

EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR SERVICE

STRATEGIES FROM STATE COMMISSIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PEOPLE	3
Increasing the Capacity of Commission Staffs	3
Increasing the Power of Commissioners	5
III. MONEY	11
Funding for Commissions	11
Funding for Programs	15
IV. IMPACT	17
Shaping Service in the State	17
Building Partnerships to Address Common Challenges	22
V. CONCLUSION	33
APPENDIX A: Application to Serve as a Volunteer with the Ohio Governor’s Community Service Commission	A-1
APPENDIX B: Ohio Governor’s Community Service Commission Commissioner Skills Assessment	B-1
APPENDIX C: Mississippi House Bill No. 1549	C-1
APPENDIX D: Nebraska Commission for National and Community Service Database Survey	D-1
APPENDIX E: State Commissions Included in this Report	E-1

I. INTRODUCTION

As a means of uniting the promise and pragmatism that characterize national service, this manual provides descriptions of current state Commission strategies for using the resources that are essential for transforming vision into reality: people, money, ideas and resolve. The information that follows represents activity in 20 states, distilled into a guide whose purpose is to illuminate innovative approaches and to share promising strategies.

This document has, as its foundation, a 30-month study of the implementation of AmeriCorps, the signature component of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. That study, which included two published reports based upon extensive field work conducted in nine study states, was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the 1993 Act in creating or expanding national service activities in the United States, with particular focus on the role that states played in that process. This guide builds on that earlier work by describing what states_and state Commissions in particular_are doing to realize the promise that service holds.

Having moved from a focused appraisal of activity in nine study states to a broader exploration of 20, P/PV's role as an observer and chronicler of Commission activity has shifted to that of compiler and provider of information. This document is meant to complement the growing body of knowledge currently available to the service field. Thus, we have not included discussions of issues, such as evaluation and monitoring, that are being addressed by other sources of technical assistance.

While this document is intended more as a guidepost than a guidebook, capturing activity that represents a particular moment in time, it does nonetheless provide examples of practical solutions to what are likely to be familiar challenges. And while we recognize that context_political, geographic and historical_contributes to the efficacy of a particular approach in a particular place, we also believe that there is no better teacher for state Commissions than other state Commissions. This guide is a compendium of strategies that states have found to work for them. Ultimately, it is each state's own Commission that is best suited to determine what makes the most sense for it. We invite states to glean what they can from this guide, modifying it where necessary, as a means of more effectively addressing service needs.

The guide is divided into three sections: People, Money and Impact. The first describes ways in which states have accessed and made effective use of human capital, including both Commission staff and commissioners. The second section provides examples of how state Commissions have responded to the challenge of obtaining the increasingly greater share of funds required to support the administration of national service. The third

section describes ways in which Commissions have played active roles in achieving their states' service objectives by expanding both their own reach and that of their programs. Finally, we highlight welfare reform and tutoring/literacy efforts to illustrate how individual states have responded to issues of national importance.

II. PEOPLE

Most Commission executive directors report that they are understaffed, underbudgeted and overworked. Pulled between their responsibilities to the state AmeriCorps programs and their obligations to the Corporation, they are often so caught up in the day-to-day demands of their work that it becomes difficult to think about, much less address, their larger missions. In order to respond to this challenge, Commissions are developing strategies to increase the strength of their staffs and fulfill the potential of their commissioners.

INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF COMMISSION STAFFS

While circumstances vary from Commission to Commission depending upon relative staff size, relationships with state agencies, and a range of other factors most executive directors are looking for ways to increase the amount and kinds of work their staffs can accomplish without budgeting money, funds they don't have, to hire additional staff. This section looks at some of the ways Commissions have established structures and connections that provide access to skilled workers while using little or none of the Commission budget.

At least one state is setting up a system for recruiting volunteers who can contribute regularly to all levels of the Commission's work.

With a staff of only four full-time employees to administer its state-funded AmeriCorps programs, coordinate service around the state and fulfill the numerous other roles of Commissions, the Governor's Community Service Commission in Ohio has begun to systematically recruit volunteers who can perform a wide range of work. Kitty Burcu, the executive director, says that, "building the volunteer bank is key for building the capacity of the Commission."

The effort actually began late in 1995, when a volunteer agreed to recruit and train a group of volunteer consultants who would work directly with AmeriCorps program directors to provide training and technical assistance on issues that included community relations, program management and leadership training. A year later, the Commission hired a part-time volunteer administrator himself a former volunteer to expand the concept behind this Volunteer Consultant Corps.

The Ohio volunteers will be doing work that ranges from data entry to monitoring

programs to organizing a resource library. But the key to acquiring those services is investing in a staff member who is responsible for managing the volunteer program. This staff member_who is paid in part through Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds_is setting up a data bank of potential volunteers (see Appendix A for a copy of the volunteer application) who will be available either to give time regularly or to work on special one-time projects. In addition to recruiting, screening and selecting volunteers, he is working with Commission staff to develop descriptions of positions that volunteers can fill, and he will be providing ongoing support and supervision.

A number of Commissions have interns, students and special-project employees who are unpaid or whose salary is covered by other sources.

¥ In Arkansas, a three-university partnership called the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC) accepts applications from students interested in becoming policy interns and then assigns the interns to specified agencies. The Arkansas Commission on National and Community Service is one of those agencies. Its coordinator for the Americans with Disabilities Act, for example, is an intern who came to them through APAC_and APAC pays half of the intern's salary while the other half comes from disability funds available through the Corporation.

¥ In Ohio, a connection with Ohio State University helps the Commission find graduate students who serve in unpaid internships for special projects. One such intern, for example, is writing a "life after AmeriCorps" publication for participants in the state's AmeriCorps programs. The Commission also has paid interns who have specific responsibilities; one intern, for example, handles public relations.

¥ The California Commission on Improving Life Through Service hires college students through the Hornet Foundation, a university student employment foundation that helps organizations find people with specialized skills in areas such as clerical support, research and computer technology. The Commission has also arranged for high-level in-kind staff: the staff member responsible for project development, for example, is on loan from the California Conservation Corps.

AmeriCorps Leaders are a unique resource for state Commissions.

Members of a highly competitive program open to people who have completed one year of national service, AmeriCorps Leaders receive their living allowance and benefits directly from the Corporation while they serve for a second year. Individual AmeriCorps

programs apply to have a Leader assigned to them; the Leader then serves 75 percent of the time in the program and 25 percent with that program's state Commission.

In Ohio, executive director Kitty Burcsu worked with program managers to help them apply for an AmeriCorps Leader. Now there are two serving in the state, and they have made significant contributions to the Commission's work. They plan trainings for AmeriCorps members and staff, organize special events, and act as consultants for Commission efforts to coordinate service by bringing together diverse organizations within regions to create joint projects. While the Commission has reimbursed the Leaders for travel costs, their services are otherwise free. They are, says Burcsu, "a real resource that expands capacity at very little cost."

INCREASING THE POWER OF COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners are a formidable human resource whose potential is just becoming fully realized. Some Commissions have begun to develop strategies to expand the contributions that commissioners can make to enhancing service in the states.

For commissioners to be most effective, they must have the credentials and skills that their respective states consider essential. (See Appendix B for an example of a commissioner skills-assessment form.) In other words, states must cultivate "the right person for the job." Additionally, commissioners require support_which can take a variety of forms_from staff and from each other so they can serve effectively. Finally, commissioners must be held accountable. Reasonable expectations on the part of staff, along with a commissioner's personal commitment to service, is a powerful combination that can result in a productive Commission.

The following strategies have contributed to the development of quality Commissions.

Identification and selection of commissioners need not be left entirely up to the governor. There are a range of methods that states are using to cultivate and recruit new Commission members while remaining within the parameters of the legislation.

¥ At its inception in 1994, the Oklahoma Community Service Commission worked with a governor who was genuinely supportive of community service in general, and of the Community Service Commission in particular. Not only was he engaged in the selection process, he contacted each of the confirmed commissioners personally to thank them for their commitment and to convey to them how important he felt their work would be. By setting the standard at the

very top, this governor communicated a level of seriousness and resolve to the commissioners that is reflected in their work.

While this initial support from the governor's office was valuable, the Commission was aware_given political reality_that it could be short-lived. As a means of ensuring at least nominal control over the commissioner-selection process, the Oklahoma Commission included within its by-laws a clause indicating that if a vacant Commission seat is not filled by gubernatorial appointment within 90 days, the sitting commissioners can fill it themselves. While politics will no doubt continue to play a role in the commissioner-selection process, this clause reflects a commitment to ensuring that there is broad representation among commissioners by limiting the amount of time seats remain vacant.

