A Guide to Effective Citizenship

Through AmeriCorps

Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National Service

Established in 1993, the Corporation for National Service engages more than a million Americans each year in service to their communities–helping to solve community problems. The Corporation supports services at the national, state, and local levels, overseeing three main initiatives:

- AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs and, after their service, receive education awards to help finance college or training;

- Learn and Serve America, which helps link service and education for students from kindergarten through college; and

- the National Senior Service Corps, through which Americans 55 and older contribute their skills and experience.

Constitutional Rights Foundation

Established in 1962, Constitutional Rights Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to educating young people to be more effective citizens. Governed by a board of directors representing community leaders in law, business, government, education, and the media, CRF provides programs and materials throughout the nation.

Recognizing that future citizens must possess knowledge, attitudes, and skills to effectively participate in civic affairs and democratic decision making, CRF offers students a wide variety of programs on law and government and civic participation. It provides teachers with technical assistance and training, classroom volunteer services and student conferences, and curricular publications on law, government, civic participation, and business.

Contents

Introduction

Making Connections: Citizenship and the Mission of AmeriCorps

In leading an AmeriCorps program, you have an exciting opportunity to apply a rich, full meaning of citizenship to the pressing needs of contemporary America. We all understand citizenship as the right to vote and the responsibility to obey the law. When linked to the mission of AmeriCorps, citizenship can also mean improving our nation's quality of life.

Getting Things Done—AmeriCorps members explore their potential as citizens by helping communities meet their education, public safety, environmental, or other human needs.

Strengthening Communities—AmeriCorps members broaden the meaning of citizenship by helping to unite groups and individuals from all different backgrounds.

Encouraging Responsibility—AmeriCorps members exercise citizenship by fulfilling responsibility to their communities, their families, and themselves through service.

Expanding Opportunity—AmeriCorps members accumulate valuable leadership skills, job experience, specialized training, and opportunities to further their education, thus becoming more effective citizens for the future.

With strong leadership, careful planning, and an ethic of active citizenship, AmeriCorps members can effectively address a broad range of national needs. Members can work with day-care and parenting programs to provide our children with a healthier future. Members can build teams to clean up urban neighborhoods or restore precious rural habitats. They can act as liaisons between law enforcement officers and community members in an effort to bring public safety to neighborhoods accosted by violence and fear. Because AmeriCorps is designed to address the needs of almost any community, the opportunities for active citizenship are practically limitless.

By linking the mission of AmeriCorps to the concept of citizenship, AmeriCorps members can realize their potential as individuals. Working together to improve the quality of life for a community can do wonders for personal growth. Team efforts help individuals develop social skills, and gain self-confidence. Linking citizenship to the AmeriCorps mission helps members develop vital connections between their sense of themselves and their value to the community.

This publication provides tools for integrating active citizenship into the AmeriCorps experience through interactive educational modules.

Overview

The handbook is divided into 10 modules of two hours apiece. The modules are based on four elements essential to active citizenship: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action.

Each module has two sessions: a content session and an action session. The content sessions provide activities that help members delve into the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship. The action sessions guide members through a service project in the community.
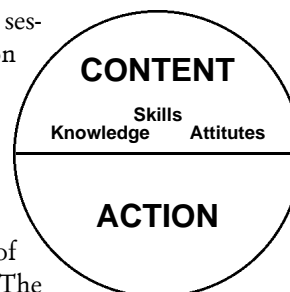
Knowledge

To function effectively as a citizen, AmeriCorps members should have some basic knowledge about citizen rights, community issues, and their community's institutions. Many activities in the modules provide members an opportunity to gain some of this knowledge.

Skills

The ability to use information effectively, to make a plan and act on it, and to move others to support your efforts requires special skills. Skill activities give AmeriCorps members methods to evaluate public issues and public opinion polls. Other activities help members learn how to find information about community issues.

Attitudes

An effective citizen upholds democratic attitudes—values, dispositions, and outlooks. Activities on attitudes will give members the opportunity to discuss methods for dealing with conflicting rights

and values, the pros and cons of getting involved in community problems, why different perspectives exist, and how to accommodate them.

Action

An effective citizen, working with others, can improve the community. The second part of each module is an action session. The action sessions take members through a service project in the community. AmeriCorps members can learn much from planning, implementing, and evaluating an action project in the community.

This publication is intended to support your efforts to help members make the challenging but fulfilling connection between citizenship and the mission of AmeriCorps.

When doing a service project, keep these things in mind:

Make sure the project . . .

- **Can be accomplished, given your resources and time frame.**
  A successful "small project" is preferable to a failed grandiose project.
- **Does not fall under "Prohibited Program Activities."** (See **Handout 2C**.)
- **Serves the community.** An essential part of every project should be to involve members of the community in planning and giving input.
- **Promotes good citizenship in general or fits within one of the AmeriCorps issue areas: education, the environment, public safety, and other human needs.**

Ask members to keep all the handouts from one session to the next. They will prove helpful at all stages of a project.

Photocopy and distribute the resource guide to help members with their project. The resource guide, located at the back of this guide, contains a reading list and additional ideas for community-service projects.

How to Use This Guide

Review the guide carefully. Look through each module's content and action sessions to familiarize yourself with the material.

Plan each module carefully. Read the facilitator's instructions and the member handouts well in advance and plan how you are going to present the material. Make sure you have all the material listed under "Facilitator Checklist." You will need to photocopy the member handouts to distribute to all the members who attend. The checklist may call for a chalkboard or chart paper. If your meeting room does not have a chalkboard, you can usually find pads of low-cost chart paper (27" x 34") in most office-supply stores.

Most modules follow the same pattern. They are divided into two sessions. In each session, typically you . . .

1. Distribute the member handout.

2. Begin with a short introduction.

3. Ask members to read a brief article in the member handout.

4. Have them do an activity in small groups.

5. Use the questions listed on the handout under "For Discussion" to discuss the activity.

Exact instructions for leading every session are detailed in this guide.

Use the tips in "Training Methods" on pp. 4 to help you. "Training Methods" includes sections on brainstorming (which you are asked to do in some sessions) and on directed discussions and small groups (which every session requires). The final section on handling controversy will help you in case an argument erupts during a session.

Training Methods

This publication aims to broaden members' vision of citizenship through selected readings, group study, directed discussions, brainstorming, and ultimately a civic action project in the community. As a facilitator, it will be your job to introduce the information in this booklet and guide AmeriCorps members to participate effectively in the sessions and activities. In short, you will be acting as a teacher. Here are some teaching techniques.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique for generating lots of ideas. In a brainstorming session, people do not judge or criticize any idea because that would stop people from coming up with ideas. All judgments are left to after the brainstorm session.

In a typical brainstorm, a group is given a clearly stated question such as, "What is the most serious problem in your community?" Within a limited time, members are told to think of the greatest possible number of answers. One group member records the answers. The time pressure short-circuits judgment: If members must come up with lots of ideas quickly, they have no time to judge or censor their own thought process. Here are a few quick rules for brainstorming:

- Say anything that comes to mind.
- Do not judge or criticize what others say.
- Build on other ideas.

After all items have been brainstormed and listed, participants can discuss, critique, and prioritize them.

Directed Discussions

A discussion section is included in every handout. Discussions allow members to explore the material further. There may not be a single, easy answer to the questions raised.

As a group facilitator, it will be your responsibility to direct the discussion. Try to arrange the seats in a circle so members can look at one another when they are speaking. Use the discussion questions to get the process going. Once the discussion is going, try to take a back seat and allow the discussion to take its course.

Your role, however, is not passive. In a directed discussion, all participants should be treated as equal partners. Encourage everyone to participate. Be sure members listen to one another. Don't allow the conversation to stray off the topic.

Make a list of ground rules for all discussions and ask members to agree to them prior to the first discussion. Here are some suggested ground rules for discussions:

- State your ideas and opinions clearly.
- Support your statements with facts or logical arguments.
- Define the terms you use.
- Keep an open mind and listen to one another.
- Respect the opinions of others.
- Work together to answer the questions posed.

Small Groups

By working in small groups of two to five members, people get the opportunity to communicate, cooperate, persuade, bargain, and compromise. They learn that problems are best solved through the efforts of groups rather than individuals. In small groups, it is harder for members to blend into the background. Each must make a contribution. Here are a few tips to make small groups work:

- Make sure people understand the activity before they begin.
- Give each group member a task.
- Monitor progress by circulating among the groups.
- Make sure all members participate inside the group.

Handling Controversy

Disagreement is a real—indeed necessary—part of dealing with community issues. Controversy cannot, and should not, be avoided. When properly handled, disagreements can bring information and understanding to a discussion. When controversy arises in discussion, clarify the disagreement. Identify the issue under dispute. Point out areas of conflict and agreement, and look for assumptions that give rise to the controversy. When conflict becomes apparent, ask members to follow these ground rules:

- Argue ideas, not personalities.
- Admit to weak points in their own position.
- Listen carefully and represent the opposite viewpoint fairly and accurately.
- Concentrate arguments on facts and information.

If necessary, bring in one or more resource persons who can provide a balanced perspective on the issue at hand.

MODULE ONE

This is the introductory module. In the content session, members discuss the qualities of an effective citizen. In the action session, they read a summary of the action sessions and they begin exploring their community by looking for assets and resources that may help them with an action project.

CONTENT SESSION: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

This session introduces members to the elements of effective citizenship. It asks members to think about what it takes to be an effective citizen. First, members read about citizenship. Then in small groups, they brainstorm the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action it takes to be an effective citizen.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 1A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Brainstorm components of effective citizenship in four areas: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action.

2. Rank and defend their opinion of the most important citizenship components in each of these four areas.

3. Explain how AmeriCorps helps members develop citizenship knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action.

Notes

Effective Citizenship

Introduction

In AmeriCorps, citizenship can mean much more than memorizing names and dates from a history book or spending a Saturday cleaning up a vacant lot. What is citizenship *really* about, and how can it help you make a real and lasting difference in your own life and the life of your community?

I. Citizenship in Our Free Society

AmeriCorps encourages its members, and indeed all of America, to embrace a renewal and expansion of the idea of citizenship. At a basic level, citizenship means voting, obeying the law, and serving on juries. On another level, it means much more. Citizenship also means:

- Becoming informed about the critical issues facing our nation and its communities.
- Making a commitment to personal responsibility for the welfare of ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.
- Getting involved at the grassroots level to solve problems and build a better future for everyone.

II. Activity

In small groups, do two tasks:

First, list as many ideas as you can in response to these four questions:

1. What does an effective citizen need to **know**? (How laws are made, etc.)
2. What **skills** does an effective citizen need? (Speaking, etc.)
3. What **attitudes** (values, dispositions, and outlooks) does an effective citizen need? (Belief that one person can make a difference, etc.)
4. What does an effective citizen need to **do**? (Vote, etc.)

Second, from the answers you have brainstormed, choose the top three answers to each question.

III. For Discussion

1. What do you think are the three most important citizenship skills? The three most important attitudes? Items of knowledge? Actions? Explain.
2. How can the AmeriCorps experience help develop citizenship knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action?
3. What do you think makes a good citizen?
4. What could AmeriCorps do to encourage good citizenship?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "Who in your opinion is an effective citizen?" (Accept various answers.)

2. Tell members that they are going to read about citizenship and think about what it takes to be an effective citizen. Distribute **Handout 1A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Citizenship in Our Free Society.** When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.

3. Put members in groups of four. Tell them to brainstorm answers to the four questions about citizenship in **Section II: Activity**. Each member should be responsible for recording on paper the group's answers to one question.

4. When the groups complete the brainstorm, ask them to do one more task. Have them rank in order of importance what they consider their top three answers to each question.

5. List these headings on the board: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Action. After the groups finish ranking their answers, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**. As groups report their top three answers, list them under the appropriate heading on the board.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In this first action session, members are introduced to the action sessions and they start identifying community assets and resources. First, members read and discuss an overview of the 10 action sessions. Then they read tips on finding government and non-profit agencies in the community that are concerned with AmeriCorps issue areas. Next, they are assigned to find and record contact information about these groups. In the next action session, they will report on the agencies they find.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 1B for members
- Four 3 x 5 cards for each member

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Identify and distinguish non-profit and government agencies from one another.
2. Use resources to locate community agencies working on an AmeriCorps issue area.
3. Describe various agencies working on community problems.

Notes

Introduction to the Action Sessions

Introduction

Part of the mission of AmeriCorps is to empower members to become a force for positive change in the communities of America (in other words, to become effective citizens). These 10 modules are designed to serve this purpose. Each module has two sessions. The first focuses on skills, attitudes, or knowledge helpful to effective citizens. The second session focuses on action. It will take you through a civic action project in the community. Your action project will not just help the community. It will also help you develop leadership and other citizenship skills. Below is a summary of the 10 action sessions.

I. The 10 Action Sessions

1: **Identify Community Resources.** Find other community agencies working on the AmeriCorps issue areas.

2: **Identify Problems.** Find problems in the community.

3: **Take an Opinion Poll.** Find out which problems the community considers most important.

4: **Select and Research a Problem.** Decide on a problem area that you want to focus on and research this problem.

