

CITIZENSHIP TIP SHEET

THINKING OUTSIDE THE FRAMERS



To meet the citizenship requirements outlined in the 2003 guidelines the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides two curricula. (For a summary of the requirements and/or descriptions of the curricula see page 6.) While these curricula do provide a solid beginning for meeting the stated goals of CNCS, some programs have experienced difficulties using them because their members already have the basic skills and knowledge these curricula are designed to develop.

For these groups it may be time to go beyond the provided curricula, but how does an already overtaxed Program Director begin to address this issue? **The tips and project ideas presented here have been developed with both the needs of your members and the goals outlined by CNCS in mind.**

TIPS: THINGS TO REMEMBER

Use the resources at your disposal



From libraries and community organizations to professional organizations of lawyers, judges and social workers to university libraries and political science departments your community is filled with experts in civic engagement and citizenship.

You don't need to be an expert

You need to be able to motivate and delegate, you don't have to know the material. Let the members do the work, they can identify and research topics of interest, make presentations, do the teaching and plan events.



However, a little knowledge is always helpful



It helps to be familiar with the vocabulary (civic engagement, active citizenship, globalization, community, social capital, etc.) but bear in mind that members will explore terms and concepts at a variety of levels. For more academic discussions ask members to conduct literature reviews or ask local professor for recommendations on good journal articles to hand out.

Recycle, you don't have to reinvent the wheel

While the CNCS curricula may not work for your corps as is, they are a good starting point. Keeping the corporation's intent in mind, these curricula can be customized or used in new ways with a variety of corps. For example teachers can use these curricula with their students (for more ideas page 2).



You already know this, but we have to say it anyway: reflection is important



As with other programming, build reflection time into your projects and activities. This does not have to be complicated, having members write a short journal entry is an effective way to help reinforce the goals of the material.

Sample questions

1. Does this discussion/activity relate to the themes of citizenship we have identified in previous discussions? If so how? If not, what was missing?
2. Did you learn anything about your country? Your community? Yourself?

When the going gets tough, the tough can always stop

Be prepared for some sessions not to go well, especially in the beginning. As you do with all of your programming, stop, get feedback from the participants and try to apply these lessons next time.



Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate!



Remember, this is a required part of your performance measures. Using quantitative questions on pre- and posttests can help you gauge *if* your members have learned anything new, and open ended qualitative questions can tell you *what* they have learned.

Be a cliché: think outside the box

Of course these ideas and materials are only meant to get you started, don't be afraid to explore and be creative.



IDEAS: THINGS TO TRY

CREATE A CITIZENSHIP DICTIONARY

Ask the group to develop a list of key terms and concepts, with definitions. Have some ideas standing by to get the group started or in case of a lull in the discussion. This is a good opening session, and many of the following ideas refer back to this project.

(Note: This project works well as a conference call.)

Variation: Homework Have teachers/mentors complete this project with their students and then discuss the process with one another. Were the ideas offered by the students at all surprising? Was anything left out?

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Develop a list of topics and have each member choose one item from the list. These topics can be of particular importance to AmeriCorps members (how to use the Ed Award, social services such as food stamps and unemployment, requirements to complete the term of service) or to your program (volunteer management, certification for tutors, background checks). Ask members to research their topic of choice, create and regularly update a file in the home office and to field relevant questions. You may also want members to make presentations on their topics to the group. Topics can be developed through conversations with current members, AmeriCorps alumni and past and present program participants.

GETTING THINGS DONE

This is an extension of the previous project. Have members choose from a list of social issues of particular relevance to your community (homelessness, literacy, animal welfare, HIV/AIDS). Again, Ask members to research their topic of choice, create and regularly update a file in the home office, field relevant questions and make a presentation to the group. Additionally, ask each member to plan a service project for the group relating to their topic at a local organization.

CITIZENSHIP TEST

Have your members take a citizenship test (samples can be found at <http://www.rallye-pointe.com/Opinion/citizenship.htm>) and discuss the results. If your members were required to take this test would they pass? Have the members break into groups and rewrite the test for your state or local community. Have members identify what other communities they belong to (ethnicity, faith based, service community). If these communities had a had a citizenship test what would they ask?

Variation: Rewriting Citizenship In addition to the citizenship test give members a study guide (one sample can be found at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/natz/ushist.pdf>). Ask the members to identify any inherent biases in the test and/or study guide. Why do these biases exist? Can they be changed? If so, how? Have the members identify values they feel are important to citizens Can they agree? Once they agree, or almost agree, have participants rewrite the citizenship test.

