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There are two attachments to support this presentation: Resources for New Direct AmeriCorps Grantees and 2015 Checklist for New AmeriCorps Programs (posted on the National Service Knowledge Network:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/new-ameri-corps-program-start-institute>

The New AmeriCorps Program Start-up Institute is a series of workshops that are designed to help new CNCS grantees launch successful AmeriCorps programs. The 2015 series will include:

Session 1 – July 23, 2015

Orientation to CNCS and Basic Financial Management

Session 2 – August 20, 2015

AmeriCorps Member and Site Management; Financial Management Systems

Session 3 – September 15, 2015

New AmeriCorps Program Start-up Grantee Panel at 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Symposium: Lessons Learned in Year 1

Session 4 – Fall, 2015 and Beyond

Grantee Reporting, Site Monitoring, Member Evaluation, Branding and AmeriCorps Identity

Today's Agenda:

- Site Management Overview: Sarah Yue
- Member Management Overview: Kerry Lupher
- Financial Management Systems: Bonnie Janicki
- Closing Remarks

Sarah Yue: AmeriCorps State and National Program Officer:

Sarah Yue has seven years of experience managing grants for AmeriCorps State and National, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), where she has supported a number of new grantees during program start-up and management. She also spent 10 years teaching science at US and international high schools.

What do we mean when we talk about an AmeriCorps program's sites?

Typically, AmeriCorps grants function on three levels.

The **grantee** is the parent organization that receives CNCS funds and has the ultimate legal responsibility for the grant.

An **operating site** is the organizational entity that administers the AmeriCorps program in that state or region.

For multi-state grantees, there will be at least one operating site in each state where they are placing members.

A **service location** is the organization where a member provides most of his/her service in the community.

Typical service locations are schools, food banks, health clinics, community parks, etc.

Roles may be combined for some AmeriCorps programs depending on their program design. For example, a grantee may serve as operating site in its state or region, and an operating site may also be a service location if members are directly providing service there.

Regardless of the exact design, the grantee is responsible to manage and monitor all of these levels of operation. This is true even if the grantee chooses to subgrant funds to operating sites or service locations; the ultimate responsibility still rests with the grantee organization.

Comprehensive site management is a continuous process that includes selection, training, and monitoring of operating sites and service locations.

- Site selection involves considering the community need and performance goals articulated in your approved grant application, then choosing organizations with the capacity to partner with the program to address those needs and goals. For operating sites, this involves managing the AmeriCorps program at a state or regional level; for service locations, this means hosting one or more AmeriCorps members.
- Site training means helping staff at the operating sites and service locations understand the requirements of the program (both program-specific and the overall AmeriCorps requirements) as well as their own roles in training, supervising, and supporting AmeriCorps members. One important requirement is that sites clearly communicate their identity as AmeriCorps program sites and that members serving there clearly identify themselves as AmeriCorps members.
- Site monitoring involves developing a clear and detailed plan for ensuring that all AmeriCorps operating sites and service locations are fulfilling their responsibilities to the program and to the AmeriCorps members. Some examples of these responsibilities include certifying member timesheets and ensuring that AmeriCorps members avoid any prohibited or unallowable activities.
- Operating sites and service locations provide the essential framework of guidance and support for AmeriCorps members, including member training and day-to-day supervision.
- Since they play such a key role in the program, it is critical for grantees to establish solid site management systems on both the operating site and the service location levels.
- A helpful trio of goals to keep in mind in site management is “prevent, detect, and enforce”: prevent any incidents of non-compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations, detect any problems or issues right away if they do occur, and enforce prompt action at the site level to correct any identified problems.
- As the grant year continues, you will receive more guidance about the “detect” and “enforce” portions of site management. For today, we’ll focus on the prevention aspect – making sure your operating sites and service locations function smoothly and in compliance with all rules and regulations from day one. One important best practice is to have written agreements in place with your sites; these may be called site agreements, MOUs, MOAs, etc.