¥ In Oregon, the Commission has established a solid working relationship with relevant members of the governor's executive appointments staff. Open lines of communication with members of this staff facilitate the selection process. Staff members appreciate the fact that the Commission comes directly to them with recommendations; this not only helps them do their jobs, it also ensures that appropriate candidates are considered. In return, staffers from the governor's office provide the Commission with lists of individuals whom they have considered for seats on other state commissions and who might be appropriate for the service Commission.

¥ Candidates for the Minnesota Commission on National and Community Service take part in an open appointments process designed to allow anyone who is interested to self-nominate for a position. These applications are forwarded to the governor's office for review and selection.

¥ Like Minnesota, Wyoming provides individuals throughout the state with an opportunity to apply for vacant Commission seats. Information about the application process and criteria for selection are provided in press releases that indicate the areas of expertise sought as well as the kinds of professional and personal contacts it would be helpful to have. Applicants submit a letter of interest and resume for review. Recommendations for appointments are then made to the governor, who has usually approved them.

¥ In Ohio, serving as a commissioner is going to be one option open to all Commission volunteer applicants. The volunteer recruitment brochure that the Commission is developing includes categories such as "grant review," "office work," "special projects" and "commissioner." This is a way of expanding the pool of potential commissioners: anyone who is interested can apply.

As service evolves in the states, the kinds of commissioners who are likely to make the most valuable contributions are beginning to change as well. While diversity continues to be a central theme, states are expanding their vision of who commissioners are, the resources they should have access to, and the kinds of interests they represent.

¥ In Maryland, as elsewhere, a premium is placed on attracting individuals to the Commission who are connected in some way to local foundations. In fact, two of Maryland's commissioners are directly affiliated with two of the wealthiest foundations in the state. Michigan recruits individuals who are major investors_of both time and money_in the service field. While including these people was a conscious decision from the start of AmeriCorps, external changes, such as the rising percentage of the required match for Commission administrative costs, have made the need for individuals with these skills and connections more acute over time.

¥ In addition to foundation representatives, Commissions in some states have benefited from having corporate executives on board. Ohio and Washington have both explicitly included representatives of the corporate sector on their respective Commissions. These individuals have been able to leverage funds from their own businesses as well as to identify other likely financial supporters.

¥ One thing that Colorado looks for among its commissioners is a range of perspectives and philosophies regarding service and volunteerism. While all Commissions are required by law to identify and select commissioners who represent a broad array of agendas, sectors, political affiliations and the like, Colorado executive director, Greg Geissler, believes that adhering to just those categories can result in a kind of "surface diversity" among commissioners. Looking beyond the categories and appointing commissioners with diverse philosophies, he says, "creates energy," which in turn helps to fuel the Commission's work.

While attracting commissioners who are capable and well-connected politically, financially and personally is essential, these individuals are likely to be committed to a variety of pursuits that compete for their attention. One Commission has devised a set of strategies to ensure that it is making the most of its commissioners' time.

Rather than avoid selecting busy, visible and influential people for fear of never seeing them at Commission meetings, the Oregon Community Service Commission instead

actively seeks and supports these individuals so that they can contribute despite competing obligations.

At the outset, Oregon makes it clear that commissioners can say "no." This seemingly simple strategy keeps expectations realistic and communicates to Commission applicants that their time is valued. The challenge for Oregon is determining how best to use the commissioners' time. For example, if a particularly busy commissioner has only three or four hours a month to devote to Commission work, the staff and commissioner might decide that the time would be best spent on something other than attending a full Commission meeting. While these meetings are important, that commissioner's time might be better spent raising funds from business associates or visiting a program in her hometown.

To help with this decision-making process, commissioners conduct self-assessments every two or three months that provide information about shifts in availability. Commission staff are also in regular contact with commissioners to support and encourage them. These "reality checks" keep staff apprised of who is available to participate in a given activity. The commissioners, in turn, are aware that although their availability is limited, they are expected to respond favorably when a request is made of them for a time when they have indicated they are free.

Although it may seem burdensome for staff to have to maintain fairly close and constant relationships with commissioners, the result is a group of commissioners who are both influential and involved. Having a range of well-connected and available commissioners, rather than one or two, provides staff with the opportunity to select teams of especially appropriate individuals to respond to the variety of demands that tend to arise, from a public-speaking engagement at a local town hall, to a meeting with corporate CEOs interested in supporting service.

States can build on commissioners' skills and expertise in ways that will enhance the contributions they make to service at the state and local levels. One strategy that many states have adopted is conducting regular retreats in order to support commissioner development.

¥ The Ohio Governor's Community Service Commission began hosting Commission retreats in 1994, its first year of operation. Since that time, the retreat, which boasts 90-percent participation, has become an annual event, taking place each fall for one-and-a-half days. The retreat agendas reflect a gradual evolution of activity. Year One's began with orientation and an affirmation that, during its tenure, the Commission would address the entire range of volunteer activity in the state rather than AmeriCorps alone. Year Two was devoted to developing youth leadership and building local networks, and the most recent

retreat addressed ways in which the Commission in particular and service more generally could be maintained in the face of significant structural change. Ohio's retreats have addressed practical concerns while creating a unified sense of purpose. These events provide opportunities for commissioners to get to know each other better, to build cohesion, and to underscore the stake that each member has in promoting service in the state.

¥ Other states use retreats in a variety of ways to support commissioner development. In Minnesota, the annual retreat takes place in July, near the end of the program year, and provides commissioners with the opportunity to look back on the year's accomplishments and challenges and to plan for future activity. Connecticut and West Virginia, among other states, have used their commissioner retreats to examine organizational restructuring, including identifying alternative committees, roles and responsibilities. Among the objectives of Oregon's retreats is building relationships among commissioners. During the first retreat, commissioners devised a "buddy system" that paired commissioners so one could apprise the other of issues discussed and decisions made if he or she were absent from a meeting or event.

Commissioners can play an active and visible role in promoting service and building partnerships in their respective states.

In Colorado, commissioners "go on the road," travelling to communities across the state to promote service and generate partnerships that provide the foundation for future efforts. This "Listening Campaign" provides an opportunity for commissioners to engage directly with communities that have expressed an interest in service, while also gathering information about the needs of localities. As service "ambassadors," commissioners are delivering information about the Colorado State Service Commission through town meetings, "coffee hours" and other forums that promote personalized face-to-face interaction.

The objective, apart from involving commissioners, is to spread the message that all citizens should be involved, in one way or another, with service. This participation would augment current local systems that are likely overburdened as responsibility for responding to a range of education, human service, environmental and safety needs devolves to the states.

As the initiative's name suggests, the commissioners are in the field as much to hear and record what communities need as to talk about what the Commission is doing. The trips are planned in advance by Commission staff, who establish contact with key partners in the destination communities. These contacts may be local service or volunteer

organizations, county commissioners or others with whom the Commission already has a relationship. The goal is to reach into as many sectors as possible through the process of setting up the visits.

On the road, commissioners attempt to communicate with the broadest possible cross-section of community members, operating on a flexible schedule and attending meetings in the morning, during lunchtime and in the evening. Whenever possible, they attend meetings that are already scheduled, adding their discussions to agendas at school board meetings and community gatherings. While commissioners address community members, they also act as conveners, providing an opportunity for attendees to talk to each other and discover common goals, needs and agendas so that they can begin to build partnerships and share resources locally.

To date, the Commission has visited 32 communities throughout the state in trips that have lasted up to a week each. Word of mouth is among the most potent tools to get people to meetings. Local media has also played a role. The Commission submits press releases to local weeklies, often becoming front page news in some of the smaller communities. Meetings can be as small as 10 and as large as 50 people. In addition to providing a forum for a discussion of community needs and the ways volunteers and paid service providers can address them, the meetings also provide a rare opportunity for individuals in some of the most remote rural areas to interact with state government.

Commissioners achieve several objectives when they are on the road: they share information about the Commission and what it does; they generate interest in volunteerism; they convene groups who then interact with each other to share ideas and concerns; they introduce localities to the RFP process for AmeriCorps programming; and they help build connections across communities as they gather and share information across the state. Finally, the meetings are also a way to identify and recruit new commissioners.

