

RECRUITING AMERICORPS MEMBERS:



**CREATING A STRATEGY
AND MAKING IT WORK**

June, 2000

Dear AmeriCorps Program Leaders and Supervisors:

First things, first. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to national service. Together, we're getting things done for America!

As you well know, the cornerstone of any successful AmeriCorps program is recruitment. We ask a lot of our members—time, energy, compassion, and more. The truth is that not everyone is ready for AmeriCorps' many challenges, and finding those who are can be hard work. You'll need to be creative and persistent, and you'll have to invest time and energy. You may have some disappointments along the way, as a promising prospect or two decides they're not ready for the commitment. But, in the end, you'll discover you're building a team, one that will allow your program to prosper and grow.

While recruiting can be hard work, it needn't be a mystery, and that's why we've put this manual together for you. It's full of hands-on, real-life advice on how to run a successful recruitment campaign. While not everything in these pages will be applicable to your community, much of it will be.

Whether you have six months or six weeks to conduct your recruitment campaign, this guide is designed to help you to hit the ground running. In the six years since AmeriCorps recruited its first member, more than 150,000 Americans have joined forces to accomplish great things for the country. They've tutored more than two million children, recruited millions of volunteers for charitable causes, built or rehabilitated more than 25,000 homes, organized afterschool programs for more than half a million at-risk youth, and much more. Your recruitment campaign and the program that grows from it will add to that impressive record of accomplishment—a record of which you, your members, your recruits, and all of us can be proud.

Finally, please do us the favor of giving us your feedback on this manual. You

can contact the Office of AmeriCorps Recruitment, Selection, and Placement at (202) 606-5000 with any suggestions. We want the manual to be as helpful as possible, because you deserve the very best support we can provide.

Thanks again for all you're doing for community and country.

Sincerely,


Deborah R. Jobspin
Director, AmeriCorps

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help AmeriCorps sponsors and supervisors plan and execute successful recruitment campaigns. Based on experience from the last several years, we recommend seven fundamental steps to recruitment success: setting ambitious but realistic goals, developing a meaningful plan and budget, assembling the necessary materials, identifying your likely members, finding and encouraging applicants, following up and evaluating, and retaining your members.

Of course, AmeriCorps programs come in different sizes, with a variety of objectives, and serving a broad range of communities. For that reason, it's not realistic to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to recruitment. Your campaign must be unique because your circumstances are unique. But experience demonstrates that successful campaigns share certain elements: they're well planned, creative, executed with energy, tightly focused on the recruitment goal, tailored to the specifics of their communities, and strong on follow-up.

This manual is for all AmeriCorps programs, so it covers a great deal of material. Sponsors and supervisors should pick and choose what is of greatest use to them. That said, the framework laid out in this manual—the seven-step process for recruitment campaigns—is basic enough that it should be applicable in some form to all AmeriCorps programs. Don't shortchange your recruitment efforts by imagining you won't need to map out a budget, for example, or skip over the important step of identifying what you are offering potential members.

Remember, too, you have another resource you can draw on. The AmeriCorps Recruitment, Selection, and Placement Division is available to assist programs in two principal ways. First, staff will gladly provide advice and technical assistance to program supervisors and sponsors as they plan and carry out their campaigns. Second, the Division oversees AmeriCorps' national referral database and is developing an on-line recruitment system that connects new recruits to local programs. Don't forget to take advantage of these important resources.

Check the website for more information. As we update this guide and develop new resources, your fastest way to get them is by going to www.americorps.org.

STEP ONE: TAKING AIM

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Develop goals for your recruitment campaign.**
- **Put the goals in writing, and share them with your colleagues, so everyone will be aiming at the same targets.**

No doubt other questions will arise as you begin to think through your goals.

After you've finished mapping out your goals, commit them to writing—nothing too elaborate, just a piece of paper you can share with your colleagues so everyone will be on the same page before you get started.

Setting Ambitious but Realistic Goals

Every campaign needs an objective. Candidates for public office aim for victory on election night. Baseball teams focus on the World Series. Mountain climbers aim for the summit.

AmeriCorps recruiters need goals too, the more specific, the better. So before designing your recruitment campaign, gather the key leaders of your program and those who will carry out the recruitment campaign, and ask yourself:

- How many new members do we need?
(Remember that experience shows you'll need at least two applications for each member position.)
- When do we need them?
- What tasks will they perform?
- What special skills will be required of them?
- Who are our ideal candidates?
- Who should be involved in helping select them?
- How do we ensure a diverse group of members?
- Will we recruit members living outside of our local area?

STEP TWO: GETTING READY

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Plan ahead. It'll make a difference.
- Make sure your plan answers the following: What will we do? When will we do it? How much will it cost?

Building a Plan that Can Succeed

It's one thing to know where you want to go, and another to know how to get there. So, after agreeing on and spelling out your goals, you'll next want to map out the path from here to there.

It's sometimes tempting to jump over the planning process. After all, planning is rarely as much fun as getting out there, meeting new people, and selling them on a great and rewarding program. Resist the temptation to recruit by the seat of your pants, and develop a plan instead. It'll pay off in the long run. Once you've thought through what you're going to do, and laid the groundwork, the campaign will run much more smoothly.

The three areas you need to consider in developing your plan all have to do with three short questions: What will we do? When will we do it? How much will it cost? Put differently, it's about planning your activities, mapping out a timeline, and developing a budget.

In a bit more detail:

What will we do?

- What kinds of events will we sponsor?
- What existing events can we take advantage of—career fairs, festivals, community days, other local events?
- Where are we likely to find concentrations of potential applicants? (You'll find more about this subject in the next section.)

- What sorts of materials will we need—brochures, position descriptions, handouts?
- Who will staff the events?
- What sorts of follow-up will we do to reel in interested prospects?
- What community partners should we work with?

When will we do it?

- When do members need to start?
- How long will it take to conduct our campaign?
- How long will interviews take?
- When will orientation sessions begin?
- How long after recruiting a member before he or she can start?
- When will we be ready to start our campaign?
- When do we need to notify our state office that we have a new recruit? (This question applies to AmeriCorps*VISTA programs only.)

How much will it cost?

- What free materials are available?
- How much will new materials cost to produce?
- Are there registration fees for community events or career fairs?
- What travel costs will we incur?
- How much will advertising cost?
- What other incidental costs will we encounter?
- To help hold down expenses, are there in-kind contributions we can solicit, or fees that we can ask to be waived?

Here again, you'll surely come up with many other questions, and the more of them you can ask and answer the better. Planning is in large measure about setting priorities and making choices. Chances are you'll

come up with plenty of good and creative ideas about outreach activities, once you get a discussion flowing. The task of planning is to figure out which ideas you will actually pursue, and making sure they all come together into a coherent campaign. That will involve making choices among good ideas and weighing costs against benefits.