The purpose of a site agreement is to articulate up-front and in clear terms exactly what is expected of each party in the partnership, as well as what each party is agreeing to do. Specifically, site agreements should:

- Define the scope of the partnership and the nature of the member service activities;

- Clearly delineate the responsibilities of both the site and the grantee organization;
- Establish clear rules governing the partnership, including both program-specific rules and AmeriCorps regulations;
- Create a clear picture of how the partnership should function so that success can be evaluated later; and
- Ensure that the responsibilities undertaken by each party collectively form a seamless and comprehensive support system for AmeriCorps members. For site agreements with service locations, you could consider sharing copies of the agreement with AmeriCorps members so that they understand what types of support and services will be provided by their service locations.
- The content of site agreements will vary based on the program model and needs, and depending on whether the partner organization is an operating site, a service location, or both. However, there are several important items you should include:
 - a designated site supervisor (for service locations, this will be AC members' direct supervisor; for operating sites, this will be the individual responsible for leading the management of the AmeriCorps program in that particular state or region);
 - length of agreement (typically a program year);
 - specific responsibilities that the site agrees to carry out: e.g., supervising and training members, completing reports, raising a certain amount of match funds
 - specific responsibilities that the grantee agrees to carry out: e.g., types of support, materials and/or funding the grantee will provide to the site
 - member position description: sets the parameters of allowable activities for members
 - policies and regulations (AC regulations and provisions as well as program-specific rules)

Some other things to consider when crafting site agreements:

Make sure that the agreement clearly articulates who is responsible for conducting National Service Criminal History Checks on members, including the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) check and the state and FBI checks. If operating sites or service locations are expected to conduct some or all of these checks, it is essential that this responsibility be spelled out explicitly in the site agreement and that the mechanism by which the checks will be conducted is also specified. Your site management plan should also include a process to monitor the initiation of those checks and ensure that it is done before the members' start of service.

A second thing to consider is to build in consequences within the site agreement itself for any failures to fulfill agreed-upon responsibilities. In addition to specifying corrective actions, also consider outlining the circumstances under which a site agreement would be terminated or would not be renewed.

Finally, remember that the site agreement is just one piece of a broader ongoing plan for site management. We talked earlier about the "prevent, detect, enforce" model of site management; implementing strong site agreements is only the first step of this model. As you go through your grant year, it's important to put in place monitoring protocols to ensure that the site agreement is being followed as written and that your sites act promptly to resolve any compliance concerns.

Your CNCS program officer is your best resource for helping you develop strong site management practices, including site agreements and monitoring plans. In some cases, your program officer may ask to review your

site agreements and will provide feedback and suggestions. Please reach out to your program officer with any questions or concerns you may have.

The National Service Knowledge Network also has some suggested resources on site management; see the link on the slide. Please remember, though, that these are examples, not templates. Each program must determine its own site management plan and structure. Please refer to the 2015 Terms and Conditions and the Resources for New Programs document for additional guidance.

What questions do you have?

Question on August 20 call: where can I find examples of site agreements?

Answer: Find tips for creating strong site agreements, an outline of a site training manual, and more in the Site and Subgrantee Management eCourse posted on the National Service Knowledge Network:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/site-and-subgrantee-management>

Kerry Lupher is an AmeriCorps State and National Program Officer. Kerry manages and supports grantee relationships with state commissions in Illinois, Nebraska, and Rhode Island, three Indian tribes, and the US territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For over 20 years, she has brought positive and transformative change to communities across the nation in her roles as social worker, advocate, consultant, evaluator, trainer and volunteer.

Successful member management is one of the most critical elements of an AmeriCorps program. As members are the cornerstone of every program, you need to spend a significant amount of time at program start-up developing systems and tools to ensure successful member service and positive member experience.

Our discussion today will focus on understanding where to find information about program requirements related to member management, important considerations for successful member management, and a more in-depth discussion about position descriptions and member service agreements.

There are many requirements for member management, such as recruitment, selection, screening, training, monitoring, etc. Those requirements are outlined in the Federal Regulations (or administrative laws that govern AmeriCorps), the AmeriCorps Grant Terms and Conditions issued with your award annually, and additional guidance that CNCS issues periodically to help clarify some of the requirements, such as the Frequently Asked Questions and Criminal History Check Resources and Guidance.

In addition, the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, is also used as guidance in member management, as it provides information on the amount of living allowance and education award for a particular grant year, as this can change year to year during your grant period. For example, the amount of education award increased with the 2014 grants, so current programs had to amend their member service agreements and other documentation for the 2014-15 program year to make sure they had the correct amount listed.

All of these documents are available on the Managing AmeriCorps Grants page. The link is shown here.

Here is the screenshot of the landing page for the Managing AmeriCorps Grants page on the CNCS website.

You'll want to get to know and love this page... you should be closely familiar with the documents and references here as they link to different regulations and resources you need to develop your individual program and member management materials, train staff and members and for ongoing management of your grant.

If you haven't already, spend a little time after this Webinar clicking into the different links to familiarize yourself with the content and consider bookmarking this page, as you will likely return to it often.

If you recall during the July 23rd webinar, my colleagues discussed the AmeriCorps program development cycle.

