

Communications Guide

AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, 2018



Dear AmeriCorps and Senior Corps Grantees:

We are delighted you are a part of the exclusive network of programs that work with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to champion national and community service across our great nation. Your recognition of the important role that service and volunteering play in addressing the critical issues we face – both in our communities and as a country – make you uniquely qualified to bring AmeriCorps and Senior Corps assets to your organization, community, or state. We are ecstatic to have you on board and very much look forward to working with you this year!

In an effort to support and streamline your communication and highlight your important work, please reference this set of guidelines and resources to enhance engagement and announcement ideas, improve social media posts, and bolster your storytelling across digital and traditional media. We also included sample templates and our agency branding guidelines to ensure consistent grantee messaging.

It is our hope that this toolkit not only serves as a resource for current projects but is something you see fit to utilize for future opportunities to strengthen your continuing relationship with AmeriCorps and/or Senior Corps. The CNCS Office of External Affairs (OEA) is here to be a resource for you and your program. If you are planning an event or announcement, need sample materials, or need assistance or advice, please contact us at pressoffice@cns.gov.

We look forward to working with you and thank you for your continued support of national service and volunteering in your community!

Office of External Affairs
Corporation for National and Community Service

Announcements

- **Press Release:** Send a release to local news desks, newspapers, and reporters. This is a great opportunity to include recruitment language and get elected officials or community validators on the record saying great things about your program and the impact of AmeriCorps or Senior Corps.
- **Social Media:** Please tag us ([@AmeriCorps](#), [@SeniorCorps](#), or [@NationalService](#)) in all posts related to projects/programs where CNCS members are present, and use our [#GetThingsDone](#). We encourage our grantees to “retweet” and/or “like” national service-related posts by AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members, and of course follow us on all social media platforms. In addition, we encourage AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs to follow the State Commission and/or CNCS State Office social media channels in their state. See below for additional social media guidance and sample posts.
 - We are pleased to officially announce that we have been selected as a [@NationalService](#) grantee! We look forward to working with [@AmeriCorps](#) and are excited to see what we can accomplish together!! [#GetThingsDone](#)
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- **Blog post:** If you currently have an active blog, please use the following guidelines to write a post highlighting your grantee status.
 - At least twice per calendar year, please have a Senior Corps or AmeriCorps member write a guest blog or schedule a Q&A that can be published in place of an article (interviews may be conducted by a staff member, another CNCS volunteer, or a member of OEA if you would like). Articles and Q&As should include information about the member’s service experience, the impact of service on both the community and the member, and details about the project or program. Remember to include compelling photos with visible AmeriCorps or Senior Corps branding.
 - While CNCS is phasing out the National Service blog, CNCS can share your content on other social media platforms. Share your blog post on social media and tag us ([@AmeriCorps](#), [@SeniorCorps](#), or [@NationalService](#)) and use [#GetThingsDone](#).
- **Newsletter:** Please share your award announcement in your newsletter. If you have community leaders and/or elected officials who work with you frequently, consider using their newsletter as a channel to get your announcement to a wider audience.
- **Email Blast:** Please include an announcement of your award in your next email update to your network and the benefits of national service in your community. This is a great opportunity to share details and data about the impact of your program, recruit volunteers, and increase the overall awareness of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.
- **Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor:** Consider writing an op-ed or letter to the editor of your local newspaper to thank AmeriCorps or Senior Corps members and provide details about their service. Be sure to include that their service is thanks in part to a CNCS grant. Include details like impact numbers, personal member stories, or recruitment information.

Events & Engagement

- **Site Visit/Member for a Day:** Invite elected officials, community leaders, and other VIPs to serve as an AmeriCorps or Senior Corps member for a day. Pitch the story to a local reporter and ask them to join you on the site visit. If your program addresses a specific issue, find a reporter who covers that beat and invite them to be a Member for a Day.
- **Swearing-In Ceremony:** Invite an elected official, community leader, or VIP to administer the AmeriCorps or Senior Corps pledge. Send a media advisory to local press to attend and follow up with a press release announcing your grant award.
- **Special Days and Holidays:** Use days of service as an opportunity to engage with media. Plan events with a media focus in mind, including but not limited to, MLK Day, 9/11 Day, AmeriCorps or Senior Corps Week, and National Service Recognition Day. Get creative and think about the calendars or events that may relate to the work that you do: Grandparents Day, Get Outdoors Day, Military Families Month, etc., or holidays like Thanksgiving. **(Please be sure to notify OEA no later than three weeks prior to the event, so we have sufficient time to obtain or support your efforts to obtain media for these events.)**
- **Presidential Volunteers Service Award (PVSA):** Submit one of your AmeriCorps or Senior Corps members to receive a Presidential Volunteer Service Award, which recognizes citizens for exemplary service in their communities. This award requires at least 4,000 hours of combined volunteer service and is awarded on behalf of the President of the United States. **Nominees must be thoroughly vetted to ensure they have completed the service requirements and have no red flags in their background that could reflect poorly on the agency.** If you have members who meet these requirements and are continuing to perform exemplary service, please submit them for the award. OEA can often arrange for special presenters and media coverage.
- **Proclamation:** Ask local officials to issue a proclamation in support of national service programs like AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. Consider this ask as part of your strategy to promote AmeriCorps or Senior Corps Week, and National Service Recognition Day. The CNCS Office of Government Relations (OGR) and OEA can help you provide documents with the appropriate language.
- **CNCS Initiatives:** Use CNCS initiatives as an opportunity to promote your program! Announce that your program or a partner organization is becoming an [Employer of National of Service](#), or collaborate with a college or university to announce a new scholarship or matching institution for those who have earned the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. You can also use the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award [payment data](#) as a resource.

