A Spectrum of Service

Combining Volunteerism and Paid Service: A Look at Roles and Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

A symbiotic relationship exists between volunteers and the organizations they serve. Volunteers extend programs' limited resources by providing direct services and supporting professional staff at low cost. They can inspire staff with their desire to "give back" or "do good," and can offer a fresh perspective in settings where means are scarce but the need is profound.

Just as organizations need the volunteers who support them, volunteers need the organizations they support. Few volunteers work effectively in isolation. Rather, organizations initiate and structure the programs where volunteers serve. They provide training, oversight and support. They can legitimate the efforts of volunteers in the field and, in the best cases, ensure that volunteers' time is both well-spent and well-regarded.

While the need for—and value of—volunteers is typically self-evident, making good and appropriate use of volunteers' time can be challenging for organizations whose resources are already stretched to the limit. Recruiting and managing volunteers is time consuming but essential. Without a sturdy infrastructure to provide ongoing support and direction, volunteers' time and talents are squandered, and their enthusiasm dampened. And because volunteers themselves are often in short supply—and may leave if they are dissatisfied—it is essential that procedures are developed to ensure that volunteers make a positive contribution, but that they are clear about what is expected of them and how they fit in.

One way to ensure that organizations and volunteers both benefit from the alliance they form on behalf of those they serve is to use paid service providers to supply the infrastructure. In this role, paid providers, in addition to directly serving clients, are recruiters and managers, as well as intermediaries who reside between busy host staff and eager volunteers. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) launched the Spectrum of Service initiative (SOS) in 1997 to take a closer look at the strategies that organizations use to effectively combine the work of paid and unpaid service providers.

Supported by The Ford Foundation, SOS has allowed P/PV to record these efforts and disseminate this information to funders, policymakers and practitioners in the field. P/PV has also been able to look at how shifts in priorities at the national level—particularly as reflected in the Corporation for National Service (CNS) and in the sources of funding available for this type of work—have affected the ways that the blended efforts of volunteers and paid providers are manifested at the local level. While previous papers in this series examined broader aspects of program operations, this paper focuses specifically on SOS sites' strategies for effectively uniting the work of paid and unpaid service providers.

This is the final in a series of reports that examines approaches to uniting the efforts of paid national service participants and unpaid volunteers. Drawing on information generated through Public/Private Ventures' Spectrum of Service initiative, the reports are intended to illuminate the sometimes overly theoretical debate about the relationship between paid and unpaid service providers, and the professional staff with whom they work, and to contribute useful information to program practitioners.

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SERVICE DELIVERY: IMPLEMENTING A BLENDED STRATEGY

The seven SOS sites share some common elements. They all seek to strengthen supports for children and youth by providing services such as tutoring and mentoring. They have small staffs and decentralized operations—the paid service providers and volunteers are placed at host sites (in almost all cases, these are schools)1 away from the central office. And they are all able to provide their services because they blend the work of paid service providers and volunteers.

Beyond those commonalities, the SOS sites represent a diverse group of national service programs that vary in size, budget, geography and longevity. They use a range of paid service providers, including full-time and part-time AmeriCorps members (ACMs) and AmeriCorps*VISTAs, who receive a modest living stipend and an education award; ACMs who receive only the education award; and college students who are paid through federal work-study dollars. At two of the sites, the Philadelphia Experience Corps and Generations, Incorporated's Leaps in Literacy program (in Boston and Brockton), the paid providers are primarily retired older adults who, during the period of the SOS initiative, received stipends through the CNS Seniors for Schools project.

Both program focus and structure vary from site to site and, thus, the roles of paid service providers also vary considerably. At Volunteer Maryland, individual ACMs are placed in schools, where they strengthen existing volunteer programs or develop new ones that can be sustained after the ACM's term of service has ended. At Connect Tucson, ACMs fill a similar, though not identical, role that focuses on generating volunteers to mentor youth. At two of the sites— Mississippi's Campus Link and Leaps in Literacy—paid service providers' primary responsibilities are to coordinate and in other ways facilitate the work of volunteers who tutor primary-grade children in reading.

While paid service providers at those four sites might also perform some direct service by tutoring or mentoring children or youth, most of those services are carried out by volunteers. The other three sites rely on smaller numbers of volunteers. Paid service providers work alongside them as mentors and tutors, although they may have other roles as well. At Providence Summerbridge, for example—where the program provides academic and social support to motivated middle school students and helps them enter and succeed in college preparatory high schools—ACMs serve as coordinators at the schools while also tutoring and teaching. ACMs at the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative recruit volunteers while also tutoring and developing classroom-based service-learning projects. And at the Philadelphia Experience Corps, the corps members' central role is to provide intensive one-to-one literacy tutoring to primary-grade children, while the volunteers contribute more occasional services at the schools, such as reading aloud to groups of children.

Operating with this seemingly complex cast of recruiters, coordinators, managers and direct service providers, the SOS sites have been able to deliver tutoring and mentoring to thousands of children and youth. The rest of this report describes effective practices the sites have implemented in order to achieve these objectives. It looks at the ways in which one's status as a paid or unpaid provider determines the roles that are played and the responsibilities that are undertaken. It examines how paid and unpaid

providers—as well as professional staff—interact, and the ways that programs are structured to minimize tension and maximize effectiveness on the part of all providers. In addition, it looks at the importance of working with staff at host sites—the schools where the services are delivered—to develop a shared understanding about which providers are expected to do what work and about how their respective roles fit together to achieve programmatic objectives.2

CONNECTING ROLES WITH REALITY

Like organizations everywhere, the SOS sites have had to balance their vision of the ideal program design and service delivery system against the reality of shifting funding streams and the sometimes limited availability of people who can fill the roles necessary for managing and delivering services. To achieve this balance, the sites have developed a variety of approaches to defining roles, recruiting and training paid and unpaid service providers, and availing themselves of the sometimes unanticipated skills and strengths that these providers bring with them to their positions. This section discusses some of their strategies.

> **Tap into multiple streams of service.**

The fact that there are several streams of national service—each with its own application and accountability process—can sometimes be daunting to programs seeking funding or service slots, particularly when programs have few administrative resources to devote to managing multiple grants, timelines and reporting requirements. However, the availability of several streams of service can also be viewed as an opportunity. In varying ways and to varying degrees, the SOS sites have addressed two related questions about national service funding streams: (1) How can programs be designed to take advantage of the multiple streams of service? (2) How can programs expand and strengthen their administrative efforts and direct services by tapping into those streams?

Mississippi's Campus Link—which creates one-to-one tutoring relationships between school children and college students from 18 campuses around the state—provides an answer to the first question. The program's design incorporates a full range of paid service providers; and while there is some variation from campus to campus, in general there is a well-defined hierarchy of roles and responsibilities. Full-time ACMs coordinate the program at each campus by recruiting and managing the volunteer tutors, organizing schedules and serving as the primary liaison with elementary schools. Part-time ACMs assist with these responsibilities while also providing direct service as tutors, and education-award-only ACMs assist with recruiting volunteers, among other activities. VISTAs play a broader role by building program capacity and providing leadership at each campus. In addition, a number of the tutors are federal work-study students, who are funded through the U.S. Department of Education.

Leaps in Literacy has a similar, though less elaborate, design. There, Senior Leaders—older adults who receive a stipend for their work—coordinate the tutoring that is provided by unpaid volunteers, in addition to serving as tutors. ACMs serve as the primary liaisons to the schools where the tutoring takes place and assist with volunteer coordination, while VISTAs focus on volunteer recruitment and support.

Other sites have focused on activities that address the second question. While their designs are not necessarily shaped by the multiple streams of national service funding, these sites judiciously tap into the streams to strengthen program operations. At Providence Summerbridge, where part-time AmeriCorps members are responsible for on-site volunteer volunteer managemnet, it is the organization's sole full-time ACM who has a key role in strengthening both programmatic initiatives and administrative functioning. this paid provider coordinates efforts across all the partner schools, manages the part-time ACMs, helps to develop academic curricula for the after-school tutoring program and assists in publishing a monthly newsletter. In addition, education-award-only ACMs supplement time spent tutoring and teaching in the summer

portion of the program with various office tasks that support program administration. And at the Experience Corps, where almost 150 stipended corps members provide direct tutoring services to children in several Philadelphia schools, the program augments the work of full-time paid staff with that of two VISTAs who help recruit and train volunteers, manage several school sites and provide administrative support.

> **Identify the specific skills and qualities required for service providers in your program.**

The SOS sites have found that they can operate more effectively and efficiently if they identify, up front, both the personal qualities and, where applicable, specific skills they require on the part of their paid service providers and volunteers. Volunteer Maryland, for example, which encourages host sites to help them find promising candidates for the ACM positions, has developed a job description that includes a lengthy list of required skills and abilities, such as basic computer literacy and writing skills, as well as the ability to take initiative and work independently.

At Connect Tucson, ACMs' roles changed over the course of the SOS initiative, and the site found that it correspondingly had to redefine the qualities it was looking for in its ACMs. Originally, the AmeriCorps members had been placed individually at host sites, where their primary role was to recruit and train tutors and mentors. To strengthen its effectiveness and more deeply involve the community in supporting youth, the site shifted its approach. Instead of working with individual organizations, it facilitated the creation of six Partnership Collaboratives—clusters of agencies, schools, neighborhood groups and businesses that develop or strengthen mentoring initiatives in their communities. ACMs are now placed in teams at each of the Collaboratives, where they are charged with developing or expanding mentoring programs and playing a fuller role in volunteer management. With this shift came more challenging roles for members and higher expectations for the skills and levels of resourcefulness they were expected to bring to the program. As a result, according to former director

Melody Schneider, the site had to "do more work on the front end to screen out less skilled members and recruit higher quality members."

At some sites, volunteer recruitment is similarly focused. Where their role is to mentor youth or tutor primary-grade children in reading, volunteers typically receive training in the necessary skills after they have been accepted into the program. In those cases, requirements for volunteers tend to center more on personal qualities, such as patience and the ability to follow through on commitments. But at several sites, volunteers provide academic support to older students, and are required to have more specific skills. To recruit college students with the capacity to teach and tutor rigorous subjects to college-bound youth, Summerbridge formed a long-term partnership with Brown University and has also begun to work with other area colleges. At Volunteer Maryland, one ACM realized he had to recruit strategically to find volunteers who had the bilingual capability and subject matter expertise that were essential for tutors to be effective in the high school program he was developing. To find the right people, he wrote volunteer job descriptions, created an appropriate application form, and conducted interviews with potential volunteers. Using this approach, he was able to ensure the recruitment of volunteers with interests and skills that coincided

> **Build capacity through training.**

with the school's needs.

While, ideally, all youth-serving organizations provide training for staff and volunteers so they gain the information and develop the specific skills they need to be effective in their roles, the SOS sites face two particular challenges related to training paid service providers and volunteers. First, they have to provide training to prepare people for a spectrum of roles, balancing these multiple demands with the resources available for training. In addition, because national service participants generally serve for only a year, the sites have to develop approaches to training that will help maintain consistency in service delivery even though key players change from year to year.

Given these challenges, two sites—Campus Link and Volunteer Maryland—have found it worthwhile to have full-time training directors on staff. They develop training sessions and volunteer manuals, and serve as resources to service providers who need technical assistance in particular areas. In another approach, the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative taps into the expertise of its partners. One partner, the Volunteer Center of San Francisco, provides training to ACMs on volunteer recruitment and management, while another, Linking San Francisco, provides training on developing service-learning projects.

Other sites hire outside experts on a part-time basis to provide training. At Campus Link, each campus hires local reading specialists—college professors or elementary school teachers—to train ACMs and volunteers to become effective tutors. Experience Corps, a program of the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, has similarly hired a graduate student at the university to help train corps members.

Sites have also discovered the value of providing ongoing training rather than sessions that take place only at the beginning of one's period of service. Leaps in Literacy, for example, offers "Coaching Chat" sessions once a month for all tutors (also known as Reading Coaches), including volunteers, Senior Leaders and ACMs. This provides an opportunity for tutors to ask questions, talk about challenges with the children and share insights into effective approaches for addressing those challenges. For ACMs, ongoing training is a CNS requirement, but it is also a necessity as their roles evolve and they develop first-hand knowledge of the skills they need to hone. At Volunteer Maryland, for example, ACMs must learn all aspects of volunteer management so they can develop volunteer programs in schools. Thus, their training includes the basics of recruiting, screening and placing volunteers, using software to track accomplishments, and writing press releases and newsletters. And since the ACMs also serve as capacity-builders for school staff—usually a principal or teacher who will take on responsibility for the volunteer program after the end of the ACM's service term—they have to learn how to train those staff members in all of these skills as well.

Finally, sites have found that it pays to be open to new training opportunities that can lead to stronger delivery of services. Some of the Experience Corps volunteers, for example, read aloud and tell stories to elementary school students. Thus, the site quickly took advantage of an opportunity to partner with the Free Library of Philadelphia, which provided training in storytelling to both its volunteers and paid service providers. The training was such a hit that corps members formed a local chapter of Spellbinders, a nationwide organization of storytellers, and offered to train new Experience Corps members the following year.

> **Recognize and plan for differing levels of commitment among volunteers.**

Like the paid service providers, the volunteers at the SOS sites are a varied group of people. They include high school students, college students, corporate employees, community members and older adults, who bring with them varying interests, skills and levels of commitment. Given this range, sites have found that building flexibility into the roles helps them attract and retain volunteers.

At Leaps in Literacy, volunteer tutors decide on the level of time and commitment with which they are comfortable. They can write their own lesson plans for their one-to-one tutoring sessions with children or use lesson plans written by a Senior Leader; they can tutor two, three or four days a week; they can tutor one child or many. Providence Summerbridge similarly builds flexibility into its volunteer roles. The college students who volunteer as after-school tutors can commit to one or two days per week, depending on their class schedules. And because class schedules shift from semester to semester, there is room in the program design for that commitment to change within a single school year—volunteers can add or subtract a day as their schedules dictate.

As is true at Leaps in Literacy, the volunteers in Experience Corps are older adults, and program director Rob Tietz says that he has found it important to let volunteers "design their service to fit into existing schedules." But even with this flexibility, the number of volunteers fluctuates: volunteers have to take time off because of illness, or want time off to take a vacation or to accept a temporary job in order to earn money. To deal with these realities, volunteers are given roles that can be shared among different people, depending upon availability. Thus, these volunteers tend not to provide one-to-one tutoring, but they do lead group activities with children.

The San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative has developed yet another approach for dealing with the reality of volunteers' sometimes erratic schedules. At one partner school, volunteer mentors come from nearby corporations, and although they are allowed release time from work, their busy schedules sometimes prevent them from being able to attend mentoring sessions regularly. To accommodate this situation, AmeriCorps members' responsibilities include occasionally filling in for absent mentors in order to maintain consistency for the participating youth.

> **Be flexible—take advantage of skills and qualities that emerge after providers have begun to serve.**

The SOS sites have found that volunteers' and paid service providers' roles have to be clearly defined if services are going to be delivered effectively. But at the same time, as several sites have discovered, they can strengthen their programs if they are flexible enough to tap into skills that might not be immediately evident or that would not appear to be directly related to those roles.

At times, these discoveries of unanticipated skills are almost accidental. For one school in the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative, this flexibility meant having an AmeriCorps member of Philippine heritage visit a social studies class to teach a traditional dance to students. While this activity was outside of his official role, it had several positive repercussions: students became more motivated to attend the after-school tutoring program where he served, and teachers gained an understanding of the value of bringing service providers into the classroom and became more welcoming to their contributions.

In other cases, programs are designed to take advantage of skills that lie outside of precise role definitions. In Experience Corps, for example, members are placed in teams at school sites, where their primary role is to tutor children in reading. Each team has an official leader, but all members are encouraged to take on periodic leadership roles. The flexibility benefits both the Experience Corps program and the corps members, who are able to discover and use their skills. One corps member, for example, drew on his musical experience to organize a school choir that involved volunteers, service providers, teachers and students. The choir, which met after school, proved to be a creative way to encourage students to read. Another member took on a leadership role as a recruiter. Using her skills as a public speaker and her knowledge of marketing, she attracted many new corps members to the program.

Sites have also been able to take advantage of the experience that volunteers and paid providers gain while they are in the program to promote them to positions of increasing responsibility. At Campus Link, this form of promotion is ongoing and intentional. There, volunteers are considered the best candidates for future ACM positions, not only because they have tutored in the program, but also because they have acquired first-hand knowledge of the ACMs' role from working beside them for a year. With this in mind, Campus Link starts announcing the openings for new AmeriCorps members in the spring while the volunteers are still engaged. Other sites, including Leaps in Literacy and Experience Corps, have recruited part-time direct service providers to become full-time VISTAs in their program. And at a number of sites, former paid providers have been hired as staff members, bringing with them the valuable perspective they gained during their term of service.

ADDRESSING TENSION AND AVOIDING CONFLICT

Combining the best of what paid service has to offer, in terms of energetic participants who, for a small stipend and/or education award, seek to make a difference, with the commitment of volunteers who want to make a difference but require opportunities to do so, appears to be promising on its face. However, organizations who seek to integrate these resources would do well to consider challenges the SOS sites have faced and strategies they have implemented to address them.

While the distinction between a paid provider's work and that of an unpaid volunteer is likely to be non-existent to the child or youth receiving the service, there can, in fact, be significant differences between what is expected of a paid provider and a volunteer. At the seven SOS sites, while many paid providers partici-pate in direct service activities such as tutoring or mentoring, most are also charged with tasks that include recruiting, scheduling and managing volun-teers, and overseeing program activity. These providers are sometimes younger and less experienced than the volunteers they manage. In other cases, they are col-lege students managing their peers. In addition, these providers receive some remuneration for their time, while volunteers typically do not. All of these situa-tions can become sources of tension which, in turn, can challenge even the best intentions.

The relationships among paid and unpaid providers must be handled delicately. As one staff member at the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative noted, "Our job is to not break anything. It's to enable all the play-ers [both paid and unpaid] to discover and work effec-tively with one another so they can achieve program-matic success." At the same time, the relationships must be supported by sound processes and reinforced by clear, well-communicated objectives. The following section discusses ways the SOS sites have addressed potential sources of tension to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs of using different types of service providers in their programs.

> **Ensure clarity of roles for different types of service providers.**

As in any work environment, knowing what one's responsibilities are, particularly in relation to those of one's colleagues, helps to ensure that time is well-spent and efforts remain unduplicated. This certainty also contributes to confidence and boosts morale; it is less likely that one's work will go unnoticed and more likely that it will contribute to shared objectives. When volunteers and paid providers work together, particu-larly in settings where needs are many and resources are few, role clarity becomes an essential part of a pro-ductive environment. The extent to which role clarity was achieved differs across the SOS sites for a number of reasons—some programmatic, others circumstantial.

When roles of paid and unpaid service providers are obviously different, there is likely to be less tension. As the distinctions narrow, the potential for tension—and the need to be very clear about who is responsible for what—grows. At Volunteer Maryland, for example, the difference between the AmeriCorps members' work (volunteer recruitment and program manage-ment) and that of the volunteers (one-to-one tutoring with youth) is so readily apparent that there is no con-fusion—either among the providers or on the part of host staff—regarding who is responsible for what. This is, in large part, a function of program design, where the mission of the AmeriCorps member is to set up a volunteer program within the school setting so that school staff can eventually take over management of the program after the ACM leaves. Noted Barbara Reynolds, Volunteer Maryland's Executive Director, "In many cases, a volunteer might not even know the difference between an AmeriCorps member and a staff member."

For a number of reasons, not all of the SOS sites are able to be as clear about paid and unpaid roles as Volunteer Maryland. This may be a result of program design or simply the desire on the part of program staff to build in flexibility so that paid and unpaid providers share a broader range of for example,

where a volunteer is out sick, a paid provider can step in to guarantee continuity for the service recipient. However, while this arrangement helps to ensure that children are able to meet with an adult tutor as scheduled—even if that person is a manager who generally does not engage in direct service—it is likely to require a more deliberate effort on the part of SOS site staff to ensure that everyone is clear about what is expected of them.

At Providence Summerbridge, for example, paid providers typically manage their peers—fellow college students who volunteer to provide academic support to middle-school students. At this site, paid providers' jobs can be challenging precisely because there is flexibility across roles. While this flexibility is essential because the volunteers often have competing time demands connected to their own academic work, it can engender exasperation on the part of paid providers who find themselves not only doing their own jobs, but also covering for the volunteers they manage. This can be further complicated by the fact that the two groups are peers, which can make it even more difficult to negotiate roles and responsibilities.

Dual strategies are in place in Providence to combat potential tensions. First, expectations concerning time and consistency are clearly communicated to both paid and unpaid providers at the beginning of the program year (with reminders throughout the term of service) so they know what they are likely to face. And, second, the paid providers take great care to know what the parameters are around individual volunteers' service. As one ACM said, "When I ask them [volunteers] to do something, I make sure they are comfortable that they are being used to the extent they want to be [not more, not less]. I feel sensitive to how involved tutors want to be."

