

AmeriCorps Impact and Branding

Presented on December 10, 2015

Access the audio recording to support this presentation at www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps

Welcome to today's session; this webinar is one in a series of webinars designed for program staff of tribal programs, national/multi-state programs, and commissions.

Today's Agenda

- Demonstrating the Impact of National Service: Barbara Ellen Reynolds
- CNCS and AmeriCorps Branding: Ted Miller
- Resources Available for AmeriCorps State and National Grantees
- Closing Remarks

Technology Check

Recording:

This webinar was presented on December 10, 2015; you can access the audio recording on the National Service Knowledge Network: www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps.

On Webex:

Use the Chat feature on your screen to ask a question at any time and respond to presenter questions; please test it now with a 'hi' to everyone.

Who's on the webinar today?

Please use the Chat feature on your screen to share your agency's name and location.

- Who's on the webinar today from a State Service Commission?
- Who's on from a tribal program?
- Who's on from a national or multi-state program?
- Who's on from CNCS or another agency?

Who's on today?

I'll be kicking off our presentations today. As you can see on the slide, I am currently the Training Specialist for the AmeriCorps State and National unit at CNCS, and I have been in this role since 2013. Before joining CNCS, I was a commission director and state AmeriCorps program director in Maryland. And I am not a great snowboarder – but happy winter and happy holidays at any rate!

Demonstrating the Impact of Service

Today's discussion points:

- Definition of AmeriCorps program impact

- Dimensions of impact
- Challenges faced by AmeriCorps programs
- Data collection
- Storytelling
- Continuous improvement

Getting Things Done

To define the impact of AmeriCorps, I think it's always helpful to remember how and why the national service program was created. As you know, AmeriCorps was created in 1993 to meet community needs across the US by engaging dedicated citizens in meaningful direct service.

The program's motto 'getting things done' captures one dimension of impact envisioned for the national service program.

Dimensions of Impact

There are multiple dimensions to the impact expected for AmeriCorps programs. In addition to 'getting things done,' AmeriCorps programs and members impact our communities in a number of other ways. These dimensions of impact include impact on the members themselves, both during and after their terms of service; impacts on community-serving agencies, community members and clients; impacts on community volunteers; and collective impacts on our nation as a whole.

Impact of AmeriCorps

These different dimensions of impact are articulated quite well in the legislation that created AmeriCorps.

The following items are selected from the full list (in the national service law as amended by the Serve America Act in 2009), and they provide a glimpse into the types of impacts envisioned for national service programs:

- Meet unmet needs
- Encourage national service across all segments of society
- Provide tangible benefits

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Data Collection

Data collection is a central and extremely important responsibility of all recipients of public AmeriCorps resources.

- Who collects data on AmeriCorps? CNCS, the Office of Management and Budget, Congress, state legislatures, private funders, AmeriCorps programs, State Service Commissions, and other stakeholders collect data on AmeriCorps service.
- What is collected? Member data; performance measurement data that supports the program's logic model; demographics; implementation successes, challenges, and special initiatives; and financial data are collected.
- Where is AmeriCorps data collected? eGrants is the central collection tool for CNCS; and AmeriCorps grantees use a variety of other processes for collecting their own program or state data.
- When does data collection occur? Data collection occurs throughout the AmeriCorps grant year.
- How do grantees collect data? CNCS provides instructions for submitting reports in eGrants; and grantees are responsible for establishing adequate systems to collect all required data for their approved AmeriCorps activities within their logic model.
- Why is data collection required? Thorough and timely data collection allows CNCS and grantees to demonstrate that the public AmeriCorps resources are managed responsibly and to demonstrate how AmeriCorps impacts local communities. Data tells us why our good work/service/effort matters.

Program Data

This slide provides a snapshot of program data that is required and data that may be collected to inform and improve AmeriCorps program delivery.

The CNCS required data includes member enrollment and retention rates, performance measurement data (outputs and outcomes), and, when appropriate for the program design, data on community volunteer generation.

Additional data in this example includes member demographics and alumni activities, and client and volunteer demographics. This type of data may inform program management in many ways, including outreach/marketing, recruitment, training, supervision, recognition, and evaluation.

Audience participation: please use the Chat box to type in other sources and types of data used by your program or commission.

Audience participation: please use the Chat box to type in other uses of data at your program or commission.

Types of AmeriStories

In addition to required CNCS reporting, programs may use the data they collect to build strong stories to engage their communities, members, funders, and more.

On the slide you can see a list of the types of stories AmeriCorps program should develop over time. These include:

- Where we came from: how was your program founded? Who were the people involved? What's interesting about that?
- What challenges our community/clients: community need, reason for existing
- How we achieve success: program in action, and people-centered examples of success
- How we learn from our mistakes: demonstrates continuous improvement and builds expertise in program and across field
- Where we are going: what does the future hold for your program, your members, and your community?

Written Stories

AmeriCorps stories demonstrate impact on multiple levels: from the impact on a single AmeriCorps member or service beneficiary to the impact on a neighborhood, tribe, or state and to the collective impact of the national service field as a whole. Each of these levels provides an opportunity for a powerful service story.

And each AmeriCorps story should contain several important elements. The best service stories include a personal focus. Whether it's the AmeriCorps member, the family in need of housing, or the adult who needs help finding a job, stories tell us about people. Good stories also provide a clear beginning, middle, and end and include vivid details. Great stories describe a transformation or change that occurred as a result of the service; again, the change could be seen in a recipient of service, an AmeriCorps member, or an entire community. And, finally, the best service stories demonstrate how AmeriCorps played a central role; they explain the meaning of the service to the broader community.

Written Stories

Recommendations for success:

- Create an annual calendar of opportunities and assign staff to collect stories
- Create a Story Bank and review it regularly
- Provide detailed staff training and practice
- Provide member training and practice in PST and IST
- Integrate stories into all aspects of programming

Visual Storytelling

The next type of storytelling is visual storytelling (that is, photos). Ted Miller will provide a great deal of information about visual storytelling in his branding presentation in just a few minutes.

Visual Storytelling

As with written storytelling, AmeriCorps programs can take specific steps to be sure to develop strong visuals for their programs.

These recommendations for success are similar to those given for written storytelling. They include:

- Create an annual calendar of photo opportunities and assign staff to collect them

- Create a Photo Gallery and improve it constantly
- Provide detailed staff training and practice
- Provide member training and practice in PST and IST
- Archive photos regularly

Grantee Tools

Over time, programs and commissions amass a wealth of program or subgrantee performance data that may be used to demonstrate the outputs and outcomes of AmeriCorps service. And since data collection and reporting are required for AmeriCorps grantees, this can be a routine and on-going process.

In addition to program data, programs and commissions may collect a variety of action-oriented or candid photos that capture the essence of service. From photos of AmeriCorps members serving in their AmeriCorps gear to photos of program beneficiaries or community partners, a well-stocked photo gallery is an invaluable tool for helping to demonstrate the impact of service.

And, finally, programs and commissions must routinely collect stories that reflect the unique nature of AmeriCorps. The story bank should include member stories such as ‘why I signed up for AmeriCorps,’ ‘the meaning of my service,’ and ‘where I’m going after AmeriCorps,’ as well as program stories such as ‘how our program started,’ ‘what makes our work successful,’ and ‘where we’re going in the future.’ To build their story banks, programs and commissions must build a culture of storytelling and a process for capturing and using important stories over time.

With all of this information working together, each grantee may pick and choose the data, images, or stories that are most useful to incorporate in to the program or commission website, use in social or traditional media, build in to the annual report or newsletter, and share in professional publications or public presentations.

Continuous Improvement

In today’s presentation, we have discussed many ways that AmeriCorps State and National grantees may convey the impact of national service. To do this well, it is important to continuously improve all aspects of the program, including:

- Data collection: seek data from a variety of diverse sources to represent the full range of the AmeriCorps program; and continuously improve the data collection tools and reporting
- Written stories: establish a story bank and annual calendar of opportunities to craft, refine, and publish stories about members, volunteers, and program services
- Visual stories: create and constantly refine a photo gallery of great photos to show the impact of your work

CNCS Staff Resources

There are several staff resources available to you at CNCS to help build your capacity in these areas:

- CNCS Program Officer
- AmeriCorps State and National Training Specialist
- Knowledge Network Manager
- CNCS Office of Evaluation
- CNCS Office of External Affairs

CNCS Website

The CNCS Office of External Affairs manages the CNCS website. Among its many useful features, the website contains these elements that will help you continuously improve your data collection and storytelling:

- The National Service Knowledge Network
- National service in your state profiles
- Research and reports on service and volunteering
- Newsroom
- CNCS official logos and stock photos

Title slide: Branding National Service

Ways to Make Your Mark

Ted Miller, Chief of External Affairs

CNCS Office of External Affairs

Ted Miller serves as the chief of external affairs at the Corporation for National and Community Service. Ted and his team are charged with telling the story of how AmeriCorps members make a difference in communities across the country. They run the AmeriCorps social media channels, help prepare AmeriCorps members for TV interviews, and work with the White House to get AmeriCorps programs highlighted in presidential initiatives. Among many exciting opportunities, Ted's team is helping lead the celebration of the AmeriCorps 20th anniversary.

Before joining CNCS as a presidential appointee in August 2012, Ted worked for nonprofit organizations and as press secretary to former Sen. Tom Daschle of South Dakota and then-Rep. Sherrod Brown of Ohio. He also traveled to 11 states as the regional communications director for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in 2002 and worked as a presidential appointee in the Clinton administration at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Ted has appeared on ABC News and MSNBC and has been widely quoted in leading publications and online news sources, from the *New York Times* to Salon.com.

Ted is a proud Jayhawk who holds a degree in journalism from the University of Kansas.

The Four R's of Branding

- Reasons
- Requirements
- Resources
- Recommendations

Brands Matter

Brand Elements: Core Values, Positioning, Brand Story, Tagline, Elevator Story

Why do you brand?

- To Provide an emotional connection to an organization, rather than just a transactional one
- Brand development creates a singular focus on a value proposition, helping cut through clutter, differentiate, and establish “mind share”
- Over time, consistent management of your brand establishes a reputation that can protect you

The images on this slide represent business brands that have been cultivated over many years.

Branding Checklist

- Logo
- Language
- Gear
- Site Signs

The AmeriCorps Community

These are the types of data points that we want all grantees to use to demonstrate the national impact of AmeriCorps:

- 75,000 members @ 35,000 sites
- Nearly 1 million AmeriCorps alumni
- Education Awards awarded to date: \$2.4 billion

Visibility

Next I want to discuss some of the resources you have to help you incorporate the national CNCS and AmeriCorps branding in to your program activities. Together, these will build the visibility of our national network and of your program.

Resources

Earlier, Barbara mentioned that the official CNCS and AmeriCorps logos are available on our website.

- Please make sure the AmeriCorps logo is displayed prominently on your website.
- You can find downloadable versions of all CNCS program logos, including the AmeriCorps logo, at www.NationalService.gov/logos.

Results of Branding Assessment

Earlier this year, our office also surveyed 154 grantee websites to see how we were doing in our overall branding efforts. Here are the results:

- 42 grantees rated 1-5 on a 10 point scale
- 112 grantees rated 6-10
- The mean score was 6.7

- The median score was 8
- The mode was 9
- The average rating was 6.7

These results indicate that, overall, our AmeriCorps programs and commissions are working hard to build the AmeriCorps brand and foster the national identity in their communities.

Public Engagement Calendar

In 2016, the Office of External Affairs will offer another resource to support grantee marketing and branding work. The Public Engagement Calendar will provide key milestones and dates for days of service and other CNCS activities. We are still putting the finishing touches on the 2016 calendar, but I can tell you now that AmeriCorps Week will be held on March 5-12 in 2016 (breaking news!).

Who Wore It Best?

A few minutes ago, Barbara talked about visual storytelling and building your agency's story bank. I want to emphasize how important it is to produce photos that are well branded and high quality. Our office collects photos from programs all over the country all the time, and we want to be able to use your material. However, if the photos come in and they are not well branded or high quality, then we can't use them.

On this slide, you'll see an example of what I mean. The photo on the right is an interesting one; the member looks happy, we want to know what type of service he's doing, and the field behind him could represent an interesting AmeriCorps program. However, we don't know any of that or if the images here connect to national service because the AmeriCorps logo is not visible.

By contrast, the photo on the right also shows a happy AmeriCorps member face and we want to know what type of service she's doing. Here, though, we do know that this is an AmeriCorps member – and an AmeriCorps program. We can also see the program's name over the member's left shoulder, which is Rebuilding Together. This is a good example of a well-branded and high quality photo.

Who Shot It Best?

Here's another example of good versus bad service photos. The photo on the left side of this slide shows three individuals standing around – with one of them on his phone. They seem to be standing by passively in a disaster zone while others work hard in the rubble behind them.

By contrast, the photo on the right side of the slide shows two AmeriCorps members actively engaged in service to help this disaster zone. The AmeriCorps logo and Rebuilding Together logos are both visible, and this photo provides a positive, action-oriented image for national service.

Who Said It Best?

This is the introduction all AmeriCorps members should use to introduce themselves, begin their elevator speech, etc.

My name is [NAME] and I'm an AmeriCorps member serving with [ORGANIZATION].

For the next year, I will be doing [TYPE OF SERVICE] while working to [TANGIBLE OUTCOME] in [LOCATION].

Unique Ideas

In addition to the traditional methods for representing national service and branding AmeriCorps, programs and members can be creative in their approaches. The photos on this slide show a couple of different creative ways to incorporate the AmeriCorps A into program photos.

The photo on the left side of the slide shows two AmeriCorps members who carved AmeriCorps and the A into a tree trunk.

The photo on the right side of the slide shows a group of AmeriCorps members who are forming a human AmeriCorps A with their bodies and the tools used at their service site.

Unique Ideas

And finally, I always want to lift up the Colorado commission and Mr. Sam Foster, the commission's AmeriDog. The Colorado commission used this series to very effectively promote service and engage the hearts and minds of their social media followers.

Stay In Touch

These are the variety of ways that you can stay in touch with national service staff and social media activities:

- Email: pressoffice@cns.gov
- Facebook: [facebook.com/amicorps](https://www.facebook.com/amicorps)
- Twitter: [@amicorps](https://twitter.com/amicorps)
- Tumblr: nationalservice.tumblr.com
- Instagram: [Instagram.com/nationalservice](https://www.instagram.com/nationalservice)

Branding Q&A

What questions do you have?

Where can I find the branding guidance document?

http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2015-AmeriCorps-Branding-Messaging-Guidance_0.pdf

Does CNCS have any examples of effective tri-branding (i.e., AmeriCorps, program, and service site)? We do not, but Ted and the External Affairs staff are always happy to review materials if grantees are looking for feedback on branding.

Will CNCS provide printed materials for outreach and marketing? No funds are available to distribute printed materials to all grantees. But fact sheets, stock photos, logos, and other materials are available at www.nationalservice.gov.

Grantee Resources

As a reminder, you may access all of the resources discussed today at the CNCS website, www.nationalservice.gov. And please be sure to visit the AmeriCorps page of the National Service Knowledge Network to access the slides and recording for today's webinar as well as many other materials to support your program management and branding efforts. The Knowledge Network may be found at www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameri-corps.

Wrap Up for Today

The next webinar in the AmeriCorps program development series will be held on January 28, 2016, 3:00-4:30 pm Eastern. The topic will be "Laying the Groundwork Before Your First Evaluation," and this session will be most useful for new programs that are currently operating in their first three-year AmeriCorps competitive funding cycle.

Thank You!

Thank you for your participation in today's webinar.