



Ideation AmeriCorps Post-Event Notes

2016 National Service Training Conferences

The 2016 National Service Training Conferences are a training opportunity for national service program staff. Four conferences were held (Atlantic, North Central, Pacific, and Southern) and an Ideation AmeriCorps event was held at each conference. Ideation AmeriCorps was an interactive discussion in which participants brainstormed innovative ways that national service programs can address today's national and local challenges. Participants also explored new ways of thinking about and designing national service program models. Each session was open to commission staff, AmeriCorps program staff, and Senior Corps project staff.

A summarized version of event notes, broken down by conference, are provided below. For more information on Ideation AmeriCorps, please email ASNInformation@cns.gov.

An Ideation AmeriCorps event was also held at the CNCS headquarters in Washington DC in December, 2015. You can access notes from the [first Ideation AmeriCorps event here](#).

(Notes are ordered alphabetically by conference title and focus area title. Notes are broken down by table group. Each table group was focused on a different CNCS focus area.)

Atlantic Regional Conference (May 2016)

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Nexus of disconnected youth, dislocated workers, and re-entering individuals

Table notes:

- Connect Department of Justice and Department of Labor funding with AmeriCorps and Senior Corps
 - Example: jail-based hospice volunteers transitioning to AmeriCorps Opportunity Corps through Memorandum of Understanding (necessary policies and procedures to address safety concerns)
- Challenges around recruitment and retention of high-risk populations should be incorporated into program design. For example, retention expectations for AmeriCorps programs (i.e., 100% retention) may not fit this program design.
- College access model could be adapted to this population, especially in areas with large re-entering populations at risk (example, Re-entry Corps)
- Campus Compact VISTA model could be applied to reentry, college access, employment access applied to non-traditional population
- Legal aid aimed at expungement of records to improve employability (professional corps?) and to provide support for public defender offices
- Team-based models (such as NCCC) can provide needed supports for targeted opportunity youth or re-entry individuals, as residential programs may be a good transition from incarceration
 - Would require a special cost per member service year allowance to support the housing and board costs
 - Need to also consider youth unwilling to submit to residential or relocation



- Multi-generational models may be considered for mentoring and support in team-based residential programming. For example, leadership/mentor roles could be filled by Senior Corps-eligible individuals
- Would need to consider how to incorporate mental health supports in field-based programs, as this creates heavy staffing needs
- Could be a moving focus of inner-city AmeriCorps programs from school-based to re-entry opportunities
- Create portal specific to the needs of this target population

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Housing for AmeriCorps members, support for aging populations

Table notes:

- Housing a member can be a challenge, especially in expensive areas and/or rural communities
- More support is needed for aging populations (aging in place and supports)
- Idea: Ameri B&B
 - Aging individuals provide housing for AmeriCorps members in exchange for help and support
- Where:
 - Entirely new facilities: private and community space, shared meals
 - Redesign abandoned school buildings, other available facilities
- Work out how service hours would be counted/considered
- Help grow and brand national service through community connections and bonding
- Intergenerational housing for AmeriCorps members
 - What?
 - Aging population plus AmeriCorps members living in community
 - Ameri B&B
 - Need to house AmeriCorps members combined with need for support for aging population
 - Offers independent living/privacy for both parties
 - What's in it for CNCS?
 - Increase people able to serve
 - Potential partnerships for corporations, increased match, money
 - How will we accomplish it?
 - Building relationships with landlords (tax benefit to landlord?)
 - Advertising opportunity to host an AmeriCorps member for a year
 - Rehabilitating homes to be accessible for seniors
 - YouthBuild-like programs could come in for three years to help develop the neighborhood
 - Tax breaks / incentives for construction companies
 - Utilizing old school buildings or old rectories/convents and turning them into apartments or multi-use properties
 - Who would manage? CNCS or local programs? Using city-based national service task forces.



- Compensation through extra hours, etc. for members who may be helping out an older adult.
- Cross-stream program with Senior Corps?
- Challenges?
 - Would hosting an AmeriCorps member be considered a sublet?
 - Could the payment to the homeowner be non-taxable?
 - Transition would be difficult, since AmeriCorps is only a one year commitment.
- Look at existing models from Vermont, minor league sports, international exchange programs, efforts in Seattle (AmeriHouse) and Baltimore (housing for police officers and teachers around police stations)

Focus area: Education and Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Cycle of educational poverty

Table notes:

- Need to create holistic family engagement in schools
- Redefine 'slot' as entire family
- Bring parents into schools
- Kids involved in service learning
- Outcome: increased engagement in learning for entire family
- Integration of VISTA, AmeriCorps State and National, and Senior Corps
- Challenge: what is keeping families from being engaged in school?
- Incentivize parents to be engaged through earning awards toward student tuition (similar to Silver Scholars/Somner awards)
- Families of National Service: where families can serve together to be engaged and pool their service hours towards an education award ('family' slot type/Full time equivalent)
- Partnership with welfare programs and social services
- Training/service study program: service learning with defined set of skills that benefit a family unit
- No disqualifiers for adult participation (i.e., felony, citizenship). Child beneficiary: dreamers, citizens, on way towards legal permanent residency
- School/community center collaboration with cross-stream service
- Involved in development programs, Mayor's office, VISTA, schools
- Indirect service: VISTA, build up structures, identify partners who could identify beneficiaries/families, finding community or family champions to identify local strategies.
- How to bring job skill training into the schools so they are engaged and learning in school
- Student creates service opportunities to engage parent (activity development led by AmeriCorps members)
- Outputs/Outcomes: student grades/attendance, parent participation, skills developed, greater understanding of school (parent), and increased ethic of service (children)

Focus area: Education

Challenge discussed: Student loan debt (for AmeriCorps members and program beneficiaries)

Table notes:



- What can AmeriCorps do?
 - Education members and students they work with about loan repayment options and benefits to being members, such as forbearance, loan forgiveness, education award, etc.
 - Remove tax from the education award (would require act of Congress)(benefits AmeriCorps members)
 - Educate members on government processes and civic engagement
 - Facilitate relationships with colleges and universities to offer scholarships and other economic opportunity programs for students (benefits program beneficiaries and/or AmeriCorps members)
 - Education/Economic Opportunity performance measures around this issue (benefits program beneficiaries and/or AmeriCorps members)
 - Linking student loan forgiveness to AmeriCorps service (i.e., time served = lower loan balance) (benefits AmeriCorps members)
 - Train the trainers for AmeriCorps program directors around loan borrowing and repayment issues and available resources (benefits AmeriCorps members)
 - Create programs starting in middle school that educate students about college savings and financial literacy (program beneficiaries)
 - Mobile college and financial awareness help centers to properly inform people about college cost, acquisition of loans, and repayment options (benefits program beneficiaries)
 - Partnership with Junior Achievement (benefits program beneficiaries and/or AmeriCorps members)

Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenge discussed: Opioid abuse epidemic

Table notes:

- No specific demographic of age range affected
- VISTA program to identify ways for communities to address this
 - Year 1: Community assessment and identification of potential pilot programs (recommend 10).
 - Could VISTA members each write a thesis to describe the issue and proposal for their community? CNCS would then choose from their proposals (5-10)
 - Year 2: Implementation of pilots in selected communities across the nation
 - Year 3: Impact and sustainability assessment, reassess program design
- Involve other federal and state agencies (example: Department of Health)
- Each community has unique resources and gaps
- Members could track prescriptions and potential abuse (Department of Health may not have capacity).
- Members could become substance abuse counselors.
- Research funding for holistic medicine (yoga, reiki, incorporating alternative therapies, etc.). Empowerment of alternative options.



- Needle exchange program: people would go to doctor's office for needles, and doctors would provide education.
- How does AmeriCorps get involved with these issues, as they intersect with public policy?
 - Members can't advocate for legislation
 - Members can educate
- Area Recovery Network
 - Safe place for recovery groups to meet (AAA, etc.)
 - Could AmeriCorps be involved in communicating to users about these options?
 - Transition services for incarcerated, former addicts, etc.
 - Bridges out of poverty – wrap around services, members would network with community services
- Could there be curriculum that is nationwide for members and their beneficiaries?

North Central Regional Conference (June 2016)

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: National service as a career pathway, Re-entry after incarceration

Table notes:

- Volunteer with housing as a way of building up your resources to improve income stability and housing stability
- AmeriCorps is a career pathway for some (as in, some could go to college OR do AmeriCorps, may not need to do both). How?
 - You could enroll as a member in high school or right out of high school; do not have to have a high school diploma to enroll.
 - AmeriCorps could be one's 'apprenticeship.' It could be one's job training or internship, their entry point or pathway to a career.
- AmeriCorps can also be career exploration.
- Implementation:
 - Organizations need opportunities to use members to maintain simple projects that meet the skill level of less-advantaged members, re-entry members, members with only basic educational attainment.
 - 'AmeriCorps Light'
 - Greater flexibility for youth service (e.g., summer service). Allow youth to participate as members.
- Potential partners
 - Greater coordination and interagency collaboration between federal agencies
 - Overlap funding with HUD or Health and Human Services
 - Department of Education for youth opportunities
 - Department of Workforce Development



- Allow nonprofits to be co-applicants to AmeriCorps and share capacity and responsibility for grant oversight and implementation. This allows rural communities to band together and put together a more competitive application.
- Re-entry after incarceration:
 - AmeriCorps members as social and emotional support for re-entry
 - Assist in mentoring while incarcerated
 - Trainings in cognitive support
 - Be a new network
 - Coach and train using technology, navigating the city, finding a job, etc.
 - Service alongside them while doing community service
 - Connecting kids with additional supports and services

