

START-UP

A. Site Selection Tips

Program directors often spend little time and attention on the site selection process. Often, program directors select sites based upon need (how the member will serve the site) rather than also considering how the site will serve the member.

The following tips are offered to assist with successful site selection:

- **Site Criterion**: Establish criteria for each site for your program. Be specific. Site criteria should be unique to the needs of your program and its members. Refer to **Site Selection Handout #1: *Sample Criterion*** for a model of such a criterion.
- **Site Supervisor Criterion**: Similarly, establish criteria for each person who will serve in the capacity of site supervisor. Refer to **Site Selection Handout #1: *Sample Criterion*** for a model. Place a special emphasis on determining the time that the site supervisor will have to devote to the member. Ideally, site supervisors should be selected with input from you, rather than simply appointed by the site.
- **Site Supervisor Position Description**: Determine exactly what is expected of the role of site supervisor in your program. An important distinction is whether or not this person will function in a site coordination role (supervising other staff who will have direct contact with member) or a direct supervisory role with the member. Another helpful distinction is how your program expects your site supervisors to function as mentors to members. One suggestion for busy site supervisors is to have a different staff member appointed as the “mentor”, providing emotional support to the member.
- **Site Application**: Design a site application process, according to the guidelines established in the above criterion (refer to **Site Selection Handout #2: *Sample Site Application***). Consider developing an Agency Request form (refer to **Site Selection Handout #3: *Sample Agency Request Form***) for established sites to request members for subsequent years. Include sample forms for creating a position description that will be included with each application. Be certain that position descriptions include skills *and* ideal qualities.

- **Site Visitation**: Visit the site! Someone (program staff or a designee) should visit all potential service sites. Just as you would never hire an employee sight-unseen unless you are desperate, don't choose a site sight-unseen! Refer to **Site Selection Handout #4: *Initial Site Visitation Guidelines*** for some key areas to be aware of when conducting your visit.
- **Refusing a Site**: Be comfortable saying, "not right now." Just as all good program directors learn to refuse a potential member based on an inadequate fit with the program and its mission, program directors must do likewise with potential sites.
- **Evaluating the Site**: At the end of each year that a site has participated in your program, establish an evaluation process so that the site will be re-evaluated in terms of your criterion **each year!** Design evaluations for all players including: site supervisors, site staff, and members refer to **Site Selection Handout #5: *Sample Evaluation by Site Supervisor***, and **Site Selection Handout #6: *Sample Site Evaluation by Member***. Site dynamics change from month to month as well as from year to year! Consider doing evaluations mid-year and end-of-year.

Remember, site selection is an ongoing process, not a once and done task. It should be evaluated and revised each and every year. Sites are ever changing – being aware of such changes could assist you in making good program management decisions that will avoid problems down the line.

Site Selection Handout #1 : *Sample Criterion*

Criterion for a Successful ** A/C Program Site

- ❑ Members will feel safe working at the site
- ❑ Staff will be receptive to members
- ❑ Service is direct and meaningful and meets an identified need
- ❑ Site has adequate space to accommodate new member position
- ❑ Members will have the opportunity to be well-supported
- ❑ Site mission supports program mission
- ❑ Possesses technology to meet program requirements
- ❑ Training opportunities will be available to members

The following criterion indicates the elements of an “ideal” member position:

- ❑ Fills service gaps
- ❑ Educates, meets basic human needs or improves the environment
- ❑ Outreach to vulnerable/ under-served population
- ❑ Developmental or new
- ❑ Involves service that would not otherwise get done and/or expands availability of service
- ❑ Utilizes unique gifts and talents of the individual
- ❑ Does not take away paid positions
- ❑ Does not involve prohibited activities
- ❑ Follows goals of sponsoring AEAP program

The following criterion indicates the qualities of an “ideal” AEAP supervisor:

- ❑ Possesses a full understanding of the AmeriCorps program
- ❑ Has qualifications to provide growth and support to AmeriCorps member
- ❑ Possesses time to devote to supervision
- ❑ Can fulfill site supervisor obligations as outlined in site supervisor agreement

The following criterion describes the needs of an AEAP member in the placement:

- ❑ Enough structure and support from supervisor
- ❑ Clear position description
- ❑ Opportunity to function as/ or as closely as possible to a full staff member
- ❑ Opportunities for individual feedback

*****Note each AEAP should develop its own individualized criterion... this is only a sample to get you started!***

Site Selection Handout #2: *Sample Site Application*

AmeriCorps Education Award Program Site Application 2003-2004 Program Year

This application provides a **general overview** of the items requested in the Statement of Agreement between AmeriCorps Education Award Program and its host sites. Completion of this is not a guarantee of an AEAP member placement. Please return this form to AmeriCorps Education Award Program at the address shown at the end.

