

Peace Corps Recruitment Division Organization Analysis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Organization Biography	3
Organizational Chart	4
Capacity Assessment Grid	5-14
Systems Story	15-17
Appendix A: Interview	18-20
Appendix B: Observation	21-23
Appendix C: References	24-25
University of Vermont Organizational Theory and Behavior	0

ORGANIZATION BIOGRAPHY

The Peace Corps is a U.S. government agency established in 1961 to promote world peace and friendship through international service. Volunteers work in partnership with communities in over 60 countries, addressing critical needs in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, environment, community economic development, and youth development. Overall operations are guided by the three goals:

- Helping the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained individuals.
- Promoting a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
- Promoting a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Peace Corps offers individuals an opportunity to contribute to sustainable development while gaining valuable cultural exchange experiences. Its operations are supported by an annual budget of \$495 million, funded through congressional appropriations, and employs approximately 7,350 people.

The recruitment sector plays a critical role in sustaining this mission by identifying and preparing individuals for impactful service abroad. This report will specifically focus on the recruitment division, analyzing its strategies and operations to ensure the Peace Corps continues to attract dedicated and qualified volunteers.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

OFFICE OF RECRUITMENT AND DIVERSITY

As of 07/02/2024
(total recruiter count and org
structure when fully staffed).

Judy Torres
Director of Recruitment



CAPACITY ASSESSMENT: GRID ANALYSIS

1. Mission

Moderate level of capacity in place: Clear expression of organization's reason for existence which reflects its values and purpose; held by many within organization and often referred to.

The Peace Corps Recruitment Division (PCRD) demonstrates a moderate capacity in terms of mission clarity and integration. As observed in team huddles on October 21 and November 4, Aimee Schattner consistently emphasized the agency's commitment to inspiring and recruiting highly qualified volunteers, aligning with the Peace Corps broader purpose of promoting world peace and friendship. However, while the overall mission of the Peace Corps was referenced in discussions about priorities and projects, it was not consistently connected to daily tasks or outcomes. This suggests room for improvement in making the mission a frequent point of reference for team operations as clear organizational values helps focus daily operations (Kanter, 1979).

Supporting Materials:

- Kanter, R. M. (1979). *Power failure in management circuits*. *Harvard Business Review*, 57(4), 65-75.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

2. Overall Strategy

Moderate Level of Capacity in Place: Coherent strategy has been developed and is linked to mission and vision but is not fully ready to be acted upon; strategy is mostly known and day-to-day behavior is partly driven by it.

The PCRD aims to increase applications and diversify its volunteer pool to reflect the demographics of the United States. While their strategies align with the agency's core mission, gaps exist due to a lack of autonomy within the broader organization. Effective organizational development principles advocate for a participative culture that integrates democratic values, including employee empowerment. While the PCRD allows input from recruiters, it lacks transparency regarding interdepartmental functions and decision-making processes from headquarters. Increased transparency and input in higher-level decisions could enhance current operations (Carnevale, 2002). As Aimee noted in our interview, the recruitment strategy aligns with the mission but does not fully inform everyday actions, as the mission is uniformly applied across all Peace Corps teams rather than tailored to specifically to recruitment. Transitioning from static planning to adaptive management is recommended for aligning goals with daily operations, especially in dynamic

environments like the PCRD. The division's recent shift to hybrid recruitment events and a new pilot program showcases flexibility; however, consistent integration of these initiatives into daily practices is necessary to improve recruitment outcomes and advance diversity goals (Poister, 2010). Maintaining a clear target can provide the division with steady direction, much like a ship guided by the North Star. While the organization demonstrates flexibility in strategy, increased autonomy could enhance effectiveness. Collaboration is vital; open dialogue among staff and other branches of the Peace Corps can facilitate shared objectives. Strengthening communication within the recruitment division would make the strategy more actionable and address the gaps between high-level planning and team needs (Gray, 1989).

Supporting Materials:

- Carnevale, D. G. (2002). *Organizational development in the public sector* (Ch. 7 Basic values and prospects). Prentice Hall. <https://brightspace.uvm.edu/d2l/le/content/89160/viewContent/1791784/View>
- Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multiparty problems*. Jossey-Bass. <https://brightspace.uvm.edu/d2l/le/content/89160/viewContent/1791810/View>
- Poister, T. H. (2010). The future of strategic planning in the public sector: Linking strategic management and performance. *Public Administration Review*, 70(S1), S246–S254. <https://brightspace.uvm.edu/d2l/le/content/89160/viewContent/1791787/View>
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

3. Goals and Performance Targets

Moderate Capacity: Ambitious targets in most areas; staff are aware but may lack specific milestones.