GLOBALIZATION

Discuss the ideas of globalization and global citizenship. Does one necessarily lead to the other? Does global citizenship differ from citizenship? And if so, how? Is it possible to use the same or similar materials to teach these two concepts? Distribute one or both of the CNCS curricula (http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/ameriCorps/index.php and http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/ameriCorps/a_guide_to_effective.php). Divide members into groups and ask each group to rewrite one section to teach global citizenship instead of citizenship. Did they change anything? Would your members use these curricula to teach citizenship?

Variation: Again With the Citizenship Test Instead of using the CNCS curricula, have members rewrite the citizenship test for global citizenship.

EXPLORING GOVERNMENT

Have members break into groups and research the processes and structure of Congress, the Supreme Court, state legislature/courts, city council, local courts, the police, etc. Have each group make a presentation. *(Note: this project works well as a conference call.)*

Variation: Field Trip Get more in depth by adding a field trip; visit your city council, the state legislature, local/state courts or a police station.

EXPLORE THE PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AMERICORPS

First, review the history of national service with your members (summary available at <http://www.nationalservice.org/about/history.html>). What is the purpose of AmeriCorps? Why does it exist? (You may also wish to have your members read The Bill by Stephen Waldman for this discussion.) Second, have members go out into the community and ask people if they have heard of AmeriCorps, and if so what it is? This can be either a formal survey or informal conversations started in line at the supermarket. Third, discuss this activity.

Sample Discussion Questions

1. Have most people heard of AmeriCorps? Do they know what it is? If not, did the members try to explain it? Could they?
2. What do they feel is the members' responsibility in informing the public about AmeriCorps and national service? What about program directors? State commissions? Congress?
3. What do they feel is the AmeriCorps members' responsibility in informing/educating the public with regards to citizenship? What about program directors? State commissions? Congress?

(Note: This project works well as a conference call.)

Variation: Speaker Corps Fourth, ask a local community member (drama teacher, theater/communications professor, lawyer) to train your members in public speaking. Next, have your members create talking points about AmeriCorps, your program and citizenship. Discuss not only the information that should be included in these talking points, but why they are important and why talking about these things in your community is important. Have your members create and distribute fliers advertising the new speaker corps in the community (good places include schools, community centers, churches or other places of worship). And when calls come in asking members to speak at events, ask for volunteers.

WATCH AND DISCUSS A MOVIE/TELEVISION SERIES

Suggested films include: *The American President*, *Bulworth*, *Bob Roberts*, *The Candidate*, *Dave*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The West Wing*, especially: *Mr. Willis of Ohio* (6); *Take This Sabbath Day* (14); *Somebody's Going to Emergency*, *Somebody's Going to Jail* (38); *The Stackhouse Filibuster* (39); *Isaac and Ishmael* (unnumbered); *100,000 Airplanes* (56); *Documentary Special* (unnumbered); and *The Supremes* (105).

Sample Discussion Questions

1. Does this movie/program explore any of the terms and/or concepts from our Citizenship Dictionary? Which ones? Does the filmmaker/creator agree with our definitions? What about the characters?
2. How does this movie/program define citizenship? Do you agree or disagree?
3. If you were the filmmaker/creator what would you change? Why?

Variation: Change Over Time Compare and contrast *The Candidate* and *The American President*.

Sample Discussion Questions

1. What does each film tell us about politicians and their relationship to polling data? How has this changed over time?
2. What other themes do the films have in common? How have attitudes toward those themes changed over time?

VOICES FROM HISTORY

Have members listen to an historical speech such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's address to the civil rights marchers in Washington, D.C, Gloria Steinem's address to the women of America or President Franklin D. Roosevelt's speech on the declaration of war against Japan.* Follow with a discussion about the themes of the presentation and why it is noteworthy. What defines a moment as historical? And how does history relate to citizenship? Does this speech touch on any of your group's previously identified themes of citizenship?

*The Library of Congress has many such resources available through the national archives. Alternatively, one collection available through most book stores is *Great Speeches of the 20th Century*, which includes the aforementioned works.

LIFE AFTER AMERICORPS SPEAKERS

Seek out experts and professionals to speak with your corps members about citizenship after AmeriCorps and how citizenship is a part of their work and their lives. Try to find a broad range of individuals, good candidates include lawyers, activists, political science professors, community volunteers, teachers, AmeriCorps alumni, state commissioners, politicians, sociology or anthropology professors, police officers, judges and social workers.

