

Designing a recruitment timeline

Abstract

Designing an effective and efficient recruitment timeline is a cornerstone of success for recruiting members. A schedule can help establish outreach windows, application deadlines, interview times, and clear targets for staff members. This effective practice was submitted by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's (NWREL) Recruitment and Development Initiative (EnCorps) in December 2006.

Issue

Although having a recruitment timetable is essential for good program management, it can be challenging to find time for each phase of recruitment and selection and adhere to deadlines.

Action

When creating a recruitment timeline, consider the following:

1. Write position descriptions

Detail what each position involves and the qualifications required by an applicant.

Basic member requirements for **AmeriCorps members** are as follows:

- Members must be at least 18 years old. (Some programs allow 17-year-olds to serve, with parental permission, or 16-year-olds if they are out of school and participating in a youth corps program.)
- Members must be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.
- Members must have a high school diploma/GED or be willing to earn one while serving.

While each AmeriCorps program likely has other requirements, most require members to serve a minimum number of hours (commonly 1,700 for a full-time member), participate in trainings and service projects, and successfully complete their term to be eligible for an education award.

Basic member requirements for **AmeriCorps*VISTA members** are as follows:

- Members must be at least 18 years old.
- Members must be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.
- Members must have a high school diploma or GED. Some programs require AmeriCorps*VISTA members to have college degrees.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members generally serve full-time for 12 months. Because they must be available to their communities regardless of regular work hours, AmeriCorps*VISTA members are also prohibited from accepting outside employment. All AmeriCorps*VISTA members attend a Pre-Service Orientation prior to enrolling, and must successfully complete their service terms to be eligible for an education award or stipend.

2. Create an outreach plan

Consider informing other similar programs about your program's position, posting the position on free listservs and job boards, and advertising the position in other media. Use the Corporation's AmeriCorps website and the AmeriCorps Recruitment and Placement System (AC*RPS).

- Cast a wide net

Reaching the most qualified and diverse applicant pool leads to the most successful placements. You'll want to get the word out in a number of different ways to reach many different audiences.

- General outreach guidelines

- Create a targeted outreach plan that matches your recruitment resources and needs. Count on spending a quarter to one-half of your time on recruitment, four to six months before orientation.
- Research your options. There are many ways to communicate your opportunities with your potential applicants—be sure to choose the ones that they use.
- Break down your plan into specific tasks and timelines, so you can build momentum over a longer period of time.
- Sell your program and the service experience—emphasize your program's strengths and accomplishments.
- Tap into your alumni and other volunteers for recruiting ideas and testimonials to use in outreach.
- Take time to evaluate your efforts at the end of your recruitment period, so you can build on your successes and learn from your missteps.
- Share your enthusiasm and passion for your program: it's contagious!

- You may have more outreach avenues than you realize!

- Piggyback on existing community efforts. For example, if you're planning a community literacy fair, include information about upcoming programs and recruitment in all press materials and make recruitment materials available at the event.

- Use your existing network to identify and reach community leaders who can help you spread the word to different constituencies. This could include members of professional associations, religious leaders, local politicians and community activists.
 - Enlist the help of local public relations/design firms or design students to create visually compelling material.
3. Establish an application acceptance process

Gather the materials that will be required to complete an application and set up processing procedures and deadlines.

- Outline the steps in the placement process

Schedule times for screening applications, conducting interviews, and checking references. Create forms to document these activities to keep in applicants' files.

- Develop a selection strategy

Decide on the criteria for accepting a candidate, who will make the final decisions, and if there are any other people (staff or project partners) who need to have input on the final decision. Make sure you build in time to check references.

- More tips for creating a recruitment timeline:

- Move backward from the date your program starts.
- If other staff or project sponsors are involved, make sure to coordinate schedules.
- Allow enough time for successful applicants to give two weeks' notice to their current employer.
- After you have filled all your positions, create a waiting list. Cancellations happen frequently, and a back-up plan is critical.
- Be prepared for unexpected issues and the time it will take to resolve them.

Context

EnCorps resources carry a "field stamp of approval." Veteran program staff reviewed and recommended these tools for recruiting and developing AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps* VISTA members.