Day One …
in the life of a program coordinator

As a tutoring program coordinator, you must juggle many tasks and responsibilities: forming partnerships with schools and community members, finding and training volunteers, and helping measure student and program performance. The "to do" list can seem overwhelming.

Day One breaks down typical beginning tasks into six steps: Assess What You Know and What You Have; Define the Program; Establish Outcomes and Performance Measures; Meet with Stakeholders; Write a Memorandum of Understanding; and First Steps Toward Recruiting Volunteers. The information you find here will help you develop a course of action and build a successful program!

1. ASSESS WHAT YOU KNOW AND WHAT YOU HAVE

Project Focus

Learn all you can about your program and its history. Read the grant proposal or agreement and other documentation to help you learn about:

- Project goals
- Existing partnerships or stakeholders (organizations or individuals)
- Timelines
- Expected intermediate and end outcomes
- Methods of performance measurement
- Reporting requirements
- Other promised or required actions or products

Resources

- Make a list of resources you need to run the tutoring program, everything from paper and pens to volunteers.

- Ask a student or staff member to orient you to the building. Look for materials you can use: bulletin boards, pictures, maps, or empty space.

- It's important to create a sense of space that helps students identify an area or room as their tutoring space. Speak to the teacher or person in charge about hanging a bulletin board or pictures, or placing a reading chair in an area of the room.

- For a portable sense of space, designate a stuffed animal as the tutoring mascot or bring along a big book made of cardboard and illustrated with photos or pictures and text by students and staff.

- Take stock of supplies you already have: paper, markers, staplers, etc. If you share equipment with your host school or organization, learn the rules for using the photocopier, computers, and materials.

- Cross off items you've located. Make initial contact with community partners who can donate, share, or help locate items you don't have.

Stakeholders

The individuals and organizations whom you serve or who otherwise benefit from your program's work are *stakeholders*. When you work with stakeholders, you build community interest and participation in your program, multiply your creative and material resources, and help ensure the success of your program.

- Find out who is already involved or interested in your work by reading the program proposal or contract.

- Determine who else is a stakeholder by asking who will be served by the program: students, teachers, principals, other school staff, parents, members of community- or faith-based organizations, etc.

- Look for local experts: If you tutor reading in a school, is there a school or district reading specialist? In an adult literacy program, are there experts working in projects serving homeless families or migrant workers, or in projects related to employment and training? Professors and students at universities, community colleges, and extension services may also be interested in forming partnerships.

- Define the role you want stakeholders to play in creating the program, setting goals, administering daily work, and providing guidance for the future.

- Create a steering committee made up of a diverse group of stakeholders. For logistical reasons, limit the committee to six to eight people. The steering committee can be responsible for any of these activities:
  - Maintaining and developing the program's focus on outcomes
  - Ensuring that everyone's needs are being met
  - Encouraging involvement of teachers, parents, and community members
  - Building capacity for the years to come
  - Finding additional funding
  - Serving as ambassadors for the program to the community

- Create a list of potential committee members, and make initial contact by letter, phone, or personal visit. Follow up any letter with a phone call.

2. DEFINE THE PROGRAM

Who, What, When, and Where (and How)

Your answers to the following questions will help flesh out the initial concept of your project. You'll also begin imagining what tutoring sessions will look like.

- What grades or populations will your program directly serve?

- What is the focus of the tutoring program: reading skills, homework help, etc.?

Using a Logic Model

The Corporation for National and Community Service proposes that programs consider using a logic model to represent their goals, service activities, and performance measures. This is a recommended approach to use during the planning stage to identify the results (or outcomes) your program intends to achieve. The logic model consists of six components:
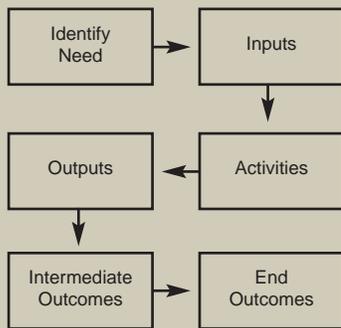
After you work with your community and education partners to define the need for your project and the student outcomes you want to achieve, use the logic model to detail and organize how your services will achieve these outcomes.

For more detailed information on logic models and their role in performance measurement and program design, take a look at Outcomes and Performance Measurement for Tutoring Programs, online at: www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/measurement/Outcomes_and_Performance_Measurement.pdf.

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- When will tutoring happen? How often? *Students benefit from consistent attention from the same tutor. Daily sessions for students with high needs may be ideal. Depending on the goals of your program, meeting schedules will vary, but frequency and consistency are key.*

- Where will tutoring take place: within classes, as pull-outs from class, after school? What space accommodations must be made? *Rooms may be scarce but finding or defining a space relatively free of distractions is optimal.*

- How will tutoring sessions be structured: one-on-one, in small groups, or some combination? *Training needs will vary based on how your tutors work with students.*

- How will students be selected or referred to the program? *Most researchers and educators agree that volunteers should work with students who are making less than average progress, leaving teachers more free to work with the lowest students.*

- How will tutors be selected, and how will they be paired with students? *Consider any special accommodations your tutors may need (parking, building access, etc.). This is especially relevant for programs with senior volunteers.*

- Who will train tutors initially? On an ongoing basis? (*See side bar at right.*)

- Who will observe and supervise the tutors directly?

