

The 2015 Public Engagement and Outreach Plan

Guidance for the National Service and Social Innovation Communities



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Dear National Service Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I share with you our 2015 Corporation for National and Community Service Public Engagement and Education Calendar.

Whether you are an AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Volunteer Generation Fund, or Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grantee, a governor-appointed State Service Commission, or a participant in one of our programs, you will see many opportunities to share your examples of impact over the coming year.

Together, we are operating in 60,000 locations across the country. This engagement calendar outlines ways that we can work together to raise the public's awareness of our work and engage even more individuals in it.

This year is a special one for us. We have the 50th anniversaries for the AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Corps Foster Grandparents programs, the first-ever SIF Week, and the return of Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service. In addition, we are introducing theme months that are tied to our focus areas, thus giving all of us the opportunity to communicate the breadth of our efforts to transform communities and improve lives.

We will announce new opportunities for Americans to serve. From the governor-appointed State Service Commissions to private-sector partners, we will mark the expansion of national service programs throughout the year. SIF and other programs will produce evaluation reports and other research-related materials that will give us even more information with which to tell our story.

We will also engage you in our announcements regarding Operation AmeriCorps, Employers of National Service, Stars of Service, and more. We will put this document online and keep you apprised of any changes or announcements. Like national service, it is dynamic.

Please share how you are participating in this engagement calendar with your key stakeholders: staff, members/volunteers, elected officials at all levels, board of directors, corporate supporters, and public-sector partners.

If you have questions, please contact our Office of External Affairs at engagement@cns.gov.

Warmest Regards,

Wendy Spencer, CEO
Corporation for National and Community Service

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About the Office of External Affairs

The Office of External Affairs (OEA) plays a key role in maintaining communication with multiple audiences for CNCS.

Our principal responsibility is focusing on what the outside world sees or hears about the impact of our programs or initiatives. Effective external engagement also requires internal communication. This process involves coordination and collaboration among our team, program staff, and our partners, including grantees and outside organizations.

If you have questions regarding this document, please send them to engagement@cns.gov

SECTION I

Introduction

This document is a guide regarding public education and engagement for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) grantees, programs, projects, partners, governor-appointed State Service Commissions, CNCS federal offices in states, program members and alumni, and champions. Our goal is to maximize and coordinate awareness of the important contributions we make to individuals and communities across the country.

Outreach and engagement is organized into focus months with key activities or milestones as noted in Section III. Although every focus month may not be aligned with your work, we hope you will participate in the months that do and that you will follow and amplify all our social media channels to help us reach as many people as possible. Additionally, attached you will also find a DRAFT calendar of events (that will always be an evolving tool) so you know what announcements, activities or engagements will originate from CNCS.

We hope that using this guide will help all of us increase our shared knowledge, visibility and support and therefore, our ability to implement and grow evidence-based programming leading to improve communities.

Goal

Inspire Americans to increase their knowledge, awareness, and support of national service and social innovation as the country's best examples of civic engagement, collaboration, and problem solving.

Objectives

- Amplify AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund as innovative ways to improve communities and provide additional opportunities for Americans to serve.
- Strengthen ties with established supporters of national service, social innovation and performance-based outcomes to reinforce and expand the tradition of bipartisan support for national service.
- Encourage more Americans to learn about AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, and other initiatives and programs funded by CNCS and actively share what they learn about our impact.

- Use AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and the Social Innovation Fund weeks as opportunities to educate the public about program impact.
- Increase visibility of governor-appointed State Service Commissions and state funded programs.
- Partner with Senior Corps on promoting the evaluations of the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and RSVP programs.
- Partner with the SIF on promoting its projects, evaluation reports, and impact via SIF and Pay For Success grantees.
- Leverage additional partnerships and resources to expand national service and social innovation.

