The Governor’s Commission on Community Service

Volunteer Florida

DISABILITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN GUIDANCE

The requirement for the submission of Disability Community Development Plan (DCDP) was created to assist programs in building relationships with organizations that serve persons with disabilities. The outcome of these developed relationships between AmeriCorps programs and disability organizations are initiatives that lead to opportunities for individuals with disabilities to experience service.

Building partnerships with the disability community through the DCDP will increase the likelihood of AmeriCorps programs recruiting qualified persons with disabilities that can assist the program in achieving its measureable objectives. Partnerships with disability organization are a valuable resource for AmeriCorps programs because of the knowledge disability representatives can provide about: different disabilities, program accessibility and reasonable accommodations.

**\*\*\*Note: Disability organization refers to an organization whose primary mission is to serve persons with disabilities. Although many organizations serve persons with disabilities for example Red Cross, Second Harvest etc. the mission is specific to a particular outcome. Whereas the Division of Blind Services only serves individuals with a specific visual lose with express intent of improving the quality of life of persons with who meet the agencies requirements.**

**Disability Inclusion Measurable Objective**

Volunteer Florida has designed the following measureable objectives that support the DCDP to measure the progress of AmeriCorps grantees' efforts to reach out to and include person with disabilities in AmeriCorps programs.

**Goal 1**

AmeriCorps programs will increase the number of partnerships with disability organizations resulting in increased capacity to include persons with disabilities in AmeriCorps.

**Outputs**

 First – Third Year Outputs: Three partnerships

To increase the capacity of AmeriCorps programs to include greater numbers of persons with disabilities in AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps grantees will establish (3) three on-going partnerships with disability organizations identifying reciprocal strategies that: 1. provide opportunities for person with disabilities to have individual service experience, 2. assist the disability partners in strengthening its mission.

Fourth Year – Ongoing Outputs: Five partnerships

To increase the capacity of AmeriCorps programs to include greater numbers of persons with disabilities in AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps grantees will establish (2) two additional partnerships with disability organizations identifying reciprocal strategies that: 1. provide opportunities for person with disabilities to have individual service experience, 2. assist the disability partners in strengthening its mission.

**Clarification:** In the AmeriCorps grantees first program year, three (3) partnerships will be established with the following statewide agencies: Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Florida Division of Blind Services and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. In year four of the AmeriCorps grantees contract cycle, AmeriCorps Grantees will established two (2) additional partnerships with disability organizations. Ideally, one (1) required partnership to be a recognized exceptional education counterpart of the Florida Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and one (1) of the AmeriCorps programs choosing.

**Goal 2**

Persons with disabilities will complete a service experience with an AmeriCorps program.

**Outcomes:** As a result of the creation of partnerships with disability organizations a minimum of ten (10) individuals with varying disabilities will complete an individual service experience with the AmeriCorps program each year.

**Elements of the DCDP**

The DCDP consist of three sections: 1) Partnerships, 2) Collaboration and Outreach Activities and 3) Individual Service Experiences. During the second quarter of the new contract year, programs will identify a minimum of three disability partners. Together they will develop activities designed to reach out to and engage persons with disabilities service. In subsequent quarters throughout the contract year and as a result of established partnerships, programs will report on Individual Service Experience achieved by individuals with disabilities along three areas: 1) Shadowing, 2) Volunteering and 3) Internships. By separating individual service experiences into these three areas, programs will have diverse opportunities to engage individuals with disabilities in service in three areas of intensity. See section on Individual Service Experiences for a detailed description of these categories.

# Partnership

Developing partnerships with organizations that serve persons with disabilities has multiple outcomes for the AmeriCorps grantee: access to knowledge about disabilities and reasonable accommodation, access to individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to educate and engage an overlooked segment of the community who can help the program meet objectives and the agency’s mission. AmeriCorps programs offer disability organization and individuals they serve access to: real opportunities to learn about careers, develop employability skills, increase knowledge about the community and develop or expand individual networks.

In this section of the DCDP template AmeriCorps grantees will provide the following information about their partner: 1. Name of disability organization, 2 Contact information for the agency representative the program who will maintain contact with the AmeriCorps program, (include: name, position, e-mail, phone number, 3. A description of the services provided by the organization and the population the organization serves.

AmeriCorps grantees must develop partnerships with a minimum of three disability organizations in their first contract year and in the programs fourth program year or new three year contract, the program must have a total of five disability partners. Partners need to include: the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, The Division of Blind Services, The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, local County Exceptional Student Education Services representatives. Other possible and recommended partners include youth transition initiatives, college disability support services offices, Centers for Independent Living, veterans’ offices that serve veterans with disabilities, organizations serving persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Others may be available check with your Program Consultant for further guidance.

**Collaboration and Outreach Activities**

After AmeriCorps grantees provide contact and organizational population information for the partner the Collaboration and Outreach Activities section needs to be completed. The Collaboration and Outreach Activities section must include a brief but detailed description of how the AmeriCorps program and disability organization will work together to create/provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to: shadow, volunteer or complete internships with the AmeriCorps program. The outcome must result in opportunities for individuals with disabilities to have a “real” service experience. The AmeriCorps program must also describe how the disability organization's mission will benefit from the collaboration with the AmeriCorps program.

**Individual Service Experiences**

Individual service experiences provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to learn about the service provided by the AmeriCorps program. Partnerships established between AmeriCorps grantees and disability organizations need to result in persons with disabilities provided one or more of the following “hands on” activities: 1. Shadowing, 2. Volunteering, 3. Internships. Regardless of the outreach activity utilized to engage persons with disabilities, the resulting service experience from shadowing, volunteering or completing an internship, is more likely to create a natural outcome of individuals with disabilities being recruited to become members.

Equally important and requiring close coordination with disability partners is reinforcing and providing on-going coaching/mentoring for the person who is completing a service experience. AmeriCorps members should be used as on-going mentors for all shadowing, volunteer and internship experiences. A sound coaching/mentoring strategy should include an on-going reference to and explanation of how the present service experience the individual is taking part in lends itself to career exploration and employability skills development.

Regardless of the service experience all participants will need to be provided with a process of evaluating their individual service experience. An evaluation of the performance of individual completing the service experience should be completed based on the development of standards created by the disability partner and in conjunction with the AmeriCorps program.

**Shadowing-**Shadowing provides a great way for individuals to learn more about a particular field of work by seeing it “up close and personal.” Shadowing involves spending an adequate amount of time (partial, full day or several days depending on the position) with a member at his or her service site observing a typical day. Shadowing provides an opportunity to ask specific questions about a particular field of work and may help expand an individual’s professional network of contacts. Shadowing is particularly useful for persons who are undecided about a major in college or potential career path. The actual length of the shadowing experience will be determined by the AmeriCorps grantee and the disability partner. The experience however should provide an opportunity for the individual who will be shadowing to: gain a complete understanding of the organization, why the service is being provided, what critical need the program is addressing; what the potential career goals of the member being shadowed are and how they think their service will prepare them for whatever career field they will be entering.

**Volunteering-**Volunteer opportunities with the AmeriCorps program offer the program and the individual variability of the extent of the volunteer experience. Regardless of the length any volunteer experience facilitated by the AmeriCorps grantee must result in the volunteer assisting the program achieving its measureable objectives. As with any endeavor planning will be required to ensure all parties benefit equally. Opportunities for volunteers with disabilities should be no different than those of other volunteers assisting the AmeriCorps program and should mirror already established practices. Individuals should be accountable just as any volunteer would be with the program. As with the shadowing experience, volunteers referred by disability partners should be provided with a comprehensive overview of the AmeriCorps program. Orientation of the program should include a shadowing opportunity that provides the volunteer with: a complete understanding of the organization, why the particular service is being provided, what critical need the program is addressing; what the potential career goals of the member being shadowed are and how the member thinks his/her service will prepare them for whatever career field they will be entering. If the individual is unable to volunteer because of his/her school schedule, the AmeriCorps program should work with the volunteer to identify teacher workdays, school vacations, AmeriCorps service days and national days of service that occur on weekends or during national holidays that can provide an opportunity for individuals to complete a service experience.

 **Internships-**Individuals with disabilities completing a service experience internships should serve a minimum of 75 service/volunteer hours with the AmeriCorps program Duration of the internships can be longer based on the collaboration between the AmeriCorps program and disability partner. Internships should mimic the service of AmeriCorps members to the extent possible. If training is required the intern will need to complete training before beginning the internship. Depending on the length of training a portion of the hours can be included as part of the internship. Maximum flexibility needs to be exercised when establishing the internship and will require the prudent judgment of the AmeriCorps program staff and disability partner. If training is not possible based on the service the program provides the intern will complete activities that support the objective of the AmeriCorps program.

Internships may be paid or unpaid. In the event Volunteer Florida has funding available to support paid internships, programs will be made aware of the process and informing disability partners how to access this funding. If disability partners have access to funding to support internships, AmeriCorps programs will work with partners in applying the requirement to the service experience internship.