The Peace Corps Recruitment Division (PCRD) sets ambitious performance targets, including a goal of 10,000 applications annually. However, staffing shortages and the transition back to in-person recruitment after the pandemic has posed challenges. Despite integrating data-driven systems like Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) to track performance, the division's control over the tools and metrics is limited by mandates from the Washington Office. Aimee Schattner (2024) noted that while the division is aware of uneven staffing across territories, it is working to address these issues. The division's current approach to strategic planning and goal setting could benefit from more continuous feedback loops to improve decision-making and alignment with the broader mission. Effective management of organizational change, clear communication, and adequate resource allocation are critical to overcoming the challenges posed by understaffing and

external constraints (Bryson, 2024; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). Building a cohesive team and aligning recruitment targets with available resources will help ensure sustained progress.

Supporting Materials:

- Bryson, J. M. (2024). The future of public and nonprofit strategic planning in the United States. *Public Administration Review*, 70(S1), S246–S254.
- Carnevale, J. (2024). Conflict in organizational development.
- Fernandez, S., & Rainey, H. G. (2006). Managing successful organizational change in the public sector. *Public Administration Review*, 66(2), 166-179.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

4. Performance Measurement

Moderate level of capacity in place: Performance measured and progress tracked in multiple ways, several times a year, considering social, financial, and organizational impact of program and activities; multiplicity of performance indicators; social impact measured, but control group, long term.

The PCRD demonstrates a moderate capacity for performance measurement, tracking progress and outcomes through various methods several times a year. However, indicators related to social and cultural impact, in relation to the third goal, are either missing or underutilized in evaluations. In prior observations of team huddles, the "Top States" report was regularly presented as a tracking tool for monitoring recruitment data and identifying trends. This report offers valuable insights, however, there was limited evidence of social impact or integration of broader organizational goals being properly tracked. Public organizations often focus on outputs rather than more meaningful evaluations of impact, especially in long-term social outcomes (Guy, 2017). The Peace Corps third goal focuses on leveraging the skills and global insights gained during service to positively impact communities in the United States. The PCRD often organizes speaking events and community activities for returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs), that help foster a positive image of the organization at home and encouraging continued public investment. For an organizations like the Peace Corps that relies on public support through funding, public perception, more than the direct services provided, maybe more valuable to track.

Supporting Materials:

- Guy, M. E. (2017). *Measuring and managing for performance*. In Public administration: Balancing power and accountability (pp. 223-247). SAGE Publications.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

5. Performance Analysis and Program Adjustments

Moderate level of capacity in place: Effective internal and external benchmarking occurs but driven largely by top management and/or confined to selected areas; learnings distributed throughout organization, and often used to make adjustments and improvements.

Observations from the team huddles on October 21 and November 4 suggest that the Peace Corps recruitment team relies heavily on tools like the "Top States" report to track trends and make adjustments. However, these adjustments often seem reactive, addressing immediate needs rather than stemming from a proactive, data-driven approach. Aimee Schattner, the recruitment supervisor, acknowledged the importance of data driven decision making but stated that the division is currently focused more on operational metrics than on long-term benchmarking strategies. Public organizations often prioritize short-term solutions over long-term, transformative improvements. Shifting to a process that uses performance data to drive meaningful change requires a reorientation towards addressing both current challenges and future organizational needs but can be worth the cultural shift in the long-term (Behn, 2017).

Supporting Materials:

- Behn, R. D. (2017). *On why there is a significant difference between firing poor performers and producing results*. *Public Administration Review*, 77(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12627>
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

6. Program Relevance and Integration

High level of capacity in place: All programs and services well defined and fully aligned with mission and goals; program offering are clearly linked to one another and to overall strategy; synergies across programs are captured.

The Recruitment Division demonstrates a high capacity in program relevance and integration.

Initiatives such as the pilot program for local printing, discussed during team huddles on October 21 and November 4, reflect efforts to streamline processes and enhance outreach, aligning well with the division's mission. Aimee Schattner emphasized the importance of operational efficiency and continuous improvement in supporting recruitment goals during our previous interview. Overall, it was clear that the PCRD consistently demonstrates mutual support and innovation across initiatives (Barnard, 1938).

