

**An Evaluation of the
2003–2004 *Roadmap to
Civic Engagement***

***Final Report:
Executive Summary***

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Prepared for
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Acknowledgments

The authors of this report would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of everyone who contributed their time and knowledge to *An Evaluation of the 2003–2004 Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. The project site supervisors and AmeriCorps members at the six project sites visited welcomed us enthusiastically to their programs and shared invaluable information about their experiences with the *Roadmap*. Their hospitality and willingness to accommodate this disruption to their normal activities is recognized and much appreciated. Staff from WSC headquarters, including Nancy Pringle, Debbie Schuffenhauer, Terry René, and Kayje Booker (AmeriCorps Leader), provided ongoing feedback and thoughtful insight as the project evolved. The receptivity to evaluation feedback from all levels of WSC is indicative of the program’s commitment to quality and ongoing improvement based on the suggestions of those in the field. Abt researchers Anne Chase and David Warner provided essential design advice and offered wonderful insights on how to present study findings.

Study Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

May I present the evaluation of the second year of the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. We are pleased to see that the continuous improvement efforts made to this exciting program after our pilot year have resulted in even more progress for both our members and the youth they serve. In response to member and supervisor feedback, the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* was revised—shortening the length of the curriculum, clarifying expected outcomes, and allowing members and sites more flexibility in its implementation.

The *Roadmap* program arose in response to growing evidence and concern that young people in this country have become increasingly disconnected from their communities and their civic duties. While institutions nationwide have begun to look for solutions, national service programs in particular have been singled out for their access to young adults and their organizational focus on service and community involvement. Beginning in 2003, all AmeriCorps programs were instructed to include training for their members on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

We at Washington Service Corps (WSC) saw this situation as an opportunity, not just to inspire the ethic of civic engagement in our members, but in the youth they serve as well. During the 2002–2003 program year, we piloted the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* throughout our organization. We utilized a cross-age tutoring structure (a proven success strategy of our Washington Reading Corps program) in which members first experience the program, and then facilitate it with youth. Not only does the facilitation reinforce the training for the AmeriCorps members, it also extends the reach of civic engagement education to include hundreds of youth, thereby maximizing the benefit to the community. In short, the *Roadmap* has allowed WSC to turn a member training performance measurement into a unique program that addresses one of the most pressing needs of youth today: civic engagement.

Once again the partnership of Service-Learning Northwest, who developed *The Roadmap to Civic Engagement*, was invaluable. They requested and incorporated staff, supervisor and member feedback, which resulted in extensive and effective revisions to the curriculum. In addition they conducted specialized member and supervisor training and provided ongoing technical support throughout this year. Additionally, WSC also provided an AmeriCorps Leader to coach the members and made our entire staff available for support. In keeping with our tradition of commitment to evaluation, WSC again contracted with Abt Associates Inc. to provide an independent evaluation of our civic engagement program. We are quite pleased with the results. Along with anecdotal evidence from the field suggesting that the program is having a significant effect, the youth and member assessments have provided us with proof in numbers that our program is succeeding in raising our participants' levels of civic engagement.

The *Roadmap* continues to use the six-step service-learning methodology to help members walk youth through the entire process of developing a project to meet a genuine community need. Through this service learning process, members and youth learn the skills, behaviors, knowledge and values necessary to becoming effective, engaged members of their communities and of our democracy. Moreover, our results have shown that the empowerment that participants gain through successfully implementing a service project is a motivating force for positive involvement in the future.

I invite you to take a look at this evaluation. If you have questions about our program, please feel free to contact me at 1-888-713-6080 or e-mail npringle@esd.wa.gov or Terry René, Civic Engagement Program Coordinator at trene@esd.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pringle, Director
Washington Service Corps

Executive Summary

Established in 1983, Washington Service Corps (WSC) is one of the largest AmeriCorps sponsoring agencies in the United States and has received AmeriCorps funding since 1993. Nationally recognized as a leader in the national service field, WSC has cemented this reputation through the delivery of needed services to Washington's residents and by implementing innovative programs exhibiting the potential to improve the civic atmosphere in the state's communities. In keeping with this tradition, WSC entered into a partnership with Service Learning Northwest to develop the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* (the *Roadmap*), a seven-unit curriculum designed to enhance the civic engagement and community awareness of participants. To assess the efficacy of the 2003–2004 *Roadmap*, WSC contracted with Abt Associates Inc., an independent research organization recognized as a leader in national and community service research.