It is important to note that member management responsibilities occur throughout the cycle and throughout the program year and should be considered at all stages of your program development (here called foundation building), implementation, and evaluation.

This flow chart of member management can be helpful in thinking through your different activities and responsibilities with members.

First, a program develops AmeriCorps member positions. Certainly, each program engaged in some process to determine what member positions would be needed (including how many and the types of slots) and what activities and responsibilities the members would have for their service. This diagram takes you through each member management step from developing positions through the point that members exit the program and end their term of service.

This flowchart may serve as a useful guide to help you think through your processes and develop plans and systems for:

- Member recruitment and selection;
- Enrollment;
- Training;
- Supervision (including monitoring);
- Performance assessment; and
- Exit

In developing your member management systems, some important things you need to consider and incorporate are:

- Ensuring that member positions are designed to avoid activities that AmeriCorps members are prohibited from engaging in and that members are properly trained and supervised to avoid those activities;
- Having a strong plan for conducting compliant and timely criminal history checks.
- Ensuring that you have a process for possible member grievances. (The AmeriCorps Regulations provide specific direction on what needs to be included in your grievance policy.)

- Another consideration is having a secure file management system for all necessary member documentation and making sure that you have a process in place to check and verify that your files include all that CNCS requires and all that you need to manage your members.
 - Member files are among the first things CNCS staff and the Office of Inspector General (or OIG) look at as part of program monitoring and auditing.
- Consider whether any members need disability accommodations and work with your organization and with CNCS to provide these.
- It will be important to think through your overall approach to supporting and engaging members; to make sure they have a positive and successful experience. For example, some programs build in monthly teambuilding and social events for members to help them connect, develop esprit de corps, and provide support to one another. Other programs provides members with support services (similar to an employee assistance program) to help with a variety of issues, from working through emotions to offering financial advice.
- If possible, programs also may consider having a process in place to engage AmeriCorps alumni. (Not every program does this, but more and more are using alumni engagement as a program and member development strategy).

The more time and effort you spend thinking through all the elements of member management as you develop your program, the more successful your members and, ultimately, your program will be. Yes, you did already articulate some of your plans related to member positions, training and supervision in your grant application; now it is important to think through these member management systems and responsibilities more concretely; being sure to include CNCS requirements, and then putting your member management plans into action.

As you develop your member management strategies and consider the important topics I just mentioned, know that your CNCS Program Officer can be a great resource for thinking this through. There are a lot of rules to follow and systems to put in place as you start-up a new program... be sure to use your resources and take the time to be thorough and inclusive of what is required. Here are a few examples of how this comes into play:

As you recruit members, you will need to have a clear plan for how you are going to conduct criminal history checks on them. Has your plan been approved by your CNCS Program Officer? Do you foresee any challenges with completing the checks within the timeframe you have for starting their service? Do your staff know what documentation they need to retain in member files (and/or other secure locations) related to the checks?

Second, you may be aware (hopefully you are) that CNCS requires members to be enrolled and exited from the program in the Member Portal within a 30-day window (30 calendar days—not business days). It will be important for you to have designed processes and timelines that make sure that all enrollment and exit paperwork is in order, and staff are able to complete these tasks on time.

I know there's a lot to learn... Today, we'll focus our limited time together on the position descriptions, member agreements, and file keeping.

The member position description is a document that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of each member during his or her AmeriCorps service.

Each member service agreement needs to include a member position description, either within the agreement or as an attachment. And each position description needs to be reviewed and agreed upon by members and their supervisors. Program staff should either have a direct role in creating member position descriptions or there should at least be a process in place for program staff to review and approve the descriptions; to make sure that members actually engage in the activities to which they agreed; and to ensure that the member activities are aligned with the scope of the approved grant.

It may be that your program plans to have all of its members serve in the same role and do the same activities; thus you could have one uniform position description. With a different program model, however, you may have members serving in a variety of roles – at one or multiple locations; and a different position description would be needed for each position. For larger grantees with multiple locations or host sites, it would be important to have a process in place to ensure that all position descriptions are comprehensive, include appropriate tasks and responsibilities, and are of high quality. You may do this, by providing a template for host sites that outlines the information they need to include for each position description; provide training and guidance on how to develop them; and then have a process for reviewing and approving the position descriptions prior to service start or during monitoring.

Once developed, well designed position descriptions can serve as the foundation for recruiting, selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating members. A position description may outline certain knowledge and skills that members must have to qualify for the positions. This information then would be used to promote available positions, to screen applications, and as criteria for member selection. Position descriptions also describe what service activities and responsibilities are required. These statements may help provide an outline for what training and on-boarding is needed so that members are prepared to successfully engage in service.

