs using Seniors
- Homeland security and other disaster training in local schools
- Red Cross 'Capacity Building' (volunteers help Red Cross prepare, not respond to emergencies)

- Train volunteers in public speaking which makes them more effective communicators

Building upon these early strides and successes in homeland security activities, participants expressed the sentiment that there are many other areas in which they can expand their efforts.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

The feedback collected from grantees, associates, and staff has highlighted the areas in which training and technical assistance could assist CNCS grantees in fully implementing their homeland security program. The data collected has identified very specific issues related to the homeland security initiative as well as to broader programmatic topics such as sustainability, volunteer retention and the role of information. Based on the needs assessment findings, we have developed the following recommendations:

##### **A. CNCS Homeland Security National Workshop**

As stated above, all respondents mentioned the need to meet and talk with one another face to face. They commented on the initial launch of the initiative, discussed how much has been learned in the last 18 months (both related to successes as well as next level of questions and considerations) and recommended a national meeting to review, address the new skill development needs and develop strategic plans for the next 18 months. To that end, we recommend convening a national workshop in early Fall 2004 for all current CNCS homeland security grantees, which will focus specifically on the areas identified above and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange.

The goal of this national workshop will be to enhance connectivity among the grantees, provide skill building sessions for them, and to offer an opportunity for CNCS staff to be advised of promising practices among the grantees and talk to the grantees about news at CNCS. This workshop could provide an opportunity to solicit support and participation from our other National partners, such as Citizen Corps and the Medical Reserve Corps to help fund the workshop.

##### **B. Specialized HLS Training and Program Support Materials**

Develop specific training and materials on selected topics to address the issues identified above. These will be offered in a variety of mediums including modules on the web; training sessions at State and Regional conferences as travel funds permit such as the proposed National Conference listed above, as well as for other forums; and special webinars as appropriate.

Current modules planned for development include:

- Homeland Security Landscape– Overview and programming considerations  
This module would include:
  - Overview of current homeland security efforts and issues

- Major players in Homeland Security; i.e. EMS, Fire and Rescue, law enforcement, Citizen Corps councils.
  - Roles and responsibilities in HS and disaster response
  - Creating a new program focused on homeland security
  - Adding activities to existing programs
  - Opportunities and challenges to the field
  - Mutual aid agreements/other mechanisms
- Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers for Homeland Security programs.  
This module would include:
    - Organization and culture of HS first responders
    - Traditional interaction with volunteer sector
    - Identifying niche for volunteer service
    - How to develop and implement a grass roots plan
    - Partnerships/activities to promote volunteer retention
- Developing Strategic Partnerships for your program  
This module would include:
    - Researching needs of community sectors
    - Identifying potential program partners
    - Preparing your presentation for varied audiences
    - “Making the ask.”
    - Targeted marketing of your programs
    - Mutual aid agreements/other mechanisms
- Seniors Supporting Business Continuity Planning  
This module would include:
    - Identifying potentially vulnerable small businesses
    - Conducting risk assessments of small businesses
    - Identifying most critical business continuity needs
    - Developing plans with priorities and strategies
- Sustaining Programs through Positive Communications  
This module would include:
    - Value of communications to sustainability
    - Identify and define stakeholders for outreach
    - Reaching Traditional vs. non-traditional stakeholders
    - Mechanisms to reach your stakeholder audiences
    - Working with the media

### **C. Responsive Technical Assistance**

Provide personal, phone and email TA to grantees for specific issues, problems, or technical referrals.

**D. Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Exchange between HLS Grantees**

Provide an on-going mechanism for peer to peer exchange. The primary medium for this will be a web based chat room.

**E. Promising Practices Exchange**

Promising practices will be exchanged in a variety of ways. There will be a location on the Web for the display and discussion of practices; whenever a training session is held, sharing of practices will be a major component; and webinars will be designed to address particular issues with a sharing of successful practices. Examples include: the Florida Front Porch Preparedness program, the North Carolina Foster Grandparent Preparedness program, the Tulsa Language and Culture Bank, the Amateur Radio Disaster Response program, the Austin Sr. Corp Law enforcement patrol.

**F. Homeland Security Partnership Directory and Training Catalogue**

As part of the proposed Homeland Security Community Resource Network, design and develop a tool-kit/partnership directory and training catalogue around homeland security.

## **Appendix A: Focus Group Guide for Homeland Security T/TA**

### ***Introduction***

The purpose of this focus group is to identify what your needs are for Homeland Security Program technical assistance. Project TAHS the new CNCS T/TA provider for homeland security initiatives has been contracted to provide TA on issues such as:

- Homeland Security organization and partnership building
- Emergency preparedness and response planning
- Risk Assessment/Community Threat Assessment
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Public health/ immunization/emergency medical/toxicology
- Crisis Communications
- Public education and awareness
- Public safety and crime prevention
- Multi-hazard mitigation
- Infrastructure protection

Our goal is to be responsive to your program's needs. To help us do this, we are holding focus groups and will be conducting interviews with program staff to get your input on the issues you face, the resources you need and that you have found to be helpful in the past. Your T/TA needs surrounding Homeland Security, and the ideas and resources you may have to offer other programs. There is no right or wrong answers to our questions and everyone's thoughts are important. We will be tape recording, so please only one person talk at a time.

### ***A. Your Projects***

1. Please introduce yourself and tell us what program you represent and where you are located?
2. What does your program do related to homeland security? Who are your audiences?
3. What local, state or federal agencies, do you work with as part of your homeland security efforts? (Probe for DHS, State Emergency Services, National Guard, CDC and other specific agencies)
4. What other organizations do you work with? (Probe for other non-profits/ public service agencies, religious or social service organizations.)

### ***B. Program Challenges and Successes***

1. What impediments did you face in designing your program/activities? In implementing them?

2. What successes have you had in implementing your program/activities?
3. Who have been your biggest supporters/local champions?

### ***C. Resources and Needs***

1. Other than more money or supplies, what would be of greatest help to you and your program? (Probe for training curricula, connections with other organizations, guidance in specific areas)
2. What types of information or programming assistance would help you implement your program more effectively? (For example best practices, model programs, special needs/language issues, training or exercise design)
3. What is the preferred way for you to receive this information? (Probe for web alerts, e-mail, newsletters, one-on-one etc.)
4. What information or resources do you have to share with other programs? What is the preferred way for you to share this information?

### ***Closing***

Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to add before we close this session?