> **Align roles with programmatic objectives and host site expectations.**

In addition to avoiding conflict or confusion by being as clear as possible about what is required of each type of provider, it is also important to ensure that these

roles are aligned with the objectives of the host site where providers serve. An understanding that the nature of one's role is based on what the needs of a particular program are—in addition to the skills, personal qualities and level of commitment one is able to bring to the effort—will contribute not only to successful program implementation, a satisfying provider experience and confidence on the part of host staff, but will also mitigate potential tension across different types of providers.

Just as paid and unpaid providers need to know what their responsibilities are, so, too, must the staff at the schools where the providers serve. This ensures that host site staff know what they can expect from each group, and that providers—whether remunerated or not—can be confident they are trained and prepared to do what is expected of them. By identifying a direct relationship between the nature of the work and the needs of the program and its participants, differences between the kinds of work that each type of provider performs on site will be understood and appreciated by both the host staff and the providers themselves.

Achieving this mutual understanding between the SOS site, the host schools and the service providers is not always a simple matter. For example, the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative's school-based program was initially fairly loosely organized, allowing school principals to determine how best to use AmeriCorps members' time. While this often suited the host schools, it made it difficult for ACMs to know what was expected of them. Without structural parameters, it was not long before ACMs found themselves engaged in all manner of administrative tasks rather than in serving the needs of students, coordinating volunteers or helping teachers develop service-learning projects, which were their stated responsibilities. In order to more closely align what was being asked of the ACMs with the intent of the Collaborative's program, specificity about the role and responsibilities of the AmeriCorps members were more clearly specified and Memoranda of Agreement codifying these responsibilities were signed by school and program staff.

Connect Tucson similarly works with host sites at the front end to help them develop a clear understanding of the AmeriCorps program and ACMs' roles. The program holds partnership development sessions with staff from the organizations and agencies involved in each Partner Collaborative. During the sessions, Connect Tucson provides training on project planning and working effectively with ACMs. The process does not always work perfectly: on occasion, AmeriCorps members may arrive at a site whose operations are relatively unstructured and who may still be unclear about the ACMs' roles. But an increasing number of Connect Tucson's partners are now sensitive to the fact that not only do there need to be clear roles for the ACMs assigned to them, they also have to be prepared to provide support for those efforts.

> **Create ongoing opportunities for communication across the spectrum of service providers— and between service providers, program staff and host sites.**

One of the ways to guarantee that everyone is clear about his or her role—and how that role relates to the roles of others and the program being served—is to build in opportunities for communication across different providers and, where possible, between providers and host site staff. While some of this interaction should be formally scheduled, it is also the more informal, ongoing contact that contributes to a shared vision, a sense of purpose and a recognition that, whatever the commitment—whether it be an hour of tutoring a week or 40 hours of intensive volunteer management—everyone's role is understood and valued.

At Experience Corps, regular informal contact between service providers and school staff is built into the program design. Service providers are placed in teams at a school, where they interact regularly with one another, in addition to participating in scheduled team meetings. And because each corps member is assigned to tutor children from one teacher's classroom (and in some schools do the tutoring in the classroom itself), teacher and tutor invariably have opportunities for frequent communication.

Other sites rely more heavily on regularly scheduled meetings to try to ensure that communication will take place, particularly between groups whose paths may not typically cross but who could benefit from talking to one another. At Connect Tucson, AmeriCorps members meet quarterly with their site supervisors (in addition to fairly regular, though less formal, contact on site) and other Collaborative Partners with whom they might not otherwise have an opportunity to interact. However, despite these scheduled opportunities for communication, there remains occasional uncertainty about roles and responsibilities. This underscores the fact that it is not enough simply to schedule (and follow through) with regular communication. These sessions must also be organized to give voice to all participants. In addition, wherever possible, providers should know that it is acceptable to augment planned communication with as-needed calls to address concerns immediately, rather than allowing issues to remain unresolved.