Then, once the program and a member's service term are underway, the position description can help guide supervisors in monitoring, managing and supporting a member's success in fulfilling the duties assigned; help evaluate the member's performance; inform future training needs; and serve as a platform for engaging members in reflection.

CNCS does not have specific requirements for what needs to be in a member position description, but we have some suggestions based on best practices and lessons learned for what makes a strong position description and a strong program.

Just as a weak position description, one that is vague and does not contain sufficient information about what the member's roles and responsibilities are, can jeopardize your program, a strong position description can be an invaluable tool for successful program and member management.

This list was created, based on best practices in AmeriCorps program management.

Your position description, at a minimum should include the member name, the title of the position, and list member tasks and responsibilities, which should be as specific and comprehensive as possible.

In addition, a position description may also include information about the program with which the member will serve, the service location and supervisor information. It may also list specific information about service hours and the start and end of the service term.

Some organizations, choose to list specific outcomes and deliverables on their member position descriptions that are tied to the program's performance measures, which can be helpful for overall program management.

You can also list the types of training members will receive for their positions or the skills and knowledge that a position requires.

You may include the list of prohibited activities within the body of the position description, in addition to having it in the member agreement and other member materials, just to reinforce the topic.

My colleagues developed a great eCourse on building and maintaining strong AmeriCorps member position descriptions that you can find on the National Service Knowledge Network.

This brief, 15-minute recorded course, provides helpful tips for developing member position descriptions and examples of different types of descriptions:

www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameri-corps/member-position-descriptions

Now let's move on to the member service agreement...

Each AmeriCorps member is required to sign a member service agreement before the start of service, and it needs to contain all the elements listed on pages 6 and 7 of the 2015 AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions. You can see from this long list that the member service agreement is a pretty hefty document... some of these elements you'll likely copy verbatim from the Regulations (like the list of prohibited activities, and rules on members not displacing or duplicating staff positions). Other elements are required by CNCS but we do not dictate what needs to be included because they will be completely unique to each program... such as your program's rules around member suspension and termination, how a member might file a complaint, and standards of conduct.

As with the member position descriptions, CNCS does not provide grantees a template for member service agreements, as they are unique and specific to each program. If you have questions, though, or feel stuck in developing certain content, consult with your Program Officer, and consider the great resource you have in other AmeriCorps programs. Grantees are often willing and happy to share their tools. Do keep in mind, though, that all documents must be customized to your program and include current terms and conditions. And, you, of course, are responsible for own compliance, so know the content, believe in it, and make sure that it fully represents AmeriCorps requirements as well as those of your organization.

Finally, and for future thought, consider how you will share the member service agreement document with your members – individually, or perhaps in a group pre-service orientation – so that rather than be intimidated by the sheer volume of words, they understand, honor, and embrace the agreement that you are making with each other for a commitment to service.

Now, let's consider what goes into member files...

Each program will need to have a consistent tool for collecting, confirming, and storing AmeriCorps member records during and after the service year. Requirements for those records may be found throughout the guidance on AmeriCorps grants management.

This slide provides a starting list for your consideration as you develop processes for bringing new members on board. Be sure to include in every member file:

- Full member application, screening and interview materials (such as interview notes, reference checks, and writing samples)
- Verification of eligibility to serve should be included. (This would include a copy of the documents you used to verify age (such as a driver's license or birth certificate), nationality, and high school diploma.
- Member files must include completion of all National Service Criminal History Check required steps – AND documentation that checks were completed prior to the member starting service; AND verification (i.e., signature and date) that program staff reviewed the criminal history check results. Timing of initiation and completion is just as important as completing the steps themselves.

Because of the specificity required for member records, you should take great care as you go along to compile complete and accurate materials. It can be very difficult to go back in time to try to fill in any holes in documentation – and, in some cases, there can be negative consequences if you fail to complete member onboarding steps or do not have documentation that member enrollment and management steps were completed fully and on time. The great news is that once you establish a structure for creating and maintaining member files, it will be easy to implement year after year.

A helpful tool for ensuring that your member file contains the information you need is to develop a member file checklist that your staff complete for each file and that you can use to check the completeness of files. Your CNCS Program Officer can provide you with the member file checklist that we use in our grantee monitoring practices which may be used as the foundation for developing your list.

Again, please use your CNCS Program Officer as a resource and sounding board as you develop documents and systems for member management. Program Officers can talk through and provide guidance in your development stage and review and provide feedback once you have drafted materials.