That said, don't let budget considerations overwhelm the conversation. You may find a very good but too expensive idea will generate conversation leading to a very good and reasonably priced idea. There never seems to be enough money to do what you want to do, but with careful planning you can get the most from your budget.

Once you've thought through your plan, be sure to sketch it out on paper, and refer to it throughout your campaign. You should feel free to deviate from the plan as circumstances change, but let it be a conscious decision, not simply a knee-jerk reaction. Also keep in mind, your planning document will be very helpful to you later when you evaluate your efforts, and farther down the road, when you or your successor starts to put together another recruitment effort.

STEP THREE: BUILDING YOUR TOOLBOX

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Develop a position description that includes information on what members will do, who you are, the benefits of being an AmeriCorps member, and contact information.**
- **Develop a flyer and other materials from the description.**

Developing and Gathering Your Recruitment Materials

Your next important step is to make sure you'll have the tools necessary to recruit effectively. That will involve assessing the quality and quantity of materials you have on hand, and then figuring out how best to supplement what you've got. You may need to develop new documents, or you may simply need to make or order more copies of what you already have.

Developing a Position Description

The first thing you'll want to do is to develop a "job description" for AmeriCorps members in your program. It will be useful for several reasons. First, the process of developing the description will help you and your colleagues determine what specifically the members will be doing. The conversation may reveal divergent expectations of your new members, and that's a useful thing to find out before you begin recruiting.

Second, the position description will be a recruitment device—perhaps your most valuable one. Potential members understandably want to know as much as they can about what will be expected of them, and the position description will go a long way toward answering their questions.

Your position description should grow out of your grant or program application, and it should include specific information about what the member will be doing, and any particular skills or attributes the member should have. It should list the benefits of being an AmeriCorps member and of serving with your program in particular. Don't forget the obvious:

- A weekly living allowance;
- Health coverage;
- Student loan deferment;
- Up to \$4,725 for further education or to pay back student loans; and
- Great experience in a field that interests you.

Of course, if you are able to offer low-cost incentives to applicants, such as help with finding housing, public transportation passes, and post-service job search assistance, be sure to include that information in your position description.

Finally, don't forget to include information on how applicants should apply and to whom—by fax, phone, email, or in person, and with a résumé, some work samples, or other material.

All position descriptions should include the following:

- A "one-liner" about your public or private agency and what you are looking for;
- A paragraph describing your organization's mission and work;
- A list of the duties and responsibilities of the positions;
- A list of required and preferred qualifications;
- A description of benefits—stipends, educational awards, and other benefits, tangible and otherwise;
- A contact name, address, phone number, and email for requesting additional information; and

- A short sentence or two about any unique opportunities you offer—advanced training in a particular skill, for example, or anything that is unique about your community.

A sample position description is included on the next page. You can use it as a model.

In addition to the position description you develop, you will also want to have materials about AmeriCorps on hand. Contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 or send email to questions@americorps.org for free brochures, applications, and literature. Also, any other materials about your organization and the program you're planning to have members work on will help give potential applicants a better picture of what they're getting into.

AmeriCorps brochures are already available on audiotape, in large print, and in Spanish. Braille applications are available on loan. If your organization is in an area where part of the community speaks and reads a language other than English, you may want to develop materials in those languages.

The position description can also be the starting point for two other documents you will almost certainly want to develop. The first of these is a simple flyer, one that can be posted on bulletin boards and handed out to potential applicants. The second document is a one-paragraph announcement of the position that can be used in newsletters, classified advertisements, and other outlets.

Finally, be sure all your materials can be distributed online as well as on paper. Many AmeriCorps programs have had success with online recruitment, and you will almost certainly have occasion to send position descriptions and other materials by email. Also, if you have a web page, be sure to post the job description in a prominent place.

SAMPLE POSITION DESCRIPTION:

AmeriCorps Member/Development Specialist Working with the Bettencourt House

Make a difference in your community by helping homeless men and women in transition. Become an AmeriCorps member and help organize fundraising activities with the Bettencourt House. Develop fundraising, networking, and outreach skills, and earn an education award for future higher education or to pay off existing higher-education debts. The members serve as development specialists, under the supervision of Bettencourt House staff.

Specific Duties

- Assist senior staff in strengthening strategic community partnerships;
- Help organize, implement, and facilitate fundraising events for the facility;
- Assist staff at a new Bettencourt facility in Macon, GA; and
- Draft grant proposals for supplemental funding.

Necessary Skills

- Strong writing skills;
- Ability to work as part of a team and individually;
- Interest in homelessness issues; and
- Background in communication, fundraising, or grant-writing a plus.

Bettencourt House will provide ongoing training to members. One member will work in Atlanta, the other in Macon, Georgia. Some travel necessary. Must have your own transportation.

Established in 1975, Bettencourt House is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of homeless men and women in the Atlanta area. The House has three facilities serving veteran and non-veteran populations and is working to open an additional site. The House takes a holistic approach to helping individuals break the cycles of disappointment, hopelessness, and dependency. Programs include:

1. *My Brother's Place*: A program providing shelter, food, and emergency health care on a short term basis to people in need.
2. *Program Emerge*: A residential program with on-site health services, lifestyles workshops, skills training, computer literacy, and literacy programs.
3. *Program Recall*: Graduates of Program Emerge mentor individuals coming through the residential program to help encourage and support independence.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members serve full-time, for one year with varying work hours and receive a modest living allowance, health insurance, an education award of \$4,725, relocation expenses, and travel reimbursement. Bettencourt House provides skills training, opportunities to build your resume and work portfolio, career counseling at the end of your service, and a staff mentor throughout the year to provide support and guidance. Bettencourt House and AmeriCorps are equal opportunity organizations.

Please contact Ali Harvey, Program Director, at 1-888-123-4567 for more information or visit our website at www.sampleposition.org. AmeriCorps*VISTA members currently serving with the House are also available to answer your questions. Send applications to: The Bettencourt House, One Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 00000.

STEP FOUR: A FEW GOOD MEMBERS

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Target your recruitment to those most likely to join.**
- **Identify organizations that might already be in touch with your likely candidates.**

they joined. Ask them where to reach people with similar motives or interests.

- Focus on people who are already active in their community through volunteer service, and particularly on people who have expressed or demonstrated an interest in the community problem you're working on.

Of course, you'll want to be careful to remember the legal requirements for all potential AmeriCorps members. All members must be United States citizens, nationals, or legal permanent aliens. In addition, AmeriCorps members must be at least 17 years old, and AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*NCCC members must be at least 18 years old.

Who Are You Looking For and Where Will You Find Them?

Your next step is to figure out exactly what kind of members you're looking for and where to find them.