Supporting Materials:

- Schattner, A. (2024, October 7). Personal communication.
- Barnard, C. I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Harvard University Press.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

7. Strategic Planning

Moderate level of capacity in place: Ability and tendency to develop and refine concrete, realistic strategic plan; some internal expertise in strategic planning or access to relevant external assistance; strategic planning carried out on a near-regular basis; strategic plan used to guide management decisions.

The Recruitment Division exhibits moderate capacity in strategic planning. Programs like the pilot initiative for local printing, as presented in the team meetings on October 21 and November 4, indicate intentional planning to address operational challenges and improve efficiency. Aimee Schattner noted in her interview that the division evaluates emerging needs and opportunities regularly, ensuring alignment with recruitment goals (Schattner, 2024). However, observations suggest that planning efforts are more responsive to immediate operational demands than driven by a comprehensive, long-term strategic vision. Public organizations often face a tension between aspirational strategic goals and practical operational constraints. Strategic planning in for these types of organizations requires balancing external pressures and internal capabilities while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to emergent challenges (Hyde and Uys, 2016).

Supporting Materials:

- Hyde, C. A., & Uys, L. R. (2016). *Organizational strategy and public administration*. *Journal of Public Administration*, 51(3), 28-36.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

8. Community Presence and Involvement

Basic level of capacity in place: Organization's presence somewhat recognized, and generally regarded as positive within the community; some members of larger community constructively engaged with organization.

The PCRD has several initiatives for outreach and is constantly striving to reach a broader audiences and meeting recruitment targets. However, these efforts seem to prioritize quantitative outcomes

rather than fostering meaningful, collaborative relationships with the communities being engaged, as shown in the “Top States” report. As Schattner explained in her interview, the division focuses on maintaining visibility in high-performing areas but has limited direct, localized partnerships to deepen community ties (Schattner, 2024). From browsing Peace Corps Instagram, and based on my observations, it is clear that the organization is working to expand its recognition but it is not as widely known as it would like to be. This is an area of ongoing improvement, which the organization is actively addressing.

Supporting Materials:

- Schattner, A. (2024, October 7). Personal communication.
- Peace Corps. (n.d.). *Peace Corps (@peacecorps) [Instagram profile]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/peacecorps/?hl=en>
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

9. Revenue Generation

Clear need for increased capacity: No internal revenue- generation activities; concepts such as cause-related marketing, fee-for- services and retailing are neither explored nor pursued.

This metric may not fully apply given its role as a publicly funded entity within the Peace Corps. The PCRD’s funding is managed by the Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) department (Peace Corps, 2021). Internal revenue-generating activities such as cause-related marketing, fee-for-services, or retailing are not pursued, aligning with the Peace Corps overarching mission as a public service organization rather than a revenue-focused entity. The division could explore partnerships or grants to enhance recruitment efforts without compromising its mission if funding was ever pulled entirely due to lack of public or administrative support.

Supporting Materials:

- Peace Corps. (2021). *Volunteer recruitment and selection (VRS) policy manual* [MS-126]. <https://files.peacecorps.gov/documents/MS-126-Policy.pdf>
- Schattner, A. (2024, October 7). Personal communication.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

10. Financial Planning and Budgeting

Clear need for increased capacity No or very limited financial planning; general budget developed; only one budget for entire central organization; performance against budget loosely or not monitored.

Budget discussions were briefly touched upon during the October 21 and November 4 meetings, primarily focusing on cost-saving measures related to the pilot program for local printing. However, budgetary concerns are largely managed by the VRS department and appear to be reactive and project-specific, rather than part of a comprehensive, long-term financial strategy. Public organizations often face challenges in integrating financial planning into broader strategic decision-making (Hyde & Uys, 2016). Developing a more transparent relationship with the VRS department could help foster greater trust within the organization.

Supporting Materials:

- Hyde, C. A., & Uys, L. R. (2016). *Organizational strategy and public administration*. *Journal of Public Administration*, 51(3), 28-36.
- Peace Corps. (2021). *Volunteer recruitment and selection (VRS) policy manual* [MS-126]. <https://files.peacecorps.gov/documents/MS-126-Policy.pdf>
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

11. Staffing Levels

Moderate level of capacity in place: Positions within and peripheral to organization (e.g., staff, volunteers, board, senior management) are almost all staffed (no vacancies); few turnover or attendance problems.