I also mentioned the resource you have in each other as AmeriCorps grantee programs – as new grantees and with grantees who have successfully implemented AmeriCorps programs for years.

Also, bookmark - and come to know and love – the Managing AmeriCorps Grants Webpage to find policy FAQs, terms and conditions, regulations and more.

And finally, check out our CNCS Knowledge Network for sample member management documents provided by other grantees.

What questions do you have?

Bonnie Janicki is a Senior Grants Officer for Grant Operations at the Corporation for National & Community Service, Office of Grants Management. Currently she manages a team of grants officers responsible for the day

to day grants management of a diverse portfolio of programs that includes AmeriCorps State and National, Social Innovation Funds, Martin Luther King and many others. Bonnie began her federal service with the Corporation in 1994 and continues to enjoy her work.

AmeriCorps program grants management systems: review

Grant Terms and Conditions:

- Are issued by CNCS with the Notice of Grant Award
- Are the guiding principles for CNCS-funded grants and cooperative agreements
- Contain program and financial guidelines
- Are binding on the grantee and subgrantee in the same manner

NATIONAL SERVICE CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS BASICS:

For staff with no access or episodic access you need two components:

1. NSOPW BEFORE hours start for work.
2. FBI or state checks no later than the first day hours start.

For staff with access to vulnerable populations you need three components:

1. NSOPW BEFORE hours start for work.
2. FBI checks no later than the first day hours start.
3. State checks (state of service and state of residence) no later than the first day hours start.

BOOKMARK THIS PAGE FOR ALL THINGS NSCHC:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check>

Efficient Accounting Systems

Distinguish between:

- grant vs. non-grant related expenditures
- CNCS vs. grantee share
- direct and indirect costs
- program years
- budget categories

All costs charged to the grant must be supported by clear documentation

What is in your financial house?

Characteristics of Organizations with
Highly Effective Financial Management

- Written and followed policies and procedures
- Qualified and trained financial staff
- Effective communications
- Succession planning and cross-training
- Self-assessment and continuous improvement
- Active, knowledgeable, and informed Board and finance committee

Policies and Procedures:

Policies and procedures are a set of written documents that describe an organization's:

- policies for operation – “what is to be done”
- the procedures necessary to fulfill the policies – “how it is to be completed”

All staff must be familiar with these documents

Documents must be kept up-to-date

Documents should explain the rationale and include principal transactions and completed forms

Documents must incorporate federal and CNCS grant regulations and terms and conditions

Documentation Basics:

What do we document?

EVERYTHING!

All expenditures charged to the grant, INCLUDING:

- Match
- In-kind

Documentation Basics:

Why retain documentation?

- To track incoming information
- To review information
- To provide historical evidence
- To provide evidence of accomplishments
- To prepare for an audit

What is source documentation?

Physical:

- Hard = paper documents, such as purchase orders, invoices, timesheets, reimbursement vouchers, travel vouchers
- Soft copy = computer system, floppy disks, CD disks, thumb drives,

Source:

- Internal = documentation created within the organization
- External = banks, vendors, customers

Benefits:

Can the documentation support the value of the goods or services, as well as meet the performance of the program objective

Documentation of Staff Time:

- Critical for staff to document time charged to both federal and grantee share of the budget
- Particularly important for staff working on multiple projects to document actual time spent on multiple projects
- Timesheets are required

Key Elements of Financial Reporting:

- Prepare all financial reports with information from the organization's accounting system
- Review and reconcile the information to ensure accuracy prior to report submission
- Ensure files have the proper documentation to support all information reported in financial reports
- Submit all reports on time

Resources are available to support AmeriCorps program financial management on the CNCS website and Knowledge Network. Specifically, you can find:

- Grant Terms and Conditions
- AmeriCorps Regulations
- <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-amicorps-grants>
- Trainings

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management>

What questions do you have?

On the August 20 call, a participant asked: 'In regards to the criminal background checks, has the FBI Channeler DO Temporary Exemption from June 16th been updated?'

Answer: There was a minor edit made to the June 16 guidance, but it did not alter the content. You can access it here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check>

Wrap Up for Today:

Resources on the CNCS website

- www.nationalservice.gov
- Grant Terms and Conditions, Regulations, NOFO

Resources on the National Service Knowledge Network

- www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps
- Start-up Institute Recordings, Slides

Reminder: Be sure to register for the ASN Symposium

- <http://americorps.hb-co.com/index.htm>

Reminder: New AmeriCorps Program Start-up Grantee Panel

- September 15, 2:30 – 4:00 pm, Arlington, VA

Thank you!