Identifying Likely Candidates

You'll save yourself a lot of work if you spend a little time thinking about where you'll find likely applicants for AmeriCorps. After all, the best materials and the best recruiters will do you little good if you don't match them up with people who might be interested in devoting a year of their lives to AmeriCorps.

So start by thinking about who would be most likely to want to join AmeriCorps. Here are some tips:

- Don't overlook your own backyard! Think about particularly good volunteers who have worked with your organization in the past, or who may have worked with other organizations.
- Look for groups of people in transition from one phase of their lives to another. That would include people who are leaving or will soon be leaving their jobs or schools, and might be more open to doing something unique and rewarding for a year. Recent retirees are another example.
- If you have hosted AmeriCorps members before, survey your current and former members about their motivations to serve and look for applicants who share similar interests. Consider the reasons

Sources of Potential Members

And just where do potential AmeriCorps members hang out? Where should you look? And to whom should you talk? Here are some suggestions:

- The National AmeriCorps Referral System—see the next section for details;
- Career counseling and planning centers;
- Other AmeriCorps programs that may have waiting lists—contact them through your state commission and state office;
- Members who are graduating from other AmeriCorps programs in the area;
- Local Learn and Serve America programs in your area—call 1-800-808-SERVE or go to www.learnandserve.org to identify programs;
- Local social service offices;
- Local volunteer clearinghouses and volunteer centers or campus community service centers;
- Local nonprofit and volunteer organizations;
- Places of worship—clergy often know a lot about who in their congregation might make good AmeriCorps members;

- College career fairs;
- High school career days for graduating seniors, including vocational or magnet schools, and those with a service-learning component;
- Teachers and guidance counselors in both public and private schools;
- Downsizing companies or military bases;
- The local Peace Corps recruitment office—call 1-800-424-8580 to find out where that is; and
- Local senior centers.

Special Challenges

Because every community is different, each will pose its own unique set of challenges. Here are some tips other AmeriCorps programs and sponsors have found useful for overcoming specific recruitment issues.

Recruiting in Small Communities and Rural Areas

Because small communities and rural areas offer fewer opportunities to find large gatherings of potential members, recruitment in such areas requires some special tactics. Think about where you get the most information about your community. It may be your community newspapers or bulletin board, a popular restaurant, or the local grocery store. Here are some approaches that have been successful in the past:

- Get the help of influential town members to get people talking about your program.
- Contact national and regional clubs, such as teachers associations, Rotary, and Cooperative Extension/4-H. These can be valuable contacts to reach retired and student membership groups.
- Ask for a chance to speak at a meeting and put a notice in the newsletter to spark interest among service-oriented individuals.
- Place posters or fliers on community bulletin boards and at grocery stores and restaurants –depending on the qualifications you need for the program.
- Host information events at local libraries, town meetings, or local and county fairs to spread the word.

- Talk to someone at the local newspaper or television station and ask to have a story run about your organization's work and need for members to help in the community. Smaller papers and stations are often very receptive to suggested story ideas, particularly if you can provide them with solid background information and names and numbers of sources.

Incorporating Diversity

Diversity can include many things: age, gender, sexual orientation, income level, educational attainment, ethnic background, race, physical abilities, geography, skills, and more. A healthy mix of members on a program can make for a better program, and a better experience for the members and sponsoring organizations. Some tips on improving the diversity of your members include:

- Ask current members to promote your program in local communities where they serve. Ask them to recommend people within the community who would make good applicants.
- Plan outreach and advertising campaigns targeted to reach organizations or areas where diverse members can be found.
- Partner with local agencies or organizations serving diverse populations to help in your recruitment campaign. See the resources page at the end for some suggested starting points.
- Be sure to pay careful attention to any cultural sensitivities as you recruit—calling potential recruits on religious holidays, for example.

STEP FIVE: ROLLING UP YOUR SLEEVES

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Recruit candidates in face-to-face meetings at events, speeches, information sessions.**
- **Use the national AmeriCorps recruitment database and local recruiting leads.**
- **Don't be shy about using your own network of contacts, or tapping into your colleagues' networks.**
- **Use the media to get your message out.**

Finding and Persuading Potential Applicants

Once you decide on your timeline, figure out your budget, and write a plan and a position description, you're ready to start talking to potential applicants. When it comes to recruitment, most AmeriCorps programs rely on four basic outreach methods: face-to-face recruitment, the national AmeriCorps referral system, networking, and the media. Some programs use all four methods while others pick and choose. What you do, and in what mix, will depend on your resources, your plan, and your community.

Face-to-Face Recruitment

Nothing compares with looking potential applicants in the eye, shaking their hands, and telling them why you think the opportunity you're offering is something they shouldn't pass up. It is by far the most direct, and generally the most effective way to recruit members.

Unfortunately, it can also be more expensive and time-consuming than other approaches, but with proper planning, you can make the investment of time and money amply worthwhile. Some events, speaking engagements,

and other face-to-face recruitment opportunities may require no out-of-pocket costs at all. The following are a few examples and hints for face-to-face recruitment.

Stress Your Strengths

In your one-on-one conversations with potential members, don't forget to play to your strong suit.

Emphasize:

- The appeal of being part of a national movement;
- The opportunity to help the community;
- The chance to meet new people, and have an adventure;
- Training in job skills and career networking opportunities;
- Student loan deferment or forbearance;
- An education award to pay off most student loans or for future study; and
- The chance to apply education and experience to help communities.

Outreach Events

Once you've thought about where you're likely to find potential applicants, choosing the right events to attend is easy. Set up display tables at events such as career fairs or expositions, special conferences or meetings, town festivals, or city heritage days. Before you spend your time and resources on these events, think about the following:

- Make sure the intended audience of an event is likely to be there before you decide to attend. A college career fair for prospective or recent graduates, especially a nonprofit career fair, is a good example of an appropriate event audience. You'll also want to assess whether event sponsors have promoted the event sufficiently to draw a crowd.

- Make sure you have a good display space—both in terms of size and location. If you have a choice about where to set up, walk through the space and see where the natural flow of the area takes you. See where your eyes are led. Make note of which doors people will enter the space through, and which direction they will naturally walk. Know the size of your display space and then create or request a display appropriate to the space. Displays are available for loan by calling the AmeriCorps Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.
- Bring enough materials with you. You should give people enough information to understand your agency and the position, but not a copy of everything you have. The first thing potential applicants read should tell them right away what your program is doing and what AmeriCorps is. Have a few applications behind the table for people who seem very interested in your program.
- Have a sign-up sheet at your table. It'll save you from losing the name and contact information for potential applicants. Take notes on anyone you talk with who seems particularly interested, and what they had to say. That way you'll know whom you're talking to when you follow up.