The PCRD demonstrates moderate capacity in staffing levels. According to Aimee Schattner's interview and discussions during the team huddles on October 21 and November 4, the most critical positions are filled, and there are minimal concerns regarding turnover or attendance. However, the organization is experiencing a national staffing shortage, with only 40 to 45 of the 70 recruiter positions currently filled. This has led to recruiters covering larger areas and taking on more virtual events to compensate for the shortfall. Additionally, recruiters are only allowed to work for the organization for 5 years but can be granted extensions. Nevertheless, with vacancies and several recruiters coming up on their 5th years, filling these vacancies is vitally important. Not only to alleviate the workload on current recruiters but to ensure a more sustainable staffing structure (Hyde & Uys, 2016).

Supporting Materials:

- Schattner, A. (2024, October 7). Personal communication.
- Hyde, C. A., & Uys, L. R. (2016). *Organizational strategy and public administration*. *Journal of Public Administration*, 51(3), 28-36.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.

- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

12. Decision Making and Framework

High level of capacity in place: Clear, formal lines/ systems for decision making that involve as broad participation as practical and appropriate along with dissemination/ interpretation of decision.

The Recruitment Division demonstrates a high level of capacity in decision-making and organizational framework. Observations of team meetings on October 21 and November 4 revealed that decision-making processes are guided by clear lines of authority and hierarchy (see organizational chart on page 4, provided by Aimee Schattner via email on October 8, 2024). Aimee, as regional leadership, facilitated discussions efficiently, allowing team members to contribute to decision-making when appropriate. However, while decisions were generally made through formal channels, there were occasional instances where informal decision-making and reliance on individual expertise took precedence over structured frameworks. This reflects a clear democratic cultural norm in decision-making within the organization; a positive and adaptive trait (Hyde & Uys, 2016).

Supporting Materials:

- Hyde, C. A., & Uys, L. R. (2016). *Organizational strategy and public administration*. *Journal of Public Administration*, 51(3), 28-36.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

13. Technological Infrastructure

Moderate to High level of capacity in place computers, applications, network, and e-mail: Fully networked computing hardware with comprehensive range of up-to-date software applications; all staff has individual computer access and e-mail; accessible by frontline program deliverers as well as entire staff; used regularly by staff; effective and essential in increasing staff efficiency.

The PCRD demonstrates a moderate to high level of capacity in technological infrastructure.

Observations from team meetings on October 21 and November 4 revealed that the division utilizes well-established systems for tracking recruitment metrics, allowing staff to access important data efficiently. Each team member has individual computer access, and the use of email and other software applications is integrated into daily operations, facilitating communication and task

management. However, while these tools are effective for recruitment tracking, there is no indication of a comprehensive platform that integrates broader operational data accessible across all staffing levels.

Adding this will streamline and centralize operational data to enhance overall staff efficiency.

Supporting Materials:

- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A. (2024). Personal knowledge as a former Peace Corps volunteer and current recruiter.

14. Shared References and Practices

Moderate level of capacity in place: Common set of references and practices exists, and are adopted by many people within the organization; references and practices are aligned with organizational purpose and occasionally harnessed to drive towards impact.

The PCRD has a moderate level of capacity in shared references and practices. Common processes, such as standardized reporting and regular team huddles, are widely adopted across the division.

These practices align with the organization's broader goals of recruiting and placing qualified Peace Corps volunteers, reflecting the structured and procedural approach (Hyde and Uys, 2016). The observed team meetings on October 21 and November 4 demonstrate how these practices facilitate communication and coordination, allowing staff to share updates, track progress, and align on key performance indicators. Resources and successful programs appear to be freely shared within the organization.

Supporting Materials:

- Hyde, C. A., & Uys, L. R. (2016). Organizational strategy and public administration. *Journal of Public Administration*, 51(3), 28–36.
- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

15. Program Growth & Replication

High level of capacity in place: Frequent assessment of possibility of scaling up existing programs and when judged appropriate, action always taken; efficiently and effectively able to grow existing programs to meet needs of potential service recipients in local area or other geographies.

The local printing pilot program and podcast outreach initiative are solid examples of the PCRD's innovative approach to enhancing recruitment efforts. The printing pilot aims to localize and

streamline the production of recruitment materials, increasing their accessibility and timeliness for recruiters as they travel for outreach programs. Similarly, the podcast initiative leverages digital media to engage potential recruits through compelling stories that showcase volunteer experiences and the organization's mission. By piloting these programs, the organization can assess their effectiveness on a smaller scale before expanding them regionally or nationally. Optimize resources and enhance overall impact.