III. MONEY

As fiscal and management responsibilities for AmeriCorps continue to devolve to the states, Commissions are, in the words of one executive director, "being asked to do more with less." Beyond the immediate practical concerns of raising their required matching funds, many executive directors are working to extend the reach of their Commissions to enhance volunteer and service initiatives around the state_and these efforts often require additional funds. AmeriCorps programs are also faced with the challenge of raising their own matching funds, and in some states, they are receiving help from Commissions and from foundation-organized initiatives.

FUNDING FOR COMMISSIONS

In order to meet their increased match requirements, Commissions are looking for new strategies to raise these funds from both public and private sources_and in some cases, to raise additional money so they can expand their work. These are some of the approaches they are taking.

Commissions are increasingly asking state government for cash support to meet their match requirements.

From the beginning of AmeriCorps, some Commissions have received matching funds from their state governments. In Minnesota, for example, where the governor and legislature have a 10-year history of support for service initiatives, the state has been providing the Commission's cash match. In Connecticut, the Commission chair is a state legislator who is also chair of the House Appropriations Committee, and this connection has been invaluable for securing financial support from the state. Now, some Commissions that had been meeting their match requirements through in-kind state support are making renewed efforts to receive some of that support through direct funding. These are two examples:

¥ The Arkansas Commission on National and Community Service, which is housed in the state's Division of Volunteerism (DOV), receives in-kind support from both DOV and the state Department of Higher Education (DHE)_including two DOV staffers who help coordinate volunteer services to the Commission, and legal counsel and financial services from DHE. Now, though, the Commission is asking the state for money to support two full-time staff positions so it can increase staff size and hire people with the backgrounds and skills needed to fulfill

specific roles.

¥ The Ohio Commission originally received its match from the state through in-kind support, but as match requirements increased, it went to the state legislature to request funding. In making its case, the Commission used this argument: a two-year, \$200,000 investment by the state_money for the Commission match_would generate \$4 million in federal funds for national service programs, money that would be jeopardized if the Commission did not exist. The argument was successful.

Another funding approach has been implemented in Mississippi, where the state legislature recently passed a bill that adds the state's Commission for Volunteer Service to a small number of organizations that appear in a checklist on the state income tax form. Taxpayers who are getting a refund can designate one or more of these organizations to receive a portion of that refund. The Commission, which already receives its matching funds from the state, will be using this money to expand its role as a volunteer center. (See page 20 for a fuller description of the legislation and the Commission's plans. See Appendix C for a copy of the legislation.)

Some Commissions are looking to the private sector for matching funds and other Commission support.

States are taking a variety of approaches to obtain in-kind donations and raise funds from private sources. In several states, the Commission is housed in the offices of a corporation that, in addition to providing space, contributes other forms of in-kind support.

¥ The Kansas Commission on National and Community Service has a close relationship with the state's Department of Education (DOE), but its office is located within a corporation. While the formal relationship to DOE, which pays half of the executive director's salary, keeps the Commission connected to state government, the corporation provides substantial in-kind support, including space, computers and even, initially, executives-on-loan.

¥ The Utah Commission on Volunteers also inhabits both the corporate and state government sectors. The Commission recently moved into the offices of a high-tech corporation, but its formal connection with the lieutenant governor's office gives it a strong ally in state government.

Other Commissions have received private-sector support for special initiatives:

¥ In Florida, the Commission on Community Service has formed a major

partnership with Allstate Insurance Company, which has given \$30,000 to help support the Commission's disaster relief project. Learning from the lessons of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, when massive volunteer efforts after the storm were hampered by a lack of coordination, the Commission is setting up an interactive database in an effort to streamline the process of disaster relief. The database will provide information on organizations and supplies available to help with the relief, and communities and individuals will be able to access that information and enter details about the help they need to recover from natural disasters. The partnership with Allstate, a major insurer in the state, is one element in the Commission's campaign to have the corporate community "take responsibility"—a message that is central to the Presidents' Summit on America's Future and that the Commission has adopted for Florida.

¥ The Colorado State Commission is trying to partner with a large corporation that is currently engaged in a campaign to promote volunteerism in Denver. The corporation has developed public service announcements (PSAs) for radio and TV spots, along with posters and other print materials, and Greg Geissler, the Commission executive director, envisions "taking the concept to scale." Expanding the Denver-based initiative into a statewide campaign would, he says, require only localizing the tags on the PSAs and making minor changes in the print materials. The result would be increased visibility for the Commission, excellent public relations for the corporation, and a statewide push to increase residents' involvement in service and volunteerism.

¥ In Iowa, the state's Commission on National and Community Service has successfully developed private support for a large-scale public awareness campaign. Beginning in 1995, the Commission created six PSAs that feature quotes from well-known Iowans on the importance of volunteerism, a jingle with the theme "Volunteers_Getting Things Done," and an invitation to viewers to call an 800 number to receive information on volunteer opportunities in their community. The governor wrote a letter to all 20 of Iowa's television stations requesting that they run the PSAs. They all agreed—each station contributed \$10,000 of air-time for the PSAs.

Some Commissions are establishing a 501(c)(3) organization as a separate fundraising arm.

It did not take long for Commissions in many states to discover that foundations and corporations are unable or reluctant to give money to a government agency. A few Commissions have addressed this problem by incorporating as a separate agency, independent from state government. However, other Commissions that originally

considered this option have decided not to make the change. In part, they value the administrative support that comes with being part of state government. But in addition, as one executive director noted, keeping the Commission within state government makes an important statement to the public—that the Commission and its work are valued by the state.

One potential solution to the dilemma of being part of state government but needing to raise foundation and corporate funds is to create a separate fundraising arm. That approach is being taken by a number of Commissions, including the Nebraska Commission on National and Community Service, which recently established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that will focus on raising funds to help meet the required Commission match and, ultimately, support service around the state. The nonprofit has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service, and while, according to Commission executive director, Tom Miller, it is still in its "seminal stage," the fundraising strategy is in place and they are ready to get moving.

The Commission has been receiving in-kind donations from state government, but the increased match requirement, along with the Commission's small staff and large agenda, meant it was going to have to create a development plan and raise some significant funding if it was going to become a viable center of service and volunteerism in the state.

Its first step was to contract with a local public relations firm, which interviewed people around the state to gauge their awareness of the Commission. The firm also spoke informally with small foundations about their potential interest in providing grants. It became clear from all of these conversations that, as a government agency, the Commission was going to have a problem raising private funds.

Its solution was to form a separate nonprofit fundraising arm. With help from the Kansas Commission on National and Community Service, which had already formed a similar organization, a small group of commissioners—one of whom was an attorney—worked through the process of establishing the nonprofit. Their "master stroke," according to Miller, was persuading the former head of a local foundation to serve on the board. It is not just the foundation connections that make this board member so valuable, Miller notes. It's his "larger vision" of the possibilities of fundraising. When Miller told him they were trying to raise \$50,000 to meet the higher match requirements, the board member said, "Let's go after \$125,000 first, and then let's try to raise two million over the next few years."

The organization's initial strategy is to find an individual or corporation with "statewide clout" who will make a three-year commitment of \$25,000 a year. This kind of commitment from a major donor would, Miller believes, help to generate other significant gifts. As a kick-off for the campaign and to give it immediate visibility, the organization is

holding a major fundraising event this fall and inviting exactly those people_Miller describes them as "people of influence and affluence in the state"_who they hope will become their donors.

The nonprofit is currently run by a three-person board, which includes two commissioners along with the former foundation director. While there is not yet any staff, it is in the process of increasing the size of its board_but it is proceeding carefully. The organization will only be as effective as its board members make it, and those members need to have some very specific qualities. They should be "influential" people who have the kinds of connections that help with fundraising, and they need to have the time to devote to the fundraising work. And, Miller notes, they also have to understand the Commission's purpose and have a strong commitment to service. You need people, he says, "who really believe in your cause."

FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS

In most states, AmeriCorps programs are on their own when it comes to raising their matching funds. While a number of executive directors report that they want to be able to do more to help their AmeriCorps programs get access to matching funds, only a limited number, so far, have succeeded in accomplishing this. These are examples of what a few states are doing.

At least one Commission has a fundraising committee that obtains foundation and corporate cash support for the state's AmeriCorps programs.

Commissioners in Minnesota have formed a private-sector committee to raise foundation and corporate money for programs. While they have had more success with foundations than with corporations, they raised \$70,000 last year in grants of \$1,000 and up. Minnesota's executive director, Mary Jo Richardson, says that the committee works with potential donors to match their interests with the type of service a particular AmeriCorps program is providing. A home building supply company, for example, gave a grant to a program that rehabilitates housing.