Name of Organization:	_____
Contact Person:	_____
Address:	_____ _____
Phone Number:	_____
Extension:	_____
Fax Number:	_____
E-mail address:	_____
Website:	_____
If you do not have workplace access to email or the Internet, do you anticipate this possibility in the coming year? _____	

1. Please describe the mission of your organization, and the general objectives of the program in which the AEAP member would work:
2. Where would an AEAP member be placed within your agency (department, office, or service site location, etc.)?
3. What would the general position duties consist of for the AEAP member (if available, you may refer to position descriptions)
4. Would the position be generally limited to weekday hours? ____ If not, please describe:
5. Under what circumstances might the AEAP member be compelled to work weekends, evenings, or holidays?

6. Who would supervise the AEAP member? What is this person's title? Will they need orientation to what the HCA program is about?

7. What is the size of your organization:

_____	# Full-time staff	_____	# of service sites
_____	# Total staff		
_____	# Regular volunteers		

Approximate Annual Budget:

8. Is your organization sponsored by a faith-based organization? Please describe.

9. Please estimate the approximate percentage of time that the AEAP member's position will be divided among the following:

_____	Direct, in-person service to clients	_____	Office/Administrative work
_____	Advocacy	_____	Teaching or public education
_____	Direct phone contact with clients	_____	Other

10. Does the position entail any of the following activities (If the position involves any of these activities, please provide an approximate number of hours per week. This question relates to whether the position is eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award, and does not necessarily make the position ineligible for AmeriCorps Education Award Program):

_____	Fund raising	_____	Proselytizing and other activities that involved religious instruction or worship
_____	Union organizing or discouragement of union organizing	_____	Provide direct benefit to a for-profit entity, labor union, or politically partisan organization.
_____	Political Advocacy (voter registration, endorsement of candidates, etc.)		

11. If we are able to offer an AmeriCorps Education Award to the AEAP members at your site, this will require the supervisor to sign weekly timesheets (perhaps in addition to that required already by your site) and two or three 'quarterly' reports, to ensure that no ineligible hours (activities described in question 10) are counted on those timesheets, and to have an AmeriCorps sign present on site; AEAP staff will gladly provide orientation to these rules. Will this present any problems for your program?
12. Is there any required driving for the position? If so, will the organization provide a vehicle, or will the AEAP member need to provide a vehicle in order to perform this position?
13. If the AEAP member has to provide the vehicle, does the organization provide reimbursement for mileage?
14. Can your organization commit to an annual expense of approximately \$X,XXX to support the cost of the AEAP member?
15. What is the source of funding that you anticipate using for these expenses?
16. Will the AEAP member be replacing a current staff member?
17. Will you be able to accommodate an annual site visit by the AEAP Program staff (approximately 2 hours of time commitment per year)?
18. Time off is required for the Wednesday before Thanksgiving through the Sunday of that weekend (November 27-30, 2003), as well as the period of the Thursday before Memorial Day through the following Tuesday (May 20-25, 2004), for program training. Is this acceptable to your organization?

19. Please check off the following:

If we have an AEAP member placed with our organization, we understand the following:

- The AEAP member will be employed by our organization and will start on October 1, 2003, with an intended final working date of September 30, 2004;
 - The AEAP member will be supervised by our organization, but any significant problems in work performance will be brought to the attention of the program;
 - The AEAP member will not be paid on an hourly basis, but will receive a consistent stipend that will total \$7,800 gross pay from October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2004, if the AEAP member remains with the program for that entire time;
 - Our organization will be able to reimburse AmeriCorps Education Award Program for its health plan as well as a \$1,600 administrative fee, for each placed AEAP member.
- I/we have read the Statement of Agreement, and accept its tenets with the following exceptions:
- None, or:
-

Please sign and return with the following attachments, to:
AmeriCorps Education Award Program
555-555-555 (FAX)
P.O. Box 668
Anywhere IN 99999

- 1) Agency brochure
- 2) Agency Annual Report
- 3) Position Description

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Site Selection Handout #3: *Sample Agency Request Form*

**AMERICORPS EDUCATION AWARD PROGRAM
PRELIMINARY AGENCY REQUEST FORM**

2002-2003 Program Year

DATE: _____

TO: AmeriCorps Education Award Program
555-555-555 (FAX)
P.O. Box 668
Anywhere IN 99999

FROM: Name: _____
Program: _____

_____	Our organization/program <i>IS</i> interested in having AEAP members for the 2003-2004 program year: ____ Please indicate the number of AEAP members you wish to host ____ We anticipate the following changes in our position(s): _____ _____ _____
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_____	Our organization/program <i>IS NOT</i> interested in having AEAP members for the 2003-2005 program year.
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_____	Our organization/program is <i>NOT SURE</i> at this time. We will have more information by the following date: _____.
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_____ Check here if you would like AmeriCorps Education Award Program to contact you concerning the information you have provided; telephone number: _____ ext. _____.