Supporting Materials:

- Aimee. (2024). Leader interview.
- King, A. (2024, October 21). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.
- King, A (2024, November 4). *Participant observation at a Peace Corps recruitment team huddle meeting*. Unpublished manuscript.

SYSTEMS STORY (OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS)

This capacity assessment evaluates the Peace Corps Recruitment Division (PCRD), focusing on key operational areas to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. Grounded in observations from recruitment team huddles, insights from an interview with Aimee Schattner, and a review of relevant literature on organizational development and public administration, the assessment provides actionable recommendations to enhance the division's effectiveness. The ultimate objective is to offer strategic suggestions that will support PCRD's contribution to the broader Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship while simultaneously improving recruitment outcomes, operational efficiency, and community engagement.

Mission Alignment and Leadership Practices

PCRD's mission is to recruit skilled and diverse volunteers for international assignments. However, observations from team huddles on October 21 and November 4 revealed that, while the mission is often referenced, it is not consistently integrated into daily tasks or performance metrics. Staff members understand the overarching purpose of the Peace Corps, but daily operations are not regularly linked to the mission statement. The PCRD could develop a division specific mission statement that aligns with the Peace Corps three core goals. Additionally, the PCRD should incorporate mission driven leadership techniques, such as storytelling and role modeling, to inspire greater staff commitment to the mission, particularly for those who benefit from concrete examples of how these concepts can be implemented (Kanter, 1979).

Strategic Planning and Flexibility

PCRD's strategy prioritizes increasing application volume and diversifying the volunteer pool, both of which align with the broader Peace Corps mission. However, while recruiters are granted significant autonomy to implement tactics for increasing volunteer numbers, diversity and general recruitment targets are set centrally by the Washington headquarters. Regional recruitment sectors hold regular strategy meetings and occasionally receive updates on successful practices from other territories. However, establishing consistent feedback loops between headquarters and regional offices would enhance coordination and promote a more unified, adaptable strategy. One effective approach would be to implement cross-divisional collaborative workshops where staff from different offices and regions can gain a deeper understanding of each other's roles and how their work contributes to the larger organizational mission. This increased collaboration would create opportunities for more informed and cohesive strategic planning. Additionally, transitioning from static, annual plans to a

dynamic, iterative strategic process would allow the PCRD to better navigate the shifting recruitment landscape (Poister, 2010). Strengthening communication across departments and empowering regional offices to customize strategies based on local needs would benefit the PCRD's overall effectiveness.

Performance Management and Staffing Challenges

The PCRD sets ambitious performance targets, such as reaching 10,000 applications annually. However, staffing shortages and post-pandemic operational challenges often impede the division's ability to meet these objectives. Setting high recruitment targets without adequate staffing can lead to decreased morale among employees. Aimee Schattner assured me that the Washington office is aware of these staffing challenges and is mindful of setting realistic goals. Implementing a more flexible performance management system would help the agency meet its volunteer recruitment targets without negatively impacting staff morale (Bryson, 2024; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

Measuring Long-Term Impact and Community Engagement

The PCRD tracks its progress through various reports, such as the "Top States" report, but these measures focus primarily on quantitative outputs. While these indicators provide useful data on recruitment efforts, they do not capture the long-term impact of the Peace Corps third goal: bringing the volunteer experience back to U.S. communities. This gap in measuring the broader social and cultural effects of the program needs to be addressed. The PCRD should adopt a balanced scorecard approach that includes both traditional recruitment metrics and social impact indicators to close this gap. Incorporating qualitative social data from community stakeholders will provide a more comprehensive view of third goal program success (Guy, 2017). This data could be collected via a stakeholder survey system where program attendees rate their view of the Peace Corps based on prior events. Currently, the PCRD relies on internal benchmarking reports to make operational adjustments, but these reports are often reactive, addressing immediate needs without considering long-term strategic goals. To shift from reactive to proactive performance management, the PCRD should adopt a continuous improvement framework that leverages data analytics to anticipate trends and inform strategic decisions. Regular knowledge sharing sessions across regional offices would foster the exchange of best practices, encourage innovation, and support the division's long-term objectives. Cultivating a culture of continuous learning and improvement will enhance the division's capacity for sustained growth and development (Behn, 2017).