Some Commissions receive money from their state legislatures that they distribute to AmeriCorps programs to help them meet their match requirements.

¥ In Minnesota, with its history of strong state backing for service, the state legislature appropriates \$1.8 million a year for the Commission to use to support programs. While the Commission uses a small amount of these funds for statewide

training and evaluation, it passes most of the money directly through to programs to help them meet the required 15-percent cash match for AmeriCorps participants.

¶ In Washington, the Commission on National and Community Service works with the governor and legislature to generate state funds that not only cover the Commission match, but also help some of the state's AmeriCorps programs meet participant match requirements. The Commission is particularly interested in providing those funds to AmeriCorps programs in rural areas. While these programs are able to obtain in-kind support from the communities in which they operate, they are located in remote areas, where there are few corporations or foundations to provide cash grants.

In several states, regional associations of grantmakers are helping to fund AmeriCorps programs.

In the fall of 1994, during the first year of AmeriCorps, members of Northern California Grantmakers (NCG)_one of a number of regional associations of grantmakers (or RAGS) located around the country_established a National Service Task Force and Collaborative Fund to provide matching support for AmeriCorps programs located in that part of the state. The NCG members realized that programs would be faced with the challenge of doing a lot of fundraising over a short period of time and that pooling the foundations' resources and administering them centrally could benefit everyone. Instead of applying to numerous foundations in the region, each AmeriCorps program would have to write only a single, three-page grant application and submit it to the Task Force. The foundations' staffs would, similarly, be saved a lot of duplicative work.

Everyone involved_the Commission, programs and foundation officials_agrees that the approach has worked well. In 1996, the Collaborative Fund received almost \$400,000 from 16 grantmakers that was, in turn, awarded to 19 state and national direct AmeriCorps programs to help meet their required 15-percent participant match. And while it will continue to help provide program matching funds, the Task Force is also expanding its role. Last year, it sponsored a communications initiative to help get the word out about AmeriCorps and, as part of that effort, supported the Northern California AmeriCorps Launch to kick-off the third year of national service.

Other states have also been working with their local RAGS to establish a pool of support for service programs. In Maryland, for example, the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers partnered with the Governor's Commission on Service to organize a statewide funding collaborative of philanthropic, business, civic, and state and local government organizations to support service around the state. This group identified

after-school programming as its priority focus, and it is helping to support the AmeriCorps MASCOTS initiative in Maryland, a Commission-inspired program in which AmeriCorps members across the state work with middle-school students on service projects or school work during after-school hours.

IV. IMPACT

A Commission's resources_the people who contribute time, energy and ideas, and the funding that makes their contributions possible_are, by their very nature, a means to an end. The goal of each Commission is to realize the vision that is inherent in its mission statement; achieving that vision requires an evolving series of pragmatic steps.

This section describes some of the steps that Commissions are taking to expand their scope by reaching out to service and volunteer organizations throughout their states. And it describes strategies that Commissions are using to build partnerships and develop initiatives that address two crucial national issues: welfare reform and literacy.

SHAPING SERVICE IN THE STATE

As AmeriCorps evolves, many Commission executive directors are expanding their roles in volunteer and service activities throughout their states. In states where there was not, before AmeriCorps, a central volunteer office, Commissions have begun to take on this function, conducting outreach to organizations statewide and acting as clearinghouses for information. These efforts can be as uncomplicated as including articles about a wide range of service and volunteer activities in the Commission newsletter, or including materials about regional volunteer centers, along with materials about AmeriCorps and other national service programs, in the Commission's information packet. In order to convey their expanded role, several Commissions have even changed their names: the Texas Commission for National and Community Service has become the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, while Utah's Commission on National and Community Service has been renamed the Utah Commission on Volunteers.

Here are examples of the ways that Commissions are having a statewide impact on service and volunteerism.

Some Commissions are developing communications strategies that both reflect and shape the reality of service around the state.

In early 1996, when Kevin Punskey began work as communications director for the Florida Commission on Community Service, the Commission had no logo, no newsletter, and almost no public identity at all. What was worse was the fact that whatever image it did have was not exactly flattering. Punskey's first job was to turn that image around. Commissions around the country are creating excellent communication products_videos,

newsletters, press kits, annual reports_to get out the word about their states' service accomplishments. This section focuses on Florida's communications strategy because it had a defined beginning, explicit goals and a coherent plan for achieving them.

Punsky, whose background is in journalism and public relations, started from the ground up to build a media plan. He and the Commission's graphic designer created public information packets and a logo and put together an annual report. In mid-April, he took advantage of the National Day of Service to introduce the Commission's new identity_displayed everywhere on t-shirts and pins_to the public.

Then he began work on the newsletter. Designed after *USA Today*, the quarterly, tabloid-sized publication features catchy headlines, color photos, and short, lively articles. "The concept," Punsky says, "was to make the newsletter something that makes a statement." The title, *Florida Serves!*, is part of that statement. The exclamation point suggests energy and excitement, and since the Commission "is about more than AmeriCorps," the newsletter includes articles about service and volunteerism all over Florida. Because it is produced in-house, the newsletter costs the Commission only 37 cents per copy.

At the same time he was developing these products, Punsky initiated contacts with the Corporation and the Points of Light Foundation, and he began to establish ties with people and organizations around the state_the media, state legislators, the Florida Association of Volunteer Centers, United Way organizations, independent nonprofit groups like Habitat for Humanity, and all of the VISTA and Senior Corps programs. The Commission "reached out to everyone," sending them material, inviting them to events, calling on the phone and meeting face to face. They invited the governor to everything, Punsky says, and eventually "he did visit several AmeriCorps programs and was happy that things had changed."

The communications efforts didn't stop there. Punsky subscribed to a newspaper-clipping service so the Commission could track all of its publicity, good or bad. He developed a photo file so he had the materials available when he needed to put together a quick publication. He built a web site and developed a multi-media exhibit display. And when he learned that MTV was going to be in Florida filming a "spring break" special, he arranged to have them film Florida AmeriCorps members working on an environmental service project, building a dock that is accessible to people with disabilities. MTV not only aired the footage_featuring the AmeriCorps project as an alternative that their college-age audience might consider in place of their usual spring break activities_but they also helped pay for the materials to build the dock.

"It's more than just the publications," Punsky says of the Commission's communications strategy. "It's the attitude. The whole concept is to make people aware that we're making things happen." The response, he says, has been "huge." The increased awareness of the

Commission and its work has helped generate funding from the state, corporations and foundations. And it has also resulted in more and stronger applications from potential AmeriCorps programs. "We have so many proposals coming in that we're really able to be selective and have high-quality programs that make a difference," he says. "That's a result of reaching out to the community."

Commissions' web sites on the Internet are creating linkages among volunteer organizations and connecting those organizations to potential volunteers.

The Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service has built a web site that reflects its mission: to foster volunteerism and community service as a means of solving problems in the state. The web site (<http://www.serve.state.tx.us>) provides information about the Commission and its AmeriCorps programs, and it also includes links to volunteer centers and service organizations throughout the state.

Anyone with access to a computer and modem can call up the web site and click onto information about the Center for Volunteerism and Nonprofit Management in El Paso, Houston Proud, or several dozen nonprofit organizations in Denton County that depend on volunteers to help provide services. Visitors to the web site can also access information on these organizations through a "City Directory Database" (see more on databases, below); learn about the Texas Youth Service Network; read the Commission's newsletter, *Common Ground*, which includes a wide range of information about service and volunteerism; and find out about upcoming service-related events and trainings. The web site is, in fact, a high-tech network that helps the Commission achieve its goals of being a statewide resource for the Texas volunteer community.

Some Commissions are compiling databases that can help match volunteers to organizations.

There are 13 volunteer centers in Nebraska, but no real coordinating body because, until now, there has been no state office of volunteerism. The Commission, despite its staff of only three people, is trying to fill this role, and one way it is addressing the gap between its mission and its limited resources is by developing a database of volunteer opportunities throughout the state, which it will then publish on its web site. According to Commission executive director Tom Miller, using the Internet is a good way to communicate in Nebraska. "The state is wired," he says, "farmers, libraries, everyone." The Commission is compiling information on 2,200 agencies around the state that includes, for example, specifics on the location of each agency, the type of service it provides, the ages of people served, and the kinds of volunteer jobs available. (See Appendix D for a copy of the information-gathering form.) This information will be

organized in a variety of ways on the database_by, for example, geographic area or type of service_so anyone in the state can check the Commission's web site and identify an organization whose volunteer needs match that person's own interests. People who aren't "wired" will be able to access the information and find a volunteer match by calling the Commission.