Generations, Incorporated, used some of the site grant money that P/PV provided to hire a consultant who helped them build the infrastructure they needed to support the growth of the Leaps in Literacy program. Among the issues addressed was the need for more (and more effective and efficient) communication between the providers at the schools and the central office, and among the providers themselves. The central office set up weekly written "briefings" for AmeriCorps members that included program updates, upcoming events and a "weekly wisdom" section. In addition, to accommodate the fact that programming takes place in schools in two cities (Boston and Brockton) with some similar characteristics but also unique challenges, the program structured its weekly meeting of AmeriCorps members so that ACMs from both cities meet together every other week and separately during alternate weeks. That way, providers would have an opportunity to share experiences and ideas with their peers across two separate but related efforts, as well as a chance to focus on concerns likely to be specific to their respective settings.

CONCLUSION

Through the SOS initiative, P/PV has begun to uncover strategies and approaches that can strengthen the efforts of practitioners in the volunteer and service fields. This paper, the final installment in a four-part series that has examined a variety of operational issues related to the effective blending of paid service providers and volunteers, has looked at the ways that managers determine the roles that paid and unpaid providers play in order to achieve programmatic objectives, as well as the implications that the nature and content of those roles have on the way these providers relate to one another within program settings.

Ultimately, what the SOS initiative has demonstrated is that paid providers are in place to generate—not duplicate—unpaid volunteers. These programs are structured to take the fullest advantage of both groups in terms of the roles they play and responsibilities they take on. And while the distinction between paid and unpaid providers may be nearly invisible to the young person who is getting tutored or the teacher who is receiving classroom help, for program managers it is quite evident. By recognizing the implications of this distinction in terms of what is expected from each group, how those expectations are communicated and how they are manifested via program design, initiatives seeking to effectively blend the work of paid and unpaid providers will go a long way toward achieving that objective.

These efforts, however, do not take place in a vacuum. Program strategies, like the ones discussed in this paper, are developed, implemented and modified within a social and political environment that can have real effects on the roles that paid and unpaid providers play, the means by which their work can be supported financially and programmatically, and the extent to which their services result in positive outcomes for youth. And while these external variables can sometimes appear limiting, at the SOS sites they have inspired creativity and resulted in new ways of thinking about, and responding to, programmatic challenges.

When operators rely upon uncertain funding streams and a fluctuating policy environment, factors such as shifts in priorities at the Corporation for National Service require both creativity and flexibility. CNS guidelines, for example, have shifted over time to reflect the recognition that volunteer generation and management are valuable roles that paid providers can and should play. This is evident in the CNS proposal process, where programs are strongly encouraged to show in their grant requests that activities include volunteer generation. It is equally evident in reporting requirements, where CNS asks sites to include information about the number of volunteers generated and their hours of service. SOS sites have designed programs, and the roles that providers play within them, not only to work effectively within these guidelines, but to take advantage of the opportunities they present.

In some cases, the CNS emphasis on volunteer generation has encouraged sites to be creative in terms of the partnerships they have developed. Two of the SOS sites reside in volunteer centers (in Tucson and San Francisco), organizations whose long-standing mission has been to recruit and place volunteers in their cities. Their use of AmeriCorps members has allowed them to expand their reach, in partnership with schools and other organizations, to effect positive change for the children and youth in their communities, and to recruit more—and in some cases, more diverse—volunteers to contribute to these efforts. While all of the SOS sites (like all programs that depend on volunteers to provide direct services) can feel frustrated by the ongoing challenge of recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers, they have been able to expand the pool of volunteers at relatively low cost and, thus, increase the delivery of services.

External factors can and do affect program design and practice. The policy environment in which service and volunteerism reside has been especially capricious, with critics challenging the efficacy of individuals being paid for work that some feel ought to be motivated by altruism. Yet the SOS sites are effectively combining the work of paid and unpaid service providers—the very groups that some would argue are supplanting one another's efforts. Rather than operating in opposition to one another, the experience of the SOS sites suggests that volunteers and paid providers, the "twin engines of service," can, in fact, work effectively together to strengthen supports for children and youth.

Endnotes

1   While three of the SOS sites—Connect Tucson, the San Francisco AmeriCorps Collaborative and Volunteer Maryland—place their AmeriCorps mem bers in both community-based organizations and in schools, P/PV's initiative focused exclusively on the experiences of paid and unpaid service providers working together in schools.

2   For a full discussion about the effective use of volunteers and paid service providers in schools, see Combining Paid Service and Volunteerism: Strategies for Effective Practice in School Settings, Kathryn Furano and Corina Chavez. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1999. That report, the second in the SOS series, can be ordered from P/PV.