It's important to make your display space visually appealing so people are drawn to it, and equally important that whoever staffs the table is outgoing and good at talking with people. Here are some ideas:

- Use a tabletop display or table banner to brighten up your space.
- Display large pictures of members in service in an attractive and professional manner.
- Show a video, if an electrical connection is available. You can use the AmeriCorps recruitment video "Walk the Walk" (available by calling 1-800-942-2677) or a video of your program.
- Stand in front of or beside the table. If you are sitting down, reading a newspaper or talking with another presenter, people will be less likely to want to bother you.
- Offer food to draw people to your table. Candy is always a cost-effective enticement.
- Bring other giveaways as incentives for people to come talk to you. For example, you can give away pens, water bottles, highlighters, magnets, and other items that include contact information—your phone number, program name, and the AmeriCorps 1-800 number. Check your local yellow pages or the Internet for promotional item vendors, and consider asking for an in-kind contribution. Low-cost AmeriCorps products and give-aways are available by calling (601) 984-3200. You can download an AmeriCorps catalog at www.nationalservice.org/ameri-corps/resources/index.html.
- Actively pursue event attendees. Greet people as they approach your table or look your way. Start a conversation with a question like, "Are you familiar with AmeriCorps?" If they say no, follow up with, "Well, let me tell you about it." Then get them talking to you.

Public Speaking

Speeches are effective for both short- and long-term recruitment efforts. The key to effective public speaking is to know and respect your audience. No matter how worthwhile your program, if it does not connect with the audience members' values and interests, they won't be interested. Similarly, if you drone on longer than your audience is prepared to listen, you'll lose every one of them. Here are some tips:

- Choose your audience. Offer to speak to organizations whose members are likely applicants.
- Tell real-life stories and anecdotes. Make eye contact with the audience.
- Stay within your time limit.
- Be straightforward. Don't sound like you're trying to sell them a used car. Just tell them what your program does, how it affects the lives of people in your community, what you're looking for in new recruits, what they'll be asked to do, and what past members have gotten out of the experience.
- Bring copies of the position descriptions.
- Make presentations even if you are not actively recruiting. You can help interest people in your next round of recruits.

- Talk to audiences who may have friends, children, or neighbors who might be interested; word-of-mouth is very powerful.
- Use visuals such as flip charts, photos, slides, or other items unique to your program or community. They will reinforce your spoken message and appeal to the visual learners in the audience.
- Offer information and take the names of any potential members so you can follow up with them later.

You'll want to be sure to make certain points in your speech. They include:

- Since 1994, AmeriCorps members have served more than 4,000 communities, mobilized and recruited nearly 2 million volunteers, tutored and mentored more than 2 million children, organized after-school programs for more than a half million at-risk youth, and built or rehabilitated more than 25,000 homes.
- AmeriCorps members come from all walks of life. Many are young, others are older. Some have years of higher education or work experience, others are working toward their GED. But they all have one thing in common—a drive to improve communities through service.
- Since 1994, more than 150,000 members have served in AmeriCorps.
- The benefits of AmeriCorps last beyond a single year. AmeriCorps members learn responsibility and effective citizenship through their actions, and for many members, their year of service is a bridge to a lifetime commitment to helping others. The AmeriCorps members' pledge is to "get things done for America" and includes a lasting promise: "I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond." AmeriCorps members are making good on this promise every day.

Information Sessions

Unlike a speech, an information session is a chance for potential members who already have some interest in applying for membership to learn more. You know they have some interest simply because they come. The event can be held at your agency, in a local library, a nearby college, or any other place appropriate and accessible for potential members.

Some tips to an effective session:

- Organize a session through a college career center to lend credibility to your program.
- Post announcements on community bulletin boards, advertise in the local paper, or mail an invitation to people interested in your program.
- Make the presentation short—no more than 20 minutes or so—with information about AmeriCorps, your specific program, and, if available, a video on your program.
- Build in 15 to 20 minutes at the end of your presentation for questions and answers. This may be members' best chance to get information before they apply.
- End on time, but stay afterwards for one-on-one questions about the application process or the program itself.
- Bring flip charts with facts about AmeriCorps and your program, a video of your program or AmeriCorps, or other visual aids.
- Have current or former members from your AmeriCorps program participate. People want to hear about the program and the AmeriCorps experience from people who have done it.
- If your budget allows, serve a snack.

Special Events

You might also want to schedule your own events as a way to draw potential members, showcase your program, and attract the media. Such events might include service days, a social or community activity like a basketball tournament, an event at a local library, an assembly at a high school, or a program at a local community center. Remember that the event should be of interest to the people you're trying to reach, not just to you and your board members! Promote the event with flyers, conversations with key leaders, newspaper announcements, and whatever else is appropriate. Also be sure to invite community leaders, anyone whose name was passed on to you from the national referral system (see next section), and current or past AmeriCorps members. This is your chance to increase awareness about your program, your program's benefit to the community, and your recruitment needs.

National Recruitment Efforts

Each year, more than 90,000 people contact AmeriCorps—many through the telephone hotline or the AmeriCorps website. Those who express an interest in joining AmeriCorps are added to a database called the National Referral System. It includes names, addresses, educational backgrounds, geographic preferences, skills, and interests. The database reflects inquiries from general interest and awareness generated by AmeriCorps recruitment. They place ads in college and community papers, conduct outreach events in communities and on college campuses, send direct mail letters, distribute tearcard posters to college financial aid offices, career centers, and faith-based organizations, web advertising and outreach, and much more.

AmeriCorps programs and sponsors are invited to tap into the database for information on potential recruits for their programs. These people already have expressed an interest in AmeriCorps and have received basic information about the program.

To receive names of potential candidates by area, state, skills, geographic preferences, availability date, or a combination of this information, call the AmeriCorps hotline at 1-800-942-2677. You receive personal profiles of potential members and mailing labels for the individuals. Remember, these potential members have not been evaluated. This is only a listing of people who have expressed an interest in serving as AmeriCorps members. Also, keep in mind other AmeriCorps programs may also be actively recruiting them.

Programs have used these lists in many ways to help with recruitment. Here are some ideas you might find useful:

- Call the potential members and tell them about your AmeriCorps program.
- Send them materials about your program, including materials specifically about your organization and the program for which you are recruiting. Everyone in the database has already received basic material on AmeriCorps.
- Invite them to an information session, a service program, or your graduation ceremony.
- Offer to put them in touch with one of your current members or recent alumni.

- Refer the candidates you do not accept to other programs in your area. If you are not sure how to locate other programs, refer them to one of the AmeriCorps recruitment offices listed at the end of this manual.

Coming Soon: Online Recruitment System

In the fall of 2000, AmeriCorps will set up a new online system to help match prospective members with the programs that might best match their interests, eligibility, and skills. As part of the AmeriCorps website, this new system will give programs and prospective members direct access to each other. Applicants will be able to contact and apply directly to programs that interest them. Programs will be able to mine a database of prospects by sorting for those they would like to follow up with directly. For more details about how your program can participate, contact your state office, your commission, or your cluster's AmeriCorps recruitment officer.

Networking

Word of mouth consistently ranks as one of the top reasons people join AmeriCorps. That means one of the best ways to recruit members is to ask others to help you talk it up. This is easily the most cost-effective approach, although it may take months to yield results.

Don't be shy about tapping your own networks, and asking your colleagues to tap theirs. Board members, staff, former staff, business associates, customers, vendors, practically everyone knows someone who might be right for AmeriCorps. So while it's important to reach out to new contacts, don't overlook the people you come in contact with every day.

You'll also want to be sure to reach out to a number of key individuals and organizations in your community.

Community Leaders

Every community has a number of leaders with particularly strong personal networks. Sometimes their contacts are the result of the organizations they work for or belong to; sometimes they are the result of personal friendships. Reach out to these people. They include: elected officials, counselors, clergy, youth workers, teachers, and others in a position to influence career choices and who want a variety of options for the people they help. Be sure to stress with them that the work AmeriCorps members do for your program benefits your community, not just your organization. Local

organizations, businesses, and schools that help you recruit are strengthening their community.

Strategic Partnerships

Other AmeriCorps programs and community agencies in your area can join you in activities to cut down on recruitment expenses and staff necessary for activities. Take the competition out of recruiting. After all, someone who is attracted by another program but was turned down might turn out to be your ideal candidate. Collaborate early and try to build a cooperative relationship with your fellow AmeriCorps programs.

Here are some important things to remember as you network with community leaders and strategic partners:

- Don't assume everyone knows what AmeriCorps is, or they are familiar enough with your program to speak intelligently about it to others. So be sure to tell people your story, stressing your program's benefits to the community, and what makes it unique.
- Tell people how AmeriCorps benefits its participants and the community.
- Ask for specific help, such as including an announcement in a newsletter, referring potential applicants, and allowing you to speak at a meeting. The more specific you are about what you want, the easier it is for people to help you.

- Show how helping your program benefits their organization.
- Give them the materials they'll need to be effective.
- Keep them informed about your activities and progress both while you are recruiting and throughout the service year. Ways to keep in touch include mailings and inviting contacts to special events.
- Thank them for everything they do. Your appreciation will encourage an ongoing relationship. Be sure to follow-up on any leads they give you, and let them know what happened.

The Media

The best way to reach a mass audience in a hurry is to use the biggest megaphone around: the media—including newspapers, television, and radio.

You can get your message out through the news media in either of two basic ways: you can buy advertising, or you can get what is often called “earned media”—that is to say, you can make news.

For most people, the process by which “news” is selected for publication or broadcast is something of a mystery. But in truth it's perfectly straightforward. The media covers what they think their readers, listeners, and viewers want to know about. In that sense, AmeriCorps pro-

[date sent to media]

CONTACT: [name of person]
1-999-999-9999

MEDIA ADVISORY

TrailWorks' AmeriCorps Program to Stage 'Rebuild a Trail Day'

Cleveland, OH—On Saturday, June 30, TrailWorks and AmeriCorps will sponsor Cleveland's first “Rebuild a Trail Day,” in which several hundred area residents—including 50 local AmeriCorps members—will rebuild North Park's Goldenrod Trail. The trail was badly damaged in last fall's flooding, and has been closed to the public since October 3, 1999.

The event will also kick off TrailWorks recruitment campaign for its 2000 AmeriCorps program. In all, twelve members will be recruited over the course of the three-month campaign. Members receive a living allowance while they serve and an educational award at the end of the year.

The event is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 30, at the Goldenrod Trailhead, 100 yards from the North Park ranger station. For more information, or to arrange interviews, contact TrailWorks at 1-999-999-9999.

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grams are perfectly positioned, because reporters are always on the lookout for “human interest” stories.

Media Events

For the most part, local news outlets cover events, and specifically look for activities that affect readers’ lives. If you want to attract media coverage, you might stage a recruitment event connected to a service opportunity. In the past, AmeriCorps programs have attracted local news coverage for daylong home-construction programs, local community fairs, the dedication of a new homeless shelter, and other events with clear value to the community.

To get the media to cover your event, you’ll need to let them know about it. A sample “media advisory” is provided on the previous page. Send your advisory to reporters who cover your issue at every local news outlet you can find. If you are uncertain about which reporter covers your issue (such as education, homelessness, health, etc.), send your advisory to the outlet’s “News Assignment Desk.”

Make sure your advisory reaches the outlet five days in advance of the event. Faxes are perfectly acceptable to reporters. Then, after the advisory has arrived, call the reporter or assignment desk to make sure they got it, and to answer any questions they may have about the event.

On the day of the event, have a press release with you at the event that describes what happened, includes a quote from your spokesperson, and describes your organization and the day’s program. Hand out the release to any reporters who cover it, and fax it to those outlets who do not send a reporter.

Newspaper Opinion Pages

Practically every newspaper in the nation has a letter-to-the-editor column on or adjacent to their editorial pages. Letters are much easier to get published than some people think. Many papers also carry one or two 500- to 750-word “op-eds” every day. (Op-ed is actually short for “opposite editorial,” a reference to where in the newspaper op-eds run, and not for “opinion/editorial” which is what they actually are!) Op-eds are more difficult to place, but have a bigger payoff. Consider writing one or the other.

To place an op-ed, first sketch out an outline of what you want the piece to say, and figure out who will sign

the article. Op-eds should have a point of view, for example, you could argue that the popular view that today’s 18- to 25-year-olds are all “slackers” is disproved by the success of AmeriCorps. Then contact the newspaper’s op-ed editor. (Note—many smaller papers have no op-ed editor and leave the selection of op-eds to the editorial page editor.) Tell the editor you’re thinking about submitting an op-ed piece, and be ready to sketch out what it would say. Ask the editor if the newspaper would be interested in seeing such a piece. Don’t expect a commitment on the phone; the editor will usually tell you they’d like to see the article before deciding one way or the other.

Letters-to-the-editor are shorter—usually no more than 250 words or so—and are easiest to place when they are related to a recent news event. That said, the relationship is often fairly sketchy. For example, you might use a story about homelessness in general as an opportunity to promote your AmeriCorps program on the same topic.

Member Feature Stories

Another way into a newspaper is to promote the good deeds of a hometown member. Local, special interest, or college newspapers are often willing to place stories about opportunities benefiting their readers. A story about a current or former AmeriCorps member from the area can increase the chances for publication.