At least one Commission is becoming a funding resource for volunteer organizations around the state.

Some time next year, the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service will become a funding resource for the state's volunteer organizations. That's when money will start coming to the Commission from state taxpayers who designate the Mississippi Commission Volunteer Fund to receive a portion of their tax refund.

The state income tax form in Mississippi had been listing two funds_the Educational Enhancement Fund and the Wildlife Fisheries Fund_to which taxpayers could donate money simply by checking off an item on the form. In order to establish its own fund and earn a place on the checklist, the Commission worked for months with key legislators and convinced them that this would be an excellent way to promote volunteerism in the state. The bill passed this year (see Appendix C for a copy of the legislation), and the Volunteer Fund will be added as a third name on the checklist beginning in 1998.

The Commission will use money it receives from the tax-refund donations to expand its role as a center of volunteerism. Although the details have not yet been worked out, the Commission plans to develop an application process through which it will distribute the money for nonprofit, volunteer-related activities in the state. It is particularly interested in using the funds to build local networks and coordinate efforts in rural areas. And while the amount of money generated through the check-off is, for now, relatively small_taxpayers designate a total of about \$60,000 a year to the two funds currently on the checklist_the Commission intends to "market" the check-off option in order to increase contributions.

To help build networks and provide technical assistance to a broad range of organizations, many Commissions host statewide conferences on service and volunteerism.

¥ This year the Wyoming Commission for National and Community Service broadened the scope of what had been its national service conference by inviting all individuals and organizations in the state who have an interest in service and volunteerism. The 120 participants represented a wide range of organizations_from food banks to museums to all streams of national service.

Beverly Morrow, the Commission executive director, says that the key for getting this range of participation was having people from an entire spectrum of organizations on the planning committee: they had buy-in to the conference from the start. In addition, the planning committee set a low fee for registration and arranged for very inexpensive hotel rooms so the conference would be accessible to organizations from around the state, no matter how limited their funds. The conference, during which participants also took part in service activities, is going to become an annual event, held in a different city in Wyoming each year.

¥ In Nebraska, the Commission holds an annual statewide Governor's Conference on Community Service. The three-day event, which attracts about 300 people from the state's national service programs, nonprofit organizations and other volunteer groups, addresses issues related to all facets of volunteerism: including increasing volunteers, fundraising, using technology, media relations and building better boards.

¥ The California Commission on Improving Life Through Service is a co-sponsor of the state's annual service and volunteerism conference. This fall's conference, "Service as a Strategy for the 21st Century," features workshops on evaluation and data collection strategies, staff development, successful program models and developing local collaborations. A major goal of the conference is to build effective local connections within the state's service, volunteerism and service-learning movements, and the Commission's co-sponsors—the California Conservation Corps, the California Department of Education-CalServe, the Service Learning 2000 Center, Volunteer Centers of California, Inc., and Youth Service California—are evidence that these connections are already being made.

While these conferences are a vital way that Commissions can build networks of service and volunteerism around the state, they are also an opportunity to provide technical assistance to a wide range of volunteer programs and nonprofit organizations. In Maryland, the Governor's Commission on Service is also providing this kind of outreach through the Maryland Service Exchange (MSE), a Commission-initiated statewide network that provides volunteer consultants who offer free training and technical assistance to national service programs and other community-based service organizations around the state.

The MSE, "a university without walls," is organized into nine "colleges" whose deans recruit faculty members and link them with service programs requesting assistance. Each college focuses on one key area: service learning, community building, research and evaluation, participant development, access for people with disabilities, career planning, financial and organizational management, young consultants and resource development. While the deans receive a small stipend through the Commission's PDAT funds, the

faculty members are all volunteers. The service is proving to be popular: during its first year of operations, MSE faculty provided 175 trainings.

Commissions are expanding their outreach to both national service programs and other volunteer organizations by setting up resource libraries.

¥ In Wyoming, the PDAT coordinator is cataloging resources that the Commission has been collecting on topics such as volunteer management, training and evaluation. The materials—which include books, pamphlets and videos—will be listed in a directory sent to programs and organizations around the state, who will then be able to borrow the materials. The Commission is also working with the Wyoming State Library to develop a list of the library’s holdings of service- and volunteer-related materials. That list will help volunteer organizations identify and get access to the information they need to develop more effective services.

¥ The Arkansas Commission on National and Community Service is developing a library of training materials, including videos and interactive software. Although the Commission is housed in the state’s Division of Volunteerism, which has its own resource library, Betty Hicks, the Commission executive director, notes that the training library will have a special function. Commissioners, program managers and AmeriCorps members will be able to sign out the materials to use at their own locations: the resources will be an economical way for them to receive training in leadership development, teamwork and a range of other skills.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS COMMON CHALLENGES

State Commissions, by their very nature, encourage partnerships among state agencies joined to support service efforts; among commissioners who share a vision for service in their respective states; among AmeriCorps members joined in common effort; and between AmeriCorps members and the communities they serve. While the value and importance of partnerships on both the state and program level is evident, the extent to which Commissions explicitly seek out, develop and maintain these partnerships in order to accomplish service objectives varies across states, and according to the nature and scope of the issues being addressed.

There are several nationally relevant social policy issues that individual states are addressing through national service. For the purposes of this guide, we have chosen to focus on the efforts of a handful of state Commissions that are currently testing new responses to the challenges of welfare reform and the need for literacy training for children and youth. While both issues affect all states, the nature of each state’s responses

depends on local circumstances. Nonetheless, the experiences noted here are likely to have applicability elsewhere as states grapple with how best to use service as a strategy to confront challenges that are national in scope but local in impact. In this way, programmatic activity transcends state boundaries even as it takes place within them.

Welfare Reform

As state Commissions explore the role that national service can play in responding to welfare reform's mandate, and, in some cases, begin to feel pressure from governors and legislators eager to find ways to comply with the law, they may want to look to the work of front-runners who have already begun to plan and implement innovative approaches that are likely to become the foundation of future efforts. (State Commissions may also want to take a look at youth service and conservation corps programs, as their corpsmembers tend, by design, to be comprised of people who are poor or on welfare.)

Welfare reform is a means for states to display the power of service by becoming integral players in response to a pressing and universal need. It is also a way for Commissions to use three key benefits—the education award, health insurance and childcare—currently available to AmeriCorps members as a means of supporting mothers who are leaving the welfare roles through the service option. Additionally, it is an opportunity for Commissions to both lead the effort, as was the case in Kansas and Florida (these programs are described below), and to respond to it. During the most recent grant cycle, for example, the Arkansas Commission on National and Community Service received six proposals that addressed implications of welfare reform. Unlike the intentionality reflected in the Kansas and Florida approaches, these proposals were not the result of a targeted effort by the Commission. Rather, they originated in the welfare field.

Although it is likely that there are welfare recipients among the AmeriCorps members in most, if not all, states, this identifying feature has not necessarily been the basis on which these participants have been selected into programs. And while there are hundreds of AmeriCorps programs currently in place that respond to a range of human service needs, it is likely that few have been developed with the express purpose of preparing welfare recipients for work. Therefore, few program models exist for Commissions who seek to respond to this challenge.

In addition, although the federal legislation impacts on every state, how states choose to respond will vary widely. Although Commissions will have to tailor their own approaches to match local circumstances, the programs that a handful of states are currently putting into place will provide some guidance as Commissions attempt to navigate the uncertain terrain of welfare reform.

The following are powerful examples from three states (two are programs already underway, and one is a program in the planning/proposal stage) of how Commissions can work in partnership with other state agencies, sharing resources and experience in order to respond effectively to the challenges posed by federal welfare reform. While all states are faced with the same dilemma_how to prepare current welfare recipients for employment in a labor market likely to be ill-equipped to accommodate the influx within the time frame set forth in the legislation_the economic and political circumstances faced by each will contribute to some very different responses.

While the approaches taken by these three states differ, they share common elements that are likely to be relevant to any state that is considering undertaking similar work. These elements include:

- ¥ Determining at the outset who and where (local agencies? state departments?) the decision makers are and what decisions regarding the state's plan and response have been made; and, having done so,
- ¥ Partnering with state and local welfare departments;
- ¥ Distinguishing between state-mandated rules about issues such as the impact that participation in AmeriCorps will have on benefits eligibility, and rules mandated by the federal government that are universally applied; and
- ¥ Deciding whether to recruit welfare recipients and integrate them with the existing pool of AmeriCorps members or to devote an entire program to AmeriCorps members who are all welfare recipients.

Kansas

The Governor's Reform AmeriCorps Service Project (GRASP) was begun in October 1996, in response to the needs of Wichita's welfare population. AmeriCorps members are each assigned up to 20 families on welfare whom they mentor and provide with life skills training and opportunities to participate in volunteer service activities. Additionally, there is a pilot daycare center devoted primarily to public assistance recipients. Of the 20 full-time and 12 part-time AmeriCorps members engaged in both activities, all of the part-time and 12 of the full-time members are welfare recipients from Wichita.

The genesis of the program was a call that the Commission executive director made to the state's lieutenant governor to discuss strategies for using national service to address the challenges posed by welfare reform. The conversation focused on two critical and interrelated issues: childcare and the service structure. No welfare recipient who was also a mother would be able to return to work unless she had access to childcare, regardless of how prepared she was for a particular job. Meanwhile, AmeriCorps was set up precisely to meet the kinds of human service needs faced by welfare mothers seeking to join the

workforce.

The lieutenant governor put the executive director in touch with the head of welfare reform in the state. Wichita was chosen as the pilot site because of the extent of the need and the fact that the head of the local welfare agency there was invested in the concept of combining service, daycare provision and welfare reform. Having identified the key decision makers on the state and local level, the Commission proceeded to establish partnerships among the agencies and organizations best suited to put in place the ideas that were being developed.

With Subtitle "H" funds, the Kansas State Board of Education, the Commission and the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS), through its Wichita office, combined efforts in order to implement the pilot plan. Thus, this partnership includes the state's major players in the welfare realm. The Wichita SRS refers welfare recipients to the Commission, and when they become AmeriCorps members, SRS continues to provide case management for them and their families so that progress in the life skills areas can be assessed. An additional benefit of the program has been the "family service" opportunities, where family members provide up to 300 volunteer hours that augment a full-time AmeriCorps member's required total of 1,700 hours.

The Wichita SRS representative has also been instrumental in moving the program forward. The plan for Year Two calls for 21 full-time AmeriCorps members, with all but three or four of them selected from the welfare roles. Cessna, a corporate partner in the project, will take over the childcare piece, having promised slots to welfare recipients and employment opportunities there to some of last year's AmeriCorps members. Located in two city-owned buildings (one houses the daycare center; the other, the administrative office), the GRASP program illustrates how an initial planning effort can evolve over time, particularly with the support of key individuals and institutions who, with access to adequate resources, are working together toward a shared objective.

Florida

While Kansas' program shows how identifying the central decision makers and building partnerships are key ingredients in addressing the needs of welfare recipients through service, Florida's experience underscores the need for preplanning and front-end work to provide a clear understanding of how AmeriCorps participation can affect a welfare recipient's eligibility for benefits. This information must, in turn, be provided to case managers who are responsible for determining eligibility. In order to do this, the Florida Commission not only needed to obtain accurate information, it also had to have the appropriate contacts at the key agencies so that welfare recipients who became AmeriCorps members would continue to receive the benefits to which they were entitled.

As a means of eliciting ideas about how to address, through service, the affects of welfare reform, the Florida Commission on Community Service issued an RFP to the Secretaries of the 15 district offices of the state's Department of Children and Families. The Commission felt that agency buy-in would be faster in coming if they worked from the top down, through the District Secretaries. With the support of the person at the top of the agency, staff would be likelier to back the effort.

The Commission received 11 concept papers in response to the RFP and invited six of the district offices to submit full proposals. With the proposal process underway, the Commission began gathering the information it would need in order to ensure the continuation of certain benefits to welfare recipients who became AmeriCorps members.

Because staff at the district welfare agencies made the benefit determinations, it was important that they be kept apprised of activity at the Commission that would affect their clients. For example, recognizing that receipt of the AmeriCorps stipend by a welfare recipient could adversely affect her eligibility for some benefits if it were considered earned income, the Commission worked closely with district staff, as well as with the state Children and Family headquarters, to gather the information necessary to clarify the applicability of state statutes. This, in turn, helped to remove a key barrier to participation by welfare recipients in AmeriCorps programs.

A tremendous amount of front-end work went into researching the effects of AmeriCorps participation on welfare recipients' eligibility for a range of benefits. In fact, Florida hired a consultant to help coordinate the effort. With experience in the welfare field, this individual brought a knowledge of the system to her position that was especially helpful. Additionally, the state of Florida had already conducted a demonstration program for welfare recipients that had been underway for two years prior to the distribution of the Commission's RFP. The district welfare offices and their Secretaries had some experience with innovation in other aspects of their work and were therefore somewhat more responsive to the notion of trying something new than they might otherwise have been.

The Commission selected and funded all six district welfare agencies that had submitted proposals. All of the programs are heavily invested in corpsmember development. The welfare recipients who have become AmeriCorps members are "off the clock" for the time being (they receive no cash benefits, but continue to receive housing and food stamps, as well as Medicaid benefits for their children), which literally buys them more time on welfare in the future should they need it.

The six programs address a wide range of community needs, including building and renovation, teen pregnancy prevention, tutoring and mentoring in the public schools and with ex-offenders, and generating volunteers to work with juvenile offenders. Each

program has between 15 and 20 AmeriCorps members, all of whom are welfare recipients. All six programs have reapplied for funding in Year Two, and several of the districts have expanded their own base of local partners to include businesses and others interested in participating.

Although some aspects of Florida's experience combining service and welfare reform appear to be unique and perhaps not generalizable to other states, there are aspects of it that are likely to be relevant to most states attempting similar strategies. The front-end work was especially helpful in eliminating what could have been a significant barrier to programmatic success. As was the case in Kansas, partnerships also played a central role. Here the partnerships were between the Commission and the district offices and state headquarters, as well as among the various players within each participating district. Finally, employing a consultant from the field to operate the Commission's initiative appears to have been particularly helpful.

California

With several successful programs already underway whose AmeriCorps members are almost entirely welfare recipients, California's current competitive proposal is informed by experience from the field. The product of a partnership between the California Commission on Improving Life Through Service and the Office of the state's Chancellor of Community Colleges, the proposal combines direct service and corpsmember development (or workforce preparation) so that welfare recipients gain skills and contribute to their communities as AmeriCorps members.

Under the proposed program, welfare recipients who are also community college students obtain referrals from their case managers to the AmeriCorps program. While the individual works towards earning a certificate from the community college, typically in early childhood or elementary education, she is also a part-time AmeriCorps member. She attends classes tuition-free, and her service activity is integrated with the course curriculum. The program provides an education award, but no stipend. During their first six months, AmeriCorps members continue to receive their welfare checks. They then become eligible for work-study funding.

The AmeriCorps members are engaged in a range of service activities in public pre-schools and elementary schools, as well as in departments of social services and child development centers. They provide mentoring and tutoring, with a particular emphasis on providing literacy training to mothers. These activities augment the AmeriCorps members' course work while benefitting both child and adult members of the community. Second-year AmeriCorps members will either return as team leaders or continue their education.

According to data from the Chancellor's Office, 126,000 of the system's 350,000 community college students are welfare recipients. While the AmeriCorps program is large_ there are 830 part-time slots_ it is still only a beginning. But the model holds real promise, and it is relatively inexpensive. Since participants will not receive AmeriCorps stipends, the Corporation is being asked only to provide funding to cover staff for the program.

This example illustrates the added value of developing partnerships; the Commission and the state's community college system, by working together, will provide a range of experiences and opportunities for welfare recipients in a combination that would not exist otherwise. The AmeriCorps mentoring and tutoring placements benefit the children and adults served, as well as the teachers and other paid staff where the placements are made. Through this effort, the AmeriCorps member provides a much-needed service while building skills and gaining experience specifically related to the field that she is studying in school.

Welfare reform will continue to affect states in a variety of ways as they struggle to respond to the requirements of the federal mandate; the role of state Commissions as well as the programs they oversee will no doubt continue to grow in both numbers and significance. The early efforts described here provide a starting point for Commissions that seek to respond to the needs that welfare reform legislation has created in their respective states.

Tutoring and Literacy

While the challenge of integrating service and welfare reform represents uncharted territory for most states, literacy and tutoring efforts do not. There are hundreds of service and volunteer programs in place throughout the country that address academic needs in general and literacy needs in particular. Many are school-based and focus on children and youth; others provide literacy training, as well as GED preparation, for adults.