5: **Analyze Policies.** Examine policies related to the problem, which members have discovered doing their research.

6: **Decide on Action Projects.** Break into teams and decide on the most suitable project for your team to do.

7: **Plan and Do the Projects.** Each team will do a project.

8: **Check Progress on the Projects.** Report on your progress, compare notes with other teams, and get guidance.

9: **Evaluate the Projects.** Reflect on what you did and how you did it.

10: **Spread the Word.** Tell others about your projects.

II. For Discussion

1. How do you feel about doing an action project? Why?
2. What value do you think an action project might have?
3. Which of these sessions do you think will be the most challenging? Why?

III. Activity

In this activity, you will look for community assets and resources. Divide into four groups. Each group will be assigned one AmeriCorps issue area.

You should find government **and** non-profit agencies in the community that work on your AmeriCorps issue area. Fill out a 3 x 5 card for each agency. Put the following information on the card in this order:

1. AmeriCorps issue area the agency focuses on.
2. Name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail, and web address of the agency.
3. Government organization or non-profit.
4. Name and job title of a contact person.
5. Short description of the agency's purpose.

Corporation for National Service
A Facilitator's Guide to Effective Citizenship Through AmeriCorps

Handout 1C

Conducting the Session

1. Inform members that each module will include an action session, which will take them through a service project in the community. Tell them that in this session they will locate other community organizations and agencies. Ask members: "What community agencies do you know about that address the AmeriCorps issue areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs?" (Accept various answers.)

2. Distribute **Handout 1B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: The 10 Action Sessions**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have. Then hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

3. Put members in four groups. Assign each group one of the four AmeriCorps issue areas. Ask members to read **Section III: Activity**. Distribute **Handout 1C**. This is a handout that will help them complete the activity. Answer any questions that members may have.

4. Pass out four 3 x 5 cards to each member. Tell them that each member will be responsible for filling out four cards and that groups will report their findings at the next meeting. Give the groups some time to plot their search strategies.

5. In the next action session (in Module Two), each group will present the agencies they find out about.

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4. Name and job title of a contact person.
5. Short description of the agency's purpose.

Identifying Community Resources

Two important things to remember in searching for information are:

1. **Take notes of where you search and with whom you talk.** Do this throughout your action project.
2. **Whenever you talk to someone at an organization, ask if that person knows of other similar organizations.**

For this exploration, you may not even need to leave your home. Your telephone book and a few telephone calls may provide you with the answers you need. The Internet is another source. If you don't have a connection at home, try the local library.

Telephone and telephone book. Your telephone book is a major resource. Many phone books have helpful information about community organizations in the front. The government pages (usually found in the front of the White Pages) list government offices under headings of city, county, state, and U.S. government. Look in the Yellow Pages for non-profits listed by the service they deliver. If you know the name of an organization, find it in the White Pages.

Local library. The library holds lots of information about the community, usually at the reference desk. Tell the reference librarian what you're looking for.

Internet. Many cities, counties, and non-profits have web sites. Use a search engine and track them down.

Map of the community. You may get one free from the Chamber of Commerce, Auto Club, Tourist Bureau, or City Hall.

MODULE TWO

In the content session, members discuss and decide on the most vital problems facing America. In the action session, members identify community problems.

CONTENT SESSION: CITIZEN CHOICES

One of the crucial tasks of a citizen is becoming knowledgeable and thinking critically about community problems. This session asks members to select a problem (related to an AmeriCorps issue area) and convince others of its importance. First, members read a brief essay on why thinking critically about problems is important. Then they select a problem that they consider America's most important problem, form groups based on their selection, and make arguments to convince others of its importance.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 2A for members
- Write the nine items listed under "America's Deadlines" on Handout 2A on the chalkboard or chart paper.

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Discuss and form an opinion on what is the most pressing problem facing America.

2. Develop arguments supporting why it is the most pressing problem.

3. Make a persuasive presentation.

Notes

Conducting the Session

1. Distribute **Handout 2A**. Have members read **Introduction** and **Section I: Selecting Problems**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.

2. Ask members to read **Section II: Activity**. When they finish, ask members if any additional items should be added to the list of America's Deadlines (add the additional items under "other" on the board). Then tell members to take a moment and decide which problem is most important. (Members should think and decide individually without discussion.)

3. Point to item number 1 and ask: "Who has selected this item as the most pressing problem?" As members raise their hands, direct them to meet together in an area of the room. If no one selects the item, move to the next item.

4. Continue this process for the remaining items, after which you should have several groups of different sizes around the room. Ask each group to prepare a brief argument in favor of its selection. After a few minutes, call on the groups to make their presentations.

5. After each presentation, ask if anyone has changed his or her mind and would like to switch groups. Discuss the reasons.

6. Conclude by holding a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

ACTION SESSION: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

In this session, members start preparing for an action project by taking a look at community problems they might want to work on. First, members read AmeriCorps guidelines on projects. Next, they read about some AmeriCorps projects and discuss different community problems. Then they interview community members about what they believe are the most important community problems.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 2B and 2C for members
- Members bring their completed 3 x 5 cards.

Notes

Identifying Community Problems

Introduction
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead, anthropologist (1901–1978)

Being an effective citizen means taking an active role in your community. By joining AmeriCorps, you've made a commitment to be an active citizen. What do you want to do to help the community?

I. Getting Things Done
AmeriCorps is about getting things done. AmeriCorps members have helped communities strengthen their schools, make their streets safer, improve their public health care, and clean their environment. For example, AmeriCorps members in different communities have:

- Improved the reading scores of elementary students through tutoring and helping parents get more involved in school activities.
- Helped lower crime rates by working with community policing efforts and Neighborhood Watch organizations.
- Helped public health officials immunize thousands of infants.
- Enhanced the environment by clearing trash from lots, developing community gardens, and planting trees.

These are just a few examples. There are many possible things you can do as an AmeriCorps member. AmeriCorps places just a few limits on projects. These restrictions are:

- Your project should help a community meet its educational, public safety, environmental, or other human needs (such as housing and health care). These are the areas that AmeriCorps focuses on.
- Your project should have community support. The goal of AmeriCorps is to help communities achieve what they want. Before you do any project, you should check with community organizations and community members by interviewing or polling them. They can guide you in planning and carrying out your project to ensure it meets community needs.
- Your project must not involve any "prohibited program activities." Since AmeriCorps is a non-partisan organization set up by Congress, members must be careful not to involve AmeriCorps in political, religious, or union activities. **Handout 2C** lists activities prohibited for AmeriCorps members.

II. For Discussion
1. What do you think are this community's greatest problems? Make a list.
2. Why do you think it's important to get input from the community on its problems?
3. What community members or organizations can give you input on the community's problems?

III. Activity
Before the next session, call or meet with at least two community members or representatives from community agencies and ask them to list the five greatest community problems. Bring your list to the next session.

Handout 2C

Conducting the Session

1. From an assignment in the last action session, groups were supposed to collect information and record it on 3 x 5 cards. Ask each group to present the agencies they found out about. Collect the cards they filled out. Hold a discussion using these questions:
   - What was your best resource for finding things?
   - What are non-profit organizations? How are they different from government agencies?
   - Which organizations seemed most important in working on AmeriCorps issue areas? Why?
   - What relationships do you see between these various agencies?
   - How can you use the information you found?

2. Distribute **Handout 2B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction**. Hold a brief discussion by asking:
   - What does Margaret Mead's statement mean?
   - Do you think it is true? Why or why not?

3. Tell members they are going to discuss ways to make a difference in their own community. Ask members to read **Section I: Getting Things Done**.

4. Distribute **Handout 2C** (this is the list of Prohibited Program Activities). Briefly discuss it. (NOTE: All projects described in this publication meet AmeriCorps guidelines. Even so, before any member takes part in a project, you should make sure the project does not involve any of the activities listed in the "Prohibited Program Activities." If you are unsure whether a particular project is

prohibited, postpone the project until you receive clearance from your supervisor.)

5. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**. List on the board all the problems members come up with. Have members copy this list for the next action session.

6. Assign **Section III: Activity**. Remind members that they can use the contacts they found out about in the last action session to help them complete the assignment. Tell members to bring the lists of community problems that they gather to the next session when they will share the lists.

Optional Follow-up Activities

• Use the 3 x 5 cards to create a Community Resource File Box or Computer Database.

• Ask members to create a chart showing the relationships among the various agencies.

Notes

Citizen Choices

Introduction

Every day we are confronted with serious social problems that affect the quality of life for ourselves and our community. As an AmeriCorps member, you have made an exciting choice to work on problems regarding education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs. Where do you begin? Where will you be most effective? What problems do you think are most pressing?

I. Selecting Problems

While government, business, and non-profit groups all play a role in addressing America's problems, they don't have enough resources to deal with every problem. Even with the help of volunteers, not all problems can be fully addressed. Hard choices must be made.

For government at the local, state, and federal level, legislators must decide every year which programs will be funded and which will not. As individuals and volunteers, we must decide what causes to support and where to put our time and energy. Once we have decided, we also have to try to persuade others–our governmental representatives, community groups, and friends and associates–that the cause we believe in is worth supporting.

Choosing issues and convincing others of their importance is an essential civic responsibility.

II. Activity

Carefully review the following list of some of the problems that currently face America. Which has the most pressing deadline? Which, if solved, will benefit the greatest number of people? Decide for yourself which problem is the most important.

America's Deadlines

1. AIDS
2. Illiteracy
3. Child abuse
4. Air, land, and water pollution
5. Gang-related violence
6. High drop-out rates from school
7. Forest, wetlands, and wildlife preservation
8. Drug and alcohol abuse
9. Other (please specify)

In the second part of the activity, form groups with members who have made the same choice of most important problem. Discuss your reasons and prepare a presentation to persuade others that yours is the most pressing deadline.

III. For Discussion

1 How does each of these problems relate to the AmeriCorps issue areas?
2. What additional problems might be added to the list?
3. What could you and your group do to address some of these problems?

Identifying Community Problems

Introduction

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

–Margaret Mead, anthropologist (1901–1978)

Being an effective citizen means taking an active role in your community. By joining AmeriCorps, you've made a commitment to be an active citizen. What do you want to do to help the community?

I. Getting Things Done

AmeriCorps is about getting things done. AmeriCorps members have helped communities strengthen their schools, make their streets safer, improve their public health care, and clean their environment. For example, AmeriCorps members in different communities have:

- Improved the reading scores of elementary students through tutoring and helping parents get more involved in school activities.
- Helped lower crime rates by working with community policing efforts and Neighborhood Watch organizations.
- Helped public health officials immunize thousands of infants.
- Enhanced the environment by clearing trash from lots, developing community gardens, and planting trees.

These are just a few examples. There are many possible things you can do as an AmeriCorps member. AmeriCorps places just a few limits on projects. These restrictions are:

- Your project should help a community meet its educational, public safety, environmental, or other human needs (such as housing and health care). These are the areas that AmeriCorps focuses on.
- Your project should have community support. The goal of AmeriCorps is to help communities achieve what they want. Before you do any project, you should check with community organizations and community members by interviewing or polling them. They can guide you in planning and carrying out your project to ensure it meets community needs.
- Your project must not involve any "prohibited program activities." Since AmeriCorps is a non-partisan organization set up by Congress, members must be careful not to involve AmeriCorps in political, religious, or union activities. **Handout 2C** lists activities prohibited for AmeriCorps members.

II. For Discussion

1. What do you think are this community's greatest problems? Make a list.
2. Why do you think it's important to get input from the community on its problems?
3. What community members or organizations can give you input on the community's problems?

III. Activity

Before the next session, call or meet with at least two community members or representatives from community agencies and ask them to list the five greatest community problems. Bring your list to the next session.

Prohibited Program Activities for AmeriCorps Members and Staff

While charging time to the AmeriCorps Program, accumulating service/training hours or otherwise engaged in activities associated with the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

a. Any effort to influence legislation.

b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts or strikes.

c. Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.

d. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements.

e. Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.

f. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities which are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.

g. Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.

h. Providing a direct benefit to:

   i. a for-profit entity;

   ii. a labor union;

   iii. a partisan political organization; or

   iv. an organization engaged in the religious activities described in g., unless Grant funds are not used to support the religious activities.

   v. a nonprofit entity that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of Title 26, except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent Members or Participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative.

MODULE THREE

In the content session, members discuss opinion polls. In the action session, members create an opinion poll on community problems and conduct the poll on community members.

CONTENT SESSION: OPINION POLLING

Because polls are used to measure public opinion on all aspects of American society, it's important that citizens be able to critically examine them and even put them to use. This session asks members to do both. First, members read and discuss questions for analyzing polls. Then they conduct an informal poll about citizenship action on themselves.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 3A for members

Notes

Polling

Introduction

You often hear results of opinion polls. Newspapers report them. Politicians cite them to show the public supports their proposals. In debates on issues, people bring them up. But like most statistics, poll results can mislead. When looking at the results of any opinion poll, it's helpful to ask the following questions.

I. Questions to Ask About Opinion Polls

Who sponsored the survey? Watch out for polls sponsored by groups with an interest in the results.

When was the poll conducted? Even if a poll is accurate, it only reflects one point in time—the time it was taken. As a general rule, the more recent the poll, the more meaningful it is.

What were the questions? Confusing, biased, or emotionally charged questions produce misleading answers.

Was the poll scientific? Who was interviewed? How many people? In general, the more the better. Were they selected at random? If not, the poll doesn't mean much. Polls on television and the Internet that ask people to respond by telephoning or responding electronically do not have a random sample. They reflect the views of those who have chosen to respond and do not necessarily reflect the views of the community or nation.

II. Activity

Conduct the following survey on another member. Discuss the results with all the members.

Survey:

1. Do you vote? YES   NO
2. Have you served on a jury? YES   NO
3. Have you ever written a letter to the editor of a newspaper? YES   NO
4. Have you ever written a letter to an elected official? YES   NO
5. Have you ever done volunteer work for a community-based organization? YES   NO
6. Have you ever worked on a political campaign? YES   NO
7. Have you ever started a community project? YES   NO
8. Do you stay informed on community issues? YES   NO
   If YES, then how do you stay informed? (check all that are appropriate)

   ____ read a daily newspaper   ____ listen to news on radio

   ____ watch TV news   ____ get news from the Internet

   ____ other _____

III. For Discussion

1. What surprised you about the results? What didn't surprise you?
2. Do you think the results of the survey would be similar for AmeriCorps volunteers across the nation? For the community at large? Explain.
3. Which of the citizen actions on the survey do you think is most important? Least important? Explain.
4. How do you think AmeriCorps members can promote these citizen actions?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "How many of you have taken part in an opinion poll or survey?" Hold a brief discussion by asking them:
   - What value do polls have?
   - Do you think we rely too much on opinion polls? Why or why not?

2. Tell them that today they are going to read a little about polls and even conduct one. Distribute **Handout 3A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Questions to Ask About Opinion Polls**. When they finish, hold a discussion by asking them:
   - Which question do you think is most important to ask? Why?
   - Are there any other questions that you think should be asked of a poll? Explain.

3. Put members in pairs. Ask them to conduct the survey in **Section II: Activity** on each other.

4. Tally the results on the board.

5. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Optional Follow-up Activity

Ask members to bring in surveys they find and examine them by using the Questions to Ask About Opinion Polls.

ACTION SESSION: POLLING THE COMMUNITY ON PROBLEMS

In this session, members delve further into community problems and create and conduct an opinion poll. First, members share and discuss their lists of community problems, which they were assigned in the last action session. Then they read about how to develop and conduct opinion polls. Finally, they create a poll on community problems and conduct it in the community.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 3B for members
- Members bring their lists of community problems that they are supposed to have gathered for this session.

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Create unbiased questions for an opinion poll.
2. Conduct an opinion poll.
3. Discuss community problems.

Notes

Do Your Own Opinion Poll

Introduction

Although you probably don't have the means to conduct a scientific opinion poll, you can take an informal poll. It can help you learn what people in the community think about problems. It is important to determine this before you do any service in the community. There are three steps to surveying:

I. Three Steps to Opinion Surveying

1. Create a Survey

- **Make most of your questions multiple choice and yes/no.** This will make your survey easy to tabulate.
- **Keep the survey short and simple.**
- **Be sure that your questions do not force particular answers.** They must be unbiased. Otherwise your survey results will be open to criticism.
- **Test your survey.** Before conducting the survey, ask someone to check it over. Does that person think it is clear?

2. Select the Population and Sample

- **Determine the population.** What will your poll results represent? The opinions of everyone in the community? Of a section of the community? Select the population you want the poll to cover.
- **Select a sample.** You don't have to poll the entire population to get a good idea of how people in the population feel. Try to get a random sample of the population. This means that every person in the population has the same chance of taking the survey. For example, telephoning the fifth person on each page of the phone book would be a random sample.

3. Conduct the Survey

- **Prepare and practice a brief introduction.** When approaching a stranger, introduce yourself, tell what group you are from, explain the survey's purpose, and ask whether the person would mind spending a few minutes answering it.
- **Be polite.** People who answer your survey are doing you a favor. Don't badger anyone to take the survey.
- **Tell all interviewees that they do not have to put their names on the survey.** Results will be reported anonymously.
- **Be as organized as possible.** Use a clipboard to hold the surveys and bring extra pens or pencils.
- **Wait for each survey and check it.** Make sure the information is complete. If you read the survey to the respondent and fill it in, write exactly what the person says.

II. Discussion

1. Why is a random sample important for an opinion poll? How would you get a random sample of the community?
2. What do you think would be the most difficult part of creating and conducting a poll? Why?
3. Why do you think it's important to find out which problems the community considers most serious?

III. Activity

In this session, follow the directions on this handout and create a poll to determine which community problems are considered most important by community members. Before the next session, conduct the poll on five community members. In the next action session, you will compile the results.

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members to share their lists of community problems that they gathered. List the problems on the board, add any other problems that members think are important, and hold a discussion about the problems.

2. Ask members how else they could discover which problems the community believes are important. If someone doesn't answer "with an opinion poll," suggest this answer and distribute **Handout 3B**.

3. Ask them to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Three Steps to Opinion Surveying**. When they finish, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

4. Have them read **Section III: Activity**. Ask them to get in pairs and develop questions for the survey. Remind them that the questions should be multiple choice or yes/no questions and should not lead a person to a particular answer.

5. After the pairs have developed questions, call on people to share their questions and have the group decide on the best questions and how they should be ordered on the survey.

6. As a group, decide on what population your survey is aimed at and how to get a random sample of the population.

7. Ask the members to practice conducting the survey on one another.

8. Have each member be responsible for surveying five people. As a safety precaution, suggest that the surveying be done in pairs if they are contacting community members in person.

Polling

Introduction
You often hear results of opinion polls. Newspapers report them. Politicians cite them to show the public supports their proposals. In debates on issues, people bring them up. But like most statistics, poll results can mislead. When looking at the results of any opinion poll, it's helpful to ask the following questions.

I. Questions to Ask About Opinion Polls
Who sponsored the survey? Watch out for polls sponsored by groups with an interest in the results.

When was the poll conducted? Even if a poll is accurate, it only reflects one point in time–the time it was taken. As a general rule, the more recent the poll, the more meaningful it is.

What were the questions? Confusing, biased, or emotionally charged questions produce misleading answers.

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II. Activity
Conduct the following survey on another member. Discuss the results with all the members.
Survey:

1. Do you vote? YES   NO

2. Have you served on a jury? YES   NO

3. Have you ever written a letter to the editor of a newspaper? YES   NO

4. Have you ever written a letter to an elected official? YES   NO

5. Have you ever done volunteer work for a community-based organization? YES   NO

6. Have you ever worked on a political campaign? YES   NO

7. Have you ever started a community project? YES   NO

8. Do you stay informed on community issues? YES   NO
    If YES, then how do you stay informed? (check all that are appropriate)

    _____ read a daily newspaper   _____ listen to news on radio

    _____ watch TV news   _____ get news from the Internet

    _____ other _____

III. For Discussion
1. What surprised you about the results? What didn't surprise you?

2. Do you think the results of the survey would be similar for AmeriCorps volunteers across the nation? For the community at large? Explain.

3. Which of the citizen actions on the survey do you think is most important? Least important? Explain.

4. How do you think AmeriCorps members can promote these citizen actions?

Do Your Own Opinion Poll

Introduction
Although you probably don't have the means to conduct a scientific opinion poll, you can take an informal poll. It can help you learn what people in the community think about problems. It is important to determine this before you do any service in the community. There are three steps to surveying:

I. Three Steps to Opinion Surveying

1. Create a Survey

- **Make most of your questions multiple choice and yes/no.** This will make your survey easy to tabulate.

- **Keep the survey short and simple.**

- **Be sure that your questions do not force particular answers.** They must be unbiased. Otherwise your survey results will be open to criticism.

- **Test your survey.** Before conducting the survey, ask someone to check it over. Does that person think it is clear?

2. Select the Population and Sample

- **Determine the population.** What will your poll results represent? The opinions of everyone in the community? Of a section of the community? Select the population you want the poll to cover.

- **Select a sample.** You don't have to poll the entire population to get a good idea of how people in the population feel. Try to get a random sample of the population. This means that every person in the population has the same chance of taking the survey. For example, telephoning the fifth person on each page of the phone book would be a random sample.

3. Conduct the Survey

- **Prepare and practice a brief introduction.** When approaching a stranger, introduce yourself, tell what group you are from, explain the survey's purpose, and ask whether the person would mind spending a few minutes answering it.

- **Be polite.** People who answer your survey are doing you a favor. Don't badger anyone to take the survey.

- **Tell all interviewees that they do not have to put their names on the survey.** Results will be reported anonymously.

- **Be as organized as possible.** Use a clipboard to hold the surveys and bring extra pens or pencils.

- **Wait for each survey and check it.** Make sure the information is complete. If you read the survey to the respondent and fill it in, write exactly what the person says.

II. Discussion

1. Why is a random sample important for an opinion poll? How would you get a random sample of the community?

2. What do you think would be the most difficult part of creating and conducting a poll? Why?

3. Why do you think it's important to find out which problems the community considers most serious?

III. Activity
In this session, follow the directions on this handout and create a poll to determine which community problems are considered most important by community members. Before the next session, conduct the poll on five community members. In the next action session, you will compile the results.

MODULE FOUR

In the content session, members examine local newspapers and their coverage of local problems. In the second, members select a community problem and research the problem.

CONTENT SESSION: CONDUCTING A NEWS SEARCH

The local newspaper is a tremendous resource for learning about the community. In this session, members use the local newspaper as a tool for gathering information about community problems. First, members read about newspapers and news articles. Then members search for articles on community problems, arrange them by problem area, and report their findings to the larger group.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Recent copies of local newspapers for members
- Copies of Handout 4A for members

Notes

Conducting a News Search

Introduction

As a citizen, it is important to be well-informed. Newspapers can supply a great deal of information about community issues on education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs. How does your local newspaper cover these issues? In this session, you will use the local newspaper as an information-gathering tool.

I. Newspapers

News stories are written in an "inverted pyramid" style, which makes them easy to scan. The most important and latest information comes in the first paragraph, known as the *lead paragraph*. This paragraph is short, usually only one sentence with fewer than 30 words. The first two paragraphs answer the six basic questions of a news story: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? The story then proceeds to provide greater detail, with the most important facts coming first and the less important later.

News stories are structured this way so they can be shortened easily to fit the space available in the newspaper. Editors can simply stop the story anywhere and omit the lower part. They can be confident that the main part of the story has already been told and they are only leaving out less important parts.

This structure also allows readers to understand the important details of an article without having to read the entire story.

II. Activity

In small groups, search your local newspaper for articles on the topics of **education**, **public safety**, the **environment**, and **other human needs**. List the articles you find under each topic. Write a brief description of the main idea of each article. Choose one person for each topic to report your findings to the larger group.

Here are some tips to help you search the paper quickly and easily:

*   **Scan the headlines** for words and ideas relating to the topics listed above.
*   **Skim the lead paragraph** of the story to grasp the main idea.
*   **Study the article** for facts on the topic.
*   **Think** about what you read. Later, you are going to discuss the information you read.

III. For Discussion

1. What topics did the newspaper cover the most?
2. Did it cover the problems you think are the most important problems in the community?
3. Do you think the newspaper described the problems fairly and accurately? Explain.

Conducting the Session

1. Distribute **Handout 4A**. Have members read the **Introduction**. Ask them: "Why do you think it's important to be well-informed about public issues?" Hold a brief discussion.

2. Ask members to read **Section I: Newspapers**. When they finish, use a copy of your local newspaper to locate its different sections and explain their function.

3. Divide members into groups of four. Distribute one newspaper to each group. Tell members to use the tips in **Section II: Activity** to search the paper for articles on education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs.

4. Tell members to make a list of the articles they find according to each of these topics and write a brief description of the main idea of each article. Tell them to choose different members of the group to report to the whole group on each of the four topics.

5. Call on groups to report on the articles they found on education. Repeat the process for each topic.

6. After all groups have reported, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Optional Follow-up Activities

*   Ask members to collect news articles on the problem area that interests them most.
*   Ask members to watch a television news broadcast and compare the problems covered in the newspaper with those mentioned on television.

ACTION SESSION: SELECTING AND RESEARCHING A PROBLEM

In this session, members select and research a problem. After reading a short selection, members choose a community problem to focus on and begin researching the problem. They carry on their research until the next module.

Facilitator Checklist
- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 4B and 4C for members
- Members bring the results of the poll they conducted on community problems

Learning Objectives
Members will be able to:

1. Identify the different components of a service project.
2. Select a community problem to focus on.
3. Research an aspect of the problem.

Notes

Selecting and Researching a Problem

Introduction

You've already learned a lot about the community's problems. You've interviewed and taken a poll of community members about these problems. Now it's time to select a problem that you want to work on and research it. Below are some ideas for doing these things.

I. Choose and Study a Problem

Select a Problem. Before you decide on a problem, discuss what you learned about problems from interviewing and polling community members. Then discuss these questions:

- Which problem affects your community the most?
- Which would be most interesting to work on?
- Which could be worked on most easily and effectively?
- Which would you learn the most from?