Please return this form no later than September 30, 2003.

REC'D: _____

Site Selection Handout #4:

Sample Initial Site Visitation Guidelines

Whenever possible, sites should be visited prior to becoming a site of your AmeriCorps program. The following are some ideas of things to look for during a site visit. Of course, the level of familiarity/ depth of relationship will determine how in-depth you can be in your visit through asking actual questions. However, much can be “picked up” just through observation. It is suggested that each program develop its own criterion and checklist.

- **Mission:** determine if the mission of the agency is compatible with your program’s mission.
- **Member Safety:** evaluate if the agency provide a safe and secure environment for the member. If the member might be exposed to violent situations within or in the direct vicinity of the agency, what precautions and assistance does the agency provide for the member?
- **Member Development:** evaluate how integrated the member will be into the staff. Try and determine the type of training and mentoring opportunities that might be available to a member.
- **Organization:** evaluate whether the agency has an organizational structure that is functioning well. Key in on areas such as frequency of staff meetings, written policies and procedures, a clearly defined organizational chart, record keeping structures already in place, success in obtaining/maintaining grants, etc.
- **Staff:** evaluate the overall commitment of staff (to the best of your ability). Try and ascertain commitment to both the agency’s mission and the concept of service.
- **Financial:** if your program expects any sort of financial support of the member, try and determine the agency’s ability to provide it during the upcoming *and* in subsequent years.
- **Supervision:** evaluate the staff who have been targeted to be site supervisors. Pay special attention to experience with your target age group and willingness/ability to take on the extra responsibilities associated with participation in your program. Try and determine if this individual can “buy into” your program’s mission and philosophy. Also, ask about the turnover rate for that and similar positions.
- **Environment:** evaluate the staff’s receptivity to “volunteers” (based on current/prior experience). When possible try and determine what are the most difficult challenges for the agency (for example, staff are underpaid, a cross-cultural staff, etc.).
- **Technology:** evaluate the site’s level of technology and how that will fit with the technology that you have/ will need to stay in close contact with them and complete recording requirements.

Site Selection Handout #5:

Sample Site Evaluation by Site Supervisor: Principal Survey

This is an example of a tool utilized by an AEAP to assess what their schools are looking for in potential members and in the program. They utilize this assessment every 2 years.

1) What strengths do our teachers bring to your school?

2) What areas do you feel need strengthening in our program?

Potential Members

Please rate the following characteristics as they relate to a potential member for your school:

1 ----- 3 ----- 5
not important for a potential member ----- important ----- absolutely essential

a) strong academic background	1	2	3	4	5
b) courses in education	1	2	3	4	5
c) student teaching	1	2	3	4	5
d) volunteer experience	1	2	3	4	5
e) references	1	2	3	4	5
f) experience with children	1	2	3	4	5
g) knowledge of city/culture	1	2	3	4	5

What other qualities are you looking for in a teacher?

AEAP Staff/ Program

Please tell us how we are doing.

1 ----- 3 ----- 5
not satisfied with this aspect of the program----- satisfied----- very satisfied

a) availability of site supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
b) feedback on teacher	1	2	3	4	5
c) frequency of visits by staff	1	2	3	4	5
d) ease of placement process	1	2	3	4	5
e) ongoing communication	1	2	3	4	5

What other ways can we be of help to you?

Site Selection Handout #6:

Sample Site Evaluation by Member

Please complete this form & return by _____. Your response is confidential.

Please rate the following on a scale:

1= Definitely agree	2=Somewhat agree	3=No opinion
4= Somewhat disagree	5= Disagree	NA = Not applicable

Position

- _____ I enjoy my service work.
- _____ This position requires a great deal of direction.
- _____ The workload is adequate.
- _____ I believe I make a meaningful contribution to the site.
- _____ This position should be repeated next year

Support

- _____ I feel supported by other AmeriCorps members at my site
- _____ The support I receive from the program staff is adequate
- _____ I receive adequate training to perform my service well.
- _____ Personal (and personality) differences are respected and supported by the program staff

Site management

- _____ Communication at the site is adequate.
- _____ The site is a positive place to serve
- _____ I feel safe in my service environment
- _____ AmeriCorps is well understood throughout the site

Supervisor

_____ I have a good relationship with my Supervisor.

_____ My supervisor has adequate time to provide supervision.

_____ My supervisor meets my needs.

_____ This supervisor should be chosen to supervise AmeriCorps members next year.

Clarity from the AEAP office

Areas of the program that you find the most challenging:

Ways in which the AEAP office can increase communication:

Ways in which the AEAP Director can stay more connected with members:

Ways in which the AEAP Director can be a resource to sites:

Ways in which the AEAP Director could meet your individual needs at your site more effectively:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: