

# Inclusive Recruitment and Outreach

How do I successfully recruit people with disabilities in national and community service?

How can I make recruitment activities inclusive?

Where can I recruit people with disabilities?

Are there organizations in my community that can help me recruit individuals with disabilities?

How do I collaborate with a disability organization to strengthen my outreach and recruitment activities?

## Section IV: Inclusive Recruitment and Outreach

### *Key Words and Terms*

Access

Accommodations

Alternate Formats

Barrier Free Design

Inclusive Service Environment

Relay Service

TDD/TTY

### *How do I successfully recruit people with disabilities in national and community service?*

There are two basic approaches to recruitment of persons with disabilities as participants in your program. The first is to recruit persons with disabilities as part of your overall recruitment process. This will happen naturally as your program becomes increasingly accessible and inclusive. The second approach is to conduct specific outreach activities with communities of persons with disabilities and organizations that serve these communities.

### *How can I make recruitment activities inclusive?*

The first step toward inclusive recruitment is creating an inclusive service environment. An inclusive service environment is one that proactively seeks to include persons with disabilities, ensures that everyone can make a valued contribution, and weaves access and accommodations into all aspects of the program. There are several ways that you can ensure that your recruitment activities are inclusive:

- Include images of people with disabilities as service providers in your brochures, videos, and other materials.
- Make sure that any videos you produce are captioned and audio-described.

### **Example**

**Sample Statement:**  
**Qualified individuals with disabilities who need accommodations may make arrangements by contacting (insert your program contact person and number/email).**

- Make a clear statement of your willingness to provide accommodations.
- Familiarize your staff with your state relay services or your TDD/TTY number.
- Insert a non-discrimination clause in all of your written materials.
- Proactively let the public know that you will provide materials in alternate formats.
- Ensure that your website is accessible (good information on how to incorporate accessibility features on your website can be found at [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)).
- Be sure your application forms ask no questions regarding disabilities, history of disabilities (the applicant or their family), or other medical information – unless it requests a voluntary response that is separated and filed separately and used for statistical purposes only.
- Identify organizations or individuals in your community with disability experience who can review materials to ensure that your language is appropriate.
- Hold meetings and events in locations that are barrier free, and let people know the events are accessible.

### **Outreach to Persons with Disabilities**

People with disabilities are in every community, organization, and neighborhood. Disability crosses all demographic groups. People with disabilities are young and old, rich, poor and middle-class, highly educated and not. Some individuals with disabilities are very committed to service; while others have never been exposed to service. Some have not had a lot of experience working alongside people without disabilities; others have.

### **Program Preparedness**

Before you begin to aggressively recruit, make sure that your staff, participants, and whomever else may be involved in recruitment are pre-

### **Example**

**Sample Statement:**  
**This document and others are available in alternate formats.**

### **Example**

**Sample Statement:**  
**The AmeriCorps kick-off event will be held in an accessible location. Other accommodations will be provided upon request. Please contact (insert your program contact person and number/email).**

pared for this initiative. It will not help your efforts to do great outreach and have staff unprepared for persons who request accommodations! Be sure to provide training to all staff and participants.

### *Where can I recruit people with disabilities?*

There are several free national recruitment resources provided either directly by the federal government or through federal grants. While they exist primarily to help persons with disabilities find employment, you may be able to use them to identify persons with disabilities who are open to service opportunities. Some provide you directly with resumes or job-related information about people with disabilities, while others work in conjunction with state and local agencies. These include the resources listed below; more complete information about them is contained in Appendix D of this Handbook. All are available to you for assistance in recruiting participants for your programs.

- [Employment Assistance Referral Network \(EARN\)](#)
- [Workforce Recruitment Program \(WRP\)](#)
- [State Governors' Committees on Employment of People with Disabilities](#)
- [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)
- [State and Local Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#)

Another resource that allows people with disabilities to locate and contact you is the Corporation for National and Community Service recruitment web site: [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org). We encourage you to post your national service positions there. There is also Job Links, a service provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, which takes prospective job applicants to job listings on the Internet employment pages of organizations seeking to hire people with disabilities.

CNCS has awarded funds to 11 agencies to conduct outreach to disability communities. These agencies are promoting national service as an option and are developing training and promotional materials. Refer to the CNCS's web page: [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org) for further

information on this subject.

Many disability organizations provide recruitment and placement assistance to individuals with particular types of disabilities. A comprehensive listing, compiled under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, may be found at [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org).

There are also organizations and programs in every community, as well as at the national level, that work with people with disabilities. Many are federally operated and or funded. Some provide services to people with disabilities such as therapies or training. Others advocate in the community for increased accessibility. Some provide scholarships and awards, while others provide funding for education or job training. Some organizations serve a range of individuals with different kinds of disabilities, while others focus on one or two specific kinds of disabilities.

Depending on your program and the organizations in your community, the following kinds of organizations may be appropriate for your recruitment efforts.

- [Schools, Colleges, and Technical Schools](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation Offices](#)
- [Disability Organizations](#)
- [Support Groups](#)
- [Civic Groups](#)
- [Senior Organizations](#)
- [Youth Organizations with Programs for Youth with Disabilities](#)
- [State and Federally Funded Community and National Resources](#)

***Are there organizations in my community that can help me recruit individuals with disabilities?***

### **Schools, Colleges, University Centers of Excellence and Technical Schools**

Almost all post-secondary schools have an office for students with disabilities. Staff in these offices can provide information about your program to students with a range of disabilities. Many have bulletin

boards where you can post information. Some have campus-wide newsletters.

School districts have offices on special education. These offices are aware of all students identified with disabilities, including those who are fully mainstreamed in their classrooms. In addition, most schools have special education teachers who know students with disabilities well.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Offices**

Each state has an office of vocational rehabilitation that in turn has local offices. Vocational rehabilitation counselors, who assist individuals with disabilities in achieving educational and vocational goals, staff these offices. Counselors will know of individuals with disabilities who may be interested in service programs. In addition, there are instances where national and community service programs may become part of a vocational plan, in which case additional supports may be available from vocational rehabilitation programs.

### **Disability Organizations**

Even the smallest community has at least one or two organizations that work with people with disabilities from the very young to the very old. Here are some of the most common:

- [Parent resource centers](#)
- [Self advocacy groups](#)
- [Independent living centers](#)
- [National Mental Health Association affiliates](#)
- [UCP affiliates](#)
- [Arc affiliates](#)
- [Brain Injury Association affiliates](#)
- [National Association of the Deaf groups](#)
- [Self Help for Hard of Hearing chapters](#)
- [Lighthouses \(visually impaired\)](#)
- [Easter Seals affiliates](#)

## Support Groups

All communities have support or self-help groups for a variety of issues that people face in their lives. In most communities there is a “self-help clearinghouse.” Often, self-help groups are listed in local papers.

## Civic Groups

Many civic groups support disability issues and may conduct fundraising activities on behalf of scholarship programs or under special circumstances. Some are:

- Civitans
- Kiwanis
- Lions
- Quota Clubs

## Youth Organizations

- Boy and Girl Scouts
- 4-H
- Campfire programs
- YMCA/YWCA

## Senior Organizations

- Senior Centers
- AARP

## State and Federally Funded Community and National Resources

- See list of resources in Appendix D.

### *How do I collaborate with a disability organization to strengthen my outreach and recruitment activities?*

Sending recruitment information to community organizations may result in a few inquiries but it probably will not generate significant interest. If staff at these organizations do not know you, do not understand national and community service, or do not know your program in particular, they are not likely to do much with your material.

The success of many initiatives is based on collaborative relationships. There are a number of ways that you can initiate collaboration. A personal visit with the staff of an organization allows you to share the world of service and its potential benefits for people with disabilities.

## Example Collaboration

Hector, the program director for an AmeriCorps\*VISTA program, met with the director of the independent living center and did a presentation at a staff meeting. Angela, a Foster Grandparent program director, wrote newsletter articles for the County Office for Persons with Disabilities.

You can meet with staff individually, or perhaps ask to attend a staff meeting.

Even more, you can organize a service day or project in conjunction with a disability organization. This activity can help them experience the rewards of service first hand and build personal relationships that will be valuable to you as you recruit persons with disabilities in your program. Most communities have local or statewide disability related conferences or meetings. Many have space for exhibitors. You may be able to recruit and publicize your program at the same time.

You can also place ads in disability organization newsletters, or even better, offer to write an article about service opportunities for a newsletter.

### Meetings and Events

Meetings and events, whatever the purpose, are great ways to let people with disabilities know that you are serious about providing access and that you are serious about inclusion. To be inclusive means that you are thinking about accessibility in all of your activities, not just when you know there may be people with disabilities present. There are opportunities for recruitment no matter what the purpose of your meeting or event.

- Always let the public know that you will provide accommodations to those who need them.
- Always hold your meeting or event in an accessible location.

### Example Collaboration

**In Maryland, the State Commission funds inclusive service projects with agencies that serve people with disabilities to perform service to benefit a third party. For example, an AmeriCorps program that tutors at-risk youth partnered with a local Arc chapter to clean and paint the gymnasium of a local youth center together.**

**This joint service project gave the AmeriCorps program the opportunity to see people with disabilities as active service providers, and individuals with disabilities were able to learn about and experience AmeriCorps. The community benefited from the service performed. This type of partnership can be replicated across all national service programs.**