As part of this evaluation, an Abt evaluator visited six of the AmeriCorps project sites participating in the *Roadmap*. These six sites, and the youth-serving organizations¹ chosen as *Roadmap* partners by these sites, capture the full diversity of Washington State's geography and offer a glimpse into how the *Roadmap* was implemented in a variety of contexts. Middle school-aged youth were served by a majority of these sites (four of six) with the other AmeriCorps teams facilitating the curriculum to elementary school-aged students. The number of AmeriCorps members (*members*) facilitating each session ranged from 2 to 12, with between 4 and 11 youth participating in each session. In each of the visited sites, facilitation occurred in a classroom setting (see Exhibit 1 for more site details).

In addition to the site visits described above, data sources for this evaluation include: focus groups with members, mail surveys of project site supervisors and representatives from youth-serving organizations, and self-administered surveys completed by members and youth once they had completed the *Roadmap*. Member focus groups collected information related to the impact the curriculum had on members' overall service experience. The mail surveys were designed to capture characteristics of the organizations involved with the *Roadmap* while also providing these stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on their overall experience with the curriculum. The survey of youth and member participants measured their progress on several of the attitudes and behaviors the *Roadmap* was designed to positively affect. During the data collection process, several notable findings about the positive effects of the *Roadmap* were identified.

¹ Youth-serving organizations are the organizations that partnered with AmeriCorps project sites to implement and facilitate the *Roadmap*. Examples of youth-serving organizations include: school sites, the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and other community organizations operating youth programs.

Exhibit 1

Civic Engagement Site Visits

Project Name	Partner Organization	Location	Number of AmeriCorps Members	Number of Youth	Age of Youth ^a	Unit Facilitated during Observation
ESD 101	Boys and Girls Club	Spokane, WA	9	7	Elementary school (6), Middle school (1)	Service project
OIC Yakima	Gear-Up at Harrison Middle School	Sunnyside, WA	2	8	Middle school	6
CYS	Napavine Elementary School	Napavine, WA	6	11	Middle school	6
BMAC	Green Park Elementary	Walla Walla, WA	2	4	Middle school	Between Units 5 and 6
FPA-Seattle	Aki Kurose Middle School	Seattle, WA	12	11	Middle school	6
Federal Way Public Schools	Wildwood Elementary School	Federal Way, WA	3	6	Elementary school	Service project

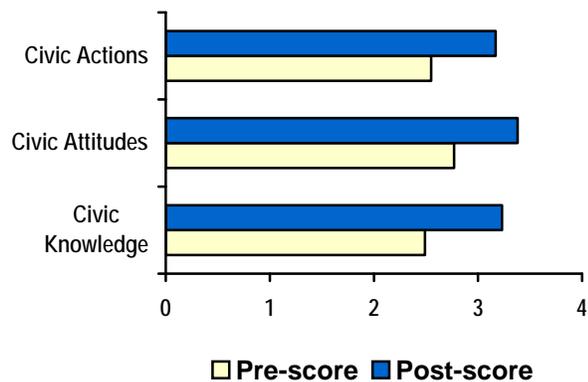
a These grade level designations classify grades K–5 into the elementary school category with the middle school definition including participants in grades 6–9.

