Opening Day

Toolkit

A Guide for AmeriCorps Grantees

NationalService.gov/AmeriCorps

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview 2

Event Planning 3

- Take the First Steps 3
- Build a Crowd 4
- Create a Dazzling Program 5
- Pre-Event Preparations 7
- Spread the Word 9

Media Planning Beyond Your Event 11

Messaging 14

CNCS Resources 16

APPENDIX 17

- Event Planning Checklist 18
- Branding Requirements 19
- Sample Elected Official Invitation 20
- Sample Governor Proclamation 21
- Sample Event Program 22
- Photo Guidance 23

OVERVIEW

During the last 21 years, almost one million men and women have joined AmeriCorps to make our country stronger.

Last year, you helped us conduct a simultaneous, nationwide swearing-in of AmeriCorps members in every state and territory, on the same day, at the same time. The result was astounding, and we thank you for your leadership.

This year, we want to do something similar. October 16 will be AmeriCorps Opening Day, an opportunity to welcome new AmeriCorps members in a nationwide swearing-in pledge ceremony. Although we have identified a nationwide date for these ceremonies, we do not expect that all ceremonies will take place simultaneously as they did last year. We understand that events will look different from state to state and may not all be on October 16.

No matter how you are able to participate in AmeriCorps Opening Day, whether you host a large or small event, we want to help make your event successful. This toolkit provides tips on helping to plan an amazing event. It has tips on building a crowd, planning a great program, outreach, and more.

This toolkit is primarily designed for State Commissions since they are leading statewide events. However, in some states there may be AmeriCorps members who can't attend a statewide event because of travel, budget, space, or other limitations of their service. If you are one of those programs, we strongly encourage you to plan your own event! The tips inside can be helpful to you too – this toolkit also contains media, messaging, and branding that is relevant for all programs.

AmeriCorps Opening Day is a great opportunity to highlight accomplishments from this year. At the AmeriCorps 20th Anniversary, President Obama announced two new initiatives: Employers of National Service and Stars of Service. Since last year, more than 200 employers have signed up to be Employers of National Service. Your event could be a great time to announce key employers you have recruited to this effort. The event could also be an opportunity to honor Stars of Service in your state.

We wish you the best in planning for AmeriCorps Opening Day!

Office of External Affairs
Corporation for National and Community Service

EVENT PLANNING

TAKE THE FIRST STEPS

1. **Designate an event coordinator**
2. **Settle on a time**
3. **Secure a venue**
4. **Develop a budget**

For major events, early planning is essential. There are many steps to take and partners to work with. The good news: most State Commissions are already planning an event. If you aren't in that bunch, don't worry – there still is time. Here are some tips to get started:

Designate an event coordinator to plan your event and serve as the primary point of contact. Coordinators should develop a timeline of tasks and accomplishment dates and oversee the completion of these assignments. You may want to establish an event committee to help make decisions and provide for a better coordinated event. Your Commissioners can be invaluable for this, as can grantees or an Intercorps Council. Seek out pro bono help from a PR or event planning firm.

Settle on a time: The national AmeriCorps Opening Day in Washington, D.C., will take place on Friday, October 16, 2015.

Secure a venue: If you haven't already, you must secure your venue. Here are some things to consider:

- Invite AmeriCorps members, alums, program staff, and key stakeholders from around the state.
- Ensure that your chosen site has the space to accommodate your expected audience.
- Consider holding your event at the State Capitol with the Governor.
- Reach out to partners. For example, a state agency or grantee may have access to a good venue.
- Look into any permits or special conditions that may be in effect for your location.
- Consider your AV needs. You may want to show videos, photos or other visuals.

PLEASE NOTE: We do not yet have guidance on whether there will be a live-stream from the Washington D.C. event. We think it's likely, but are still working on it. We will let you know as soon as we do.

- Have a contingency plan in the event of bad weather, especially if planning an outside event.

Develop a budget to carefully plan your expected expenses in a detailed spreadsheet. Seek out cash and in-kind support from private sector or foundation partners. Look for pro bono help on event planning and media. If you have questions about allocating time or resources to your grant, consult your program officer.

BUILD A CROWD

1. **Make your invitation list**
2. **Reach out to AmeriCorps alums**
3. **Send invitations**
4. **Track your head count**

Make your invitation list: This is an amazing opportunity to engage a large number of stakeholders. As you make your list, think big. Aim for inviting all current AmeriCorps members serving in your state, including AmeriCorps National Direct, AmeriCorps NCCC, FEMA Corps, and AmeriCorps VISTA, as well as their program staff. For help in getting the word out:

- Consult with your CNCS State Director on reaching out to AmeriCorps VISTA.
- For AmeriCorps NCCC and FEMA Corps, check with the regional campus for your state.
- For AmeriCorps National Direct programs operating in your state, contact your program officer.

Reach out to AmeriCorps Alums: Your event offers a superb opportunity to connect with AmeriCorps alums in your state. Invite them to join your celebration and re-pledge their commitment to get things done. It will be a powerful experience for members just starting their service to meet alums who've advanced in their careers. And, alums will get a charge from being part of this nationwide event. The AmeriCorps Alums organization will be getting the word out to their members, and we will also be contacting our large list of alums. Work with AmeriCorps Alums to collaborate with chapters in your states to involve them in planning and invite them to attend.

Save the date and invite: Once you have your venue and time secured and a system for capturing RSVPs, send a "save the date" to your invitees. Given the distractions of summer and early fall, you should resend your invitation more than once.

Track your head count: When publicizing your event, consider using an online registration tool, such as Eventbrite.com. This can help you streamline the list-management process, get a better head count for your ceremony, and provide opportunities for follow-up later.

CREATE A DAZZLING PROGRAM

1. **Determine your program**
2. **Consider making an announcements**
3. **Invite elected officials to speak**
4. **Find an emcee**
5. **Keep everybody happy**
6. **Plan for accessibility**
7. **Consider audio-visual**

Determine your program: The success of your event depends on the program (and logistics management). Start now to determine who your speakers will be. Your program shouldn't be more than one hour. Limit speaking times to allow for more speakers and diverse perspectives. Be sure to include one or more AmeriCorps members or alums to tell their compelling stories of service. Their perspective is key to remind the audience what AmeriCorps is all about. Make sure to invite several prominent elected officials (see below). Other potential speakers: a beneficiary of AmeriCorps service, a corporate sponsor to explain why they invest in AmeriCorps, a nonprofit leader.

Create a preliminary outline for the event now, including a draft run-of-show with speakers and other parts of the program such as a color guard, the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem, and musical performances. The presentation of colors is usually conducted by a military, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Coast Guard, National Guard, or Scout color guard. Book color guards and performers early. See our *Sample Event Program* in the Appendix.

Consider making an announcement: Announcements can draw excitement and attention to your event. Consider any initiatives or deliverables that you can make public at the event.

This year is the one-year anniversary of Employers of National Service. Your event could be a great time to announce key employers you have recruited to this effort like your state government or public, private, and nonprofit employers of all sizes. You could also invite one of them to speak as part of your program.

This event is a great opportunity to honor Stars of Service. This is a new national recognition program designed to honor younger Americans from all across our country who are establishing themselves as service leaders early in life. Through these awards, we aim to inspire young people to commit to ongoing community service and leadership.

Invite elected officials to speak: Identify bipartisan federal, state, and local elected officials who would be appropriate to speak at your event. These could include a U.S. Senator or House Members, Governor or Lt. Governor, or Mayor. Aim for bipartisanship – national service has always had bipartisan support and the speakers should reflect this. If you are unsure about which elected officials to invite, or how to go about it, contact engagement@cns.gov for assistance. Your invitation letter to an elected official should be formal. You can find a *Sample Invitation* in the Appendix.

Find an emcee: Consider inviting a local television anchor or other prominent leader to emcee your program. Having a TV anchor not only ensures professional delivery, but also can help increase visibility.

Keep everybody happy: Make sure your speaking order and seating arrangements follow proper protocol. Generally, the lowest ranking official should speak first; the highest ranking official last. Staff members of elected officials do not have to speak unless they are reading a letter or certificate, but should be recognized. If you have questions on speaking order, contact Kim Allman at KAllman@cns.gov.

Plan for accessibility: Arrange for an interpreter for the hearing-impaired and make sure that the seating area is accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Consider audio-visuals: If your budget and venue allow, incorporate video projection. Use videos or slide shows for pre-program, and incorporate video into the program. Consider a slide show including photographs from service in your state. We have CNCS video assets and the national service photo gallery available for you to use.

PRE-EVENT PREPARATIONS

1. **Build your event**
2. **Your big announcement**
3. **Prepare your speakers**
4. **Gather your assets**

Build your event: There are lots of logistics to consider when planning your event. Here are some:

- Secure PA system, pipe and drapes, chairs, the podium, signage, and flags for the event.
- Will you need to build anything for the event (Stages, risers for performers, press risers, etc.)? Make plans now to prevent a last-minute scramble.
- For media, plan to order a mult-box (box with multiple outputs to connect audio) and press risers.
- Order directional signs, podium signs, and banners from the National Service Gear website (operated by Industries for the Blind) at americorps.nationalservicegear.org.
- You can also download AmeriCorps logos to print your own signage.
- Do you need buses to transport AmeriCorps members from around the state? Do they need to stay overnight? Work through these logistics and how to pay for them.
- Consider hiring a professional photographer and videographer to ensure that you get quality photos and videos from the event.
- Is there a community partner where people can gather after the event? Give people a place to linger and talk about the program. They already have something in common, help them relive the good old days or swap stories with current members. You may want to capture some of their stories for your wrap-up materials.
- Look into using an event planner if necessary to optimize your venue and program.

Your big announcement: Given all the attention focused on your event, this will be a great opportunity to make a big announcement. Begin thinking now about what you want to amplify – even if it means holding back an announcement until October. Here are a few ideas:

- Governor Initiative: Does your Governor have a new initiative involving the expansion of AmeriCorps involving a state agency? This is the perfect time to announce it.
- New Partnership: Announce a new public—private partnership to expand service opportunities or new partners that have signed up as an Employer of National Service.
- Impact data: This will be a great time to amplify some of the accomplishments of AmeriCorps in your state.
- Formula grants: Package up your formula grants to announce at your event. Be sure to include the number of positions, federal funding, local match, and Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards.

Prepare your speakers

- As you get close to the event, provide talking points for speakers and elected officials. See the *Key Messages* in the Appendix, or contact engagement@cns.gov for help.
- Help AmeriCorps members and alums polish their stories to ensure a smooth program.

Gather your assets

- **Proclamations:** Do you need proclamations for governors or mayors to use? A *Sample Proclamation* is in the appendix.
- **Branding:** Are your members wearing AmeriCorps gear? Do you have site signs and banners? Make sure that their A's are everywhere. See *Branding Requirements* in the Appendix. Order items at americorps.nationalservicegear.org.

SPREAD THE WORD

1. **Alert the media**
2. **Prepare your spokespeople**
3. **Prepare your reporters**
4. **Provide an early media availability period**
5. **Market the event**
6. **Tell us what's happening!**

Be sure to use all the traditional and social media channels at your disposal. Develop an event communications plan early on, and follow it.

Alert the media:

- *Develop a pitch list:* Begin compiling a pitch list of reporters you want to cover your event. Gather contact info for assignment editors at TV and radio stations, print reporters who cover beats that pertain to the issues AmeriCorps addresses (education, health, poverty, veterans, nonprofits, etc). Be sure to include prominent bloggers or online news sources in your pitch list.
- *Traditional media (print, TV, radio):* Contact your local media to pitch stories about your AmeriCorps members and programs using media advisories, press releases, and phone calls. Pitch stories and editorial commentaries in the month prior to the event. Get your event listed on community calendars.
- *Blogs:* Write blog posts to incorporate into your organization's blog. Place posts that you write in other blogs in your community like ones that are neighborhood or issue specific. Pitch your story to bloggers in your community that have influence with the audiences you are trying to reach.
- *Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram):* create messaging that communicates your AmeriCorps successes and that are appropriate for each of the social media platforms you would use.

Prepare your spokespeople: Determine who will be your lead spokesperson to talk to the media. Provide them with talking points and have them do some practice interviews. Have several AmeriCorps members and alums who are prepared to tell their stories to the media. Make sure all people interacting with the media have strong AmeriCorps branding and are well-prepared with talking points.

Prepare your reporters: Provide a lot of background about AmeriCorps and what the program has done in your state for reporters covering the event. We have a great story, make it easy for them to tell it. Make sure fact sheets, press packets, and programs are available for reporters and interested officials.

Provide an early media availability period: If your ceremony is taking place in the afternoon -- make sure you have a media availability period for program speakers and participants *before the event* to better facilitate deadlines for evening news broadcasts and weekend print media.

Market the event: Use your email lists to ramp up excitement about the event as it nears. Also, don't ignore the power of social media to promote your event. Twitter and Facebook are effective tools for letting people know about your celebration. Ask your AmeriCorps members to help promote your event too.

Tell us what's happening: It's important for CNCS headquarters to know what is happening in states around the country. That will help us deploy speakers and other resources, work with national media, and amplify what is taking place on this amazing day.

- Be sure to give us details about your event on our tracking tool at www.nationalservice.gov/swearing-in-form
- Share stories of service with us at engagement@cns.gov
- Share photos now, and after the event! See our *Photo Guidance* in the Appendix.

MEDIA PLANNING BEYOND YOUR EVENT

In the last section we gave you tips on using traditional and social media to support your AmeriCorps Opening Day event. But this ceremony provides opportunities to promote AmeriCorps above and beyond your event. This section gives tips on how to do that.

1. **Make A Plan**
2. **Gather Your Stories**
3. **Develop Your Pitches**
4. **Go Big And Wide**
5. **Be Creative With Social Media**

Make a plan: Don't wing it! Write down a plan for how you will generate media in the weeks before and after the AmeriCorps Opening Day event. As part of your planning, talk to the AmeriCorps programs in your area to find out what else is taking place and how best to coordinate. Your plan should include:

- Timing of and tools for media outreach
- Target media list
- List of AmeriCorps member and alum stories
- Data points you need to gather about accomplishments
- List of documents/invitations/signage that you will need
- Main messages
- Primary spokesperson
- Assigning responsibilities to specific individuals, i.e., who's doing what

Gather your stories: Start now to gather AmeriCorps member and alumni stories. It will take some time to track them down and get their stories, so the sooner you start the better. Ask your grantee organizations to suggest several of their best alumni stories – they are the most likely to still be in touch.

Here are some narratives that make for compelling human interest stories:

- **Class of 1994:** Find a member who served in the original class and see where they are now – and how AmeriCorps made a difference in their lives.
- **Pathway to Economic Opportunity:** Find an alum who overcame great odds to serve, and gained skills and experience through AmeriCorps to help land a job or start a career.
- **Helping Veterans Readjust to Civilian Life:** Veterans bring outstanding skills and leadership abilities that can be applied to problems on the home front. Highlight a returned Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who is serving again through AmeriCorps.

- **Fostering the Next Generation of America's Social Entrepreneurs:** Find an alum who went on to start his or her own nonprofit organization to solve a community problem.
- **Service as a Pipeline to Public Service:** We know that 60 percent of AmeriCorps alums go into public service careers as teachers, public servants, military members, or nonprofit professionals. Find an alum who is making a difference in the public sphere as an elected official.
- **Pathway to Employment:** If you have new Employers of National Service to announce, you might also have one of them ready to talk about why they value national service experience.
- **Passing the Torch**: Look for a member or alum who was mentored or tutored by an AmeriCorps member when they were younger and are joining AmeriCorps in order to return the good deed
- **AmeriFamily:** Find someone who was inspired to join AmeriCorps member by a parent who was in VISTA, or in the Peace Corps, or a grandparent in the Civilian Conservation Corps. If several members of a family have served with AmeriCorps, that can be the basis of a great story. Or highlight a married couple who met through AmeriCorps.

Develop your pitches: Show how AmeriCorps is meeting needs in your state. Every day AmeriCorps members are tackling tough problems that people in your area care deeply about – poverty, illiteracy, hunger, health, veterans and military families, and crime. Pitch your local media with real-life examples of how AmeriCorps is having an impact on those issues. Have impact data and beneficiary stories at your fingertips. Find out who covers your issue beat and prepare a member and someone they helped to be ready to tell their story.

Go big and wide: Think about reaching out to the full range of media outlets in your community.

- **Write a Letter to the Editor**. Letters to the Editor are one of the most popular parts of the newspaper. They are also easy to write and get placed. Keep them short and personal. Write about your AmeriCorps experience, or thank AmeriCorps members for their service. Ask people or organizations that your AmeriCorps members have assisted to write letters relating their positive experiences.
- **Submit an Op-ed Column**. An op-ed can be written by a staff member, an AmeriCorps member, or someone who has benefitted from the service of an AmeriCorps member. Check out the editorial pages of your local newspaper for information on the submission process.
- **Get on Radio or TV:** As you reach out to the media for your October 16 event, don't forget public affairs and talk shows on your local TV and radio stations. Contact your local public radio, talk radio station, or a popular radio show and ask to be a guest on one of their shows. Likewise, find the public affairs shows on your network affiliates and cable channels, including the public access channels.
- **Ask Stations to Play the PSA:** Check with stations to make sure they have a copy, and ask them to play it in the weeks leading up to and on October 16. The PSAs are more likely to be used if a station knows it's important to you.

Be creative with social media: Here is a list of suggestions and ideas to get you started. Don't forget to use #AmeriCorps so we can catch all your content!

- People have been wearing the "A" for more than 20 years! That's a lot of photos perfect for #TBT, or Throwback Thursday. Post your best "vintage" AmeriCorps photos on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr with ***#TBTAmeriCorps***.
- Have a blog? Consider having AmeriCorps alumni write guest posts for your platform.
- Use social media to build a crowd for your event. Share the link for your event and ask your AmeriCorps members and partners to share it as well.
- Using Facebook's Timeline feature, tell the history of your AmeriCorps program by adding milestones to your page's timeline.
- Host a Twitter chat and invite notable alumni, elected officials, or programs to participate. These can be fun to center around a theme like veterans, recruitment, or life after AmeriCorps.
- Arrange for guest blog posts by alumni, program directors, and other members of the AmeriCorps community on local or newspaper blogs.
- Invite members of your community to answer a single question – Why do you believe in AmeriCorps – and post their photo and answer.
- Old VHS tapes or DVDs lying around? Digitize that footage and post on YouTube and Facebook!
- Most importantly … use #AmeriCorps! We want to be able to share your content too.

MESSAGING

Below are key messages for your event. For guidance on how you can align your activities with our big picture goals throughout the year, please download our Guidance on Outreach and Engagement.

KEY MESSAGES

- **AmeriCorps is a cost-effective solution to America's toughest problems.**
- **AmeriCorps expands education and economic opportunity.**
- **AmeriCorps strengthens the impact of our nation's nonprofits.**
- **With more than 20 years of experience, AmeriCorps is poised for even greater impact and growth.**

AmeriCorps is a cost-effective solution to America's toughest problems:

- **Service is a Solution:** More than 75,000 AmeriCorps members improve the lives of millions of our most vulnerable citizens each year. AmeriCorps' impacts are proven and measurable.
- **Education and Youth:** AmeriCorps places thousands of teachers, tutors, and mentors into low performing schools, helping students succeed in school and gain skills necessary to get 21st century jobs.
- **Veterans and Military Families:** AmeriCorps supports the military community by engaging veterans in service, helping veterans readjust to civilian life, and supporting military families.
- **Disasters:** From forest fires and floods, to hurricanes and tornadoes, AmeriCorps members have provided critical support to millions of Americans affected by disasters since 1994.
- **Economic Opportunity:** VISTA, AmeriCorps' poverty-fighting program, engages more than 8,000 members each year in fighting poverty by creating businesses, expanding access to technology, recruiting volunteers to teach literacy, and strengthening antipoverty groups.
- **Health:** AmeriCorps members save lives and improve health through HIV/AIDS education and outreach, drug and alcohol prevention training, and connecting poor families to health clinics and services.
- **Environment:** Members build trails, restore parks, protect watersheds, run recycling programs, and promote energy efficiency, weatherization, and clean energy.

AmeriCorps expands education and economic opportunity:

- **Preparing the 21st Century Workforce:** AmeriCorps is a pathway to economic opportunity that provides members with valuable skills, leadership abilities, and experience to help jumpstart their careers.
- **Expanding Educational Opportunity:** AmeriCorps members have earned more than $3 billion in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards since 1994, helping hundreds of thousands of alums pay for college.
- **Building Community Leaders:** An AmeriCorps longitudinal study found that AmeriCorps alums are more attached to their communities, aware of community challenges, and empowered to address them.
- **Pipeline to Public Service:** AmeriCorps alums are significantly more likely to go into public service careers, with 60% entering nonprofits or public service. This is particularly true of minorities and people from low-income backgrounds.
- **Since September 2014, more than 200 employers have signed up to be Employers of National Service, showing that they value national service in career and skill development.** Many nonprofits, federal,

state, and local government agencies, and states, like Virginia and Montana, have signed up to be employers of national service this year.

AmeriCorps strengthens the impact of our nation's nonprofits:

- **Strengthening Nonprofits:** AmeriCorps members help tens of thousands of faith-based and community groups expand services, build capacity, raise funds, develop new partnerships, and create innovative, sustainable programs.
- **Mobilizing volunteers:** AmeriCorps is a powerful catalyst and force-multiplier for community volunteering. Last year AmeriCorps members recruited, trained, and supervised millions of community volunteers for the organizations they serve.
- **Public-Private Partnership:** AmeriCorps leverages substantial private investment from businesses, foundations, and other sources. AmeriCorps has cut costs and become more efficient by supporting more members with fewer federal dollars.
- **Advancing Social Innovation:** AmeriCorps invests in entrepreneurial organizations that have been recognized for their innovative approaches to citizen problem-solving.

With more than 20 years of experience, AmeriCorps is poised for even greater impact and growth:

- **AmeriCorps has Strong Momentum:** The President knows first-hand the power of citizens to get things done and is deeply committed to investing in service and community solutions. More than 340,000 AmeriCorps applications are received each year for less than 80,000 positions.
- **Task Force on Expanding National Service:** In July 2013, President Obama created a high-level task force identify new ways the public and private sectors can partner to expand national service as a strategy for tackling national priorities. As a result, we have created ServiceWorks with the Citi Foundation and School Turnaround AmeriCorps, Justice AmeriCorps, and Resilience AmeriCorps, joining with other federal agencies to drive impact around important national issues.
- **Bipartisan Support:** There is a growing recognition from Members of Congress, Governors, and Mayors of both parties that national service is an essential strategy to address key problems.
- **Building for the future:** The annual AmeriCorps opening day honor the almost one million individuals who have pledged to serve their country through AmeriCorps and look ahead to our exciting future by demonstrating impact, building partnerships, and increasing opportunities to serve.

CNCS RESOURCES

Below are links to various resources located on the CNCS website that can help strengthen your engagement events and your communications. Please visit these links to learn what's available and how you might be able to use them.

AmeriCorps Branding and Messaging Guidelines:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2015-AmeriCorps-Branding-Messaging-Guidance.pdf

AmeriCorps Videos:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/photos-videos

AmeriCorps Marketing Materials:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/marketing-materials

AmeriCorps Logos:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/logos

AmeriCorps Timeline:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/our-history/national-service-timeline

President's Volunteer Service Award:
http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/about

National Service in Your State:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/state-profiles

APPENDIX

EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

Are you on track for October 16? Use this handy list to be sure the major components of your event are on schedule.