Despite the familiarity that almost every state Commission has with these kinds of programs, we have chosen to highlight literacy and tutoring because of their current social policy relevance. Early in his second term, President Clinton declared that education would be a domestic priority during his remaining four years in office. His America Reads Challenge and, later, the corollary initiative that dedicates half of all new college work-study funds to community service, with 100,000 slots set aside for reading tutors, make explicit the connection between service and literacy/tutoring. With the commitment of funds (assuming Congressional approval), these efforts reflect an articulated policy at the federal level that is to be realized in the states.

No strangers to literacy and tutoring programs, Commissions are redoubling their efforts in this area, building statewide linkages and bringing current initiatives to scale. With the possibility of a dedicated source of funds, states are in a position to expand current efforts and test new ideas. As is the case with welfare reform, Commissions are taking the lead, creating partnerships at the state level that allow for broader dissemination of programmatic models across localities.

The two examples described below illustrate ways in which Commissions are creatively using a range of funding streams and organizational contacts on college campuses to expand their reach in the areas of tutoring and literacy.

Mississippi

Teaching reading skills to second-, third- and fourth-grade students in elementary schools across the state is both a means to an end and an end in itself at Mississippi's Campus Link program. With Subtitle "H" monies, the Mississippi Commission launched a literacy initiative in July 1996 with the express purpose of connecting college students with youngsters in public schools around the state.

The program is based at five of the state's community colleges and three of its historically black colleges. Its mission is twofold: to identify students on these campuses who would be interested in tutoring young people in local elementary schools, and to build campus

volunteer centers that would be used as clearinghouses for these tutors.

Each campus sports a team of two AmeriCorps members_typically students there_ who are taught how to train college students to be tutors. These AmeriCorps members are also trained in building faculty and community connections so that the campus and the local elementary school with which it works have a shared vision for program success. The AmeriCorps members are responsible for a range of activities, including recruiting, training and matching the tutors, as well as establishing relationships with school teachers, school administrators and key campus personnel.

Using books donated by local businesses, nonprofits and the host campus, AmeriCorps members create "reading resource materials" modelled after Kentucky's SLICE*CORPS (Service Learning Impacts Children's Education) program. These materials are used by the campus volunteers to work with elementary school children whom they visit twice a week at their school for one-half to one hour at a time. The college tutors make a semester-long commitment to help children improve their reading skills.

Recently, the Commission met with the financial aid officers at the eight colleges to explore the work-study link and to begin to discuss the feasibility of connecting with this larger funding pool. Because there is no existing volunteer infrastructure on most of these campuses, the AmeriCorps members are identifying and training volunteers to help young people improve their reading skills even as they are building the foundation for a sustained effort rather than a short-term program.

Campus Link has begun a literacy effort that takes into account both America Reads and the work-study funding initiative. In this way, Mississippi has addressed a key federal policy area and has operationalized it within the state. The Commission's connection to the campuses through the AmeriCorps members, and the campuses' connections to the local elementary schools on the children's behalf, represent partnerships that both "get things done" and join institutions in ways that make future prospects for the program even stronger.

West Virginia

Energy Express was launched by the West Virginia University Extension Service at two sites in 1994. The pilot program was designed to provide meaningful, paid, service-related summer work for college students who often left the state in search of employment at the end of the school year, and to serve the needs of poor children in grades K through 6 who lived in rural areas and were identified as being particularly at risk for significant summer learning loss. By the time AmeriCorps joined the effort two years later, there were 38 sites serving 1,600 children.

The program_which the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service now oversees_runs five days a week for six weeks during the summer and focuses solely on building reading skills. The children in the program all receive, and are allowed to keep, books that are funded by such agencies as the U.S. Department of Education, using Title 1 funds, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The day runs from 7:30 a.m. through 1:00 p.m.; the program also provides breakfast and lunch.

The sites are chosen from among proposals submitted by community-based groups of individuals that include community leaders, school principals, teachers and parents. A teacher is identified as the full-time, paid, on-site leader during the six-week effort; the local school district provides the building and custodial support; and the local match is garnered from foundations, businesses and other community-based sources.

Participants' stipends are matched by money from the governor's office, the federal college work-study program, and the Coalition for West Virginia's Children, among others. In 1996, 80 of the 251 stipended college students working in the program were AmeriCorps members, who were distributed across 20 of the sites. A total of five- to eight AmeriCorps members and other stipended service providers work together at each of those sites, and each of the college students is responsible for about eight children. Activities are literacy-focused, with reading comprehension the central goal.

In addition to AmeriCorps members, the Commission brought with it key resources, such as the education awards and additional financial and in-kind support. The 1996 Energy Express program was especially noteworthy because it was the only reduced part-time program that the Corporation funded, allowing a precedent-setting, 300-hour, single-summer commitment from the college students.

Having the AmeriCorps members and other stipended service providers working together at sites initially posed some challenges, including the fact that the AmeriCorps members worked longer hours (because they also were engaged in community outreach efforts such as visiting and working with the families of children who attended the program) and were thus eligible for larger stipends as well as the education award.

Now, however, the pay structure has been changed. This summer, all of the stipended service providers_100 of whom will receive their living allowance from AmeriCorps; the remaining 300, from other sources_will receive education awards from the Commission. Thus, all 400 service providers will be considered AmeriCorps members. With 300 education award-only slots, the West Virginia Commission has clarified the identity issue while generating funds from a host of state and local sources to cover the cost of 300 living allowances.

Energy Express, says Jean Ambrose, the Commission executive director, is a "highly leveraged" effort with "multiple, multiple, multiple partners." In addition to the partnerships that the program has generated within communities and across types of volunteers, it also continues to garner support from a range of funders at both the state and local levels, making them all stakeholders in the process. The program's continued growth and the interest in the part of localities seeking to get a site in their own communities suggest that the initiative is likely to endure.

V. CONCLUSION

The Commission strategies presented in this document all share a common theme: they represent efforts undertaken by states to expand the scope and improve the quality of service. We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to speak with representatives from 20 state Commissions who are devising innovative and practical responses to persistent challenges and new demands. (See Appendix E for a list of those Commissions and their executive directors.) While we recognize that this guide represents just a fraction of the efforts currently underway in states throughout the country, it nonetheless provides concrete strategies that are likely to be relevant to most, if not all, state Commissions.

Because Commissions do not operate independently of political, socio-economic, geographic and demographic realities, their ability to innovate is a necessity. The changing environment within which they operate places a premium on resourcefulness and creativity. Since most Commissions do not have enough staff, money or other resources to respond effectively and consistently to all of the challenges they face, it can be particularly worthwhile to draw upon the work of others. The purpose of this guide has been to present information to help them achieve that end.

APPENDIX A

**APPLICATION TO SERVE AS A VOLUNTEER WITH
THE OHIO GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMISSION**

Name _____ Date _____

Home Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone () _____

Occupation _____

Company _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Business Telephone () _____ Fax () _____

Personal references:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone () _____

Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone () _____

Relationship _____

(OVER)

Use the following list to check off your areas of interest and expertise.
(Please use "I" for interest and "E" for expertise)

Training_____

Program Monitoring_____

Public Speaking_____

Grant Reviewing_____

Data Entry_____

Clerical Support_____

Grant Writing_____

Writing, Editing, Layout_____

Special Projects Mgmt._____

Special Events Planning/Coord._____

Library Development/Maintenance_____

Consulting_____

Other: _____

Please use this space to tell us, briefly, why you would like to volunteer for the Governor's Community Service Commission.

APPENDIX B

**OHIO GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMISSION
COMMISSIONER SKILLS ASSESSMENT**

NAME_____

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE_____

YEARS ON COMMISSION_____

TERM EXPIRES__ / __ / __

1. What do you feel is the most important contribution you make to the mission of this Commission?_____

2. What are your roles and responsibilities as a Commission member?

3. Are you satisfied with your level of involvement? Yes___ No___
If not, why not?_____

4. How would you rate your current commitment to the Commission?
(Low) 0 1 2 3 4 5 (High)

5. What more do you feel you could do in support of the Commission?

OVER

6. What do you need to help make this possible? (training, staff support, etc.)

7. What skills and talents do you bring to your position as a member of this Commission? (legal, public relations, finance, etc.)