To interest a newspaper or broadcast outlet in doing such a profile story, prepare and submit to them a “hometown”—a short article about the AmeriCorps member. The following are tips for writing a profile story:

- During training, ask members to give you information about themselves. A sample “hometown” form is included on the page 16.
- Use the information to write a story. Consider using a form like the sample provided to gather information about the member’s participation in your program or to highlight a special achievement during the year. Then use the information to prepare a 500-word article to submit to the newspaper’s feature editor, with a cover letter suggesting the paper do a story on the individual.
- Be sure to highlight your recruitment needs and to include contact information in the article.

SAMPLE 'HOMETOWNER' FORM

Help us spread the word about AmeriCorps and our program through your hometown newspaper. Complete the form below with as much information as possible and return it your supervisor. THANK YOU!

Name _____ Age (optional) _____

Current Address _____

Permanent Address (if different from above) _____

Home Telephone Number _____

City/State you are serving in _____ Start Date _____

Parents Name _____

High School Attended _____ Year Graduated _____

College Attended _____ Year Graduated _____

Degree or Major _____

Hometown Newspaper Name(s) _____

AmeriCorps Sponsoring Agency Name _____

Agency Phone Number _____

Briefly explain your AmeriCorps program.

Describe any previous work or experience related to your AmeriCorps assignment:

Reasons for joining AmeriCorps:

Who or what inspired your commitment to community service or AmeriCorps?:

Plans after AmeriCorps?:

The principle purpose for gathering this information is to write news and other public information releases for the purpose of promoting AmeriCorps. I understand the information I have provided may be used in news releases and published articles prepared and issued by AmeriCorps. I authorize the release and publication of any and all information contained herein.

SIGNED _____ Date _____

Television and Radio

Don't be afraid to contact your local radio and television stations. Reporters expect to get inquiries and are looking for information to use in their broadcasts. Don't be shy about contacting someone you've seen on television for years. They talk on the telephone just like everybody else.

Television and radio stations often cover the same things newspapers cover, but their "news judgment" is often driven by the demands of their medium.

Specifically, television news programs insist on stories with "visuals," and radio stations look for stories with "good sound." Stage a local service event, particularly one where the service being performed communicates visually, and you'll be in great shape on both fronts.

Television news programs also run "feature" stories, just as newspapers do. The best approach to interest a local television reporter in such a piece is to first, find out which reporters do profiles, second, call them and suggest a piece on a local AmeriCorps hero. You'll need to

be sure the hero is willing to be interviewed, as well as a spokesperson for the sponsoring organization. After you talk with the reporter, you'll probably want to fax them information on your organization and on the member.

Another outlet not to be missed is "talk radio." Most locally produced talk shows run for several hours, creating a daily burden for the program's producers: they have to find several interesting guests each day. For that reason, talk show producers are often open to being "pitched."

A sample "pitch letter" is included below. Customize it for your own purposes, fax it to the producer, and then call the next day to follow up.

SAMPLE RADIO TALK SHOW PITCH LETTER

[date]

[Producer's name]

[Radio Show, Station]

[address]

[city, state, zip code]

Dear [Mr./Ms. name]:

On Saturday, June 30, TrailWorks will sponsor a unique event at Northside Park. As you may recall, last fall's flooding wiped out the Goldenrod Trail, one of the area's most popular. Working with AmeriCorps, TrailWorks is staging a daylong "trail-building" volunteer day. The event will coincide with the launch of TrailWorks' AmeriCorps recruitment campaign.

As you may know, AmeriCorps has had a profound impact on our community, touching the lives of thousands of area residents. Nearly 250 local members have served tens of thousands of meals, helped put hundreds of families into safe and livable homes, tutored more than a thousand children, and much more.

AmeriCorps has built an impressive record of accomplishment here in [name of community] and around the nation. If you're interested in spending some time discussing AmeriCorps on your program, I would be delighted to join you and would be happy to bring one or two AmeriCorps members with me. If you're interested, you may reach me at [your phone number]. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[name]

[title]

Paid Media

The surest way to get the word out about your recruitment efforts is to advertise. Ads come in several shapes, and in several price ranges.

Classified Advertising

A common tool for recruiting AmeriCorps members, paid classified ads appear in the employment section and should include five basic elements:

- Give your ad a “grabber” headline, something to catch the reader’s eye, such as “Change Your Community,” or “Teach Children to Read.”
- Use the proper “key word” so your ad goes in the correct section of the classifieds. For example, an ad with the heading Literacy Teachers Sought should have a key word like “education”; otherwise, it will end up with “Librarians” or another unrelated job title that begins with the letter L.
- Provide enough information to entice people and let them know if this is a good choice for them.
- Include your phone and fax numbers and your email address.
- Use action phrases like “call this week,” “call now,” or “call immediately” to encourage a quick response.

If your ad can be listed in several different sections, place the complete ad in the most promising category

and “referral” ads in the others. List your phone number in the referral ad as well. A sample classified ad is below.

Display Ads

Display ads are placed throughout the newspaper, scattered among the articles—or in some newspapers, overwhelming the articles! Ads come in a variety of sizes, depending on the newspapers’ policies. Prices vary depending on individual papers’ practices, but generally speaking, full-page ads can cost thousands of dollars, and smaller ads can be considerably less expensive. However, many publications will place display ads at no cost as a public service, so don’t forget to ask.

Pre-designed AmeriCorps ads are available for your use, with space for you to include your program’s name and contact information. Contact 1-800-942-2677 to get copies of ads or see the ads and download a request form at www.americorps.org/resources/rec_ads/index.html. AmeriCorps programs are encouraged to use the logo on display ads. You can download the logo at www.cns.gov/logos/, or you can call the number above and have a copy sent to you.

SAMPLE CLASSIFIED AD TEXT

Improve Your Community

Description: Local nonprofit seeks self-motivated, team player committed to community service to do grassroots fundraising, grant writing, and community partnership development. Duties include events-organizing, writing, meeting-planning, and data entry. Great foot-in-the-door opportunity. Qualifications: Background in communication, development, accounting preferred. Grant writing experience a plus. Benefits: Through AmeriCorps, members receive a living allowance, health coverage, and an education award of \$4,725.

Apply: Fax resume to 1-555-555-5555 or send to

Contact: Susan Doh
The Vermeer AmeriCorps Program
100 Anystreet
Washington, DC 00000
1-888-000-0000

Keyword: DEVELOPMENT

Public Service Announcements

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs as they are called, are essentially free advertisements, aired on radio and television stations.

The Corporation for National Service Office of Public Affairs distributes national radio and television PSAs to thousands of stations across the country. To see what's currently playing, visit www.americorps.org. To find out if your local television and radio stations have copies, contact the stations' public service directors. Many times, they have a copy and just need a little encouragement to play it. If they don't have a copy, contact the Office of Public Affairs at (202) 606-5000, x304.

