

WHITE HOUSE LIAISON PROGRAM

I. Project Description

In 2002, as a part of an initiative to increase community service, the White House launched the USA Freedom Corps. The USA Freedom Corps works with community service organizations to identify opportunities for community service and to encourage Americans to be active in community service. Volunteer community service organizations use the USA Freedom Corps Volunteer Network - the largest clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities ever created - to recruit volunteers. The South Carolina Young Lawyers Division has established a "Liaison Program" with the USA Freedom Corps to enhance, and to increase volunteerism in service opportunities available to its members. Through this Liaison Program the South Carolina YLD has obtained another source of information that allows it to better assess the needs of South Carolinians and how best to allocate the YLD's public service efforts.

II. Project Planning/Development

A. Identification of need

Through SC YLD interaction with the Freedom Corps, it became clear that there were many public service groups could benefit from the talents and resources that young lawyers can provide. It also became clear that many of these public service groups were not aware of the SC YLD's available assistance. Similarly, the SC YLD was not aware that these public service groups could benefit from SC YLD involvement. The Liaison Program bridges the gap between the needs of public service groups and the resources available through the SC YLD. Because the USA Freedom Corps acts as a national clearing house for public service groups and opportunities, the Corps is in constant contact with local, regional and national public service groups that require assistance. By setting up the Liaison Program and maintaining close communication with the Freedom Corps, the SC YLD is kept up-to-date on projects, programs, and public service groups that need or want legal assistance.

In addition, the Liaison Program benefits local groups by providing them national attention. Through the liaison program, local public service groups can post information about their organization on the USA Freedom Corps' national website. By getting onto that website, local public service groups get national exposure.

B. Determination of Project Goals and Design

1. Decisions to be made

The Liaison Program is extremely flexible and can be tailored to fit the needs and desires of the implementing affiliate. A smaller affiliate may decide only to work with local public service groups to help get them registered on the USA Freedom Corps website. A larger goal would be to work with the Freedom Corps to

identify a local or regional public service group that is in need of legal assistance and then for that affiliate to offer direct involvement. Either way, the affiliate's time commitment is self-controlled.

2. Decision-making process

In South Carolina, the YLD needed formal approval by the senior Bar to establish a formal relationship with a national organization. In addition, White House Council was required to screen any formal relationship entered into by the USA Freedom Corps.

3. Considerations in project planning

The Liaison Program is exceptionally low maintenance. There are no costs involved in implementing the program, other than long distance phone calls to Washington, DC. In addition, your personnel resources would usually be limited to a single person. The primary resource needed is internet access and an email address.

III. Implementation

A. Timetable

A Liaison Program can be implemented at the affiliate level in about sixty days. Initially, it may take a few weeks to get senior Bar approval. Then coordination with the Freedom Corps is required. However, a formal written agreement is not required. Any affiliate can contact the Freedom Corps to identify service opportunities.

B. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers/Personnel.

There is no recruitment or training of volunteers for this project.

C. Publicity

Publicity is a significant benefit of this program for the YLD affiliate. By implementing this program, you are formerly establishing a relationship with the White House. The South Carolina YLD found this a newsworthy event, as did several local newspapers. In addition, publicity concerning this program in newspapers is an excellent opportunity to get the word out to local public service groups that are looking for assistance.

D. Day-to-Day Operations

Day-to-Day Operations of the Liaison program will depend largely on the time commitment by the affiliate. Usually a few hours a week or a month are all that is required to successfully implement the program.

IV. Evaluation and Impact

The impact of this program has been significant in South Carolina. South Carolina organized a signing ceremony with Mr. John Bridgeland, Special Assistant to the President of the United States and Director of the USA Freedom Corps. During this meeting, YLD leadership and Mr. Bridgeland discussed ways to advance the cause of public service. As a result the South Carolina YLD has implemented a “Public Service Challenge”. The YLD is asking all law firms throughout the state to have all lawyers volunteer at least ten hours of public service time over the next calendar year. The YLD will be working with these groups to foster and improve a spirit of public service. Numerous South Carolina groups will benefit from the Liaison Program and Public Service Challenge.

V. Bibliography/Other Resources

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