

**Tool for Improving Programs:
A National Quality Assessment Project for National and
Community Service Programs**

Prepared by

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APPENDIX E

Self Assessment Tool for Improving Programs (TIPs)

Introduction

Please rest assured that your anonymity will be protected. Only aggregate responses of all participants will be gathered for the analysis and ongoing development of the self-assessment tool. Neither the Corporation for National and Community Service nor your state commission or any other funders will utilize this information for funding purposes.

Respondent Information

Please select the response that most closely reflects your demographic and employee information.

This assessment tool was developed by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin for leaders in all of the programs funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service and community-based volunteer service programs to identify their needs for training and technical assistance. We know some agencies are funded to manage more than one type of national service program, but we are asking you to select *one* specific Corporation program to assess at a time. Your answer to this question will affect the vocabulary of the assessment tool selected for your use. When fully operational, this assessment tool will create a custom training and technical assistance plan for the user.

1. **a. As a manager of volunteers, I work in the following type of organization:**

Nonprofit organization

Public sector organization with no Corporation funding

Private or corporate organization

Public sector organization with funding through the Corporation

b. Among Corporation-funded programs in your organization, please choose only one as a reference point to complete this assessment. The program I am assessing is:

AmeriCorps' State

AmeriCorps' National Direct

AmeriCorps' Education Award Program

AmeriCorps/VISTA

AmeriCorps/NCCC

Italics in the items above indicate that this word could be translated to member or participant for national service or student for Learn and Serve.

AmeriCorps Tribal Program
Senior Corps - Foster Grandparents Program
Senior Corps - Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
Senior Corps - Senior Companion Program
Learn and Serve - K-12
Learn and Serve - Higher Education
Learn and Serve – Community-Based
Learn and Serve – Tribal Program
Volunteer Center
Other Community-Based Volunteer Program
Other, please specify: _____

2. The 5-digit zip code where I work is:

3. My highest educational level is

Did not finish high school
High school diploma (or GED)
Some college
Associate Degree
Bachelor Degree
Master Degree
Doctoral Degree
Vocational/Technical Training

4. My race/ethnic identification is

African-American/Black
Hispanic/Mexican-American
Anglo-American/White
Asian-American/Pacific Islander/Native American Indian
Multiracial/Other

5. I am

Female
Male

6. My age (in years)

Less than 21
21-30
31-40
41-50
51-60
Over 60

Italics in the items above indicate that this word could be translated to member or participant for national service or student for Learn and Serve.

7. Years of experience I have managing volunteers:

- Less than 2
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- Over 15
- Not applicable

8. Years of experience I have managing national service participants:

- Less than 2
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- Over 15
- Not applicable

9. Years our national service program has been in existence:

- Less than 2
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- Over 15
- Not applicable
- Don't know

10. Estimated size of the sponsor organization's (the agency or organization housing your national service program) annual budget:

- Less than \$500,000
- \$500,000-\$999,999
- \$1M-\$4,999,999
- \$5M-\$9,999,999
- \$10M-\$24,999,999
- More than \$25 M
- Not applicable
- Don't know

11. Estimated size of the Corporation funded program annual budget (including matching funds):

- Less than \$100,000
- \$100,000-\$249,999
- \$250,000-\$499,999
- \$500,000-\$999,999
- \$1M-\$4,999,999
- More than \$5M
- Not applicable
- Don't know

Italics in the items above indicate that this word could be translated to member or participant for national service or student for Learn and Serve.

12. If separate from the national service program listed above, estimated annual budget of the community volunteer program:

Less than \$100,000
\$100,000-\$249,999
\$250,000-\$499,999
\$500,000-\$999,999
\$1M-\$4,999,999
More than \$5M
Not applicable
Don't know

13. Estimated number of FTE (Full Time Equivalents) employees in the sponsor organization:

Less than 5
5-10
11-25
26-50
51-75
76-100
101-200
More than 200
Not applicable
Don't know

14. Estimated number of national service participants (e.g., AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn & Serve) in the sponsor organization (not FTEs but the actual number):

Less than 5
5-10
11-25
26-50
51-75
76-100
101-200
201-300
301-500
More than 500

15. Estimated number of community volunteers in the organization (not FTEs but the actual number):

Less than 5
5-10
11-25
26-50

Italics in the items above indicate that this word could be translated to member or participant for national service or student for Learn and Serve.