Developing Your Own PSA

The cost of producing a television PSA can be prohibitive for many AmeriCorps programs. Radio stations run many more PSAs than television stations do, and

are much more likely to run local PSAs. By contrast, PSAs on radio stations often cost nothing to produce, because disk jockeys, announcers, or news anchors often just read them live on the air (See sample).

The trick with PSAs is getting yours chosen from all the others. The best way to get a PSA on the air is to contact local radio stations popular among the demographic groups you'd like to hear the announcement. Ask the program manager or other appropriate person how they prefer to have PSAs submitted. Some stations will simply ask for a script while others will want you to make a 25-second recording.

To increase the amount of airtime the station devotes to your PSA, introduce yourself to the station manager or key station staff, and give them a clear explanation of your AmeriCorps program and how it benefits your community. Also, be sure to send a thank-you note to the station after hearing the announcement and to let them know if it helped recruit any members. With any luck, you'll begin building a relationship that will serve you and the station well for years to come.

SAMPLE RADIO PSA

The Harvey House Start Using: Upon Receipt
10 Nowhere St. Stop Using: May 1, 1999
Ames, IA 00000

Contact: Jane Doe, Volunteer Coordinator

1-888-000-0000

-25 Seconds-

AmeriCorps is Getting Things Done.

In Ames, AmeriCorps members are working to end the vicious cycles of homelessness and despair by working to establish shelters and training facilities for people in need.

If you're 18 or older and want to:

Help in your community

Get real experience while making a real difference in someone's life

And earn money for college, all at the same time, you can be an AmeriCorps member.

Call 1-888-000-0000 today.

The Internet

The Internet can be one of the most effective and least expensive ways to reach potential members. If your organization already has a home page, add a section about joining AmeriCorps or a link directly to the AmeriCorps home page. If you do not have a home page, you can refer people to the AmeriCorps site at www.americorps.org for more information on the program, its benefits, and to apply. And don't forget to check the site for the upcoming on-line recruitment system.

In addition, you should also be able to post your job description on a number of sites. Many of those same sites post the resumés of job seekers, some people might be encouraged to be AmeriCorps applicants. Many sites offer free listings and others charge a small fee to post your announcement.

- Contact sites specific to your target audience including sites for nonprofit employment such as www.idealists.org or www.libertynet.org.
- Post your positions in as many places as possible to increase outreach.

- Check to make sure your job description is in the correct category, field, or state to make the most of your posting and increase the number of “hits” from interested job-searchers.
- Update your posting and check websites regularly. The Internet expands every minute, so explore and research it frequently. Plan to spend an hour or so each week for web research and placing new postings.
- Contact AmeriCorps Alums for help with recruiting members at www.americorpsalums.org or acorpalum@aol.com.
- For more information on Internet recruitment possibilities, check the National Service Resource Center web site at www.etr.org/nsrc/sites/misc_sites.html.

STEP SIX: CLOSING THE SALE

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Following up with potential applicants is critical to your campaign's success.**
- **Keep notes and write short summaries of events you attend to help plan the next campaign.**

Following Up on Leads and Tracking Your Success

The purpose of large-scale recruitment events and media outreach is to identify possible applicants. But turning your list of “possibles” into “definites” is a matter of follow-up. It's great when someone is so excited about the prospect of being a member that they pursue you, but don't expect that to happen too often. Build time into your schedule to do the pursuing yourself.

Of course, in order to follow up on leads, you must first be sure you've collected the names and contact information of people you meet who express interest in AmeriCorps. So be sure to bring sign-up sheets and several pens to every event you attend, and to carry something to write on wherever you go during recruiting season. Gather information on the candidates, such as:

- names,
- phone numbers,
- email addresses, and
- mailing addresses.

Also, be sure to write down what you learn about candidates in your conversations with them. The information will help you keep track of who's who and be useful in prioritizing applicants. Applicants will also be impressed you remember the details of your conversations with them, because it will convey to them you

were paying attention to what they had to say, and it mattered to you.

If you don't already have a system in place for tracking such information, here are a few suggestions:

- Use a sign-in sheet at every event to collect the name, phone number, address, email, and general interests of everyone you meet.
- Make a special email group of everyone so you can keep track of them and send more information later.
- Create a phone log specific to your recruitment efforts. Base your log on the sign-in sheet so you are sure to capture information.
- Change your out-going voice-mail message to encourage callers to leave all of the above information.

Following Up

After gathering all the information, put it to good use. Call candidates back to follow up and send them more information. Even if all you do is send them a follow-up postcard letting them know about an upcoming information session, it's important potential applicants know you're interested in them. Be sure to personalize written communications wherever possible, with something that lets the candidate know you remember them. You might, for example, hand-write a note on the bottom of a follow-up form letter saying you enjoyed talking to them at such-and-such event.

When it comes to turning *potential* applicants into *actual* applicants, it's critically important you do exactly what you say you will. If you tell an applicant you'll send them more information, mail it promptly. If you tell them you'll call to invite them to a subsequent event, put the call on the top of your to-do list. Remember, you're asking candidates to spend a year of their lives working with you. They'll be reassured you can be relied on to do just what you say you will. It's surprising how uncommon that can be.

Here are some other tips on follow-up:

- Ask current AmeriCorps members to make informal phone calls to encourage people to apply.
- Send postcards with a friendly, encouraging message or member success story.
- Invite potential members to your program's special events.
- Encourage potential applicants to participate in short-term projects with your program.
- Send email messages to people in small groups. Large group emails make people feel like they're just another face in the crowd to you.

Tracking Your Efforts

Something you'll want to know about recruiting right up front: it's never a one-shot deal. Once you launch a recruitment campaign, you'll find yourself sizing up practically everyone you meet—not just on recruiting trips, but at the grocery store, at PTA meetings, and everywhere else. In a way, that's a lucky thing, because you'll probably be down this road again—running another campaign next year, possibly even for years to come.

When it comes time for you or somebody else to run the next campaign, you'll find one of your best planning resources will be the notes you've taken and evaluations you've conducted on the previous year's effort. So be sure to keep track of what works and what doesn't, where you found applicants, where successful candidates came from, what specifically appealed to them, and anything else relevant, including any unique solutions to problems, etc. In short, spend some time figuring out what worked and what didn't.

Some suggestions:

- Develop an activity report like the sample on the next page.
- Keep a written record of each event to act as a reminder the next time you or someone else does events.
- Include the names of people you worked with, what they did for you, and their contact information.

- Complete activity reports immediately after the event so the information is fresh in your mind. Note how many people attended, the number of applications given out, the reaction of the audience, and anything else you can measure.
- Attach a copy of the sign-in sheet from the event. As applications come in, you can check them against the lists to see how they heard about you.
- Follow-up six months later. Check to see how many applications were returned and how many of those applicants actually became members.
- Ask applicants how they heard about you and keep a record of their responses.