Research the Problem. The more you know about a problem, the more you'll understand how to approach it. Find out as much as you can about these three question areas:

1. Questions of causality.

- What causes the problem?
- What debates are there about the problem?
- Is it related to other problems? If so, how?

2. Questions about the problem's seriousness.

- How long has it existed?
- Who does it affect most?
- What are its effects?
- What will happen if it is not solved?

3. Policy questions.

- What is government doing about it?
  In the community.
  In other places.
- What are non-governmental groups doing about it?
- What are some ideas for working on the problem?
- Who else is working on it or is interested in it?

To find answers, try the following:

- **Use the library.** Look up newspaper articles. Ask the reference librarian for help.
- **Search the Internet.** Use a search engine. Look especially at government, media, and non-profit sites.
- **Interview experts.** Call local government officials. Find people at non-profit organizations that work on the problem.
- **Survey community members.** Ask questions of people you know. Conduct an informal written survey of community members.

II. For Discussion

1. What do you think should be the most important consideration in selecting a problem? Why?
2. Why do you think it's important to research a problem?
3. What other questions do you think it would be important to find out about the problem? Why?

III. Activity

As a whole group, decide on a problem area.

After deciding on one problem area to focus on, you can start researching it. Divide into three groups. Each group will be assigned one of the three question areas mentioned above. Use **Handout 4C** to help you research your question area.

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Conducting the Session

1. Ask members to take out their poll results. Divide members into three groups. Ask each group to tally the results from the poll onto one sheet. When this is done, have representatives from each group meet and quickly compile the results from the three sheets onto a final compilation sheet.

2. Ask the representatives to announce the results. Hold a discussion by asking these questions:
    - What problem (or problems) does the community consider most important? Why do you think community members consider it so important?
    - How accurate do you think your poll was? Why?

3. Inform members that the results from the survey can help them in the next step of their project. Distribute **Handout 4B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Choose and Study a Problem**

4. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

5. Ask members to read **Section III: Activity**. Have them select a problem area that they want to focus on. To do this, ask members to refer to the tips in the handout and to consider the questions there.

6. When they have decided on a problem, divide them into three groups and assign each group to

Organizations and Experts

Introduction
Many people and groups in your community probably are already working on the same problem as you. To locate them, use your telephone book. Call them and ask: What is being done about the problem? Who else is working on it or interested in it? One group will lead you to many others.

Finding Government Resources
Government officials, committees, boards, and departments work on community problems. Call your local elected representatives. In the telephone directory, find the government pages, usually located just before the White Pages. They list government offices under separate headings for city, county, state, and U.S. government. Under city, look for city council members. Under county, look for county supervisors. If you can't find them, call the main numbers under the city and county listings. Or try searching on the Internet or going to the library and asking the reference librarian for a list of local officials.

Finding Non-Profit Resources
These groups are not in business to make a profit. They vary widely—neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, environmental groups, volunteer organizations, charities, service organizations, fraternal societies, unions, churches, etc. Many play an active role in working on community problems.

Look in the Yellow Pages under "Educational Organizations" and "Educational Consultants"; "Environmental, Conservation, & Ecological Organizations"; "Fraternal Organizations"; "Human Services Organizations" or "Social Service Organizations"; "Labor Organizations"; "Political Organizations"; "Religious Organizations" and "Churches"; and "Senior Citizens' Services & Organizations." Call the United Way or a Volunteer Center. Ask for its information-and-referral directory and about groups working on a problem of interest to you. Also, look on the Internet. To find neighborhood associations, contact your local representative.

Finding Business Resources
Businesses and business groups are intensely interested in your community. Start with local business associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Chambers of Commerce" and "Business and Trade Associations." These groups may also have sites on the Internet.

Next find service organizations, such as Kiwanis, Rotary International, Lions, and Junior Chamber of Commerce. These groups are largely made up of business people. Members join to serve the community, socialize, and network with other business people. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Clubs" and "Associations" or look in the White Pages under the name of the group.

Finally, find individual businesses. Look for businesses near the problem or who would have a natural interest in the problem.

Finding Media Resources
The media—radio, television, newspapers—are businesses with the power to inform and influence the public. Reporters who have covered a problem know about groups interested in the problem. The media can also bring attention to your problem, attract volunteers, and advertise an event.

Read your newspaper or listen to broadcasts. Find out who covers the problem you are interested in. Call and ask for the newsroom and ask to speak with the reporter. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Newspapers," "Television Stations and Broadcast Companies," and "Radio Stations and Broadcasting Companies."

research one of the following three question areas mentioned in the handout:

- Questions of causality.
- Questions about the problem's seriousness.
- Policy questions.

7. Distribute and discuss **Handout 4C**, which will help them do the research. Tell them their research is due at the next action session.

Notes

Conducting a News Search

Introduction
As a citizen, it is important to be well-informed. Newspapers can supply a great deal of information about community issues on education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs. How does your local newspaper cover these issues? In this session, you will use the local newspaper as an information-gathering tool.

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- **Think** about what you read. Later, you are going to discuss the information you read.

III. For Discussion
1. What topics did the newspaper cover the most?
2. Did it cover the problems you think are the most important problems in the community?
3. Do you think the newspaper described the problems fairly and accurately? Explain.

Selecting and Researching a Problem

Introduction

You've already learned a lot about the community's problems. You've interviewed and taken a poll of community members about these problems. Now it's time to select a problem that you want to work on and research it. Below are some ideas for doing these things.

I. Choose and Study a Problem

Select a Problem. Before you decide on a problem, discuss what you learned about problems from interviewing and polling community members. Then discuss these questions:

- Which problem affects your community the most?
- Which would be most interesting to work on?
- Which could be worked on most easily and effectively?
- Which would you learn the most from?

Research the Problem. The more you know about a problem, the more you'll understand how to approach it. Find out as much as you can about these three question areas:

1. Questions of causality.
- What causes the problem?
- What debates are there about the problem?
- Is it related to other problems? If so, how?

2. Questions about the problem's seriousness.
- How long has it existed?
- Who does it affect most?
- What are its effects?
- What will happen if it is not solved?

3. Policy questions.
- What is government doing about it?
  In the community.
  In other places.
- What are non-governmental groups doing about it?
- What are some ideas for working on the problem?
- Who else is working on it or is interested in it?

To find answers, try the following:
- **Use the library.** Look up newspaper articles. Ask the reference librarian for help.
- **Search the Internet.** Use a search engine. Look especially at government, media, and non-profit sites.
- **Interview experts.** Call local government officials. Find people at non-profit organizations that work on the problem.
- **Survey community members.** Ask questions of people you know. Conduct an informal written survey of community members.

II. For Discussion

1. What do you think should be the most important consideration in selecting a problem? Why?
2. Why do you think it's important to research a problem?
3. What other questions do you think it would be important to find out about the problem? Why?

III. Activity

As a whole group, decide on a problem area.

After deciding on one problem area to focus on, you can start researching it. Divide into three groups. Each group will be assigned one of the three question areas mentioned above. Use **Handout 4C** to help you research your question area.

Organizations and Experts

Introduction

Many people and groups in your community probably are already working on the same problem as you. To locate them, use your telephone book. Call them and ask: What is being done about the problem? Who else is working on it or interested in it? One group will lead you to many others.

Finding Government Resources

Government officials, committees, boards, and departments work on community problems. Call your local elected representatives. In the telephone directory, find the government pages, usually located just before the White Pages. They list government offices under separate headings for city, county, state, and U.S. government. Under city, look for city council members. Under county, look for county supervisors. If you can't find them, call the main numbers under the city and county listings. Or try searching on the Internet or going to the library and asking the reference librarian for a list of local officials.

Finding Non-Profit Resources

These groups are not in business to make a profit. They vary widely—neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, environmental groups, volunteer organizations, charities, service organizations, fraternal societies, unions, churches, etc. Many play an active role in working on community problems.

Look in the Yellow Pages under "Educational Organizations" and "Educational Consultants"; "Environmental, Conservation, & Ecological Organizations"; "Fraternal Organizations"; "Human Services Organizations" or "Social Service Organizations"; "Labor Organizations"; "Political Organizations"; "Religious Organizations" and "Churches"; and "Senior Citizens' Services & Organizations." Call the United Way or a Volunteer Center. Ask for its information-and-referral directory and about groups working on a problem of interest to you. Also, look on the Internet. To find neighborhood associations, contact your local representative.

Finding Business Resources

Businesses and business groups are intensely interested in your community. Start with local business associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Chambers of Commerce" and "Business and Trade Associations." These groups may also have sites on the Internet.

Next find service organizations, such as Kiwanis, Rotary International, Lions, and Junior Chamber of Commerce. These groups are largely made up of business people. Members join to serve the community, socialize, and network with other business people. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Clubs" and "Associations" or look in the White Pages under the name of the group.

Finally, find individual businesses. Look for businesses near the problem or who would have a natural interest in the problem.

Finding Media Resources

The media—radio, television, newspapers—are businesses with the power to inform and influence the public. Reporters who have covered a problem know about groups interested in the problem. The media can also bring attention to your problem, attract volunteers, and advertise an event.

Read your newspaper or listen to broadcasts. Find out who covers the problem you are interested in. Call and ask for the newsroom and ask to speak with the reporter. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Newspapers," "Television Stations and Broadcast Companies," and "Radio Stations and Broadcasting Companies."

MODULE FIVE

In the content session, members use a set of questions to analyze a policy. In the action session, members examine a policy related to the problem area that they are focusing on.

CONTENT SESSION: POLICY ANALYSIS

An essential citizenship skill is being able to evaluate policies. This session provides members with a method for examining policies and an opportunity to practice policy-analysis skills. First, members read about a policy (boot camps for young offenders). Then, using a set of policy- analysis questions, they evaluate the policy.

Facilitator Checklist

• Pens and paper for members

• Copies of Handout 5A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Define policy.

2. Evaluate a policy using a set of questions.

3. Explain why examining policies is important.

4. Discuss policies they have encountered as AmeriCorps members.

Notes

Policy Analysis

Introduction

Will you vote for a new environmental initiative? Will that politician's education proposal work? Do you support spending more tax money on public safety? As a citizen, you'll need to evaluate government policies and policy proposals. Take, for example, the policy of sending young non-violent offenders to boot camps. Is it a good policy? Read the following essay and decide for yourself.

I. Boot Camps for Young Offenders

When young adults commit a non-violent first offense, what should happen to them? Should they go to prison, or is this too harsh? Should they get probation, or is this too soft? What should happen?

One proposal is to send them to "boot camps." About 30 states have already established boot camps. Boot camps provide short-term lockup (usually up to six months) with a daily routine emphasizing military-style discipline, drills, and respect for authority. The young inmates also put in a long day of hard work. Those who fail the program are sent to a regular adult prison.

Advocates say that boot camps give young offenders a chance to change their ways. They also say that boot camps keep youthful first-timers apart from hardened offenders, who might influence the young offenders. Moreover, advocates say that boot camps, which are far cheaper to run than main-line prisons, free up prison space for hardened career criminals.

Critics reply that there is no proof that strict military-type discipline will straighten out young criminals. They cite studies that show the rate of repeat offenders does not differ much between boot camp graduates and those put on probation or in a regular jail. Critics argue that the "yes sir" attitude instilled in boot camp soon disappears once the offender returns to the old neighborhood.

II. Activity

In small groups, use the following policy-analysis questions to evaluate boot camps. Write down your answers.

1. What is the policy?

2. What problem(s) is the policy designed to address?

3. What are the policy's pros and cons?

4. What are the alternatives?

5. Is the policy more effective than the alternatives? Explain.

III. For Discussion

1. Would you recommend that your state build boot camps? Explain.

2. What are policies? Why is analyzing policy important?

3. Do you think it's important to ask these policy-analysis questions? Why or why not? Can you think of other questions worth asking?

4. What policies have you learned about as an AmeriCorps member?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members to imagine that a state legislator is proposing a new law meant to reduce crime. Ask them: "What questions would you ask to decide whether to favor or oppose this law?" Hold a brief discussion.

2. Make sure they understand what a policy is. (If they are not sure, explain that policies can be laws or official directives of how things should be done. You might ask them what AmeriCorps policies they know about, such as the AmeriCorps policy on Prohibited Program Activities, which is on **Handout 2C**.)

3. Inform them that they are going to evaluate a policy proposal using a set of questions. Tell them that they could use these questions to analyze any proposed law or policy.

4. Distribute **Handout 5A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Boot Camps for Young Offenders**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.

5. Place members in groups of two or three. Ask them to evaluate the boot camp policy using the five policy-analysis questions in **Section II: Activity**. Make sure they write down their answers.

6. When they finish, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**. To conclude the discussion, ask them to compare the questions they thought of in Step 1 to the five questions they used in the activity.

ACTION SESSION: POLICY WORK

In this session, members discuss research of their problem area and analyze a policy related to the problem area. First, members discuss the three question areas they have researched. Then they read about analyzing a policy that they have uncovered in their research. Next, using a set of policy-analysis questions, they evaluate a policy related to their problem.