Remember:

The Office of External Affairs is here to help! Want to explore potential communications strategies for events? We can do that! Looking for a national comment in a media story? We can do that. Need help pitching or inviting VIPs to a major event? We can do that too! Email us at pressoffice@cns.gov.

The Office of Government Relations (OGR) can also assist with efforts to engage elected officials including everyone from Senators and Congressmen, Governors, state legislators, and city and county officials, as well as their staff. OGR staff is available to discuss events, best practices, and engagement opportunities and assist with extend invites. Email them at governmentrelations@cns.gov.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

- **CNCS Accounts:** Follow us on social media.
 - Facebook: [@AmeriCorps](#), [@SeniorCorps](#) and [@NationalService](#)
 - Twitter: [@AmeriCorps](#), [@SeniorCorps](#) and [@NationalService](#)
 - Instagram: [@NationalService](#)
 - Snapchat: [NationalService](#)
 - YouTube: [NationalService](#)
- **Tag, You're It!** Make sure to tag us (using one or more!) in all of your relevant social media posts. By tagging [@NationalService](#), [@AmeriCorps](#) or [@SeniorCorps](#), we are able to see your posts and share them with our national audience.
- **Don't You Like Us?:** We encourage grantees to “retweet” and/or “like” national service-related posts by AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers.
- **#GetThingsDone:** Don't forget to use our hashtag [#GetThingsDone](#) to highlight your program's impact on the community. Hashtags act as a filter for online conversation and using popular hashtags help your content reach new audiences. By adding [#GetThingsDone](#) to the caption of your Tweet, Instagram, or Facebook post, users who have clicked on [#GetThingsDone](#) in any other post will see yours too.
- **Include Strong Photos in Your Posts:** Action shots of your members and volunteers go a long way to illustrate the concrete contributions they are making through your program. Don't forget to include the “A” or “S”! Branding is a must! (See [CNCS Branding Guidance](#) for more details.)
- **Let Your Members Tell the Story:** Allow well-vetted, social media-savvy members to use your organization's platforms like Instagram Stories, Facebook Live, and Snapchat to talk directly to your audience. It's fun for your members and engaging to your followers.
- **Take Over the National Service Accounts:** Are your members interested in taking over our National Service Instagram or Snapchat accounts for a day? Give them a larger platform to tell their story. Connect with us at pressoffice@cns.gov for more details.
- **Share First-Person Testimonials:** Take a video, post Q&As, or have your members write a story about their service and post them on your website, blog, or social media accounts. Consider having community members do the same to highlight the impact that AmeriCorps or Senior Corps had on them.
- **Expand the Network:** Tag your partners! Encourage partner organizations in your community and in your field to spotlight how AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members are advancing your partnerships. Help them craft messaging for Twitter and Facebook, including specific hashtags and handles to ensure your national service message reaches their audiences.
- **AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC:** Are your members part of AmeriCorps VISTA or AmeriCorps NCCC? Follow and engage with their accounts on social media:
 - Facebook: [@AmeriCorpsVISTA](#) and [@AmeriCorpsNCCC](#)
 - Twitter: [@AmeriCorpsVISTA](#) and [@AmeriCorpsNCCC](#)

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- Sample Facebook and Twitter Messages:

Facebook

Our AmeriCorps members are doing a fantastic job in the #CommunityGarden! They're leading Lincoln High School students in an after-school program planting seeds and painting signs. 🌱🥕🥦 #GetThingsDone #Gardening #AfterSchool



👍 Like 💬 Comment

Twitter

Our @AmeriCorps members are teaming up w/ @LincolnHS1 students to plant seeds & paint signs in our #CommunityGarden. Way to #GetThingsDone! 🌱🥕🥦 #Gardening #AfterSchool #Veggies



💬 ↻ ❤️ ||

Our Senior Corps RSVP volunteers are repairing homes in #LincolnCounty! They've been leading more than a dozen #volunteers and are expected to finish the project by next week. Way to #GetThingsDone! 🛠️🏠 #HomeRepair #HomeImprovement #Construction



👍 Like 💬 Comment

This week, @SeniorCorps RSVP volunteers lead the final stages of #construction on two homes w/ @LincolnCareBuilds! Way to #GetThingsDone! 🛠️🏠 #HomeImprovement #HomeRepair



💬 ↻ ❤️ ||

PHOTO GUIDELINES

A picture is worth a thousand words – and that’s true for national service, too. We are always on the hunt for great pictures that highlight the tremendous work you are doing in communities throughout the nation. Capture a moment, face, or place that defines AmeriCorps or Senior Corps. Have a great AmeriCorps or Senior Corps photo? Please post the cream of the crop on the [CNCS Flickr page](#). Below are some tips for getting the best photos.