Community Outreach and Diversity

The PCRD demonstrates strong community presence but often focuses outreach efforts on high-performing areas, with less emphasis on cultivating deep, localized partnerships. This limited focus restricts the division's ability to engage with a broader range of communities and stakeholders.

While the PCRD has made efforts to engage communities by hosting events in libraries, colleges, and other venues, there is a branding issue. Many perceive the Peace Corps as catering to high achieving, privileged white young people (King, 2024). This perception stems partly from targeting areas that have historically produced volunteers, but the PCRD needs to reach more underrepresented communities to promote diversity and offer the opportunity to all Americans (Minkin, 2023). By leveraging social media platforms and digital content, PCRD can share success stories and highlight the impact of Peace Corps service. Incorporating content created by currently serving volunteers (such as "day in the life" influencer style posts) could offer an authentic, engaging perspective that resonates with a broader audience.

Addressing Staffing Shortages and Engaging RPCVs

One crucial aspect of strengthening PCRD's community outreach and recruitment strategy involves addressing staffing shortages by engaging Peace Corps Volunteers who are currently serving overseas. These volunteers are often the best advocates for the Peace Corps experience and can provide firsthand insights to potential recruits. The PCRD should develop a streamlined process for connecting returning volunteers with recruitment positions, ensuring that they are aware of job openings in a timely manner.

Developing a stronger relationship with country directors will facilitate this connection. Country directors can inform the PCRD when cohorts are nearing completion, allowing for proactive outreach to returning volunteers. This will help ensure that vacancies are filled quickly and that the division can address staffing shortages effectively. Leveraging the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) networks and involving them in outreach activities will increase the division's visibility, credibility, and ability to attract diverse applicants. By involving RPCVs right after service, the PCRD can foster a more robust pipeline of potential recruiters who are passionate about the Peace Corps mission.

Conclusion

This assessment presents several opportunities for PCRD to improve its recruitment strategies and community engagement efforts. By adopting a more flexible, mission-driven approach to leadership, strengthening communication across offices, and developing more inclusive outreach strategies, the PCRD can better support the broader goals of the Peace Corps. Additionally, by engaging RPCVs more effectively and establishing stronger connections with country directors, PCRD can address staffing shortages and enhance its recruitment toolbox and network. These improvements will contribute to the long-term success of the Peace Corps and ensure that it continues to recruit skilled and diverse volunteers committed to advancing the mission of promoting world peace and friendship.

APENDIX A: LEADER INTERVIEW

Interview Summary: Aimee Schattner, Peace Corps Recruitment Division

On October 7, 2024, I had the privilege of interviewing Aimee Schattner, a senior member of the Peace Corps Recruitment Division. Aimee shared several valuable insights regarding how the Recruitment Division operates within the broader framework of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is an organization dedicated to promoting peace and friendship across the globe through American volunteers who seek to fulfil the agencies three primary goals:

1. Helping the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained individuals.
2. Promoting a better understanding of Americans by the peoples served.
3. Enhancing Americans' understanding of other cultures.

Aimee confirmed that, although the Recruitment Division does not have a distinct mission statement separate from the overarching goals of the Peace Corps, its efforts are fundamentally aimed at advancing world peace and friendship by finding these volunteer candidates. Additionally, several members of the Recruitment Division are Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) themselves, allowing them to speak about their service on a personal level and to continue embodying the Peace Corps ideals at home.

The primary focus of the Recruitment Division is to generate applicants to serve overseas as volunteers: “all of our work is directed toward that goal” (A. Schattner, personal communication, October 7, 2024). Every recruiter working in the field ensures their efforts align with the Peace Corps threefold mission statement in every aspect of the recruitment process. Recruiters actively engage with potential volunteers to guide them through the application process, ensuring they understand the expectations and responsibilities associated with serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer. While volunteers are required to be at least 18 years old and in most cases with a college degree, the Peace Corps also welcomes older applicants with years of work experience. Recruiters are prepared to support applicants throughout the process, from resume creation to boarding the plane. Additionally, recruiters often maintain contact with returned volunteers to help them fully utilize the benefits package earned through service and to connect them with support systems and Peace Corps alumni networks. This support helps returned volunteers share their experiences with American audiences through class talks and lectures or to gain community support from the broader network of RPCV's.