Overall notable findings and positive effects include:

- The surveys administered to youth and members after completion of the curriculum indicate that participants' civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic actions were significantly enhanced through their participation in the *Roadmap* (see Exhibit 2).
- A majority (59 percent) of youth-serving organizations reported that the *Roadmap* enhanced the civic engagement and community awareness of participants.
- Among the youth subgroups compared with one another, young women were found to

Exhibit 2

Change in Youth Construct Scores



Results are shown using the 1 (least positive) to 4 (most positive) scale on the survey answered by *Roadmap* participants. These surveys allow *Roadmap* participants to assess their experience by responding to a series of statements where 1 = NO!, 2 = no, 3 = yes, and 4 = YES!.

have significantly higher gains than their male counterparts on the civic knowledge and civic actions constructs.

- Members without bachelor's degrees reported significantly higher gains than their counterparts with bachelor's degrees on the civic attitudes and civic actions constructs.
- Nearly 80 percent of project site supervisors reported being satisfied with the training and orientation their organization received prior to *Roadmap* implementation. Additionally, 77 percent of this population stated that pre-administration training represented an improvement over that associated with the previous, pilot implementation of the curriculum.
- Eighty-nine percent of project site supervisors stated that the shorter curriculum (7 units as compared to the 14 unit pilot curriculum) contributed to a more positive *Roadmap* experience for their members.

In addition to the key positive findings summarized above, participants in the 2003–2004 *Roadmap* expressed a number of reservations:

- Members at one of the six visited sites reported that the *Roadmap* added significantly to their workload.
- Over half of project site supervisors (56 percent) identified the time associated with implementing and facilitating the curriculum as the primary drawback to participation.
- On a similar note, the major drawback to participation mentioned by youth-serving organizations was finding the time to facilitate the curriculum, with 22 percent reporting having a problem with this element of implementation.

Taken as a whole, stakeholder reservations to participating in the curriculum were quite minimal with several of the changes made to the curriculum positively impacting participants' experiences. Most notably, the reduction in length from 14 to 7 units appears to have contributed to a more positive experience with the *Roadmap*. (See Exhibit 3 for a complete list of changes incorporated into the 2003–2004 *Roadmap* process.)

In addition to the notable findings described above, information collected during this evaluation illuminates several other aspects of participating in the curriculum. Results from the member focus groups conducted during the site visits to *Roadmap* sites are presented below.

Exhibit 3

Changes to the 2003–2004 *Roadmap*

Curriculum was shortened from 14 to 7 units, with each unit being 90 minutes long.

An AmeriCorps Leader was retained and allotted additional time to providing both remote and on-site support to AmeriCorps teams as they implemented and facilitated the *Roadmap*.

A web blog was created to provide an outlet for members to share their successes and challenges with the curriculum.

AmeriCorps teams facilitated the curriculum to one another before working with youth.

More emphasis was placed on the *Roadmap* at the SERVES training held in September of 2003.

Findings from AmeriCorps member focus groups include:

- The majority of members stated that the *Roadmap* was a positive addition to their AmeriCorps experience. Among the positives cited by this group were the opportunity to work with a group of youth outside of their host site and the team-building that occurred during implementation and facilitation.
- Members were aware of the *Roadmap* well in advance of the process of implementing and facilitating the curriculum, with about half of focus group participants stating that they knew about the curriculum before attending the member training (SERVES) held in September of 2003.
- Changes in the implementation process, most notably members' participation in the curriculum as a team before facilitating it with youth, were cited as contributing to a successful and positive *Roadmap* experience.
- When questions arose on a specific element of the curriculum, members turned to one another to think strategically about addressing the problem. All teams participating in the focus groups reported that fellow members were the most frequent resource accessed during conduct of the *Roadmap*.

As part of the final unit in the curriculum, both members and youth completed a survey collecting demographic information and assessing their civic engagement both before and after participating in the *Roadmap*. These measures of civic engagement were organized into three constructs designed to measure changes in participants' civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic actions.

Findings from the participant surveys include:

As noted earlier, the *Roadmap* had an overall positive effect on youth and member participants on three key outcomes of interest: civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic actions.