Principal Outcomes

- Energized and engaged validators within each target audience
- Higher awareness of the contributions that AmeriCorps and Senior Corps make to our country
- Increased interest from a diversity of applicants for grant funding
- More diversity in members and volunteers participating in our programs
- Promoted the Social Innovation Fund and its work as part of a larger administration priority for evidence and impact
- Additional public-private partnerships
- More sources of funding for our programs

Key Audiences

Internal

- State Commission members (current and past)
- Project sponsors and grantees of all programs (current and past)
- CNCS Board of Directors (Senate Confirmed)
- AmeriCorps NCCC Advisory Board
- Current AmeriCorps members
- Current Senior Corps volunteers
- CNCS Staff including state-based Federal Offices of CNCS

External

- Affiliated groups (i.e. AmeriCorps Alums, Voices for National Service, Service Nation)
- Senior Corps Associations
- Elected officials at all levels including: Congress, Governors, Mayors, and State Legislators
- Aging organizations, particularly their Leadership Councils
- Corporate supporters
- Entertainment community
- Foundations

- Financial institutions
- Higher Education
- Potential grantees
- Other volunteer organizations

SECTION II

Core Actions

The following is an outline of how the national service community (project sponsors, grantees, members and private- and public-sector partners) can tell the national service and social innovation story in ways that create the strongest impact and deliver on our goals. The three core activities below, along with the optional themes (Section III), will guide us through the year to ensure that the national service and social innovation community has a common definition of what success will look like.

Core Activity 1: Participate in your program's week (Social Innovation Week, AmeriCorps Week and/or Senior Corps Week)

Programs and grantees/subgrantees will have a menu of options from which to choose how to engage in the programmatic weeks. The following includes a set of expectations that serve as the core activities.

The vision for these weeks is to connect your program brand with community impact and importance. Use your program's dedicated week to talk about your impact, your partners, and thank all those that make it possible for you to do your work.

If you are an AmeriCorps grantee, this year will also include a national swearing-in day in October 2015 (exact date TBD). The dates for AmeriCorps Week and the month of the national swearing-in were determined in consultation with state service commissions and national grantees. Although a consensus was not reached, these dates represent a majority opinion.

Core Activity 2: Compliant Public Education and Outreach that Meets Branding Requirements

The year-long plan provides ideal opportunities to ensure that every audience with which we connect knows that their community is benefiting from national service. This also is the moment to ensure all grantees are following the branding requirements.

By January 2014, all grantees were required to verify that all digital properties, media materials, and other relevant items reflect their association with AmeriCorps, Senior Corps or the Social Innovation Fund. At the beginning of each year is a great time to do an annual inventory to

make sure your properties and materials appropriately reflect your national service affiliation. Here are prime examples of how to execute the branding association:

- The standard AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, or Social Innovation Fund logos are prominently displayed on websites, most notably on the home page and “about us” sections.
- The standardized language used to describe the program in press releases and other public documents will identify the organization’s AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, or Social Innovation Fund affiliation.
- All gear for AmeriCorps-funded and Senior Corps-funded programs will include their appropriate AmeriCorps or Senior Corps logo.
- All sites where AmeriCorps members or Senior Corps volunteers are serving, especially those to which elected officials or private-sector partners are invited to visit, should have signs or posters that feature the grantee and their AmeriCorps or Senior Corps logos.

Core Activity 3: Outreach and Engagement

The outreach and engagement actions are ideal ways to energize those who already are part of the AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Social Innovation Fund family and bring more individuals to our community. Here are two core ways to achieve this objective:

First, as referenced above in the outline of the overall plan, the yearly engagement plan gives us multiple opportunities to engage key constituencies. CNCS will provide an online resource that will include a number of ideas on ways to engage the following groups:

- Elected officials at all levels of government
- AmeriCorps members and alums
- Senior Corps volunteers
- Grantees/sponsors
- Corporate supporters
- Potential grantees or project sponsors
- Other funders
- Other Stakeholders

As a reminder, what ties these groups together is that we are asking them to share their experiences with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Social Innovation Fund programs. Current and former members and volunteers better understand the role of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps in their communities (elected allies/corporate supporters), and strengthen their brand identity with CNCS, AmeriCorps (formula grant recipients in states) and Senior Corps.