Aimee attributed much of the Recruitment Division's success to the consistent messaging made possible by its close collaboration with the Office of Communications. This separate office supports recruitment by reviewing and providing distribution materials, such as PowerPoint presentations,

flyers, and social media templates. Although not part of the Recruitment Division, the Office of Communications plays a vital role in the Peace Corps branding and outreach efforts. Aimee explained that maintaining a unified narrative about the organization's goals and values is essential for successful recruitment. By presenting a cohesive message to prospective applicants, the Recruitment Division strengthens its ability to attract individuals who align with the Peace Corps mission.

A significant priority for the Recruitment Division is diversifying the applicant pool. Aimee emphasized that the Peace Corps aims to ensure its volunteers reflect the diversity of the United States, as outlined in goal 2. Engaging underrepresented communities within the United States not only advances this goal but also provides individuals from these communities with access to the unique benefits that accompany Peace Corps service. Opportunities such as travel, fellowships, and non-competitive hiring status for federal jobs offer personal growth potential that can be transformative for individuals facing limited opportunities due to economic or ethnic barriers. The Peace Corps gains a diverse representation of the United States and enriched volunteer experiences, while applicants benefit from this mutually rewarding exchange. However, many Americans are unaware of this opportunity, which is why recruiters play such a critical role in the organization. The division actively tracks diversity data from recruitment events to evaluate progress in this area. Aimee noted that recent initiatives focused on inclusivity have led to noticeable improvements in applicant diversity, reinforcing the Peace Corps commitment to diversifying the volunteer corps.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the Peace Corps, necessitating significant adjustments to recruitment strategies. Aimee described the division's shift to a fully virtual recruitment model, which remained in effect until mid-2022. This transition initially allowed the Recruitment Division to reach a broader audience, as virtual platforms enabled participation from individuals who may not have engaged in traditional in-person events. However, recognizing the importance of personal interactions, the Peace Corps is now transitioning back to in-person recruitment activities. Aimee indicated that the division aims for an 80/20 split between in-person and virtual engagements, with a long-term goal of achieving a 90/10 ratio. While virtual events offer convenience, Aimee pointed out that face-to-face interactions foster deeper connections with potential applicants. To support this claim, she cited previous feedback from recruits, which suggests that in-person engagements offer a deeper understanding of the unique Peace Corps volunteer experience, often resulting in more committed and enthusiastic applications.

Despite these strategies, the Recruitment Division faces a pressing challenge: staffing shortages. Aimee revealed that while the division currently has approximately 40 to 45 recruiters in the field, the ideal number is closer to 70 nationwide. This staffing gap has hindered the division's ability to meet its ambitious recruitment target of 10,000 applications for the last fiscal year. To monitor

recruitment performance, the division utilizes a Client Relationship Management (CRM) system, which tracks key metrics such as leads, event attendance, and engagement with diverse communities. However, Aimee acknowledged that the ongoing staffing shortages limit their capacity to fully leverage this data for strategic recruitment planning and execution.

Despite these challenges, the Recruitment Division maintains considerable autonomy in community engagement. Aimee explained that recruiters are required to develop tailored outreach plans that align with the unique needs and characteristics of their specific territories. Collaborations with local organizations, such as libraries, Rotary Clubs, and community colleges, are essential for fostering relationships that can lead to increased applications. These partnerships not only expand the Peace Corps presence but also help create a lasting impact within local communities by providing information about global issues and the Peace Corps itself.

Recruiters submit quarterly plans outlining their outreach activities and budgets, allowing for effective resource allocation and logistical support from administrative staff. This decentralized approach enables recruiters to adapt their strategies based on local dynamics and community needs, enhancing the effectiveness of recruitment efforts.

Overall, my conversation with Aimee Schattner provided a comprehensive overview of the Peace Corps Recruitment Division's ongoing efforts to align with the agency's mission while navigating the evolving challenges of the post pandemic landscape. From adapting to a hybrid recruitment model to prioritizing diversity and inclusion, the division is committed to continuously improving its strategies. Aimee's insights speak to the significance of community engagement and the dedication of the recruitment team to meeting their goals despite obstacles such as staffing shortages. Ultimately, the Recruitment Division's ongoing work is crucial to fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace, friendship, and cultural understanding in an increasingly dynamic global environment.

APENDIX B: OBSERVATION WRITE UP

I observed two virtual meetings with the Peace Corps Recruitment Team. The purpose of this observation was to witness the structure and nature of the team's internal communication. The first meeting took place between Aimee, the recruitment supervisor, and her fellow recruiter supervisors, while the second meeting involved Aimee and the recruiters working under her. Both meetings shared a similar structure and tone, with no rigid hierarchy among participants. Supervisors functioned more as "messengers" exchanging updates and information with their peers and team members.