- How will teachers, parents, and tutors communicate with each other? With you?

- What are the expected outcomes of the program?

- At what point will assessment take place? How will you measure program success? *Assessments should be realistic, reflecting outcomes that are reasonable to expect from tutoring activities. Assessment should help inform future tutoring goals and activities.*

3. ESTABLISH PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Set intermediate and end outcomes for your program based on the answers to your questions in Step 2. Some of the outcomes may already be determined by the proposal or agreement with host schools.

- Create a set of shared outcomes with your partners and/or stakeholders. Shared outcomes are important, though how collaborative you want to be when creating them is a decision to make carefully. At the very least, all stakeholders must agree to the end outcomes and structure set by your grant or agreement.

What is a Reading Specialist, and Where Can I Find One?

Reading specialists usually have a master's degree in reading and advanced training in the complexity of the reading process. They can diagnose why a child has difficulty reading and suggest effective means of remediation.

Ideally, tutor trainers should know the needs of the students being tutored. A school or district reading specialist can be the best source for training. Tapping into the reading specialist's expertise is a good way to honor the reading program (and policies!) of the school. And it might be the most relevant training your tutors get!

Do you work with or near a college or university? A department of education houses an array of potential resources. A professor of reading may be able to train volunteers. Graduate students may be able to design assessments, and undergraduates can serve as tutors.

- Have the steering committee review additional activities and outcomes to ensure they are within the scope and purpose of the program.

  - It is **not** a good idea to avoid involving stakeholders because they may not agree with you or the program's goals. Make the primary outcome clear; then make a good-faith effort to accommodate additional suggestions.
  - Involving local experts at this stage is key. If a school's reading expert feels she's been ignored by you, it might be difficult to gain her participation several months later.

- Create action steps that help you accomplish outcomes. Be clear about who is responsible for doing what by when. A follow-up memo or letter to the committee will put this in writing and serve as a reminder.

- Determine how you will measure the program's performance. Create initial mechanisms to do this (a record-keeping system, exit interviews, journals, database, etc.). Refer back to the reporting requirements for your program for additional guidance.

4. MEET WITH STAKEHOLDERS

You have a lot to cover in the first meeting with stakeholders. Distributing a written agenda ahead of time will help you maximize the time you're together, and participants will know what to expect and what they have to offer. It may be helpful to divide the meat of the agenda into manageable parts. The following steps will help you plan the first meetings.

- Set a time to meet with the stakeholders. Come with a written agenda and state at the beginning what the outcomes of the meeting will be. Seek input on outcomes others would like to see.

- Give a brief introduction of the program: where tutoring will take place, who will be served, what your role is.

- Allow participants to introduce themselves and briefly tell why they are invested in the success of the program.

- Outline program objectives and outcomes. Share any requirements set out in the proposal or agreement.

- Add to the list of intermediate and end outcomes.

- Brainstorm a list of local resources that the program can use (people, organizations, supplies, money).

- Discuss the different forms that tutoring sessions might take, and which one is best for the students and teachers you'll work with.

- Create the ground rules of the steering committee.
  - State the role and responsibilities of the steering committee.
  - Decide how often, when and where the committee will meet and how its members will communicate with each other and you in between meetings.
  - If someone is interested but cannot make the time commitment, have him or her recommend a colleague.
  - Be flexible – make modifications to the program and to the steering committee as needed.

5. WRITE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has many features of a contract but is not binding. An MOU or similar document puts in writing the roles and responsibilities of each partnering group. (**See the sample MOU at the end of this document.**)

6. FIRST STEPS TOWARD RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Now that your outcomes are set and your steering committee formed, it's time to begin recruiting volunteers, gaining other support, and delivering tutoring services.

Spread the Word. You can't tutor all the students single-handedly, but where do you find volunteers? Consider these avenues and sources:

- Senior centers
- Retirement homes
- Community centers
- Communities of worship
- Middle and high schools (cross-age tutoring is fun and benefits the tutor as much as the student!)
- Community colleges or universities, especially departments of education, community service, and work study offices
- Civic associations
- School newsletters
- Local newspapers
- Neighborhood association newsletters
- Professional associations

Get Some Background. Visit the library, talk to local experts, and surf the Internet to get background information on the topics the program addresses and the students it serves. If you coordinate a literacy program for elementary children, look for articles and books on how young children learn to read. If you tutor youth preparing for the GED, visit the bookstore or library to browse relevant study manuals. Spend a day "shadowing" an Adult Basic Education/GED program coordinator at a community college, employment and training agency, or community literacy organization.

Create a Framework. Below, we've broken down the process of tutoring into three stages. Using this or a similar framework will help you communicate expectations, progress, and achievement to students, tutors, teachers, and parents.

Getting Acquainted. For the first four to six meetings, the tutor and student get to know one another. They lay the foundation for a relationship and build trust. The tutor learns about the student's interests, learning style, and needs, and begins using this information to identify appropriate materials and motivate the student. Initial assessments can be done at this stage.