8. Which of these have you used in your work for the Commission?

9. Which political leaders do you have access to?

10. Which community/business leaders do you have access to?

11. Do you have access to representatives of the various media? Yes___ No___
If yes, please identify._____

12. Are you willing to make use of that access (nos. 9, 10 & 11) in support of the Commission when appropriate? Yes___ No___

APPENDIX C

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
By: Representative Williams

REGULAR SESSION 1997
To: Ways and Means

HOUSE BILL NO. 1549

AN ACT TO PROVIDE A CHECKOFF ON THE INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX FORM TO ALLOW TAXPAYERS TO VOLUNTARILY CONTRIBUTE A PORTION OF THEIR TAX REFUND INTO THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE FUND; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE FUND; TO PROVIDE HOW MONIES IN SUCH FUND MAY BE EXPENDED; TO AMEND SECTION 43-55-23, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CONFORM TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) Each resident individual taxpayer who files a Mississippi income tax return and who will receive a tax refund from the State Tax Commission may designate that a contribution be made to the "Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Fund" established in Section 2 of House Bill No. ___, 1997 Regular Session, by marking the appropriate box printed on the return pursuant to this subsection. In the case of a joint return, each spouse may designate that a portion of the refund shall be paid to such fund.

The State Tax Commission shall print on the face of the Mississippi income tax form for residents a space for designating the contribution in substantially the following form:

"MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE FUND

I wish to contribute () \$1 () \$5 () \$10 () other \$___ of my TAX REFUND TO THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE FUND."

(2) The State Tax Commission shall explain in the instructions accompanying the individual income tax form the purposes for which the contributions authorized herein shall be used.

(3) This section shall apply to taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 1997.

(4) The Chairman of the State Tax Commission shall determine annually the total amount designated by individuals to be paid to the fund, along with all interest earned thereon, and shall

report such amount to the State Treasurer who shall pay such amount into the "Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Fund" established in Section 2 of House Bill No. ___, 1997 Regular Session.

SECTION 2. (1) There is established in the State Treasury a fund known as the "Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Fund" (hereinafter referred to as "fund"). The fund shall consist of monies obtained from contributions made pursuant to Section 1 of House Bill No. ___, 1997 Regular Session. Monies in the fund may be expended by the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, established in Section 43-53-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, to carry out the purposes of Sections 43-55-1 through 43-55-27, Mississippi Code of 1972. Unexpended amounts remaining in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any interest earned on amounts in the fund shall be deposited to the credit of the fund.

SECTION 3. Section 43-55-23, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:
43-55-23. (1) The institutions of higher learning and the Office of the Governor shall provide necessary administrative and staff support services to the State Commission for Volunteer Service. The commission shall employ an executive director, who shall be initially designated by the Governor. The executive director shall employ such staff as is necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter. Future executive directors shall be selected by the commission.

(2) The commission may procure information and assistance from the state or any subdivision, municipal corporation, public officer, or governmental department or agency thereof. All agencies, officers, and political subdivisions of the state or municipal corporations shall provide the office with all relevant information and reasonable assistance on any matters of research within their knowledge or control.

(3) The commission may apply for, receive, and expend funds, grants, and services from local, state, or federal government, or any of their agencies, or any other public or private sources and is authorized to use funds derived from these sources for purposes reasonable and necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The commission also may expend moneys from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Fund created in Section 2 of House Bill No. ___, 1997 Regular Session.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 1997.

97/HR02/R2001 ST: Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Fund; create and
PAGE 2 (BS/SW/) provide checkoff on individual tax form to allow contributions to.

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR
NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
DATABASE SURVEY**

Agency/Organization _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____ Contact _____
 Position _____

Type of Organization Government Non-Profit Professional Civic Other _____
 Type of Service Health Education Agriculture Aging Library Criminal Justice
 Human Service Arts Environmental Community Development
 Other _____

Individuals Served
 Age: Children (0-12) Youth (13-19) Adults (20-54) Older Adults (55+) All

Income: Low income only All incomes
 Ethnic Background: African-American Hispanic Caucasian Asian Other _____

Disabilities: Mental Physical Developmentally Delayed

Service Area Rural Urban

Volunteer Jobs Big brother/big sister Construction Gift shop Receptionist
 Board/committee work Consultant Home repair Security
 Bookkeeping Data Entry Litter collection Teacher/tutor
 Child care Entertainer Mentor Telephone caller
 Cleaning Escort Museum assistance Tour guide
 Client advocate Food bank Office assistant Transportation
 Clothing distribution Food delivery Parent aide Visitor
 Coach Fund raising Reader Yard work
 Companion Other _____

Length of Service Short-term (less than 20 hrs. per job) Long-term (more than 20 hrs. per job)

Utilization of
 Volunteers Year-round Seasonal

Average Age of
 Volunteers 0-12 13-19 20-54 55+

Number of Volunteers Currently Average Volunteer Hours Annually _____

Overview of Needs of
 Agency/Organization _____
 For Volunteer _____
 Services: _____

Is your agency/organization interested in serving as a point of contact for inquiries regarding volunteerism in your community? Yes If yes, contact name and phone number: _____
 No _____

APPENDIX E

STATE COMMISSIONS INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

Arkansas

Betty Hicks, executive director
Arkansas Commission on National and
Community Service
Donaghey Plaza South, 7th and Main
Suite 1300
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: 501-682-6717
Fax: 501-682-1623

California

Linda Forsyth, executive director
California Commission on Improving Life
Through Service
1121 L Street, Suite 600
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-323-7646
Fax: 916-323-3227

Colorado

Greg Geissler, executive director
Colorado State Commission
1313 Sherman, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303-866-4900
Fax: 303-866-4992

Connecticut

Sandy Santy, executive director
Connecticut Commission on National and
Community Service
Department of Higher Education
61 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105
Phone: 203-566-6154
Fax: 203-566-7865

Florida

[Executive director position
is currently vacant.]
Florida Commission on Community Service
The Bloxham Building, Suite 109
725 South Calhoun Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
Phone: 904-921-5172
Fax: 904-921-5148

Iowa

Barbara Finch, executive director
Iowa Commission on Community Service
150 East Des Moines Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: 515-281-9043
Fax: 515-281-9033

Kansas

Patricia Kells, executive director
Kansas Commission on National and
Community Service
200 SW 6th
P.O. Box 889
Topeka, KS 66603
Phone: 913-234-1423
Fax: 913-234-1429

Maryland

Lynn Bopp, executive director
Governor's Commission on Service
301 West Preston Street, 15th Floor
State Office Building
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: 410-767-1216
Fax: 410-333-5957

Michigan

Frank Dirks, executive director
Michigan Community Service Commission
111 South Capitol Avenue
Olds Plaza Building, 4th Floor
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: 517-335-4295
Fax: 517-373-4977

Minnesota

Mary Jo Richardson, executive director
Minnesota Commission on National and
Community Service
683 Capitol Square Building
Saint Paul, MN 55101
Phone: 612-296-1435
Fax: 612-296-3348

Mississippi

Marsha Meeks Kelly, executive director
Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211-6453
Phone: 601-982-6738
Fax: 601-982-6790

Nebraska

Thomas Miller, executive director
Nebraska Commission on National and

Community Service
State Capitol, 6th Floor_West Side
Centennial Mall
Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: 402-471-6225
Fax: 402-471-6286

Ohio

Kitty Burcsu, executive director
Governor's Community Service Commission
51 North High Street, Suite 481
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 614-728-2916
Fax: 614-728-2921

Oklahoma

Nancy Deaver, executive director
Oklahoma Community Service Commission
1515 North Lincoln
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
Phone: 405-235-7278
Fax: 405-235-7036

Oregon

Marlis Miller, executive director
Oregon Community Service Commission
PSU/CSC, 369 Neuberger Hall
724 SW Harrison
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97205
Phone: 503-725-5903
Fax: 503-725-8335

Texas

Tanya Norwood, executive director
Texas Commission on Volunteerism and
Community Service
P.O. Box 13385
Austin, TX 78711-3385
Phone: 512-463-1814
Fax: 512-463-1861

Utah

Michael Call, executive director
Utah Commission on Volunteers
324 South State Street, Suite 240
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-7945
Phone: 801-538-8611
Fax: 801-538-8660

Washington

Bill Basl, executive director

Washington Commission on National and Community
Service
Insurance Building, Room 100
#43113
Olympia, WA 98504-3113
Phone: 360-902-0663
Fax: 360-586-5281

West Virginia

Jean Ambrose, executive director
West Virginia Commission for National and Community
Service
1 United Way Square
Charleston, WV 25301
Phone: 304-340-3627
Fax: 304-340-3629

Wyoming

Beverly Morrow, executive director
Wyoming Commission for National and Community
Service
Herschler Building, 1st Floor West
122 West 25th Street, Room 1608
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: 307-777-5396
Fax: 307-638-8967