

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: PREPARING FOR A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

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Issue Being Addressed:

After a year long dedication to national service, whether direct or indirect, many AmeriCorps members search for new alternatives to continue service to their community.

Actions to consider:

According to Sen. John McCain, "...AmeriCorps has transformed the lives of young people who have participated in its ranks. They have begun to glimpse the glory of serving the cause of freedom. They have come to know the obligations and rewards of active citizenship" (2001). AmeriCorps and VISTA members join for various reasons: to give back to their communities, to gain work experience, or to receive educational awards. Members become motivated and grow to develop an ethic of service.

Context and setting:

AmeriCorps and VISTA members are able to define the impact on the community they serve through personal stories and empirical data. Alumni of these programs need to develop a sense of purpose within their year of service to further connect with another project or organization. A year of national service is just the beginning to understanding that good committed work can solve common problems and create common things. "Public work entails not altruism, or not only altruism, but enlightened self-interest – a desire to build a society in which the serving citizen wants to live (Dionne, 24)." Depending on the member's understanding of his/her impact, some Alumni may lack the tools to continue to further impact their community.

Outcome achieved:

How can a host site supervisor or other college staff encourage an AmeriCorps or VISTA member to continue to serve in their community after a year of national service?

- Support members in their efforts to research areas of interest to them.
- Encourage member journaling and reflection during their service.
- Go to bat for the member! Develop an understanding that the member is part of the staff team.
- Encourage a second year of AmeriCorps at the current site or some other position.
- Encourage continuing education.

Sources

Dionne, J., and Drogosz, M. (2002). United We Serve: The Debate over National Service. The Brookings Review, 20, (4), 2-5.

McCain, J. (2001). Putting the "National" in National Service. Washington Monthly, October 2001. <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0110.mccain.html>