RESOURCES: THINGS TO USE

CNCS RESOURCES

A Guide to Effective Citizenship through AmeriCorps

http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/amicorps/a_guide_to_effective.php

A handbook divided into ten two-hour modules based on four elements essential to active citizenship: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action. Each module has two sessions: a content session provides activities to help members delve into the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship; an action session that guides members through a service project in their community.

A Facilitator's Guide for By the People http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/amicorps/index.php

The lessons and activities introduce citizenship skills and concepts that AmeriCorps members can apply to their own projects in the field. Follow-up sessions will provide opportunity for reflection and evaluation as members report on how they applied citizenship concepts and skills they learned in the classroom.

The Citizenship Toolkit <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/initiatives/citizenship/toolkit.php>

Developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, this toolkit is designed to help applicants incorporate citizenship into their member development plan based on the Corporation's 2003 citizenship goals and objectives. (Note: Both CNCS citizenship curricula are available here.)

National Service Resource Center <http://www.nationalservice.org>

The National Service Resource Center (NSRC) mission is to act as a central point for sharing training and technical assistance information and resources with Corporation-funded programs, State Commissions, other training and technical assistance providers, and the Corporation. This website includes a searchable database of 550 effective practices.

A Resource Guide to Civic Engagement by CityCares

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/532/civic.pdf>

The ideas behind effective citizenry and community organizing have been discussed, deliberated and written about extensively. This guide provides a comprehensive listing of books, websites and quotes to provide "intellectual resources to those interested in thinking more about effective citizenry and our work as community-based organizations." The guide provides brief descriptions of books and websites on democracy, civic renewal, community organizing, leadership, mobilizing citizens and civic engagement.

The Constitutional Rights Foundation <http://www.crf-usa.org/cetta/>

In the summer of 2001, Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) contracted with the Corporation for National and Community Service to begin work on Civic Engagement Training and Technical Assistance for National Service Programs (CETTA). This three-year training and technical assistance project is designed to provide AmeriCorps members with enrichment activities and lessons that teach civics and citizenship skills.

BOOK LIST

***The Bill: How Legislation Really Becomes Law: A Case Study of the National Service Bill* by Stephen Waldman**

Granted extraordinary access to scores of people directly responsible for shepherding Bill Clinton's prized legislation through Congress, *Newsweek* journalist Stephen Waldman was able to witness and document the bill's evolution -- from its genesis as a campaign promise to the ultimate creation of AmeriCorps and a new college loan system. (*Excerpt from back cover.*)

***Better Together: Restoring the American Community* by Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein**

A book of stories about people who are building communities to solve specific problems. These stories demonstrate that bringing people together by building on personal relationships remains one of the most effective strategies to enhance America's social health.

***Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert Putnam**

Once we bowled in leagues, usually after work -- but no longer. This seemingly small phenomenon symbolizes a significant social change. Drawing on vast new data that reveal Americans' changing behavior, Putnam shows how we have become increasingly disconnected from one another and how social structures -- whether they be PTA, church, or political parties -- have disintegrated.

***Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* by Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari**

Throughout history, work has always been the taproot of American democracy, enabling diverse people to forge connections with each other and to address the nation's problems. *(Excerpt from back cover.)*

***Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* by Theda Skocpol**

Tells the story of civic voluntarism and democratic politics in the United States, and explains how, after the 1960's membership-based voluntary associations were abruptly pushed aside by professionally managed agencies, leaving regular Americans with fewer opportunities to get actively involved in community and public affairs.

***The Essential Civil Society Reader* by Don E. Eberly**

Around the world, politicians and intellectuals seek to restore civil society by cultivating stronger public ethics and social institutions. In this book, Eberly presents the classic writings of leading scholars and organizers in the civil society debate.

***The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* by Michael Schudson**

A provocative history of citizenship in America, from a "politics of affiliation" in the nineteenth century to the modern "rights-bearing citizen" and "informed citizen" models. The upbeat message of this book counters recent claims that American civic life has declined because participation in traditional civically oriented associations has declined.

***A Passion for Democracy* by Benjamin R. Barber**

In this book of essays Barber presents his conception of "strong democracy", which contrasts sharply with traditional concepts of "liberal democracy," especially in its emphasis on citizen participation in central issues of public debate.