51-100
101-250
251-500
501-1,000
1,001-2,500
More than 2,500
Not applicable
Don't know

A Note on Terminology

As already noted, this assessment tool is intended for leaders in any of the Corporation for National and Community Service programs and for community based programs that work with volunteers. Based on your answer to #1 above, the statements in the tool will be automatically worded to reflect the vocabulary of your program. However, here is a guide to the word choices you may see:

- *Volunteer*: Even though some Corporation participants receive modest financial remuneration, the word “volunteer” has always been used as an umbrella term for all the programs. Therefore, it is used here as the default word choice if other phrasing seems awkward. Everyone completing the assessment tool should interpret the word “volunteer” as meaning whatever type of service-providing is your primary focus. Note that *board members* are also volunteers, though they fulfill a legally-defined governance role.
- *Volunteerism*: Used when a statement refers to the full scope of volunteering and community service in all its varieties, especially when discussing the entire professional field or the concept/philosophy of citizen participation.
- *Member*: Refers to AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps/VISTA participant.
- *Service Participant*: A general term most relevant to full-time service programs and students engaged in service-learning.
- *Student*: School-based service participant.
- *Community*: Refers to the local environment in which an agency or program operates, including the public at large, other nonprofit and government agencies, businesses, faith communities, etc. All volunteers and service participants obviously *come from* the “community,” but become part of the organization once accepted. So, when the assessment tool uses the word “community,” it should be interpreted as all the people and groups *outside* of the organization.

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- *Community Partner:* In this context, a “Community Partner” fills a role defined by a Corporation grant. The term is used for an organization that serves as a host site for program participants, such as an agency in which RSVP volunteers are placed, an agency providing service-learning projects for students, or any organization accepting one or more AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps/VISTA members from a grantee managing a larger corps.
- *Staff:* Although in general usage both paid and unpaid workers can be considered “staff,” in this tool, “staff” means “employee.”

Marking Instructions

This assessment tool contains a series of descriptions that represent characteristics or indicators of an effective program that uses national service participants and/or volunteers. Please read each item and decide to what extent it describes your program at this point in time. There are no right or wrong answers. Most programs will rate some items as more similar and some as less similar. Please be truthful and describe your program as it really is, not as you would like it to be. If you do not have any information about a particular statement, indicate that by selecting “Don’t know.” If the statement is not applicable to you, indicate that by selecting “Not applicable.”

Please rate the degree to which each of the following items reflects your current program:

- 5 = Exactly like my program
- 4 = Very much like my program
- 3 = Moderately like my program
- 2 = Somewhat like my program
- 1 = Not at all like my program
- 0 = Don’t know
- n = Not applicable

Board and Advisory Leadership

1. Our board members understand the organization’s mission and its programs.
2. Our board members understand their role as volunteers in a governance position and provide strong leadership.
3. Our board understands the work of the program and its role in the community.
4. Board members can articulate the role of volunteers, students on service-learning, AmeriCorps VISTA members, and others in the work of the organization.
5. Our board members support the work of *volunteers* in achieving the goals of the organization.

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6. Board composition is diverse and representative of the community.
7. Our board maintains a written plan for board development.
8. Our board fulfills its legal responsibilities to the organization.
9. Our board members make financial contributions to the organization.
10. Our board provides the organization with sound fiscal advice and oversight.
11. Our program involves an active advisory committee with members representative of the community.
12. Our program has an active community advisory committee that provides regular input and feedback.

Organizational Culture

13. Our organizational culture values community participation, including all types of volunteers, students in service-learning, AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps/VISTA members, and others.
14. Senior leadership supports the role of *volunteers* in the organization.
15. Senior leadership speaks positively and passionately about the role of *volunteers*.
16. Decision makers in the organization are accessible to employees, volunteers, and community members.
17. Decision makers in the organization support our program objectives.
18. Everyone in the organization understands the importance of our *volunteer* initiatives.
19. Our program *volunteers* advocate for the program on many levels.
20. Our program staff advocates for the program on many levels.
21. Our program leadership inspires *volunteers* and employees.
22. Our program leaders model effective problem-solving processes.
23. There is a positive synergy between employees, *volunteers*, and clients in our program.

