



Civic Works

... Providing essential services that otherwise would go unmet

... Providing low-income youths with job readiness training and job skills.

In 2002 - 2003, Civic Works ran 20 projects, all of which were geared to provide essential services that otherwise would go unmet and to provide low-income youth with job readiness training and job skills. This is an overview of two of those projects: Community Lot and Recreation and Parks Center.

Although these projects are very different, they share one key quality: they highlight the ways in which Civic Works serves communities and youth.

The Community Lot Project



... employs low-income youth to transform blighted community spaces “from profane to sacred.” Corps members work with local community members to clear lots, plant gardens, and beautify the inner-city urban landscape.

The Recreation and Parks Center Project

... employs youth to help elementary school students improve their literacy and study skills in after school enrichment projects.



Abt Associates Inc. created these project profiles, *The Community Lot Project* and *The Recreation and Parks Center Project*, based on interviews with Civic Works staff, local community members and representatives of community organizations, and on focus groups with corps members who participated in the Community Lot and Recreation and Parks Center projects.

*Project Profiles authored by: Catherine Dun Rappaport and Anne Hazlett, Abt Associates Inc.,
55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, MA 02138*

December 2003



Abt Associates Inc.

Project Profiles: Overview

Abt Associates created the following project profiles to provide detailed information about the way in which Civic Works operated two of its community service teams in Program Year 2002–2003: a Recreation and Parks Center team and the Community Lot team. These profiles highlight the kinds of activities in which corpsmembers participate, the ways in which Civic Works staff engage the community in service, and the perceptions of corpsmembers, staff, and community members about each project.¹

When determining which of Civic Works' 20 teams² to profile, Abt Associates selected sites that met the following criteria:

- *They were representative of a larger group of teams.* By selecting teams that were representative of other teams, we maximized the likelihood that it would be feasible to apply some findings from these case studies to other, similar teams.
- *They had been in existence for several years.* Because teams that had been running for several years have an established model of service, they are less likely than others to change dramatically from year to year. This helps to ensure that our findings and conclusions will be applicable beyond Program Year 2002–2003.

Each team profile includes the following elements:

- A project summary,
- An overview that describes the family of Civic Works projects that encompasses the profiled team,
- A section on project structure that details the community served by the team, outside resources leveraged for the team, standard team components, and corpsmembers' experiences in the team, and
- An assessment that highlights key team strengths and challenges and makes several suggestions for future project operations.

Abt Associates developed each of these profiles based upon site visits to Civic Works and the Community Lot and Recreation Parks Center teams in November 2002 and May 2003. We also reviewed background information about Civic Works in general and Civic Works teams specifically. During site visits, we interviewed key project staff (including Project Supervisors and directors and the Executive Director). We also conducted focus groups with corpsmembers who were participating in the Community Lot and Recreation and Parks projects. Because the program year had not yet ended, end-of-year data on corpsmember performance were not available.³ Accordingly, our analysis is based on our conversations with key stakeholders and our

¹ Accordingly, these profiles address the fourth and fifth research questions posited in Abt Associates' proposal to assess Civic Works: (4) How was the project implemented at specific sites? In what kinds of activities did corpsmembers engage? How did community members, service recipients and other key stakeholders perceive the project?

² According to *Civic Works: Team Descriptions 2002–2003* (created by Civic Works and shared with Abt Associates, May 2003), there were 20 teams in 2002–2003.

³ Data that we might consider when conducting this kind of analysis would include: number of corpsmembers who completed the program in this program year and years past, number of

knowledge of promising practices within the fields of workforce development, community service, and youth development.

corpsmembers who obtained their GEDs in this program year and years past, and number of corpsmembers placed in jobs in this program year and years past.