Facilitator Checklist

• Pens and paper for members

• Copies of Handout 5B for members

Notes

Policy Work

Introduction
In the last session, you practiced analyzing policies. In your research, you've found policies and policy proposals for dealing with the problem. Now it's time to analyze one of these policies or policy proposals.

I. Analyzing a Policy
1. Select one of these policies or policy proposals. Describe it.

2. What problem(s) is the policy designed to address?

3a. What are the pros of this policy?

3b. What are the cons of this policy?

4. What are the alternatives to the policy?

5. Is the policy more effective than the alternatives? Explain.

II. Activity
Divide into pairs. Select a policy or policy proposal and analyze it. Prepare to report your analysis to the whole group.

III. For Discussion
1. Do you think it's easy or difficult to analyze policies? Why?
2. What additional information would you like to know about these policies?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members to meet in the three research-question groups. Ask the groups to:
   a. Discuss their research.
   b. Develop answers to their questions.
   c. Prepare a presentation on each question.

2. Have the three groups make their presentations. Hold a discussion on their research. Be sure to write down on the board any policies mentioned. (Those researching policy questions should have some policies, i.e., approaches that government is taking toward solving the problem.)

3. Distribute **Handout 5B**. Ask members to read **Introduction** and **Section I: Analyzing a Policy**. Answer any questions they may have.

4. Ask them to read **Section II: Activity**. Divide the group into pairs. Have each pair select one of the policies written on the board and analyze the policy.

5. When they finish their analysis, have a pair report on a policy. Let any other pair who analyzed the same policy comment. Repeat the process for each policy. Conclude by holding a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Policy Analysis

Introduction
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Advocates say that boot camps give young offenders a chance to change their ways. They also say that boot camps keep youthful first-timers apart from hardened offenders, who might influence the young offenders. Moreover, advocates say that boot camps, which are far cheaper to run than main-line prisons, free up prison space for hardened career criminals.

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II. Activity
In small groups, use the following policy-analysis questions to evaluate boot camps. Write down your answers.

1. What is the policy?

2. What problem(s) is the policy designed to address?

3. What are the policy's pros and cons?

4. What are the alternatives?

5. Is the policy more effective than the alternatives? Explain.

III. For Discussion
1. Would you recommend that your state build boot camps? Explain.
2. What are policies? Why is analyzing policy important?
3. Do you think it's important to ask these policy-analysis questions? Why or why not? Can you think of other questions worth asking?
4. What policies have you learned about as an AmeriCorps member?

Policy Work

Introduction
In the last session, you practiced analyzing policies. In your research, you've found policies and policy proposals for dealing with the problem. Now it's time to analyze one of these policies or policy proposals.

I. Analyzing a Policy
1. Select one of these policies or policy proposals. Describe it.

2. What problem(s) is the policy designed to address?

3a. What are the pros of this policy?

3b. What are the cons of this policy?

4. What are the alternatives to the policy?

5. Is the policy more effective than the alternatives? Explain.

II. Activity
Divide into pairs. Select a policy or policy proposal and analyze it. Prepare to report your analysis to the whole group.

III. For Discussion
1. Do you think it's easy or difficult to analyze policies? Why?

2. What additional information would you like to know about these policies?

MODULE SIX

In the content session, members discuss rights that Americans have. In the action session, members decide on an action project to do in the community.

CONTENT SESSION: RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Americans have many precious rights and Constitutional protections. This session requires members to think about the importance of the Bill of Rights. First, members read about a conquering "visitor from outer space" who will allow Americans to keep only five rights. Then in small groups, members choose five rights and then with the whole group make a final, unanimous decision.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 6A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Identify basic constitutional rights of Americans.

2. Express an opinion on which rights are the most important.

3. Develop arguments supporting why these are the most important.

4. Work with a group to achieve consensus on the five most important rights.

Notes

Rights and Freedoms

Introduction

As a U.S. citizen, you have individual freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights. What would life be like if somebody took away your rights? Are some rights more valuable than others? How would you decide which rights were the most important? Think about these questions while you read the following story.

I. A Visitor from Outer Space

It is the year 2050 and you are watching your wall-sized television monitor when a special news bulletin comes on. A strange robot-like creature appears on the screen and informs you that he has taken over America. You rapidly flick through 500 channels, but find he is on every one.

"ATTENTION," he begins, "I am Sthgir from planet Noitutitsnoc. Just as I have taken over television, I will take over your lives. But I come in peace. I realize that individual freedom means a great deal to American citizens. Consequently, I will not take away all your rights. You have a choice. From a list of fundamental rights, you may pick **five** to keep. Think carefully before you vote, as all your rights as citizens will terminate except for the ones you select. You must decide as a group on your interactive televisions, and your decision must be **unanimous**. Failure to make a unanimous decision will result in the termination of **all** rights. The list of choices will now appear on screen."

Choose Five Only:
 1. Right to have a state militia and bear arms
 2. Right to freedom of speech
 3. Right to a lawyer
 4. Right to protection from cruel and unusual punishment
 5. Right to freedom of the press
 6. Right to a jury trial
 7. Right to freedom of religion
 8. Right to peacefully assemble
 9. Right to privacy
10. Protection from self-incrimination
11. Right to equal protection of the laws

II. Activity

In small groups, **unanimously** decide on the five most important rights. Keep in mind:

* Rights affect our lives on both a personal and societal level.
* Some rights have a broader scope than others. Think about which rights might include other rights.

III. For Discussion

1. Was it difficult to reach a unanimous decision? What are the pros and cons of coming to a unanimous decision instead of taking a majority vote?
2. Which rights, if any, did you find encompass other rights?
3. Would our society be different if we were limited to the five rights you chose? If so, how?
4. How can AmeriCorps members help others develop an understanding of their basic rights as citizens?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "Can you name a few rights that Americans have?" (Accept various answers.) Tell them that today they are going to evaluate which rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights are most important.

2. Distribute **Handout 6A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: A Visitor From Outer Space**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions. (Note: The name of the "visitor" is Sthgir from planet Noitutitsnoc. These two words, difficult to pronounce, are Rights and Constitution spelled backwards.)

3. Divide members into groups of five or six. Tell them to read **Section II: Activity**. Make sure they understand that (1) their decision must be **unanimous** and (2) they must select the **five** most important rights.

4. Give the groups a set amount of time. Tell them they must come to a unanimous decision within that time or they will lose all their rights.

5. List the 11 rights on the board. Give members periodic warnings of how much time is left.

6. Call time. Ask the groups to come together and share their decisions.

7. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

ACTION SESSION: DECIDING ON AN ACTION PROJECT

In this session, members decide what project they are going to do. First, they review their research on a problem. Then they read about different projects. Finally, they decide on a project.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 6B, 6C, 6D, 6E, 6F, 6G, 6H, 6I, and 6J for members
- Members bring their research findings.

Notes

Deciding on an Action Project

Introduction

Your next step is to decide on a project to do in the community. You've probably gotten ideas for projects from your research. You should place great importance on all the input you've received from the community, because serving the community is the purpose of the project. To help you further develop ideas for projects, you will receive eight handouts of sample project plans. Use the handouts as springboards to help you think of more project ideas.

I. Eight Projects

Read the sample projects on **Handouts 6C to 6J**. Although some may not apply to the problem you've selected, use them to generate ideas for your project.

II. For Discussion

1. Which of the eight sample projects were most interesting?

2. Are any of these eight sample projects already operating in your community?

3. What other project ideas do you have?

III. Activity

Divide into project teams. List the project ideas you want to consider. As a team, decide on the top *three* project ideas. Think about the pros and cons of these three project ideas. Evaluate each in terms of your available time, materials, and resources. Select the most suitable one.

Corporation for National Service
A Facilitator's Guide to Effective Citizenship Through AmeriCorps

Handout 6C   Handout 6J

Conducting the Session

1. Inform members that in this session they are going to choose projects to work on that address their problem area.

2. Distribute **Handout 6B**. Briefly discuss the **Introduction** and **Section I: Eight Projects**. Answer any questions they may have.

3. Distribute **Handouts 6C** to **6J** to each member. Ask members to read all eight handouts.

4. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion** (on **Handout 6B**). List additional project ideas on the board.

5. Have members divide into project teams of from three to seven members. Ask each team to decide on a project following the instructions in **Section III: Activity** (on **Handout 6B**).

6. After team members decide on projects, inform them that they will plan their projects at the next action session. Tell them to think about how they might do the project and who might help them. Stress the necessity of getting input from community members.

Notes

Rights and Freedoms

Introduction

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II. Activity

In small groups, **unanimously** decide on the five most important rights. Keep in mind:

- Rights affect our lives on both a personal and societal level.

- Some rights have a broader scope than others. Think about which rights might include other rights.

III. For Discussion

1. Was it difficult to reach a unanimous decision? What are the pros and cons of coming to a unanimous decision instead of taking a majority vote?

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Deciding on an Action Project

Introduction

Your next step is to decide on a project to do in the community. You've probably gotten ideas for projects from your research. You should place great importance on all the input you've received from the community, because serving the community is the purpose of the project. To help you further develop ideas for projects, you will receive eight handouts of sample project plans. Use the handouts as springboards to help you think of more project ideas.

I. Eight Projects

Read the sample projects on **Handouts 6C to 6J**. Although some may not apply to the problem you've selected, use them to generate ideas for your project.

II. For Discussion

1. Which of the eight sample projects were most interesting?

2. Are any of these eight sample projects already operating in your community?

3. What other project ideas do you have?

III. Activity

Divide into project teams. List the project ideas you want to consider. As a team, decide on the top three project ideas. Think about the pros and cons of these three project ideas. Evaluate each in terms of your available time, materials, and resources. Select the most suitable one.

Sample Project 1

Stay in School (Issue area: Education)

Description: Organize a campaign to encourage students to stay in school.

Goal: To lower dropout rates in local schools.

Facts and Figures: In the 1990s, roughly one student in 10 dropped out of school before graduation. In some areas, that figure increased to one student in three. Twenty-five percent of dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24 are unemployed. Over their lifetime, high school dropouts earn 25 percent less money than high school graduates and less than 50 percent of what college graduates are likely to earn. In any given year, high school dropouts are three times more likely to slip below the poverty level.

As America moves into the 21st century, most meaningful jobs will require advanced skills and technical knowledge. The economic gap between those with a high school diploma and those who drop out is likely to grow.

Project Resources:

*   Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Washington, DC
*   State and federal departments of education
*   The local board of education

Action Steps: To organize a Stay in School campaign, you need to . . .

*   **Discuss your goals and methods.** What do you want to accomplish with your campaign? How can you raise awareness about the importance of staying in school?
*   **Conduct a survey.** What do students and teachers at schools in your community think about the value of education? Are students willing to participate in a Stay in School campaign? What new club or activity would make school more fun, rewarding?
*   **Gather more information.** Information is a good tool to motivate people to action. Ask your librarian to help you find information on career opportunities and the value of education.
*   **Talk to the media.** Local newspapers, radio, and TV stations may have done stories on education in your community. The media can also help you publicize your Stay in School campaign. Ask them how to prepare a public service announcement (PSA).
*   **Plan your campaign and do it!**

Evaluation: After you have completed your Stay in School campaign, meet with other AmeriCorps members to ask . . .

*   How many students did you influence?
*   How effective did these students think your message was?
*   How many AmeriCorps members were involved? How many hours did you work?
*   Would you organize another Stay in School Campaign? What would you do differently?

Sample Project 2

Book Drive (Issue area: Education)

Description: Organize a book drive to collect books and make them available to young people through a school or community library.

Goal: To increase awareness about the value of reading and to make books available to students and other community members.

Facts and Figures: Television, computers, and the Internet have created an information revolution, but books continue to occupy an important place in our culture. Books contain almost all of our knowledge–our history, philosophy, science, religions, and oldest stories and myths. Studies show that people develop reading skills best at an early age. But today, young people are reading less. As a result, many young people grow up with poor reading skills. An estimated 40-44 million adult Americans cannot fill out an employment application, follow written instructions, or read a newspaper. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that the presence of books, newspapers, and magazines in the home contribute greatly to a young person's ability to read.

Project Resources:
- The reference librarian at your local library
- American Library Association, Chicago, IL
- "Building a Nation of Readers," Library of Congress, Center for the Book

Action Steps: To organize a book drive, you need to . . .

- **Measure interest.** Teachers, students, and parents will be vital to your book drive. How will you raise their interest?
- **Look for allies.** In addition to teachers and schools, other individuals and community groups may be concerned with reading levels.
- Your **local library** may want to support your efforts.
- **Newspapers** across the nation are losing readership. Your local paper may be interested in participating in your book drive.
- **Bookstores** may donate books, magazines, or other publications to your project.
- **Colleges and universities** have a high stake in raising students' reading ability.
- The **business community** needs people who can read to get the job done. Ask local businesses to support your book drive.
- **Plan your event and do it!**
- **Follow up.** Organize a reading fair for an elementary school. Include booths with reading games and contests and with free books to loan. Help children write and illustrate their own storybooks.

Evaluation:
- How many books and magazines did you collect?
- How many students, teachers, parents, and other community members participated in your book drive? How many AmeriCorps members?
- What efforts would you suggest to continue to encourage young people to read?
- Did your group work well as a team? Why or why not?

