



AMERICORPS PROGRAM DESIGN ELEMENTS

The activities members engage in will fall into one of three program design categories:

- *Needs and Services* – direct service activities that address a designated focus area;
- *Member Development* – the training members receive to complete their service, including member orientation, ongoing training, and Life After AmeriCorps training; and
- *Strengthening Communities* – volunteer recruitment and support and/or capacity building activities. AmeriCorps members may engage in capacity building activities that advance the program’s goals and are consistent with the scope of the proposed program. Capacity building activities are those that produce organizational outcomes including enhancing the systems, infrastructure, and human resources of an organization that is meeting otherwise unmet community needs.

As a general rule, AmeriCorps members devote 80 percent of their service hours towards the program's activities in the areas of *Needs and Services Activities* and *Strengthening Communities*. The remaining 20 percent of service hours may be directed towards providing members the training they need to successfully complete service activities.

Needs and Services Activities	Strengthening Communities		Member Development
Direct service activities	Volunteer recruitment and/or support	Capacity building activities (optional)	Member training <i>(not more than 20 percent of the aggregate of all AmeriCorps members in your program)</i>

Needs and Services

The centerpiece of the AmeriCorps ethic is getting things done through demonstrable service that helps solve compelling community problems. The community need determines the service; the program design provides a means to address that community need. AmeriCorps*State programs provide a variety of specific and identifiable services that address community needs.

The following information may be useful in designing an effective AmeriCorps program:

- Identify and document with local data the compelling critical need affecting the community. Statistics should document the scope and severity of the need to be addressed by the AmeriCorps program;
- Involve community members in planning and implementing the program;
- Institute long-term change and sustainable solutions to community needs. Demonstrate that the program will provide a direct benefit that the community values;
- Develop a logic model that illustrates a well-designed and effective program model that clearly addresses the identified need;
- Design impact based service activities that engage participants in meaningful activities with well-defined roles;
- Design service activities that are aligned with the identified needs and that lead to measurable outcomes and generate a social impact. Activities should leave a substantial, lasting, and beneficial impact on Louisiana and its citizens;
- Clearly describe why AmeriCorps resources represent an effective strategy for addressing the identified need;
- Develop ambitious performance measures and a comprehensive evaluation plan to measure the program’s impact;
- Develop a system for continuous program self assessment and improvement; and



- Build on (without duplicating) or reflect collaboration with other programs.

Member Development

AmeriCorps expands opportunities in vital ways by enhancing members' educational opportunities and professional skills. Because of their AmeriCorps service, members gain valuable experience. Members carry these skills and experiences throughout the rest of their lives. In addition, members receive education awards that can be used for post-secondary education or to repay student loans. AmeriCorps also encourages responsibility in members. Through service, discussion of service, and education about service, AmeriCorps enables members to see themselves as problem solvers, not problems; to become leaders, not just followers; and to act on their responsibilities in addition to their rights. AmeriCorps enables members to explore and exercise their responsibilities toward their communities, their families, and themselves.

The following information may be useful in designing an effective AmeriCorps program:

- Establish effective and feasible plans for, or evidence of, recruiting, managing, and rewarding diverse members;
- Succeed in meeting member enrollment and retention targets;
- Develop effective and feasible plans for, developing, training, and supervising members that leads to delivery of high-quality service, high member satisfaction, development of leadership skills, esprit de corps and program completion;
- Cover the required topics in the member training plan;
- Promote and sustain a national service identity and affiliation;
- Design training or service activities that promote and sustain post AmeriCorps service, a lifelong ethic of service and civic responsibility, including structured opportunities for members to reflect on and learn from their service; and
- Develop trainings and coaching activities that explore career opportunities and encourage educational and professional development for members to transition into post AmeriCorps opportunities and utilization of post-service benefits.

Strengthening Communities

AmeriCorps strengthens communities by involving citizens directly in meeting community needs. AmeriCorps members meet the *Strengthening Communities* objectives in many ways, including volunteer recruitment and support, capacity building activities, as well as community awareness events such as national service days. All applicants are required to include a volunteer recruitment and/or support component in their program design. Through the program, communities should develop their capacity to make change and sustain change that can support the long term solution of the issue at hand. The program must also begin to examine how you will sustain services without the presence of AmeriCorps. Ultimately the goal is to develop a program that is sustainable, builds organizational and local capacity, has the full involvement of community volunteers, and produces outcomes beyond those accomplished by AmeriCorps members alone.

Organizations are encouraged to effectively recruit, train, manage, and use volunteers who will ultimately have an impact on the success of their program's goals and outcomes. Programs are encouraged to capture the talents, skills, energy, and experience of Baby Boomers; increase the capacity of organizations to mobilize volunteers in communities; and develop strong partnerships and collaborations with volunteer centers or other volunteer connector organizations in their service areas.

The following information may be useful in designing an effective AmeriCorps program:

- Build strong community partnerships, including well-defined roles for partners;
- Commit to collaborating with other community organizations and institutions, including other national service programs;
- Demonstrate impact in the community that is sustainable beyond the presence of federal support;



- Establish well-defined member activities that generate and support long-term volunteer commitments from community volunteers to expand the reach of the program, with appropriate performance measures;
- Set up well-defined roles for members in enhancing the capacity of partnering organizations leading to measurable outcomes or impact;
- Commit to raise the profile in the community of the resources and benefits available through National Service and AmeriCorps; and
- Engage members and recruit community volunteers to participation in national days of service.