August 2015

- ☐ Select and book your venue for the event on October 16
- ☐ Designate event coordinator and/or event committee
- ☐ Develop your program and begin inviting speakers, including elected officials (see sample)
- ☐ Book emcee, color guard, musical entertainment, and other participants in event program
- ☐ Connect with local alumni chapter to get help planning
- ☐ Send a Save-the-Date with basic info on event to AmeriCorps programs and stakeholders in your state
- ☐ Collect AmeriCorps stories, videos, and photos – and share them with CNCS
- ☐ Order official signage (such as banners, podium signs, etc.)
- ☐ Determine accommodations for guests or members with special needs, and secure those services
- ☐ Hire professional photographer and videographer
- ☐ Determine volunteer needs
- ☐ Complete the CNCS event form
- ☐ Request proclamation from Governor's office (see sample)
- ☐ Start social media amplification (don't forget to use #AmeriCorps)

September 2015

- ☐ Secure additional vendors for event (A/V, site build, chairs, buses, etc.)
- ☐ Conduct outreach to programs, alumni, members, corporate sponsors, and supporters
- ☐ Send a Save-the-Date to local and statewide media
- ☐ Launch online registration for event and send invitations
- ☐ Determine what announcements you will make at the event
- ☐ Confirm speakers and other program participants (emcee, color guard, musical entertainment, sign language interpreters)
- ☐ Produce any A/V assets such as slideshows or videos
- ☐ Send second save-the-date to media and guests
- ☐ Prepare fact sheets and program
- ☐ Determine media spokespeople and train them
- ☐ Schedule and host walk-through of venue
- ☐ Write remarks for speakers
- ☐ Finalize event program
- ☐ Recruit volunteers

October 2015

- ☐ Train volunteers
- ☐ Finalize press materials
- ☐ Send media advisory
- ☐ Print program books
- ☐ On day of event, send and post press release

BRANDING REQUIREMENTS

The annual opening day for AmeriCorps is an ideal opportunity to ensure that every audience with which we connect knows that their community is benefiting from AmeriCorps. This also is the moment to ensure all grantees are following the branding requirements.

All grantees should ensure that all digital properties, media materials, and other relevant items reflect their association with AmeriCorps. Please review the AmeriCorps Branding and Messaging Guidelines.

Here are prime examples of how to execute the branding association:

Logo:

- The standard AmeriCorps logo prominently displayed on websites, most notably on the home page and "about us" sections.

Language:

- The standardized language used to describe the program in press releases and other public documents will identify the organization's AmeriCorps affiliation.

Gear:

- All gear for AmeriCorps-funded programs will include the AmeriCorps logo.

Signage:

- All sites where AmeriCorps members are serving should have signs or posters that feature the grantee and AmeriCorps logos.

SAMPLE ELECTED OFFICIAL INVITATION

Date

The Honorable [name]
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear [Title Name],

Every day in communities across [STATE], AmeriCorps members are making a powerful impact on the most critical issues facing our communities. Whether improving schools, fighting poverty, rebuilding after disasters, providing health services, preserving the environment, or supporting veterans and military families, AmeriCorps members get things done.

On October 16, 2015, there is a nationwide recognition ceremony of the next class of AmeriCorps members.

As part of this national event, the [STATE COMMISSION] is hosting a statewide swearing-in at [TIME] on Friday, October 16, 2015 at the [VENUE] in [CITY]. We expect more than [ATTENDEES] AmeriCorps members, alums, nonprofit leaders, corporate champions, and other partners to attend.

We would be honored if you could join us for this historic occasion as we celebrate the extraordinary impact of AmeriCorps and welcome in a new class of AmeriCorps members as they embark on their year of service. *[We invite you to give brief remarks at the event and will provide further details as we get close to the event].*

We are grateful for your support of national and community service and hope you can join us for this celebration. To confirm your participation or request more information, please contact [NAME AND TITLE] at [ORGANIZATION] at [PHONE] or [EMAIL].

Warmest regards,

Executive Director
State Service Commission

SAMPLE GOVERNOR PROCLAMATION

[The state-specific data to fill out this proclamation is available on your National Service State Profile]

WHEREAS, every day in communities across America, AmeriCorps members are making a powerful impact on the most critical issues facing our nation; and

WHEREAS, the nation will mark the annual opening day of AmeriCorps with a swearing-in of a new class of AmeriCorps members and recognition events saluting AmeriCorps members and alums for their powerful impact; and

WHEREAS, since 1994, more than more than *[NUMBER]* of *[STATE NAME]* residents have served more than *[NUMBER OF HOURS SERVED]* million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than *[DOLLAR AMOUNT OF EDUCATION AWARDS]*; and

WHEREAS, AmeriCorps members address the most pressing challenges facing our nation, from educating students for jobs of the 21st century and supporting veterans and military families to providing health services and helping communities recover from natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, national service expands economic opportunity by creating more sustainable, resilient communities and providing experience, career skills, and college scholarships for those who serve; and

WHEREAS, more than *[NUMBER OF MEMBERS]* AmeriCorps members of all ages and backgrounds serve in *[STATE NAME]*, providing vital support to our people and improving the quality of life in our state; and

WHEREAS AmeriCorps members serve in more than *[NUMBER OF SERVICE LOCATIONS]* in *[STATE]*, bolstering the civic, neighborhood, and faith-based organizations that are so vital to our economic and social well-being; and

WHEREAS, AmeriCorps members demonstrate commitment, dedication, and patriotism by making an intensive commitment to service, and after their terms of service remain engaged in our communities as volunteers, public servants, and civic leaders in disproportionately high levels;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, *[GOVERNOR NAME]*, Governor of *[STATE]*, do hereby proclaim October 16, 2015, as AmeriCorps Day, and encourage residents to recognize the positive impact of AmeriCorps in our state; thank those who serve; and to find ways to give back to their communities.

SAMPLE EVENT PROGRAM

AmeriCorps Opening Day
Sample Program

Pre-Program (Video or slideshow of AmeriCorps members in action)

Presentation of the Colors

National Anthem (Member, AmeriChoir, university, youth, or church choir, or professional singer)

Remarks of AmeriCorps member/alum
- Story
- Introduction of emcee

Remarks by Emcee (Emcee can be local TV anchor or prominent leader/funder)
- Welcome, audience recognitions, person remarks
- Introduction of AmeriCorps member/alum

Remarks of Mayor
- Why AmeriCorps is so important to city

Remarks of State Commission ED or Chair
- Facts on accomplishments, thanking partners

Remarks of AmeriCorps member
- Story
- Introduction of U.S. Senator or House Member

Remarks of U.S. Senator or House Member
- Thanking members for their service

Remarks of AmeriCorps member
- Story
- Introduction of Governor

Remarks of Governor
- Remarks
- Swearing-In

PHOTO GUIDANCE

We want to highlight what you do leading up to the 2015 AmeriCorps Opening Day!

We are asking members and programs to send in your best picture(s) highlighting the great work you are doing in communities throughout the country. Capture a moment, face or place that defines AmeriCorps. Here is what to do:

1. **Take pictures** of AmeriCorps member(s) in action or celebrating AmeriCorps Opening Day. Make sure the AmeriCorps logo and branding are prominent!

2. **Upload the best image** at WeTransfer.com and send it to engagement@cns.gov.
    a. Include **'EVENT PIC – [State]'** in the subject line.
    b. Provide a detailed caption along with names of people in photo.
    c. Follow naming convention for image file name: "AmeriCorps-State.jpg"

3. That's it! Your photo may be used on national service websites, social media and throughout the year in our publications.

Specifications:

- Send high-resolution images (*at least* 1000px or 150dpi)
- Images should be JPG, PNG, or GIF format
- Include AmeriCorps branding in shots

- Use free service WeTransfer.com to upload and send images to engagement@cns.gov
- Include 'EVENT PIC – [State]' in email subject line
- Follow naming convention for image file name: "AmeriCorps-State.jpg"

- Examples at photos.nationalservice.gov
- Technical questions? Contact engagement@cns.gov