Finally, if you had a particularly successful campaign, don't keep it to yourself! Send an email to questions@americorps.org or fax 1-202-565-2794 to the Office of AmeriCorps Recruitment, Selection, and Placement, so other organizations and programs may benefit from your experience.

SAMPLE TRACKING/ACTIVITY REPORT SHEET

Campaign Preparation/ Advance Work:

Staff Member Attending _____

Name of School or Event Site _____

Type of Event _____

Date of Event _____

Table Location: _____ #Days _____ Time of Day _____

Equipment and Space Fees _____

Travel Time/Miles/Method _____

Parking Permit Required on Campus _____

Date Invitations Sent _____ #of Posters Placed _____ #of Ads Placed _____

Letters or Posters Sent to _____

Staff and Faculty Contacts _____

Partnerships and Community Contacts Made _____

Campaign Goals:

Campaign Summary:

of Applications Distributed _____ #of Brochures Distributed _____

Number of Applications Received from Campaign _____

Number of Applicants that Became Members _____

Total Time Spent _____

Total Cost _____

Attach a copy of the sign-up sheet.

Event Rating

- Excellent
- Good (some response)
- Fair (little response)
- Inappropriate

STEP SEVEN: A BIRD IN THE HAND

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Keep your members by keeping them invested and informed.**
- **Make sure members' first few days go well by connecting them to their colleagues, getting them the materials they need in advance to get ready, and being available to answer questions.**
- **As the year progresses, continue meeting with the member, nurturing their commitment, and providing opportunities for continued growth.**

- Before your members arrive, send an orientation packet including maps, information about your area, an introduction to your organization and your AmeriCorps program, what they need to bring from home, and information about AmeriCorps members they will be serving with (if applicable).
- Arrange for an existing AmeriCorps member with your program to call them a few days before they begin work, to welcome them and answer any questions they might be shy about asking you.
- Make sure your staff members know what AmeriCorps is and understand the member's unique position in your organization and the community.
- Set up a mentor program where new members team up with experienced people in your organization.
- Plan a social event to welcome new members into your organization.
- Consider doing team-building exercises or including experiential learning activities into your orientation week.
- Allow members time to become comfortable with their new surroundings, understand all the information they have received, and develop relationships with your staff and other members.
- Help find housing for people who relocate. Encourage staff and other AmeriCorps members to help them or provide a temporary place to stay while they look for housing.
- Meet out-of-town members upon their arrival.
- As an initial exercise, pair or team members on programs (or link them with members at nearby programs). This will help them create a link to your program, the new surroundings, and the other members of your AmeriCorps team or staff, an important element for a successful experience.

How to Retain Your Members

Once you've done all the work required to recruit members, make sure they have an experience with you that makes them want to stay. That means you should create a positive and supportive work environment, one where members have ample opportunities to learn and grow. Do everything reasonable to let them know they're an important part of your organization and have a responsible and respected role.

Providing members with a good experience will be good for retention and recruitment. Happy members will spread good news about your organization and help you recruit members for additional positions in the future.

Getting Off on the Right Foot

Your new members' first impressions of their workplace will make a big difference. So be sure to get off on the right foot. Here are a few tips to consider:

As the Year Progresses

As members begin to settle into their new responsibilities, keep the following tips in mind:

- Provide a service work plan and make sure your members read and understand it before they start.
- Meet regularly with your AmeriCorps members to discuss their achievements, problems, and needs.
- Provide a solid training program throughout the year.
- Provide consistent, quality supervision to your members.
- Develop teamwork among members, between staff and members, between members and the community, and with other AmeriCorps or volunteer programs in your community.
- Encourage and acknowledge creativity and initiative.
- Agree on expectations, review performance regularly, and require accountability.
- Treat them in a professional manner.
- Enable them to make contacts with community leaders. This can be very beneficial to them during their service as well as when they leave AmeriCorps.
- Help them develop a portfolio, including samples of reports, letters, etc.
- Publicize their placement and program in your local newspaper and newsletter.
- Publicize the work AmeriCorps members are doing for your organization, particularly when AmeriCorps members are present (e.g., annual meetings, board meetings, conferences, and recognition and publicity events).
- Deal with problems as they arise and in a direct and efficient manner. Make sure to review the grievance procedure as outlined by the AmeriCorps Member Handbook as well as in your organization's policies with members.

A Final Thought

Most members come to AmeriCorps not because they couldn't find a traditional job, but because they want the kind of unique experience AmeriCorps offers. They want to serve their communities and their country, and they want to make a difference in people's lives. They're right to feel that way; the commitment to getting things done is the heart and soul of AmeriCorps. Realistically, that noble and idealistic motivation is also what keeps AmeriCorps' talented members working hard for little financial remuneration. Above all else, be sure you find ways to reinforce members' pride in their work, in your program, and in their commitment and self-sacrifice.

Good luck and good recruiting!

RESOURCES

The following is a list of contact organizations where you can receive recruitment items or more information on how to recruit for your program.

AmeriCorps Hotline

1-800-942-2677 or acinfo@infosystec.com

Available at no charge: Application, AmeriCorps Brochures, Fact Sheets, Posters, Recruitment video, Customizable Print Ads,

AmeriCorps Website

www.americorps.org/resources/index.html

AmeriCorps Catalog, Program Directors Handbook, Member Application, Guide to Working with the Media, Member Loan Forbearance Forms, Member Interest Accrual Forms

Mississippi Industries for the Blind

(601) 984-3200

Order form available at www.americorps.org/resources/appendix/catalog.pdf (Adobe format)

Some items are free, others have a minimal charge

Buttons, Banners, Lapel Pins, Stickers, Signs, Folders, Patches, Orientation Video, Pledge Certificates, Graduation Certificates, Camera-Ready Logos, Member Handbooks, Business Cards

National Service Resource Center

1-800-860-2684

Order information on-line at www.etr.org/nsrc/

Hundreds of resources and publications such as:

YMCA Volunteer Manual: The Seven R's of Volunteer Development: Reflection, Research, Readiness, Recruitment, Retention, Recognition, Resources by Celeste J. Wroblewski

Volunteer Recruitment Book by Susan J. Ellis

101 Tips for Volunteer Recruitment by Steve McCurley and Sue Vineyard

Diversity Resources

The following organizations are resources and starting places to find out more about diversity recruitment.

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

www.pcepd.gov

Phone: (202) 376-6200, TDD (202) 376-6205

NAACP Information Hotline

www.naacp.org

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the oldest, largest and strongest civil rights organization in the United States. They have many local chapters.

Phone: (410) 521-4939

Job Corps

www.jobcorps.org

Job Corps provides training for at-risk youth who chose to learn trades skills. Many members leave the Corps with valuable skills.

Pass It On: Outreach to Minority Communities

by Charyn D Sutton (available at NSRC mentioned above).