Sample Project 3

Exploring Local Government (Issue area: Education)

Description: Organize a tour of local government institutions for school children.

Goal: To educate school children about people, places, and processes that make up local government.

Facts and Figures: In contrast to the 50 state governments and one federal government, there are almost 90,000 separate local governments in the United States. The maze of different structures of local government makes it difficult to teach. But the subject is included as part of school social studies curriculum at all levels. Moreover, it's important that citizens learn about local government because citizens are far more likely to interact with it than with any other level of government.

Project Resources:
- Elected officials and government department heads
- Government web sites
- Reference librarian at your library
- A written guide to your local government

Action Steps: To organize a local government tour, you need to . . .

- **Measure interest.** Visit local schools to find out if students, parents, teachers, and administrators are interested.
- **Explore government.** Use the resources listed above to help you gather information about government officials, departments, and services.
- **Ask permission.** Call government offices, describe your project to the people in charge, and ask them if they would allow young people to visit their work places.
- **Record your findings.** Keep a record of the people you contact. You will need to keep in touch.
- **Pick and choose.** What government departments would be most interesting for young people?
- **Prepare a tour guide.** Prepare a talk or a written guide about the people and places students will be visiting.
- **Draw a tour map.** Where will you go? How will you get there? How long will it take?
- **Arrange transportation.** Talk with teachers and administrators about the safest, easiest way to transport students. How many students, teachers, parents, and AmeriCorps members will participate?

Evaluation:
- Prepare a pre- and post-test on local government for students to take.
- How many officials, departments, and services did you visit? Did you visit a variety of people and places?
- How many children, parents, teachers, and school administrators took the tour?

Sample Project 4

Neighborhood Watch (Issue area: Public Safety)

Description: Organize a Neighborhood Watch program in your community.

Goal: To increase community safety and security.

Facts and Figures: Although America's crime rate dropped during the last decade, it has still remained high compared to other developed nations. In opinion polls, Americans continue to list crime among the top five problems facing America. Research has shown that Neighborhood Watch programs can help reduce crime. For example, several years ago, a Richmond, Virginia, neighborhood experienced three murders, two rapes, and 134 burglaries. Community members organized a Neighborhood Watch program that organized and educated residents on crime prevention. Two years later there were no murders, no rapes, and only 20 burglaries in that same neighborhood.

Project Resources:
• The national and your state's Crime Prevention Council
• The crime prevention officer of your police department

Action Steps: To begin your Neighborhood Watch program, you need to . . .

• **Measure interest.** Talk to your neighbors. You will need their help. Explain that a Neighborhood Watch does not take a lot of time, and no one will have to take any personal risks.

• **Arrange a date, time, and place for the first meeting.** Notify neighbors with a flier. A few interested neighbors can get the ball rolling.

• **Invite a crime prevention officer.** Many police precincts have a crime prevention officer who can help you get started. Ask him or her to attend your first meeting. Ask the officer to explain Neighborhood Watch, talk about crime problems in your area, and teach crime prevention techniques.

• **Select a block captain.** This task can rotate. A block captain acts as a liaison between police and your group, organizes block meetings, and keeps a list of members.

• **Share information.** Exchange phone numbers, names of family members, planned vacation times, and any other information that will help you protect each other.

• **Share the tasks.** Some job assignments could be recruiting new members, teaching home security techniques, watching the homes of people on vacation, or being block parents for home-alone kids.

Evaluation:

• Find out crime rates for your neighborhood. See if they improve once your watch begins.
• Keep track of membership. Does it increase over time?
• Ask for comments from neighbors. Is the program working? Do they feel safer?

Sample Project 5

AmeriCorps Resource Guide (Issue area: Citizenship)

Description: Create a guide of government, non-profit, business, and media organizations that address the needs of your community.

Goal: To gather information that will help AmeriCorps members and others find information, concerned citizens, community groups, and materials to support civic participation projects.

Facts and Figures: In America, not just government (federal, state, county, municipal, and special district) agencies are interested in community problems. A wide range of non-government agencies are interested as well. These range from businesses and business associations (retail stores, corporations, Chambers of Commerce) to media organizations (newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and cable companies) to non-profits (neighborhood associations, unions, political organizations, environmental groups, service and volunteer organizations, and educational organizations).

Project Resources: Here are some places to look for local resources . . .
- The local library
- The Internet
- Government, non-profit, business, and media organizations. See **Handout 4C**.

Action Steps: To create a resource guide, you need to . . .

- **Discuss your goals.** Focus your search on issues that are important to your community. Do you want your resource guide to address problems of education, public safety, the environment, or other human needs? What problems concern you?
- **Design your guide.** How will you distribute your information? Will you print a booklet, create a web site, or keep a loose-leaf notebook full of resources? How will you make it available to others?
- **Visit the library.** Ask the reference librarian for lists of community organizations.
- **Search on the Internet.** Use a search engine and collect links to community organizations.
- **Talk to local government officials.** They may be able to direct you toward city programs that work with citizens in the community. Ask officials for any booklets describing local civic resources.
- **Talk to local businesses.** Talk to the Chamber of Commerce about businesses that work in your community.
- **Look for non-profits.** Many of these groups are organized specially to help people.
- **Talk to the local media.** Newspapers, radio, and television stations usually know about local resources.
- **Ask for referrals.** Ask everyone you talk with if they know of other people who can help you.
- **Don't stop.** Keep adding new information to your resource guide.

Evaluation:
- How many resources are in your guide?
- How many community members did you involve? AmeriCorps members?
- Who is using your guide? Is it helpful to them?

Sample Project 6

A Newsletter or Web Site (Issue area: Citizenship)

Description: Create a clear, interesting, and informative AmeriCorps newsletter or web site.

Goal: To inform AmeriCorps members and other interested people about AmeriCorps goals, projects, and other activities.

Facts and Figures: With the rise of computer technology and the Internet, it has become relatively easy to publish newsletters and create a web site. As a result, most organizations in America publish a newsletter or maintain a web site. They recognize the importance of letting others know what they do, how to reach them, and other important information.

Project Resources:

- Producing a First-Class Newsletter (Self Counsel Press) by Barbara A. Fanson.
- Newsletter Design (Self Counsel Press) by Edward A. Hamilton.
- Creating a Successful Web Site http://successful.pagehere.com
- Great Website Design Tips http://www.unplug.com/great
- Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9605.html

Action Steps: To create a successful AmeriCorps newsletter or web site, you need to . . .

- **Plan what you want to say.** What issues do you want to write about? You can print articles, a calendar of events, reports on AmeriCorps projects, letters from supporters, surveys, petitions, cartoons, or anything else.
- **Think about your audience.** Who is going to read your newsletter or visit your web site? How will you reach them?
- **How big will it be?** A newsletter will cost more depending on the number of pages and the print run. This is the advantage of a web site, which will not cost you more if you add more pages.
- **What are your resources?** You'll need access to a computer, printer, and copy machine.
- **Make it look good.** Your newsletter or web site should have a catchy title and graphics.
- **Assign jobs.** Who's good at writing? Who's good at drawing cartoons? Somebody should check spelling and punctuation. Someone else should do layout.
- **Set deadlines.** Set the date you want your newsletter or web site published. Make sure people get their jobs done on time. Try to publish your newsletter or add to your web site on a regular basis.
- **Use it to get help.** Be sure to tell people how they can help with your AmeriCorps projects. Let people know how to contact you. Make sure you do not include fundraising appeals. Asking for volunteers and other assistance is O.K., though.

Evaluation:

- Ask a stranger to read it and evaluate it.
- Include a comments section. Give an address where people can reach you.
- How many AmeriCorps members work on the newsletter or web site? How much time do they spend?
- How many copies of the newsletter have you printed? How many hits has your web site gotten? How many people have you reached?

Sample Project 7

Keeping Fit (Issue area: Other Human Needs)

Description: Create a physical fitness program for community members

Goals: To raise awareness of the importance of physical fitness and to improve the physical fitness of young people, the aged, or other community members.

Facts and Figures: More than half of all Americans in all age groups do not get enough exercise. This results in increased obesity (a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study reported a 49 percent rise obesity in the seven years from 1991 to 1998). It also puts people at risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and diabetes. People of all ages can benefit from regular physical exercise. In addition to health benefits, it makes people more alert and energetic.

Project Resources:

- Public Health Service, Washington, DC
- President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Washington, DC
- National Youth Sport Coaches Association, West Palm Beach, FL
- Your local YMCA and YWCA
- Local park directors

Action Steps: To create a physical fitness program, you need to . . .

- **Discuss your goals and methods.** Who do you want to reach with your Keeping Fit program? Where will you exercise? How will you interest others in your project?
- **Look for support.** Can you get support from young people, teachers, parents, and older community members? Can you get help from local business?
- **Find a physical fitness expert.** Teaching physical fitness can be fun but it takes information to make exercise fun, safe, and effective. Park and recreation directors or school athletic directors often have this information.
- **Establish a physical fitness Bill of Rights.** All people have the right to have a healthy body, to participate in sports, to have qualified sports leadership, to exercise in a safe, healthy environment, to be treated fairly, and to have a good time staying fit.
- **Identify fitness activities.** Everyday activities such as walking, biking, gardening, and hiking encourage physical fitness.
- **Plan your program and do it!**
- **Follow up.** Keeping fit takes time and continuity. How will you keep your program going?

Evaluation:

- How did participants perform before and after participating in your Keeping Fit program?
- Ask an athlete, coach or physician to evaluate your program.
- How many AmeriCorps members worked on Keeping Fit? How many AmeriCorps members participated? How many community members?

Sample Project 8

Planting Trees (Issue area: Environment)

Description: Organize a tree planting event in a local school, park, or other public place.

Goals: To improve the environment, and beautify the community, and raise public awareness about the importance of trees.

Facts and Figures: Trees convert carbon dioxide into oxygen. One acre of trees can convert 10 tons of carbon dioxide into oxygen every year. In a 50-year life span, one tree can clean up $65,000 worth of polluted air, generate $32,000 worth of oxygen, recycle $40,000 worth of water, and prevent $32,000 worth of soil erosion. Trees that surround a building can cut heating and air conditioning bills by 10 to 50 percent. Trees provide a habitat and food for birds and small animals. Trees create a more pleasing environment and help beautify the community.

Project Resources:
*   U.S. Department of Forestry, Washington, DC
*   State forest services
*   Local park and recreation departments

Action Steps: To organize a tree planting, you need to . . .

*   **Discuss your goals and methods.** What do you want to accomplish with your event? How can you raise awareness about trees and the environment? How can you get others to join you in a tree-planting project?
*   **Collect information.** Information is a good tool to motivate people to action. Ask a librarian for gardening books and a list of organizations that can help you. Search the Internet for information.
*   **Talk to local government, business, and non-profits.** Your community may already have programs that address "green" issues such as tree planting. Local businesses are often interested in supporting a community project.
*   **Ask for donations.** Local nurseries may be willing to donate seedlings or sell them at reduced prices to a community-improvement project.
*   **Talk to the media.** Local newspapers, radio, and TV stations can help you publicize your event. Ask them how to prepare a public-service announcement (PSA).
*   **Plan your event and do it!**
*   **Follow up.** Newly planted trees need care.

Evaluation:

*   How many trees did you plant?
*   How many people did you involve? Did you get support from local government, business, non-profits, and the media?
*   What effects did your project produce? Will the trees be cared for in the future?

MODULE SEVEN

In the content session, members examine illogical arguments and appeals to emotion. In the action session, members plan their community-service project.

CONTENT SESSION: DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

Effective citizens base important decisions on reasoned arguments and not on emotional appeals. In this session, members examine types of manipulative emotional appeals that often are used in advertising and other attempts to persuade. First, members read about types of these techniques. Then in pairs they identify an example of each type of emotional appeal.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 7A for members

Notes

Does It Make Sense?

Introduction

Citizens need to make sound decisions based on accurate information and objective reasoning—not on emotional appeals. Since these appeals are widespread and often subtle, it pays to know how to recognize them.

I. Techniques to Watch Out For

- **Glittering generality.** Tries to associate the policy, politician, or product with some positive idea or feeling.

  Example: "Support Candidate X. She believes in truth, justice, and the American way."

- **Name calling.** Relies on tagging an opponent or opposing idea with negative names, ideas, and associations.

  Example: "You can't be for this proposal. Only a right-wing, fascist would support this proposal."

- **Bandwagon.** Asks you to join the crowd and not get left behind.

  Example: "More than 60 percent of all Americans favor doing this. You should too."

- **Repetition.** Asks you to believe it because you've heard it so often.

  Example: For months on radio, TV, newspaper, and billboard ads is the following: "The best candidate is X."

- **Plain folks.** Attempts to portray the individual or organization as just being ordinary people.

  Example: "Vote for Y. He's one of us, not a Washington insider like Z."

- **Testimonial.** Asks you to take the word of a celebrity who is not an expert on the subject being discussed.

  Example: "Hi, this is X (a rock star). I oppose this bill on nuclear energy. I urge you to write your Congressperson to vote against this bill."

II. Activity

In pairs, identify the technique of emotional appeal used in each example below.