Prohibited Service Activities

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- Attempting to influence legislation.
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements.
- Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.
- Providing a direct benefit to:
 - A business organized for profit;
 - A labor union;
 - A partisan political organization;
 - A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
 - An organization engaged in the religious activities described in the preceding sub-clause, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support the religious activities;
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their own initiative, on non- AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Resources for Designing a Program

AmeriCorps has been described as “a mission, not a program”. Organizations must be extremely committed to service and willing to dedicate staff towards program administration. AmeriCorps challenges its members to stretch themselves and grow as human beings, and also challenges its sponsoring organizations to move beyond status quo and find new ways of effectively serving their communities. In designing an effective AmeriCorps program it is imperative that an organization understand the mission, goals, and regulations of the program.

Volunteer Louisiana highly recommends that all prospective applicants begin reviewing resources and educating themselves on the requirements and expectations for managing an AmeriCorps grant. An AmeriCorps grant is a



federal grant and all applicable federal and state regulations and policies must be adhered to while administering the grant. The grant management requirements are substantial for an AmeriCorps grant which is why Volunteer Louisiana requires eligible applicants to have successfully managed a federal or state grant. Careful consideration should be taken to decide if the AmeriCorps program is a good fit for your organization. When the fit is right, an AmeriCorps program adds substantial value to an organization, community and the members.

Below are resources that will help organizations anticipate what will need to be in place to develop and administer a successful AmeriCorps*State program in Louisiana:

Corporation for National and Community Service	www.americorps.gov
AmeriCorps Regulations, Provisions and FAQs	www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/index.asp
The National and Community Service Act of 1990	www.americorps.gov/pdf/cnsc_statute.pdf
Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act	www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ13/pdf/PLAW-111publ13.pdf
National Service Resource Center	www.nationalservicerresources.org
National Service Resources - Online Courses	www.nationalservicerresources.org/online-courses
The Corporation's <i>Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program - From Blueprint to Implementation - New Program Start-Up Guide</i>	www.nationalservicerresources.org/ac-startup
EnCorps Resources to Support Member Recruitment & Development	http://encorps.nationalservicerresources.org/

AMERICORPS IDENTITY

The program must identify as an AmeriCorps Program and its participants as AmeriCorps members. As part of a national network, AmeriCorps programs are encouraged to provide resources and experiences to AmeriCorps members that recognize their efforts and demonstrate that they are part of a national movement. Programs can support the development of AmeriCorps identity through the items below.

AmeriCorps Pledge/Swearing-In

Programs should administer the AmeriCorps pledge or another similar oath when members begin their term of service. Programs are encouraged to do this during a Swearing-In Ceremony following the completion of member orientation and initial training. In addition, programs may wish to collaborate with other programs in their area to conduct large-scale Swearing-In Ceremonies.

Service Gear

For the purposes of local and national identity, programs can provide an AmeriCorps uniform, which incorporates the AmeriCorps logo. Grantees may include funds in the program budget for service gear. All member service gear purchased with federal funds is required to include the AmeriCorps logo.

Recognition/Graduation Ceremonies

Programs are encouraged to provide recognition to members through Graduation Ceremonies that honor the completion of a term of service, or other similar recognition events throughout the course of the program year.

Participation in National and State Days of Service

As part of the National Service Network, there are a number of opportunities for programs to take part in national service days. Since these days of service are national or statewide in scope, they create a strong platform for promoting volunteerism and conveying to volunteers – including AmeriCorps members – that they are participants in a larger movement that extends beyond their local program and community. National service days provide programs a mechanism by which to raise the profile of their program in the community and recruit community volunteers and donors to participate in service events and your organization. Volunteer Louisiana



requires that all AmeriCorps programs participate in at least one national day of service, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, National Youth Service Day, National Volunteer Week, Join Hands Day, One Day's Pay, Make a Difference Day, and National Family Volunteer Day. Grant funds to support program involvement in such service days are often available from corporate sponsors. Visit the Points of Light Foundation website for more information regarding Service Days. www.pointsoflight.org/signature-events-and-series.

AmeriCorps Week

AmeriCorps Week is a recruitment and recognition event designed to bring more Americans into service, salute AmeriCorps members and alums for their powerful impact, and thank the community partners who make AmeriCorps possible. AmeriCorps Week provides an opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to shine a spotlight on the work done by members in communities across the country—and to motivate more Americans to join AmeriCorps or volunteer in their communities. AmeriCorps Week events happen across the country. Programs are encouraged get involved by organizing statewide AmeriCorps gatherings, award ceremonies, and “AmeriCorps for a Day” events with local VIPs, community service projects, recruitment fairs, and more completion of member orientation and initial training. Programs may wish to collaborate with other programs in their area to conduct large-scale events.

AmeriCorps Alums Network

Volunteer Louisiana encourages programs to connect with local AmeriCorps Alumni Chapters to help meet our goals of fostering a lifetime of service, enhancing an AmeriCorps identity, and ensuring that members' transition into career and educational opportunities beyond the AmeriCorps program. To learn more about AmeriCorps Alums, please visit the AmeriCorps Alums website www.americorpsalums.org.