***Social Capital: Critical Perspectives* edited by Stephen Baron, John Field and Tom Schuller**

This book provides an overview of "social capital" together with critical discussion of its application in a wide variety of fields, as well as a full critical analysis of social capital. The authors are from a wide range of disciplinary and policy backgrounds.

***United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship* edited by E. J. Dionne, Kayla Meltzer Drogosz, and Robert E. Litan**

Gathered together here are many diverse voices on civic life and civic obligation to explore the idea of national service as it relates to citizenship, including activists, policymakers, leaders, political scientists and philosophers. This book also includes a lively debate over whether the U.S. should reconsider compulsory national service.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Center for Democracy and Citizenship <http://www.publicwork.org/home.html>

The work of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship began in 1989 and draws on a rich heritage of people and institutions doing public work to achieve things of lasting importance. As a part of the University of Minnesota, the Center for Democracy and Citizenship draws on the very best principles of academic excellence and scholarship.

Civic Practices Network <http://www.cpn.org/>

A learning collaborative for civic renewal, Civic Practices Network (CPN) is a nonpartisan project bringing together a diverse array of organizations and perspectives within the civic renewal movement. These groups share a commitment to bring practical methods for public problem solving into every community and institutional setting in America.

League of Women Voters <http://www.lwv.org>

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government. This website is an excellent resource for information on civic participation or current public policy issues such as election reform, campaign finance reform and health care, you have come to the right place.

Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/>

The Library of Congress is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and serves as the research arm of Congress. It is also the largest library in the world, with nearly 128 million items on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves. The Library's mission is to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.

National Civic League <http://www.ncl.org/>

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, the National Civic League (NCL) is a 109-year-old non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to strengthening citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions. Just as it has since its inception, the National Civic League continues to serve as a catalyst and convener of nationwide initiatives to meet the difficult challenges facing America's communities.

Public Agenda <http://www.publicagenda.org>

Founded in 1975 by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Public Agenda's two-fold mission is to help American leaders better understand the public's point of view and to help citizens know more about critical policy issues so they can make thoughtful, informed decisions.

Thomas <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Acting under the directive of the leadership of the 104th Congress to make Federal legislative information freely available to the Internet public, a Library of Congress team brought the THOMAS World Wide Web system online in January 1995, at the inception of the 104th Congress. Available databases include *Bill Text*, *Congressional Record Text*, *Bill Summary & Status*, the *Congressional*

THE REQUIREMENTS: THINGS TO KNOW

Excerpts From the 2003 Guidelines

Page 10: The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, has as one of its basic purposes to “renew the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community throughout the United States.”

Page 17: By serving their communities in AmeriCorps, individual members are demonstrating a critical component of citizenship recognized by President Bush in recent remarks proclaiming September 17 as Citizenship Day: “Citizenship not only involves a commitment to our Nation but also to our neighbors and those in need.”

Page 49: A successful applicant will provide training and use the service experience to help members acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be active citizens of communities--local, state, and national. This primarily means enhancing members' understanding of how our democracy works and the value of their playing an active role in it.

To address the ideas and requirements established in the guidelines, CNCS has set the following goals for all AmeriCorps programs with regard to citizenship and member development:

- ⇒ Fostering within members positive attitudes regarding the value of lifelong citizenship and service for the common good
- ⇒ Enhancing the ability of members to discuss and explore their community and the people, processes, and institutions that are most effective in improving community conditions
- ⇒ Enhancing the ability of members to plan effective service projects that respond to real community needs.
- ⇒ Developing the social, cultural and analytical skills necessary to effectively participate in American democracy.

The purpose of these goals is threefold

1. To teach knowledge of American history and government; an understanding of the American tradition of private, voluntary action; the rights and responsibilities of citizens; and knowledge of local and national civic institutions.
2. To develop and enhance skills such as translating American principles of democracy into practice; engaging effectively in the democratic process; using a variety of methods to critically evaluate public issues and public opinion polls; using various methods to seek out and find information about community issues; and negotiating between possibly conflicting rights and responsibilities.
3. To develop and enhance attitudes such as respect for the principles and values that we hold in common; recognition of the responsibilities that accompany rights and freedoms; a sense of civic efficacy; and an appreciation for the significance of freedom and equality.

To fulfill the multiple purposes of their stated goals, CNCS provides two curricula designed by CHP International and the Constitutional Rights Foundation (see page 4).