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24. Senior leadership is able to articulate the role of volunteers or national service participants to organized labor union leaders, and to engage in collaborative discussions about the boundaries between paid jobs and volunteer service.

Community Collaboration

25. Our program has a clear understanding of the needs and assets of our community.
26. Our program has a community involvement plan with employee roles and responsibilities specified.
27. Our program encourages staff to network and build community connections.
28. Our program is able to benefit from and contribute to the community.
29. Our program utilizes community input and feedback to develop new program ideas.
30. Our program needs and priorities are influenced by people living in the communities served.
31. Our program has a community-based participatory planning process.
32. Our program conducts periodic data collection from community stakeholders on opportunities, challenges, and trends.
33. Our program recruits staff from community residents.
34. Our program *volunteers* are representative of the community they serve.
35. Our program patronizes local community businesses.
36. We make our organizational resources available to other community groups.
37. Our organization is regularly approached to participate in community problem solving.
38. Our organization encourages community involvement to ensure long-term sustainability of the program.
39. Our program partners with organizations that understand the roles, responsibilities, and importance of *volunteers*.

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40. Our program provides clearly defined roles and responsibilities for community partners.
41. Our program provides orientation and training for community partners.
42. Our organization produces a comprehensive multi-site management plan, if appropriate.
43. Our organization produces a multi-site management plan with written memorandum of agreement with community partners, if appropriate.
44. Our program facilitates regular meetings with employees in partner organizations about placements.
45. Our program has the staff capacity to continually identify and engage new community partners.
46. Our program collaborates effectively with other community-based organizations.
47. Our program collaborates effectively with professional networking groups such as corporate volunteer councils and others.
48. Our program has adequate staff capacity to administer collaborative efforts.
49. Our organization retains its partnerships with other organizations over time.
50. Our organization actively works to develop external champions for the program.
51. Our organization regularly gathers and shares effective practices with other community-based organizations.
52. Our program employees and volunteers participate in a wide array of activities to learn about effective practices.
53. Our program work plans are consistent with effective practices in similar program areas.

Program Accountability

54. Our program has a well-defined mission statement.
55. Our program includes *volunteers* in its strategic plan.
56. Our program's strategic plan is measurable and achievable.

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57. Our program's strategic plan is based on needs assessment and evaluation data.
58. Our program develops goals and objectives with input from key stakeholders such as staff, *volunteers*, clients, funders, and community partners.
59. Our program has objectives that relate to the overall mission of the sponsoring or host organization.
60. Our program uses valid and reliable evaluation tools to measure program effectiveness.
61. Our program uses outside evaluators to measure program effectiveness.
62. Our program measures the performance of staff, volunteers, members, board members, and program partners.
63. Program performance is measured from the perspective of *volunteers* and service recipients.
64. Our program provides opportunities for board members, employees, volunteers, and program participants to self-assess their effectiveness.
65. Our program provides opportunities for board members, employees, volunteers, and program participants to self-assess their level of satisfaction with the program.
66. Descriptive and outcome data are collected on volunteers and activities.
67. Our program produces an annual report that includes measurable outcomes, progress, and outreach of the program
68. Program and agency staffing and resource capacities are considered when making decisions.
69. Our program has an impact on the community.

Financial Management

70. Our board or advisory committee approves and oversees the budget including revenue generation and expenditures.
71. Our leadership ensures funding is tied to key program objectives and goals.
72. Our program produces regular financial reports for effective management.

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73. Our program expends funds in accordance with budget plans and in line with board oversight.
74. Our program practices effective financial management.
75. Our program manages grants effectively.
76. Our program meets grant requirements.
77. Our program provides activities that match the criteria, purpose and goals required by the funding source.
78. We have budgeted defined costs to facilitate volunteer involvement, such as staffing support, equipment and supplies, etc.
79. Our program allocates funds for program evaluation.
80. Our program maintains administrative overhead costs consistent with similar nonprofit programs.
81. Our program diversifies funding sources.
82. Our program has a sustainability plan that is periodically updated.
83. Our program has a contingency plan that addresses potential loss of major funding.
84. Our program staff have proposal writing skills.
85. Our program staff can navigate the complexities of funding agencies.
86. Our program has partnerships that involve shared resource commitments.
87. When appropriate, our program translates *volunteer* service hours into financial or Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

Staffing and Development

88. Our program provides a dedicated onsite supervisor or coordinator of *volunteers*.
89. Our program has a *volunteer* coordinator who understands and effectively applies the principles of volunteer management.
90. Our program has a *volunteer* coordinator who understands and effectively applies the principles of program development.