Second, CNCS will provide at least one monthly opportunity for State Service Commissions, project sponsors, grantees, members and partners to amplify their national service association via social media and other channels. This cross-section involvement enables us to use our

platforms to engage our members, alums, volunteers and others in elevating the profile of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.

Social Innovation Fund grantees/subgrantees will also be able to amplify their work in many of the focus months and elevate their connection to the Social Innovation Fund.

In addition, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance are good opportunities to engage and introduce existing and new partners to your work. For example, we engage cabinet secretaries and other federal officials in service projects that are tied to their missions. This model may be replicated at the state and local levels.

SECTION III

Amplification of Monthly Focus/Theme

Throughout the year, CNCS will choose a specific monthly focus that programs can choose to highlight if it connects to their issue area. One source for the monthly menu will be the CNCS focus areas (see chart below).

These theme months are one way to think about when to identify and announce new private-sector support or program impact in the focus area. Having all national service grantees and partners highlighting their accomplishments is a powerful way to draw attention to our work. The considerations include:

- Announcing a new partnership in a key focus area
- Organizing a service project run by AmeriCorps members or Senior Corps volunteers that engages other volunteers, thus providing the opportunity for more community members to see national service in action
- Coordinating with CNCS to announce a grant with elected leaders and others
- Arranging a gathering for program alumni, former staff and supporters
- Amplifying CNCS research that ties to a specific focus area
- Announcing key results of Social Innovation Fund grants or expanded work in a focus area

The following is a list of suggested themes to give you a sense of how to amplify your work in these areas:

MONTH	THEME	KEY CONNECTION(S)
January	Economic Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps VISTA 50th anniversary • MLK Day of Service • Mentoring Month • Supporting college access
February	Social Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Innovation Week for grantees and subgrantees of SIF (February 9 - 20) • All CNCS grantees highlight innovative models yielding results (across all streams of service)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of AmeriCorps VISTA 50th event in DC (February 25)
March	Public Private Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps Week (March 9 – 13) • Cesar Chavez Day (March 31)
April	Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service Day (April 7) • Earth Day (April 22) • Global Youth Service Day (April 17 – 19)) • National Volunteer Week (April 12 -18) • AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Community Spotlight in Philadelphia
May	Senior Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Corps Week (May 18 – 22) • Older Americans Month • Also spotlight Seniors in AmeriCorps
June	Healthy Futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Summer hunger-relief programs • Let’s Read. Let’s Move. • Feature community gardening • AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Community Spotlight in Kentucky
July	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (July 26)
August	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to school time; highlight program accomplishments from previous year and presence for 2015-2016 • 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina (August 19 – 31) • Foster Grandparent Program 50th Anniversary (August 24) • White House Conference on Aging (Dates TBD) • AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Community Spotlight in Salt Lake City
September	Disaster Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Preparedness Month • September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance
October	Volunteer Mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Swearing-in Day for AmeriCorps (Date TBD) • Great time to recruit volunteers to support your program; talk about the value volunteers bring to your community • National Conference on Volunteering and Service (Houston, TX during the third week of October) • Make A Difference Day (October 24) • AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Community Spotlight in Minneapolis • Talk about Volunteer Generation Fund accomplishments
November	Veterans and Military Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of the CNCS <i>Volunteering in America</i> report (Tentative) • Veterans Day (November 11)
December	Giving Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Season of giving; focus on members and volunteers who make your programs strong; also

good time to work with others in your community to meet the needs of the most vulnerable

- AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary closing at the LBJ Library, Austin, TX (December 3)

While a public event for each theme may not make sense for every program, you will be able to use social media content to quickly and easily share with followers and supporters. This still accomplishes the overall goal of ongoing communication regarding the program's association with AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and/or the Social Innovation Fund. These months are also great opportunities to highlight alumni of your programs whose work may align with the focus month. Throughout 2015, we will also honor the 50th anniversary of AmeriCorps VISTA and the Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program (FGP).