

2014 – 2015 Start-up Institute:

- Session 1 – July 23, 2014
 - Orientation to CNCS and Basic Financial Management
- Session 2 – August 20, 2014
 - Member and Site Management; Financial Management Systems
- Session 3 – September 17, 2014
 - Program Start-up Grantee Panel
- Session 4 – January 27, 2015
 - Grantee Reporting (progress and financial)
- Session 5 – February 19, 2015
 - AmeriCorps Member Evaluation and Support
- *Session 6 – March 19, 2015*
 - *Monitoring Members and Sites*
- Session 7 – June 25, 2015
 - Program Year Confluence

Today's Agenda:

- Monitoring Members and Sites: Barbara Ellen Reynolds
- Program Spotlight: Alexandro Simental, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
- Closing Remarks

Barbara Ellen Reynolds, Training Specialist

- AmeriCorps State and National Training Specialist
- Former Director of State Service Commission
- Former AmeriCorps State Program Director

Key Points

- Grantee requirements in CFR
- Monitoring benefits
- Elements of a member and site monitoring plan

Operating site = means the organization that manages the AmeriCorps program and places members into service locations. State subgrantees (programs) are operating sites. National grantees must identify at least one operating site to which they can assign service locations in the state where they are placing members.

Service site = means the organization where or with which a member actually provides his or her service in the community. Typical service locations are schools, food banks, health clinics, community parks, etc. The service location may be the same as the operating site, but only if the member actually serves at or with the operating site organization. A member may serve at multiple service locations, all of which

must be listed in the portal, although the program must select only one for the member's primary assignment.

Monitoring occurs in the Implementation and Program Evaluation/Revisions phases and informs all aspects of the program. It is a critical part of continuous program improvement.

This is the beginning of the CFR citation on grantee monitoring.

45 CFR § 2541.400 Monitoring and reporting program performance.

(a) *Monitoring by grantees.* Grantees are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of grant and subgrant supported activities. Grantees must monitor grant and subgrant supported activities to assure compliance with applicable Federal requirements and that performance goals are being achieved. Grantee monitoring must cover each program, function or activity.

This is another way of looking at monitoring – not just as a legal requirement but also an opportunity to capture the impact of all the different member and site activities that go on each year.

- Demonstrates effective management of public resources
- Provides opportunities to strengthen program delivery and AmeriCorps member experience
- Helps tell the story of the impact of program on members, service recipients/participants, communities, etc.

At the start of each year, programs and commissions determine their monitoring plans for the year ahead. In general, the plan addresses these questions:

- When? Schedule of monitoring activities; align with AmeriCorps grant year deadlines
- Who? Program staff roles
- What? Everything; all aspects of AmeriCorps-funded activity
- Why? Prevent, detect, enforce; continuously improve
- How? Methods depend on program design, risk

There are several different methods to monitor members and sites; frequently used methods include site visits, reporting, and formal and informal communications.

Note that risk-based assessment is at the center – and central to all monitoring plans, no matter the type of program.

Risk-based Assessment:

Be on the lookout for:

- Prior compliance problems – especially those that involved prohibited or unallowable activities
- Low accomplishment/performance
- Significant distance from AmeriCorps program staff
- Site staff turnover

- Low quality and/or late reporting
- Excessive absence from training and/or site

What are programs monitoring?

Service hours – verify timesheets are correct; members are on track to successfully complete the term and earn the education award

Service activities – verify every member activity is within the scope of approved grant and member position description; no violation of federal rules (i.e. prohibited or unallowable activities)

Sample member position description; note areas in red that are to be monitored: duties, time requirements, evaluation and reporting

The member position description establishes the expectation that the AmeriCorps program will conduct monitoring throughout the program year.

What are programs monitoring?

- Member supervision – verify timesheets are signed by the site supervisor, that supervisor is spending appropriate amount of time/attention with the member
- Service activities – verify every member activity is within the scope of the approved member position description and site agreement; no violation of federal rules (i.e. prohibited or unallowable activities)

Sample site agreement; site agreements establish the expectation that the AmeriCorps program will conduct monitoring activities throughout the grant year.

- Ensure adequate workspace including a phone, desk, and access to a computer and the Internet by the first day of the ACM's term of service.
- Provide the ACM with a thorough orientation and direct supervision (to include at least four hours per month).
- Participate in four training days with the AmeriCorps program over the course of the program year.
- Adhere to AmeriCorps regulations and the AmeriCorps Program Policies and Procedures.