1. In one year, a company runs a jingle on radio 10,000 times saying: "Toothpaste W gets your teeth brightest."
2. Announcer: "Let's ask the man on the street how he feels about Candidate X."

   Man on the street: "I support Candidate X. She knows what it's like to be a working person."
3. "You don't want to be a vegetarian. Hitler was a vegetarian."
4. "Sign the petition. We've already got thousands of signatures."
5. "How can you not support Candidate Y? Practically every star in Hollywood has endorsed her."
6. "Candidate Z is a patriotic, freedom-loving, family man. Vote for Candidate Z."

III. For Discussion

1. What are some examples of these techniques that you've heard in the media?
2. Why do you think people use emotional appeals?
3. Why do you think it is important to recognize emotional appeals?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "What are some methods that people use to persuade others?" After a brief discussion, point out that one common method, especially in advertising, is an appeal to people's emotions.

2. Tell them today they are going to read about some types of these emotional appeals and then try to identify the different types. Distribute **Handout 7A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Techniques to Watch Out For**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.

3. Put members in pairs. Ask them to follow the directions in **Section II: Activity**.

4. Regroup and discuss the answers: 1. Repetition; 2. Plain Folks; 3. Name Calling; 4. Bandwagon; 5. Testimonial; 6. Glittering Generality.

5. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Optional Follow-up Activity

Ask members to find examples of these techniques in the media.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: PLANNING AN ACTION PROJECT

In this session, members plan their projects. First, they read about the components of a plan. Then they make their plans. Following this session, they do their projects in the community.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 7B, 7C, and 7D for members

Notes

Planning an Action Project

Introduction

You've selected a project. Your next step is to plan. By taking time to plan now, you will save time, energy, and heartbreak.

I. The Parts of a Project Plan

All the parts of a plan should fit together and support one another. Take this example:

Let's say you're concerned that kids don't use the park in a particular neighborhood. There is a park recreation center, but it is rundown and has no equipment. As a result, kids don't use the park. They just hang around and get into trouble. What is needed is more and better recreation equipment for the park. This is your **problem statement**.

Your **goal** might be to provide the park with equipment—swings, slides, balls.

Your plan should include **resources**—those who might help you in the community—especially government, non-profit, business, and media organizations. As resources, you might list businesses near the park, the city parks department, a non-profit that works with kids, and the local newspaper.

The **action steps** describe how you are going to do the project. Since it's always important to find out what the people you're helping want, the first step might be to conduct a survey of the kids about what kind of equipment they would like. The next step might be to find out if the city can provide it or if local merchants would be willing to chip in to buy it. A third step might be to raise some money to purchase the equipment.

The **task chart** supports the action steps. Who is going to do what, in which order, and how long will it take?

The **evaluation plan** asks you to determine in advance how you will measure the success of your project. Did you get the equipment? If so, what and how much? Did the children use the equipment and the park? Did fewer kids hang around the streets and cause problems?

II. For Discussion

1. Why do you think planning is important?
2. Which part of the plan do you think will be most difficult to make? Why?

III. Activity

Divide into project teams. As a team, plan your project. Use **Handouts 7C** and **7D** to help you.

When your plan is done, show it to some members of the community whose opinion you value. Revise it accordingly. Once you're satisfied with your plan, begin your project.

Handout 7C

Handout 7D

Conducting the Session

1. Inform members that they will plan their projects in this session.

2. Distribute **Handout 7B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: The Parts of a Project Plan**.

3. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

4. Distribute **Handouts 7C** and **7D** to members. Have them read and discuss these handouts.

5. Ask project teams to meet together and plan their projects. When each team finishes, review the plan and make suggestions, if necessary.

6. When the teams finish their plans, they should take it into the community as described in **Section III: Activity**. Once the plan is finalized, the team should begin taking action. Tell teams that they will report on their progress at the next action session.

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II. For Discussion
1. Why do you think planning is important?
2. Which part of the plan do you think will be most difficult to make? Why?

III. Activity
Divide into project teams. As a team, plan your project. Use **Handouts 7C** and **7D** to help you.

When your plan is done, show it to some members of the community whose opinion you value. Revise it accordingly. Once you're satisfied with your plan, begin your project.

Filling Out the Project Plan

1. **Project Name**. Invent a catchy name for your project. Use it on anything you create for the project–fliers, posters, letterhead, etc.

2. **Team Members.** Write the names of your team members down. It's good to start thinking about the strengths and talents of each team member so you can make use of everyone on the project.

3. **Problem Statement**. State the problem clearly. It will help you focus on what you can do. Try to boil the problem down to a single sentence. Then briefly write what else you know by answering the following questions: What causes the problem? What are its effects on the community? What do people affected by the problem want done?

4. **Goal of Project.** A goal helps chart your course. If you know where you want to go, you can usually determine how to get there. In one sentence, write a specific and achievable goal.

5. **Description of Project**. In two or three sentences, summarize the project.

6. **Resources.** List different organizations (or individuals) who might help you with your project. Government, non-profit, and business organizations may be working on the problem or interested in it. Tap into these resources.

7. **Action Steps.** Your goal tells you where you're going. What steps do you need to take to get there? Write down the details of your plan. Explain how the project will work.

8. **Task Chart.** Once you have decided on the steps to your plan, break the steps down into tasks. Try to think of everything that needs to be done. Then assign people jobs that they want to do and can do. Put someone in charge of reminding people to do their tasks. Set a deadline, or due date, for each task.

9. **Evaluation Plan**. Take time now to figure out how you are going to measure the success of your project. There are several ways to evaluate a project. Pick the best ways and figure out how to do them for your project.

    Before-and-After Comparisons. You can show how things looked or how people felt before your project, and then show how your project caused changed. You might use the following to make comparisons: photos, videos, survey results, or test scores.

    Counting and Measuring. You can count or measure many different things in a project. For example: How many meetings did you have? How many people attended? How many students did you tutor? How much time did you spend? Numbers like these will help you measure your impact on the community.

    Comparisons With a Control Group. You may be able to measure your project against a control group–a comparable group that your project does not reach. If, for example, you are trying to rid one part of town of graffiti, you could compare your results with conditions in another part of town facing the same problem.

Project Plan

1. Project Name

2. Team Members

3. Problem Statement

4. Goal of Project

5. Description of Project

6. Resources

Project Plan (Cont'd)

7. Action Steps

Project Plan (Cont'd)

8. Task Chart

What tasks must group members complete to do the action steps? Write the task, the person's name who is responsible for it, and the due date. (Put an X in the last column when the task is done.)

Task	Person	Due Date	X

9. Evaluation Plan

MODULE EIGHT

In the content session, members discuss a contro-versial issue and examine the conflicting values behind it. In the action session, members report on their progress on their action projects.

CONTENT SESSION: VALUES IN CONFLICT

In a democracy, citizens often must choose among conflicting values. In this session, members debate a controversial issue. First, members read about a case that went before the Supreme Court. Then they role play defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, and justices in the case.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 8A for members

Notes

Values in Conflict

Introduction

Conflicts and disagreement are inevitable and even necessary to the democratic process. People argue over what should be done about crime, the environment, education, etc. Conflicts even arise over basic values and citizen rights. In the case of *California v. Greenwood*, a dispute arose over trash bags. The case was appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

I. *California v. Greenwood*

In 1984, Billy Greenwood was arrested and convicted in California on felony narcotics charges. The main evidence against Greenwood had been gathered by police from Greenwood's plastic trash bags. Greenwood had left them on the curb in front of his house for the trash collector. The police did not have a search warrant, but they did get permission from the trash collector to look through Greenwood's trash bags.

To conduct a search, police need both "probable cause" that a person has committed a crime *and* a search warrant. Police had neither. But attorneys for the state of California argued that police did not conduct a "search" as defined by law. A search is a governmental intrusion into something in which a person has **a reasonable expectation of privacy**. Greenwood, argued the state's attorneys, had no reasonable expectation of privacy in trash bags left on the curb for the trash collector. Greenwood's lawyers argued that Greenwood did have a reasonable expectation of privacy in these bags and that therefore the police had conducted a search, which they had no right to do.

The California Court of Appeals agreed with Greenwood and so did the California Supreme Court. Finally, the state of California appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court had to decide this question: **Did Greenwood have a reasonable expectation of privacy in trash bags left on the curb for collection?**

II. Activity

In groups of three, debate the question in the *Greenwood* case. Have one person in each group take the role of a defense attorney, another take the role of an attorney for the state, and the third take the role of a Supreme Court justice. Prepare for the role and sharpen your arguments by first meeting with members who are taking the same role. Then meet with your group of three and begin the role play.

III. For Discussion

1. What were the strongest arguments for each side? Why?
2. How do you think the case should have been decided? Explain.
3. Why do you think justices hearing the same arguments in a case come to different conclusions?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "What things that you throw in the trash would you want no one to look at?" (Love letters, photos, etc.) Continue the brainstorm until it becomes clear that there are a lot of things people throw away that they don't want others to look at.

2. Tell members that today they are going to examine a controversy over trash and the right to privacy. Distribute **Handout 8A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: California v. Greenwood**. When they finish, discuss what the case is about.

3. Divide members into groups of three. Assign each group member one of three roles–justice of the Supreme Court, defense attorney, or attorney for the state.

4. Regroup the members so each role group sits together. Attorneys should think up their best arguments and Supreme Court justices should think of questions to ask each side.

5. Redivide into the groups of three. Tell them that the judge in each group should conduct a hearing on the issue. The justice will allow each side to make its presentation and will ask questions of each side. Inform them how much time they will have to make their presentations. After both sides present, each justice should come to the front of the room and prepare to present a decision on the case.

6. When every justice has come to the front, ask each one to present his or her decision and reasons for it.

7. Finally, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**. (Note: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of California, reasoning that there could be no expectation of privacy because bags left on the street are commonly opened by "children, scavengers . . . and other members of the public.")

ACTION SESSION: PROGRESS CHECK

In this session, members check on their progress with the action projects. First, members read about checking their progress. Then they discuss among themselves how effective the plan is, how well they are accomplishing their tasks, and how well they are getting along as a team. Finally, they report on their progress to the others.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 8B for members

Notes

Progress Check

Introduction

You're in middle of your action project. It's a good idea to revisit your project plan and take stock of your progress. By stopping and thinking about what you are doing and why, you can correct problems, improve planning, and get more out of the experience.

I. Taking Stock

The plan. How effective is your plan? Are you following it? Did you overlook anything when you made it? Does it need to be revised?

The tasks. Does anyone need help in completing a task? Are you accomplishing what you want to? Are you spending too much time on some tasks and not enough on others? Are you keeping track of what you are doing so you can do a final evaluation? Does your task list need to be revised?

The group. Are you getting along as a team? In what ways is your team working well? What could be done to improve how you're working as a team?

Other problems. What other problems have you encountered? What can you do to solve them?

Learning. What have you learned so far? Would you change anything you've done? Why?

II. Activity

Get together in project teams and discuss the questions in each of the areas above. Then prepare a report on your progress for the other teams. Your report should tell what you've been doing and should include information that you think would be helpful to the other teams.

III. For Discussion

1. What has been the most difficult part of the action project so far? Why?
2. What has surprised you the most?
3. What do you look forward to? What do you not look forward to? Explain.
4. Where can you get help if you need it?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "How are your action projects going?" Hold a brief discussion, and inform them that this session will cover this question in detail.

2. Distribute **Handout 8B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Taking Stock**. When they finish, ask if there are any other questions, aside from those mentioned in the reading, that they think the groups should discuss. Write their suggestions on the board and have them incorporate these questions into the activity.

3. Ask them to meet with their project teams. Have them read and do **Section II: Activity**.

4. Have the teams report and hold a discussion using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

5. Remind members that their action projects must be finished by the next session. Inform them that they will evaluate their projects at the next session and they need to bring their project plans.

Notes

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Progress Check

Introduction
You're in middle of your action project. It's a good idea to revisit your project plan and take stock of your progress. By stopping and thinking about what you are doing and why, you can correct problems, improve planning, and get more out of the experience.

I. Taking Stock
The plan. How effective is your plan? Are you following it? Did you overlook anything when you made it? Does it need to be revised?

The tasks. Does anyone need help in completing a task? Are you accomplishing what you want to? Are you spending too much time on some tasks and not enough on others? Are you keeping track of what you are doing so you can do a final evaluation? Does your task list need to be revised?

The group. Are you getting along as a team? In what ways is your team working well? What could be done to improve how you're working as a team?

Other problems. What other problems have you encountered? What can you do to solve them?

Learning. What have you learned so far? Would you change anything you've done? Why?

II. Activity
Get together in project teams and discuss the questions in each of the areas above. Then prepare a report on your progress for the other teams. Your report should tell what you've been doing and should include information that you think would be helpful to the other teams.

III. For Discussion
1. What has been the most difficult part of the action project so far? Why?
2. What has surprised you the most?
3. What do you look forward to? What do you not look forward to? Explain.
4. Where can you get help if you need it?

MODULE NINE

In the content session, members discuss the importance of getting involved. In the action session, members evaluate and reflect on their completed action projects.