The meetings followed a predictable agenda, starting with introductions and general updates, transitioning into announcements and specialized presentations, and ending with a period for kudos and recognition. This structured format helped to maintain focus and efficiency, allowing for smooth transitions between topics. Aimee, as the meeting leader for both, communicated in a clear and direct manner, ensuring that each agenda item was addressed thoroughly before moving on to the next. She was approachable yet authoritative, striking a balance between guiding the discussion and allowing for team participation. Team members appeared familiar with the routine, engaging promptly with her updates and reminders, showing their comfort with the format and respect for the structure.

Aimee's role was both directive and facilitative. She shared key information about deadlines, policy updates, and upcoming opportunities, while also ensuring that team members had space to contribute their insights. Her ability to convey information concisely and efficiently was an admirable aspect of her leadership, as was her tendency to acknowledge each team member's achievements or milestones. This acknowledgment not only reinforced the team's sense of accomplishment but also fostered a sense of camaraderie without unhealthy competition. Courtney and Milton, who led specific segments of the meetings, also communicated in a direct manner. Courtney focused on logistical updates, such as a new pilot program for local printing, and actively solicited feedback from the team. Milton, representing public affairs, presented on outreach initiatives and asked for input on potential podcast opportunities.

Team engagement during the meetings was high when discussing operational updates or changes directly affecting their roles. For instance, there was noticeable interest in the pilot printing program and other initiatives that involved team responsibilities. These updates prompted questions and suggestions, showing the team's proactive engagement and commitment to improving their workflows. The tone of the meetings was primarily business oriented, with limited participation during more casual moments of acknowledgment, such as the recognition of work anniversaries or completed projects. This may reflect the team's busy schedules or a cultural norm around recognition, where

formal public acknowledgment is reserved for specific milestones without much fanfare. It's possible that more detailed acknowledgments occur in one-on-one meetings between recruiters and their supervisors, though this was not explicitly showcased in the meetings themselves.

The organizational culture within the Peace Corps Recruitment Team seems to emphasize teamwork, accountability, and adherence to structure. Aimee regularly reminded the team about important deadlines and compliance with formal guidelines while also providing opportunities for professional growth. The recognition of team members' achievements, such as work anniversaries, added an element of appreciation to the otherwise task-oriented meetings. Overall, there was a balance of accountability and recognition helping to create a supportive environment where both individual performance and collective success are valued.

Several assumptions about the team's dynamics became clear through the observation. First, there is an expectation that team members will follow formal protocols, whether that involves using specific channels for print requests or adhering to policies like email marketing pauses. Additionally, there is an underlying assumption that team members will proactively contribute to discussions and act on time sensitive matters. This was shown in the frequent calls for feedback on new initiatives, as well as the reminders about upcoming surveys and program deadlines. The culture also seems to place value on acknowledging individual contributions to maintain team morale and cohesion, reinforcing the culture of mutual support and recognition.

As a non-participating observer, I was able to take in the full dynamics of the meetings without being distracted by the need to engage directly. This allowed me to focus on the nuances of communication, particularly how Aimee shifted from presenting updates to expressing gratitude. Her tone changed subtly during these moments of acknowledgment, signaling a shift from task driven interaction to a more personal and supportive one. This approach helped to balance the otherwise business focused atmosphere, reminding team members that their contributions were not only recognized but also appreciated. The virtual setting presented some challenges for me as an observer, particularly the lack of nonverbal cues, since several of the participants cameras were off during the meetings. This made it harder to fully gauge the team members engagement and emotional reactions, although the structured agenda and predictable flow of the meetings made it easier to observe key moments of decision making and interaction. I got the impression that the meeting format and structure were standard within the organization, which may have contributed to a more casual or disengaged atmosphere from the participants with their cameras off. Although, that observation remains unsubstantiated.

Overall, the Peace Corps Recruitment Team's meetings were a well-organized and efficient. Aimee's leadership style was both clear and supportive, ensuring that each team member was informed

and engaged. The emphasis on structure and adherence to protocols was balanced with moments of informal recognition, demonstrating a team culture that values both productivity and morale. Despite the limitations of the virtual format, the meetings allowed for effective observation of the team's dynamics, providing valuable insights into how a well-functioning team can operate with clear expectations and mutual respect.

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