Getting Down to Business. This stage constitutes the bulk of time tutor and student work together. Because progress can be difficult to measure, it's important for the tutor to keep a record of the student's progress measured in terms other than grades or level of mastery. A running list of words the student learns or books read shows progress and gives both student and tutor reason to be proud. Portfolios, anecdotes, and journals are also valuable in showing achievement.

Getting Ahead. Ongoing encouragement and positive feedback are important for tutors to give students, and for you to give both tutor and student. Recognize tutors' contributions and students' achievements with a celebratory dinner or awards ceremony. In a way, the tutor's role is to work himself out of a job—to help the student reach a point of self-sufficiency and self-motivation. Take steps to help them both make a smooth, positive transition out of the relationship.

Think About Liability. In the course of tutoring, do the students or tutors travel in school or organization vans or buses? Will tutors and students travel off-site for related activities? Do your tutors and students arrange their own times to meet? Explore legal liability requirements and considerations before the program begins. Schools have liability guidelines for volunteers who work with students. Most schools require criminal background checks; some require fingerprinting. If tutors transport children, seek proof of driver's license and current auto insurance with personal liability provisions. Written parent or guardian permission should be obtained for off-site travel.

Write a Job Description. A brief description of the tutoring job lets volunteers know up-front what will be expected of them. A job description should address the standards of commitment and the importance of consistency, especially when working with young children. Have a space for the volunteer and you to sign the agreement.

Wanted: Caring, committed individual to spend two hours a week changing the life of a child

Job Description: Form a meaningful relationship with a child (kindergarten through third grade) and share a love of reading and discovering by spending 40 minutes, two days a week reading stories together, talking about books, writing and painting together.

Specific Duties: Meet twice a week with the same student, 40 minutes per day. Pursue a variety of activities that will help the child develop basic reading and comprehension skills. Maintain a log of your visits. Meet with the teacher to discuss classroom work, tutoring work, and how the child is progressing.

Qualified Individuals: Are dependable. Have a good rapport with children. Can be a positive role model. Have a good work ethic. Enjoy reading, and want to pass it on!

For more information, contact Brad at 555-1212.

Memorandum of Understanding

Project Year: July 1, 1998 to June 31, 1999

Sponsor: Organization Name: _____
                         Address:_____

                                  _____
                                Phone:_____
                     Contact Person:_____

Volunteer Site: Site Name: _____

                        Contact Info.:_____

                                  _____

                                  _____

Program Outcomes:
The volunteer site understands the outcomes of the tutoring program as explained by the program director or a program representative. The primary responsibility of the volunteer is to work individually with assigned children who require additional attention. Individuals will volunteer ___ hour(s) per week, unless other arrangements are made with the volunteer and program staff.

Recruitment of Volunteers:
The sponsor, with the aid of the volunteer site, will recruit, interview, select, and enroll volunteers. The volunteer site will designate a representative to serve as liaison.

Supervision of Volunteers:
The volunteer site agrees to offer on-the-job training to the volunteers, including assignment of children and monitoring services provided by the volunteer. Overall direction of the volunteers will remain the responsibility of tutoring program staff. The volunteers will follow the policies of the volunteer site while complying with the activities and outcomes outlined in the work plan of the tutoring program's current grant.

Training of Volunteers:
The tutoring program staff will provide orientation to the volunteers prior to placement. The volunteer site agrees to donate staff time to assist with same orientation and on-the-job training of volunteers, in order to acquaint volunteers with the goals, objectives, and regulations of the site. The volunteer site also agrees to assist with monthly in-service training meetings for volunteers.

Record-Keeping for Volunteers:
The volunteer site agrees to verify volunteers' time sheets on a monthly basis and assist tutoring program staff with record-keeping. All record-keeping for volunteers will comply with Corporation for National and Community Service or national service stream policies and comply with federal and other laws. The volunteer site will execute policies applicable to this program and assist the sponsor with investigation of complaints and reporting.

Space and Insurance for Volunteers:

The volunteer site agrees to allow adequate space for volunteers to provide their services and any supplies considered necessary for their assignment. The sponsor will also furnish adequate accident and liability insurance coverage as outlined in relevant Corporation for National and Community Service program guidelines and manuals.

Non-Federal Support:

The volunteer site will cooperate with the tutoring program staff in monitoring the amount of donated goods and services volunteers receive as a benefit, including materials, meals, etc.

Public Relations:

The volunteer site agrees to assist the tutoring program staff in its public relations activities by providing positive information and facts with regard to the volunteers' work, without jeopardizing the privacy of any child.

Personnel Policies, Affirmative Action:

The sponsor's Personnel Policies and Affirmative Action Plans will apply to the volunteers. The sponsor, in cooperation with the appropriate agencies, will arrange for an appeals procedure to resolve problems which could arise between the volunteer, the site, or the sponsor. The volunteer site will assure adequate health and safety regulations for volunteers.

This memorandum may be amended at any time by the parties. A copy of this signed Memorandum of Understanding will be supplied to state and regional national service offices.

Sponsor	**Volunteer Site**
By: _____	By: _____
Title: _____	Title: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____