CONTENT SESSION: GETTING INVOLVED

One of the greatest challenges of American democracy is getting people involved. In this session, members examine this challenge. First, members read about the Kitty Genovese case, a classic story about people not wanting to get involved. Then members discuss issues of citizenship involvement.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 9A for members

Notes

Getting Involved

Introduction

Have you ever heard someone say, "I just didn't want to get involved"? Sometimes there are good reasons not to get involved, but sometimes people don't get involved for the wrong reasons: apathy, unjustifiable fears, or a lack of concern for others.

The following is a true story. Although it happened many years ago, the story continues to shock. Over time it has become a classic example of Americans refusing to get involved. Read the story and decide why these people didn't get involved.

I. Thirty-Eight Witnesses

Late in the night of March 14, 1964, 28-year-old Kitty Genovese returned from work. She lived in Kew Gardens, a middle-class neighborhood in New York City. Parking her car in a lot, she started to walk the short distance to her first-floor apartment. Before she could get to her door, a man attacked her with a knife. She screamed. Lights came on. Windows opened, and someone shouted, "Let that girl alone!" The attacker ran off. Windows closed, and lights went out. Wounded, Kitty struggled to get to her door. But the attacker returned. She screamed again. Lights went on again, and the attacker once again retreated. Once the lights were off, the attacker returned a third time and stabbed Kitty Genovese to death. In all, the attacks had continued for 35 minutes. Thirty-eight people had heard her screams, but no one had bothered to call the police. When they were called, police arrived in two minutes. But it was too late. When the witnesses were questioned about why they did not call, most gave the same answer: "I didn't want to get involved."

II. For Discussion

1. What reasons might the 38 witnesses have had for not getting involved? Are any of them valid in this situation? Why or why not?

2. In what other kinds of situations might people not want to get involved?

3. Is getting involved an important part of citizenship? Why or why not?

4. How can AmeriCorps members encourage people to get involved?

Conducting the Session

1. Distribute **Handout 9A**. Have members read the **Introduction** and ask: Can anyone relate an experience from your own life where someone did not get involved?

2. Explain that sometimes not getting involved can have serious consequences. Then have members read **Section I: Thirty-Eight Witnesses**.

3. Hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

This session, held after the group has completed their projects, helps members reflect on their projects and what they have accomplished. First, they read suggestions about evaluating and reflecting on their project. Then they decide how they will evaluate and reflect and they do these tasks.

Facilitator Checklist

- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 9B for members
- Members bring a copy of the group's project plan.

Notes

Evaluation and Reflection

Introduction
Congratulations! You've completed your project. The next step is to evaluate and reflect.

I. Think It Over
When the project is over, don't forget to:

Evaluate your project. Since you made an evaluation plan, this should be easy to do. This will help you measure how successful your project was. Be sure to discuss:

- What have you accomplished? What remains to be accomplished?
- What impact did you have on the problem? Will the impact be long-term or short-term? What would need to be done to achieve long-term impact?
- If you were going to work on this problem again, what would you do?

Evaluate how well you worked together. Discuss:

- How effective was your planning?
- Did you work well as a team?
- What problems did you encounter? How did you solve them?

Reflect on what you learned. What have you learned about:

- working as a team?
- the causes and effects of the problem?
- the community?
- yourself?

Thank people who helped you. If you forgot to thank anyone during the project, take time now to thank them. A personal note is a nice touch.

Congratulate each other. You deserve it.

II. Activity
As a group, evaluate your project and reflect on your experience using the suggestions in Think It Over.

III. For Discussion
1. What did you learn from your project?
2. What would you do differently next time?
3. What do you think it means to be a good citizen?

Conducting the Session

1. Congratulate the members on doing their project. Inform them that still have to do a few things regarding their project.

2. Distribute **Handout 9B**. Ask members to read and briefly discuss the **Introduction** and **Section I: Think It Over**.

3. Ask them: "Which suggestions in **Think It Over** do you need to do? Is there anything else you need to do?"

4. Have members meet in their project teams and decide what they need to do. Give them time to do it.

5. Hold a discussion on the projects using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

6. Tell members that in the next (and last) action session, they will think of ways to inform others about their projects.

Notes

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II. Activity
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III. For Discussion
1. What did you learn from your project?
2. What would you do differently next time?
3. What do you think it means to be a good citizen?

MODULE TEN

In the content session, members discuss demographic factors (age, race, gender) that might influence people's opinions. In the action session, members inform others about their completed action projects.

CONTENT SESSION: DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

In a diverse society like ours, people have many different perspectives. In this session, members examine how people's age, race, and gender might influence people's opinions. First, members read polling data showing sharp differences of opinion based on gender, race, and age. Then in small groups, they think of reasons for these differences.

Facilitator Checklist

• Pens and paper for members
• Copies of Handout 10A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Analyze and express a reasoned opinion on why age, race, and gender may give people different perspectives on issues.

2. Explain other factors that may influence people's opinions.

3. Express a reasoned opinion on the importance of discussing issues with people with different perspectives.

Notes

Differing Perspectives

Introduction
Working in AmeriCorps, you'll encounter people with varying experiences and different opinions. They may hold opinions at odds your own. Understanding other people's perspectives is a useful skill in today's diverse society. In this session, we'll look at some factors that might create differing points of view.

I. Differences of Opinion
People's opinions are shaped by their experience, education, and also by their sex, age, and race. Below are six opinion polls that show strong differences based on gender, race, and age. When you read them, try to think of reasons why the opinions split as they do.

Remember that the point of this session is not to argue for or against any of these positions. Rather, it is to understand why gender, race, or age might influence an individual's point of view.

1. Do female soldiers get treated better than male soldiers?
   - men: 30% yes
   - women: 9% yes

2. In the presidential election, who did you vote for?
   - men: 54% Bush
   - women: 55% Gore

3. Is O.J. Simpson guilty? (1995)
   - whites: 61% yes
   - blacks: 68% no

4. Do you think that black Americans will ever be able to close the income gap and earn as much money as white Americans?
   - whites: 19% will not be able to
   - blacks: 49% will not be able to

5. Do you think gays and lesbians should be allowed to be legally married? (2000)
   - age 18–34: 54% yes
   - age 65+ : 14% yes

6. In the next century, do you think the environment will be better, worse, or about the same as it is today?
   - age 18–29: 68% worse
   - age 64+ : 32% worse

II. Activity
In small groups, discuss why the opinions in each poll split as they do.

III. For Discussion
1. Why do you think these groups' opinions split so much on these issues?
2. What other issues do you think split along race, gender, or age lines?
3. What other factors, aside from race, gender, and age, might cause deep differences in opinion?
4. Do you think it's important to discuss controversial issues with people with different perspectives? Why or why not?

Conducting the Session

1. Ask members: "Why doesn't everyone hold the same opinion on controversial issues?" (Accept various answers.) Explain that today they are going to take a look at different perspectives on issues.

2. Distribute **Handout 10A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Differences of Opinion**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.

3. Divide the members into groups of three or four. Tell them to discuss reasons for the differences in opinion in each poll.

4. Regroup the members and discuss the results using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: SPREAD THE WORD

As the final step, members inform others about their action projects. First, members read and discuss why and how to tell others about their projects. Then they decide on a method for informing people and prepare to do so.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 10B for members

Notes

Spread the Word

Introduction

Now that you've finished and evaluated your project, one important step remains: informing others about what you did. Your project may give people ideas of how they can help their community. Other people may want to do a similar project. They can learn from your successes and even from your missteps. Below are 10 suggestions for telling others.

I. Nine Ways to Spread the Word

1. Submit your project to the Corporation for National Service's online EpiCenter, which lets you submit practices for others to use. **http://www.cns.gov/resources/epicenter/index.html**

2. Submit it to the Civic Engagement Website and electronic newsletter, which profiles member action projects.

3. Submit it to state commissions and state Learn & Serve web sites. Locate them at **http://www.nationalservice.org/stateprofiles/index.html**

4. Submit a 250–500 word article to *Service-Learning Network*, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005.

5. Write letters describing the problem you addressed and the project you completed to public officials, inviting their future participation in program events.

6. Create a short video that could be used in future Corporation for National Service civic engagement trainings to show program staff and other members an example of an action project.

7. Write an editorial or article for local newspaper describing the problem you addressed and how you addressed it.

8. Make presentations to government or non-profit agencies that work on or care about the problem you addressed.

9. Showcase your project at a "resource fair." Find out if any community agencies are holding one. Or, work with other local national service programs (AmeriCorps, Vista, Learn & Serve, America's Promise, Campus Compact, etc.) to organize your own resource fair and showcase the services your groups have provided to the community.

II. For Discussion

1. Do you think informing others of your project is important? Explain.
2. What ideas, other than those mentioned, do you have for informing people about your project?

III. Activity

Meet with your project team. Discuss and decide how you want to inform others about your project. Make it happen!

Conducting the Session

1. Tell members that one final but important piece remains on their action project. Distribute **Handout 10B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Nine Ways to Spread the Word**.

2. When they finish, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.

3. Ask members to join their project teams and do the activity described in **Section III: Activity**. Before the end of the session, have groups report to the whole group on what they are going to do. Because members cannot complete this activity during this session, ask members to contact you to show you how they informed others about their project.

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LIST OF HANDOUTS

Module

1. A: Effective Citizenship
   B: Introduction to the Action Sessions
   C: Identifying Community Resources

2. A: Citizen Choices
   B: Identifying Community Problems
   C: Prohibited Program Activities for
      AmeriCorps Members and Staff

3. A: Opinion Polling
   B: Do Your Own Opinion Poll

4. A: Conducting a News Search
   B: Selecting and Researching a Problem
   C: Finding Organizations and Experts

5. A: Policy Analysis
   B: Policy Work

6. A: Rights and Freedoms
   B: Deciding on an Action Project
   C: Stay in School
   D: Book Drive
   E: Exploring Local Government
   F: Neighborhood Watch
   G: AmeriCorps Resource Guide
   H: A Newsletter or Web Site
   I: Keeping Fit
   J: Planting Trees

7. A: Does It Make Sense?
   B: Planning an Action Project
   C: Filling Out the Project Plan
   D: Project Plan

8. A: Values in Conflict
   B: Progress Check

9. A: Getting Involved
   B: Evaluation and Reflection

10. A: Differing Perspectives
    B: Spread the Word

RESOURCE GUIDE

Community Action

Active Citizen Today Field Guide by Bill Hayes and Charles Degelman. Los Angeles: Constitutional Rights Foundation and Close Up Foundation (1994).

Making a Difference: Effective Citizenship by Maryrose Eannace. Adapted from Effective Participation in Government: A Guide to Policy Skills by William D. Coplin and Michael K. O'Leary. Croton-on-Hudson, NY: Policy Studies Associates (1991).

We Are Resourceful: A Community Problem-Solving Resource Kit for Young People. United Way of America (1993).

Project Ideas

50 Ways to Help Your Community: A Handbook for Change by Steve Fiffer and Sharon Sloan Fiffer. Doubleday (1994).

Skills

Find It Fast: How to Uncover Expert Information on Any Subject by Robert I. Berkman. New York: Harper Resource (2000).

Gale Research Company's Encyclopedia of Associations. This publication lists non-profit organizations by subject and area.

"Simplified Parliamentary Procedure: Based on Robert's Rules of Order." League of Women Voters (1979).

Issues

Annual Edition series. Published annually by the Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., these oversized paperbacks contain current articles on a wide variety of issues.

National Issues Forum. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. This company publishes 30-page booklets on various social issues.

Opposing Viewpoints series. Greenhaven Press. This company publishes full-length books focusing on various social issues.

Community Facts and Figures

County and City Data Book. U.S. Government. This provides census data on about 3,000 counties and 1,000 cities of more than 25,000 inhabitants.

Places Rated Almanac: Your Guide to Finding the Best Places to Live in North America by David Savageau and Richard Boyer. This book ranks American cities under 10 categories: cost of living, jobs, housing, transportation, education, health care, crime, arts, recreation, and climate.

Additional Ideas for Community-Service Projects

Public Safety Projects
- Start a campaign to have people report crimes.
- Establish safe-haven playgrounds for students after school.
- Make emergency preparedness kits for elderly people living at home.
- Make booklets or a video (in different languages) for emergency preparedness.

Environmental Projects
- Start a campaign to vaccinate animals.
- "Adopt" a stream.
- Help recycling efforts in the community.
- Replace graffiti with murals.
- Start a public garden using native plants.

Health Projects
- Start a campaign to vaccinate children in the community.
- Start a ride-share program for getting senior citizens to their doctors.
- Make exercise videos for young and old people.
- Develop a nutrition-awareness program for children.

Education Projects
- Tutor immigrants who want to become citizens.
- Develop practical math game cards that grocery stores can provide to youngsters.
- Organize a School Pride Week for a school.
- Organize Read-a-thons at elementary and middle schools.

Projects Promoting Citizenship in General
- Create and distribute a list of community boards that citizens can serve on.
- Set up a volunteer program for a non-profit that promotes citizenship.
- Create a show on citizenship for elementary or middle school children.
- Create a community AmeriCorps Theme Fair exploring citizen service opportunities in education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs.
- Create a list of citizenship responsibilities. Survey community members about these responsibilities. Get the local newspaper to publish the results.