Italics in the items above indicate that this word could be translated to member or participant for national service or student for Learn and Serve.

91. Our other program employees understand and effectively apply the principles of volunteer management.
92. Our other program employees understand and effectively apply the principles of program development.
93. Our program placement sites have a designated staff member serving as a coordinator of volunteers.
94. We have a succession plan for employee leadership in the organization.
95. We have a succession plan for *volunteer* leadership in the organization.
96. Our program trains employees to work with *volunteers*.
97. Our program assesses employee skills in working with *volunteers*.
98. Our program staff demonstrate effective interpersonal skills.
99. Our program *volunteers* are encouraged to reach their full potential.
100. Our program employees are encouraged to reach their full potential.
101. Our program provides a written training plan for all staff that addresses position specific and personal leadership development needs.
102. Our program incorporates staff development as a management strategy.
103. Program staff are trained to manage change.
104. Our program offers a high level of training and ongoing supervision to volunteers or members to address the specific service area (e.g., literacy).
105. Our program employees receive feedback on performance.

Marketing & Communication

106. Our program facilitates regular communication with **internal** stakeholders about *volunteer* value, impact, and outcomes.
107. Our program facilitates regular communication with **external** stakeholders about *volunteer* value, impact, and outcomes.
108. Our program communicates and markets effectively.

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109. Our program's public relations materials include a statement on nondiscrimination and accessibility.
110. Our program's public relations materials reflect an awareness of diversity of the community.
111. Recruitment materials reflect current trends in volunteerism.
112. Our program uses the World Wide Web for effective recruitment, public relations, and marketing purposes.
113. Our program *volunteers* know who the official spokesperson is for the organization.
114. Our program staff knows who the official spokesperson is for the organization.
115. Our organization receives awards and recognition for the work it does.
116. Our program staff responds to inquiries from the media and/or public in an open and efficient manner.
117. We proactively seek to tell the program's story at every opportunity, such as calling media attention to possible connections with current news events.
118. Our organizational leadership publicly acknowledges the work of *volunteers*.

Infrastructure

119. Our program administrator maintains comprehensive files and documentation on volunteers.
120. Our program maintains a database including volunteer demographics, work hours, and assignments.
121. Our program provides adequate space for volunteers to work.
122. Our program provides adequate equipment and supplies for volunteers to perform their work.
123. Our program gives volunteers timely feedback on their performance, questions and concerns.
124. Our program implements effective volunteer recruitment methods, such as presentations, written materials, media events, and email.

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125. Our program recruitment initiatives are targeted to specific volunteer populations.
126. Our program *volunteers* recruit new *volunteers* for the program.
127. Our program maintains a comprehensive volunteer risk management plan with background checks and liability insurance.
128. Our program has access to adequate ongoing technical support and documentation.
129. Our program prevents data loss and corruption through back up systems, virus protection, and software upgrades.
130. Our staff uses technology effectively to support the program.
131. Our employees have access to the computer hardware and software they need to do their jobs.
132. Our volunteers have access to the computer hardware and software they need to do their jobs.
133. Our computer systems and equipment are compatible and relatively new.
134. Our program's computers maintain Internet connections from our desktops.
135. Our employees and volunteers are able to use email accounts as appropriate.

Volunteer Management

136. Our program creates service placements based on needs assessments.
137. Our program clearly defines *volunteer* roles and responsibilities.
138. Our program provides written position descriptions (duties, skills, qualifications, performance measures) for all *volunteers*.
139. Our program provides written position descriptions (duties, skills, qualifications, performance measures) for all staff.
140. Our program uses the abilities of *volunteers* effectively.
141. Our program respects the time commitments of *volunteers*.