Reminder of form and function of CNCS monitoring tools; many programs adapt the Excel workbook for their own monitoring uses

Corrective Action:

Response depends on problem; may need to launch investigation, notify/engage Inspector General, etc.

What if I find a problem? Standard steps to take include:

- Document

- Re-train staff and/or members
- Provide correction
- Notify CNCS if appropriate
- Follow-up within a reasonable period to confirm correction

Monitoring Members

- Service hours—confirm all members on track to successfully complete the year; timesheets showed % columns for easy viewing for sites, members, and program staff
- Service activities, results—compared member reports to goals set out in our grant proposal and performance measures; members had to explain deviation or “slippage”
- Training and professional development—monthly trainings and retreat gave us in-person opportunities to observe, check in, ask for focused reflection or discussion of service
- Life after AmeriCorps—starting at the mid-year, program staff kept log of all members’ plans and offered help (e.g., providing reference, reviewing a resume); we wanted to know what every member was doing when they left the program

Monitoring Sites

- Member timesheets—confirmed signatures
- Supervisory meetings—in reports, at visits, and through informal communication: made sure SS were meeting with members at least 1 hour/week, per the MOU
- Site Supervisor training and partnership support—targeted communication with SS to make sure they had everything they needed
- Partnership goals—monitored program goals through member reports, site visits, and SS communications

Check your assumptions

- Program fluency (goals, rules): not everyone knows the approved grant application, performance measures, and budget by heart; AmeriCorps program staff must be diligent and patient in supporting sites
- Program buy-in (national service, member development)

Double check your math

- Member timesheets
- Reporting data

Invest in staff training to support monitoring

- Site Visit Manual—our program created a site visit manual and training for staff (new and experienced); held the training at the start of each program year, before the monitoring visits were to begin

- Worst Case Scenario Addendum—provided a guide for managing difficult meetings

Key Points

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What questions do you have?

Alexandro Simental, Director, Economic Development Department, holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications from the University of Texas at El Paso. Bringing over 20 years of experience, Mr. Simental’s contributions to the Pueblo are represented in various grant-funded programs. His experience includes the creation and inception of systems-change programs for the Upper Rio Grande Workforce Development Board and numerous community-serving organizations throughout the West Texas region, focusing on increasing access to health care, education and employment for persons with disabilities, first generation college students, and other underserved and economically disadvantaged community members.

Location: El Paso County, Texas

- Nation Building/Cultural Education (4 half-time members)
- Financial Literacy (2 half-time members)
- Environmental Stewardship (1 half-time member)
- VITA (2 half-time members)
- Entrepreneurial Education (2 half-time members)

Program offerings are focused on building knowledge and skills among Tribal members, except VITA which provides tax preparation services to the community.

Host Sites: the Tribal Departments of: Economic Development, Empowerment (Education), Environmental & Natural Resources

Program tools to track and monitor progress:

- Program Ledger – keeps track of member time, showing hours accumulated and time balance.
- Program Progress Report – a narrative submitted by the host sites to the EDD just prior to the mid-year and year-end reports.
- Program Workbook – used to record program activities, such as educational sessions, events, and training. Submitted to EDD just prior to the mid-year and year-end reports.
- Program Monitoring Tool – tailored for each host site/program offering.

Host Site Specific Tools and Processes:

- Target Tigua host sites use a variety of pre- and post-tests to measure knowledge gains
- Participant Satisfaction Surveys to glean feedback from participants
- Self-assessment of program offerings (i.e. educational sessions)
- Monthly member development meetings provide the opportunity to glean member feedback

- Monitoring occurs at least once per program year for each program/host site.
- Monitoring tools – a monitoring tool is developed for each Target Tigua AmeriCorps program.
 - Example: Financial Literacy
 - Example of Feedback: Feedback Letter
- Self-Evaluation on Educational Sessions:
 - Example: Tool Template, this type of evaluation helps to track performance over time.

Lessons Learned

- Take time to learn the e-grants system
- Ensure that your program policies address all key areas

Program Strengths

- Staff knowledgeable in program development
- Staff expertise in self-assessment processes served to create self-monitoring process
- Great network of partners and host sites

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Resources at www.nationalservice.gov

- Grant Provisions
- National Service Knowledge Network: e-Courses on site and member management
 (www.nationalservice.gov/resources/online-courses)
- Next Session: June 25, 3:00 – 4:30 pm Eastern; AmeriCorps Program Year Confluence (2014 to 2015)