



Effective Citizenship Brainstorming Guidelines For AmeriCorps Programs

Materials:

Easel pad, masking tape, markers;
Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Action charts.

Objectives:

Members will:

- Identify historical and personal examples of effective citizens;
- Brainstorm elements of effective citizenship in the areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action; and
- Prioritize and explain their opinion of the most important elements of effective citizenship in each of these areas.

Focus Discussion – What and who is an “Effective Citizen”?:

Explain to members that AmeriCorps encourages its members to expand the traditional definition and practice of citizenship. Ask members:

- On a very basic level what are the responsibilities or expectations of every citizen?
Voting, obeying the law, and serving on juries.

Explain that on another level, citizenship means much more, such as:

- Becoming informed;
- Commitment to the welfare of ourselves, family, and community; and
- Becoming involved in efforts to solve community problems.

Ask members:

- Who in your opinion fits this description of an effective citizen (can be historical figure or personal acquaintance)? List responses.
- Specifically what is it about these individuals that made them so effective? List responses.

Inform members that today they will explore what effective citizenship is really about and how it can help them make a real and lasting difference in their own lives and the life of the communities they serve.

Focus Activity – Citizenship Brainstorm:

- Ask members form four groups.
- Distribute KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, and ACTION charts to each group containing the following questions:
 1. What does an effective citizen need to **know**? (KNOWLEDGE chart).
 2. What **skills** does an effective citizen need? (SKILLS chart).
 3. What **attitudes** does an effective need to have? (ATTITUDES chart).
 4. What **actions** does an effective citizen need to take? (ACTION chart).
- List as many ideas as possible in response to these questions; be specific! Broad categories such as “communication” should be subdivided to include various forms of communication, i.e., writing, speaking, etc.

- Once groups have completed their list, ask them to circle three items on list that they consider to be the most important; select group Reporter.

- **Shareback – Gallery Walk:**

Ask members:

- What is the title of person responsible for guiding visitors through a museum or exhibit? *A docent.*
- What are a docent's responsibilities? *To explain objects, exhibits on display and to answer visitor questions.*

Explain to members that their group Reporter will assume role of a docent to complete the next share back activity.

- Ask Docents to post group displays on walls of workshop space.
- Ask groups to join Docent next to their display.
- When signal bell rings, Docent will remain next to their display while the rest of group moves in clockwise fashion to following display.
- Docents will have three minutes to explain their display to visiting groups (introduce prompt, review list, identify top three, explain why, and answer any questions).
- Repeat process until groups return to their original display.

Debrief:

Ask members:

- Were there items repeated in different categories? Which ones?
- Were there items not mentioned that you think are important to include? (Add responses in corresponding categories).
- Why are effective citizens important to our communities? Country?
- How does the AmeriCorps experience help develop the traits of effective citizenship?
- What can AmeriCorps members do to encourage effective citizenship in the communities they serve?



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