AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
SEPTEMBER 12 – 14, 2017 ★ ARLINGTON, VA
Data-driven Decision Making for Program Managers and Grantmakers
What are our research products and data telling us about best practices in:

- Member Management and Service Delivery
- Program and Partner Management
- Grants and Grantee Management
Research Reviewed

• Operation AmeriCorps National Evaluation
• School Turnaround AmeriCorps National Evaluation
• Commission Investment Fund Evaluation
• AmeriCorps Member and Senior Corps Volunteer Research Syntheses
• Senior Corps Grantee Focus Groups
• Social Innovation Fund National Assessment
Member Management and Service Delivery
Challenges

• Members and volunteers too often lack both service-specific expertise as well as professional maturity and other soft skills

• Incentives for and benefits of service are too often insufficient to support low-income members and volunteers; differences among service programs create confusion and barriers to member movement between service streams

• Recruitment goals, especially of more men and persons reflective of communities served, are difficult to meet and can present tensions for program implementation
Best Practices and Benefits

• “Near-peer” effect with those served, and close working relationship with staff directly implementing intervention seen as particularly beneficial
• Have on-site coordinators for member oversight and development, as well as communication with intervention staff
• Use open data management and reporting systems, accessible by members, staff and partners, to facilitate regular monitoring and learning
• Include staff, partners, beneficiaries and members in intervention planning and expectation setting
Program and Partner Management
Challenges

- Turnover in organizational leadership frequently threatens the stability and functioning of programs
  - Turnover in general organizational staffing threatens continuity of services, institutional capacity
- Members too often are the increased organizational capacity, which poses a major issue should AmeriCorps funding fall through or partner priorities change
Best Practices and Benefits

- Include staff, partners, beneficiaries and members in intervention planning and expectation setting
- Use open data management and reporting systems, accessible by members, staff and partners, to facilitate regular monitoring and learning
- Facilitate a learning community among partners to capture and share lessons and best practices
- Draft written partnership agreements that outline roles and responsibilities, and revisit annually
- Build evaluation capacity by bringing in expert staff or third-party consultants, depending on resources
Grants and Grantee Management
Challenges

• In some cases, agency restrictions on service activities and incentives seem to place undue compliance and monitoring burdens on grantees without demonstrated need or benefit

• Commissions and grantees’ development of long-term programming, measurement strategies often hindered by regular uncertainty about CNCS funding streams
Best Practices and Benefits

• Greater communication and coordination between Commissions and State Offices eases grantee administrative burdens
• Use open data management and reporting systems, accessible by CNCS, commissions, and grantees to facilitate regular monitoring and learning
• Facilitate a learning community among grantees to capture and share lessons and best practices
• Build a planning and development period into implementation when standing up new grant programs or bringing on new grantees
• Provide dedicated staff, technical assistance, and embedded evaluation for experimental grants, from NOFO through application and implementation
• Find out more about the Office of Research & Evaluation: www.nationalservice.gov/research

• Search our digital repository of research and reports: https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange

Thank you!

Joseph Breems
Policy and Programs Analyst
jbreems@cns.gov

Adrienne DiTommaso
Senior Evidence and Data Use Specialist
aditommaso@cns.gov