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142. Our program offers *volunteer* opportunities at different levels of responsibility or intensity.
143. Our program creates new *volunteer* opportunities as necessary.
144. Our program offers service opportunities to meet the needs of diverse audiences.
145. Our program creates opportunities for service recipients to become involved as *volunteers*.
146. Our program employees and *volunteers* understand each other's roles and responsibilities.
147. Our program receives continuous inquiries from persons interested in joining our program.
148. Our program interviews *volunteers*.
149. Our program screens *volunteers*.
150. Our program matches *volunteers'* skills, knowledge, attitudes, and interests with appropriate placement sites.
151. Our program provides appropriate accommodation for *volunteers* with special needs.
152. Our program promotes diversity in the work environment, including accessibility to people with disabilities.
153. Our program periodically reviews *volunteers* to determine if their personalities, skills, abilities, and interests are being appropriately utilized.
154. Our program offers career paths to sustain *volunteer* interests.
155. Our program provides leadership development opportunities for *volunteers*.
156. Our program has many volunteers capable of assuming leadership roles.
157. Our program has a comprehensive volunteer handbook.
158. Our program provides an orientation for all *volunteers* for their service opportunity.
159. Our program demonstrates an awareness of diversity during in-service training, celebrations, and other organizational functions.

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160. Our program has an ongoing support system for *volunteers* once they are placed.
161. Our program provides clear lines of *volunteer* supervision.
162. Our program leaders provide *volunteers* clear feedback on their work.
163. Our program supervises and supports off-site *volunteers*.
164. Our program has grievance and termination procedures to address *volunteer* performance problems.
165. Our program monitors *volunteer* retention and assesses the reasons for any unexpected turnover.
166. Program *volunteers* remain with us until they fulfill their original commitment or longer.
167. Our program *volunteers* evaluate their involvement and provide feedback to the organization.
168. Our program engages *volunteers* for regular input on program operations.
169. Our program *volunteers* are treated as partners in achieving program mission and goals.
170. Our program *volunteers* regularly participate in project planning.
171. Our program *volunteers* are involved in program changes as the changes are being planned and implemented.
172. Our program thanks and recognizes volunteers for the work they perform.
173. Our program recognizes volunteers on the basis of performance.
174. Our program rewards employees who effectively engage *volunteers* in their work.
175. Our program thanks and recognizes employees for the work they perform.
176. Our program keeps *volunteers* engaged after they complete their original service assignment.
177. Our program uses tracking systems to measure *volunteer* involvement in civic activities following terms of service.

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Service-Learning (Optional)

This self-assessment instrument is designed to assist programs, projects, or organizations that engage national service participants and/or volunteers in service initiatives. Students of all ages engaged in service-learning are a part of the framework of national service. This section of the assessment instrument identifies the indicators of an effective service-learning project from a community-based program/organization perspective. Respondents interested in assessing the framework of a school or university-based service-learning program are encouraged to consult the National Service Learning Clearinghouse bibliography for "Assessment, Evaluation, and Performance Measurement: Selected Resources" at <http://www.servicelarning.org/article/archive/294> to evaluate their initiative.

178. Our program offers service-learning experiences that connect academic course content with service opportunities that meet specific community-identified issues...
179. Our program assigns a staff person to interface with the teacher, or education-based liaison, and the students.
180. Our program offers consistent opportunities for debriefing and reflection of the service experience.
181. Our program prepares students for all aspects of their service experience including understanding their role, the skills and information required, safety precautions and sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.
182. Our program designs service projects that build on the knowledge and the skills directly related to the course.
183. Our program ensures that youth have input into appropriate aspects of the program.
184. Our program helps young people identify the relationship between service experiences and the skills associated with citizenship.
185. Our program has an evaluation component that assesses how all the partners work together.
186. Our program helps young people identify the relationship between service experiences and the skills associated with social change.
187. Our program has an evaluation component that assesses the effectiveness of the specific project or initiative to promote learning and civic development in students.
188. Our program has an evaluative component that assesses the effectiveness of the specific project or initiative to address community issues.
189. Our project was jointly designed with community partners in order to ensure mutual benefit and reciprocity.

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190. Our program staff regularly engage in training activities to improve service-learning program quality.

191. Our program staff have access to training in how to involve students engaged in service-learning to achieve program needs and goals.

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