- **Composition:** Make sure your subject is clearly in frame and in focus. Ensure branding is clearly displayed.
- **Subject:** Capture members engaged in service, but also all the great moments throughout the year. Inductions, celebrations, graduations, and service projects are all great moments for photos too. Be creative; include photos of supplies, uniforms, and more.
- **Social Media Sharing:** Share photos with us via social media by posting them on your social media accounts and use the #GetThingsDone hashtag.
- **Submitting Photos to Us:** You may also submit using the links below. These pages can also be accessed from the main CNCS Flickr page, [flickr.com/nationalservicephotos](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalservicephotos). Please include a brief caption describing the scene and names of people included.
 - [AmeriCorps](#)
 - [Senior Corps](#)
 - [AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
 - [AmeriCorps NCCC](#)

DIGITAL AND BRANDING GUIDELINES

- Prominently display the standard AmeriCorps or Senior Corps logo on the homepage of your website – and within your “About Us” section. Review the current [CNCS Branding Guidance](#) for additional information.
- Ensure your website is ready for national service visitors. It should clearly answer general questions such as the following: What do you do? How do I join? What will I do? What is the commitment? What are the benefits? We are happy to assist you in providing these answers.
- Please make sure your AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members are representing national service by wearing the appropriate branded attire at public events. (Clear markings with your program’s affiliation to AmeriCorps and Senior Corps are a condition of grant funding.) This may include, but is not limited to shirts, hats, and pins, which can be found at [NationalServiceGear.org](https://www.nationalservicegear.org).
- Please make sure your photographs also show the appropriate AmeriCorps and Senior Corps branding whenever possible.
- Please display signs and/or posters that feature the AmeriCorps or Senior Corps logo at all sites where members are serving. Site signs can be ordered at pubs.nationalservice.gov.

Elevator Speech and Language

Provide information to your AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members about their affiliation with the national service network and other service programs of CNCS. Encourage your volunteers to identify as AmeriCorps or Senior Corps members, keeping the national service family proud and strong. CNCS-branded name tags may be ordered at pubs.nationalservice.gov.

Sample introductions:

- *I am AmeriCorps member, John Smith, and I serve with Jumpstart to make sure every child enters kindergarten prepared to succeed.*
- *My name is Jane Smith and I am a Senior Corps Foster Grandparent, helping children improve their reading skills at Oak Street Elementary School.*

Use standardized boilerplate language (suggested below) to describe your AmeriCorps/Senior Corps project in press releases and other public documents that identifies your organization's connection to CNCS. Contact OEA if further guidance is needed.

[AmeriCorps/Senior Corps/AmeriCorps VISTA/AmeriCorps NCCC] is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency for volunteering, service, and civic engagement. The agency engages millions of Americans in citizen service through its AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and leads the nation's volunteering and service efforts. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

2018 Key Dates

Holidays, recognition weeks, and days of service are great opportunities to remind Americans about national service, and promote your programs and their impact. Let us know what is happening. Input your events here:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/events-submission>

- January 1 – 31 National Mentoring Month
- January 15 Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service
- March 11 – 17 AmeriCorps Week
- April 3 National Service Recognition Day (formerly Mayor's Day of Recognition)
- April, TBD National Volunteer Week
- April 20 Global Youth Service Day
- April 22 Earth Day
- April 29 – May 5 Senior Corps Week
- May 1 – May 31 Older Americans Month
- May 28 Memorial Day
- June 9 Get Outdoors Day
- July 4 Independence Day
- September 11 September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance
- September 29 National Public Lands Day
- September 1 – 30 National Preparedness Month
- October 27 Make a Difference Day
- November 11 Veterans Day

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- November 22 Thanksgiving
- November 27 Giving Tuesday
- December 25 Christmas

Contact Information

Let us help you! We know the best stories come from our grantees and we want to hear from you throughout the year, especially in the weeks leading up to your events so we can help get media coverage for your tremendous work. We are always on the lookout for great content to feature on our channels. Below are a few ways you can reach us.

- Send news clips and press releases or interview inquiries to our press office pressoffice@cns.gov. Great blog posts, social media, or photos can also be sent to this address.
- If you are engaging elected officials and have questions or need assistance, please contact the Office of Government Relations at governmentrelations@cns.gov.
- Send any impact or volunteer stories to engagement@cns.gov.
- Please be sure to copy your [CNCS state office](#), [State Commission](#), and program officer when reaching out. Your CNCS state email is [two letter state abbreviation]@cns.gov.
- Share your [upcoming events](#) with us at least 3 weeks in advance if possible.