- Youth *Roadmap* participants were primarily white (38 percent) or Latino/Latina (29 percent) while a majority of member participants were white (76 percent).
- Over three-fifths of youth participants indicated that they were in the middle school age group, the age group targeted by the curriculum.
- Sixty-six percent of youth responding to the *Roadmap* survey reported receipt of subsidized school lunch or breakfast, indicating that the curriculum met WSC's goal of working with disadvantaged populations.
- The youngest AmeriCorps members (those under the age of 22) reported significantly higher increases in their civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic actions than their older counterparts.
- For nearly half of members (47 percent), the civic knowledge construct reflected the largest increase in scores (see Exhibit 4).

The final element of the data collection process included in this evaluation was the administration of mail surveys to project site supervisors and representatives from the youth-serving organizations participating in the *Roadmap*. These surveys focused on these organizations' experiences with the implementation and facilitation of the curriculum.

Findings from the project site supervisor and youth-serving organization surveys include:

Project site supervisors:

- Project site supervisors indicated that, on average, each member spent two weeks engaged in *Roadmap*-related activities.
- Sixty-six percent of project site supervisors reported that if given the choice, they would participate in a subsequent iteration of the *Roadmap*.
- Over three-quarters of project site supervisors reported that members participating in the 2003–2004 curriculum had a better experience than their pilot year counterparts.

Youth-serving organizations:

- When asked to assess the difficulty of integrating the *Roadmap* into their existing service structure, 74 percent of youth-serving organizations described this process as either a little or not at all difficult (see Exhibit 5).
- An overwhelming majority (89 percent) of respondents to the youth-serving organizations survey stated that they would participate in a subsequent iteration of the curriculum.

Exhibit 4

Change in Member Knowledge Scores

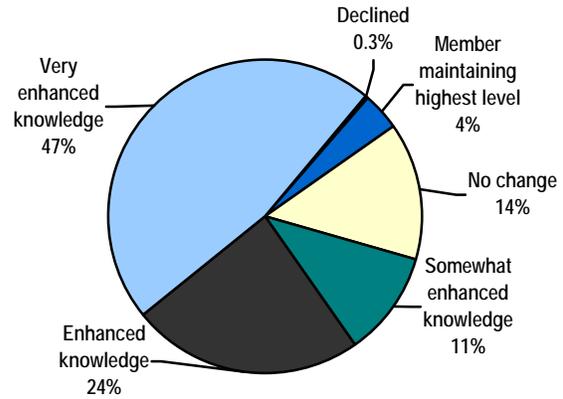
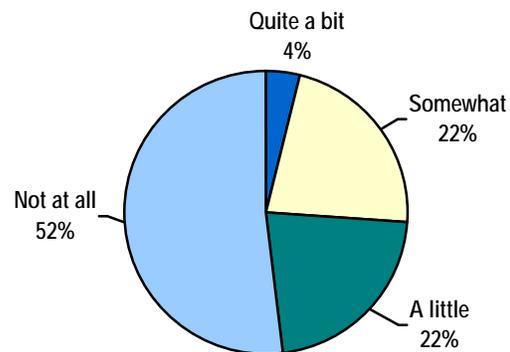


Exhibit 5

Difficulty Associated with Integrating *Roadmap* into Existing Service Structure



Conclusion

The implementation and facilitation of the 2003–2004 *Roadmap* was successful on many levels. Most importantly, participation in the curriculum was associated with highly significant changes in the civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic actions of all participants. This finding indicates the *Roadmap*'s ability to enhance participants' civic engagement and community awareness. Also of note are reports that compared with the previous pilot year, modifications made to the curriculum and the additional supports provided to members implementing the curriculum improved the *Roadmap* experience.

As project sites and AmeriCorps teams prepare to implement the 2004–2005 *Roadmap* curriculum, it is important to recognize and celebrate the past successes of the curriculum. This evaluation found that the curriculum is both having a positive effect on participants while simultaneously undergoing refinements designed to ensure smoother implementation of the curriculum in the future. By refining both the curriculum and the implementation process, WSC is ensuring that the experience of *Roadmap* participants' will continue to be positive. These constant improvements guarantee that desired outcomes will be attained with fewer barriers to overcome during the journey.