Focus area: Education

Challenge discussed: Early childhood education / apathetic youth

Table notes:

- Our philosophies: break down silos, and it takes a village
- Early childhood education
 - Medical screening / doctor's office
 - Reading
 - Collaboration with Senior Corps for help with continuity
 - Scale programs, using older adults
 - Barriers: resources limited at schools
 - Retired teachers
 - Transferring skills
 - Phase out retirement
 - Early education to preschool, benefits received
 - Service learning and mentoring (high school to elementary)
 - Pay it forward – participants expected to do it
 - Senior Corps/AmeriCorps – have to connect with 3 people in the community
- Challenge 2: Apathetic youth
 - Service learning progression throughout education
 - Gap year
- Corporations
 - Sponsor a program / member / teacher
- Ambassador program:
 - 2nd year AmeriCorps members help programs recruit new members, alongside government and corporate leaders
- Universal early education and universal national service
- Program element ideas:
 - Retired teachers to Senior Corps
 - Each member bring 3 members on
 - Universal service

- Ambassadors program
- Service sabbatical for working adults



Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenge discussed: Human/Sex trafficking

Tables notes:

- New program, using existing organizations that already do this or similar work
- Steps:
 1. Complete a needs assessment, funded by a planning grant (find someone to apply)
 - Where is it happening? To what extent?
 - What resources exist in that area? Will individuals in that area serve as members?
 - Who will support the initiative in that area?
 - Advisory committee needed.
 2. VISTA project: Program would set framework, build capacity and relationships, fundraising for sustainability, researching best practices, finding/securing host sites and match and community education.
 3. AmeriCorps State and National direct service: Once program design is built using VISTA program, apply for a statewide AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps members would provide the direct service (such as prevention, outreach, referral, and continued support) along with community partners (especially law enforcement for safety).
 4. Senior Corps: Mentorship program, helping beneficiaries reach goals
 - AmeriCorps State and National and Senior Corps partnership to support beneficiary: independent living skills, securing housing (Youth Build to help build housing)

Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenge discussed: Opioid and heroin epidemic

Table notes:

- Targets both rural and urban communities
- Challenges: getting the right people involved with designing the initiative
 - Who has the knowledge? Who has the funding? (e.g., NIH, big pharmacy, HUD?)
- Current grant year structure and performance measures may not be aligned with the nature of addiction and recovery
 - Need a hypothesis of best practice to test
- Solution: two prong approach to combatting opioid epidemic
 - Enroll members who are in recovery themselves
 - Members receive: housing (HUD?), stipend, education award, structure, support/cohort, meaning, professional development, dignity (i.e., your skills and experience are valuable and an asset)
 - Members serve as an assistant case manager for recovery services. Clients are referred to the program. When clients opt into the program members will:
 - Help clients set SMART goals (from a list of recommended goals)



- Check in – consistently follow up
- Refer clients to resources
- Connect to peers – support group
- Additional questions and considerations:
 - Are members qualified to do the service that is actually needed?
 - Should members be placed at each step of the process, or just one?
 - A 'win' may look different for each client. How would the program track it? List of goals to choose from?
 - Should the program target clients on the bubble? Certain security levels need to be considered.
 - Are there specific veteran needs and services?
 - How can we extend the capacity of experts?
 - For Recovery Corps members your sole focus for one year is your well-being (curriculum follow personally) and your case work (lead from curriculum) all housing and expenses are taken care of

Focus area: Veterans and Military Families

Challenge discussed: Threat of domestic terrorism

Table notes:

- Community versus neighborly
- Addressing isolation (often linked to becoming radicalized) through an AmeriCorps program
 - Faith leader, AmeriCorps member, and a volunteer sent out in teams to do a door-to-door campaign
 - Connecting dots
 - Equipping volunteers
 - Resource toolbox
 - Responsible
 - Sustainability builders
 - Tracking individual outcomes
- Mental Health
- Isolation
- Safety
- Advocacy
- Resources
- Neighborhood asset mapping
- Disease management



Pacific Regional Conference (April 2016)

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Prisoner re-entry, rural transportation

Table notes:

- Ride Corps to assist rural populations in accessing jobs and service and providing experience to the corps
- Job training for youth
- Car mechanics training to provide working transportation and job training to rural populations
- Driving and pilot training (Alaska)

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Juvenile justice

Table notes:

- Train members to go into prisons to provide GED services
- AmeriCorps cadet program, reduce hostility with law enforcement
- Support services for immigration

Focus area: Education and Veterans and Military Families

Challenge discussed: Healthy families, need to educate the children in military families

Table notes:

- Address: Education, academics, socio emotional – isolation, relocation, Parenting
- Provide: Health and safety activities, home visits, parent groups, tutors, workshops on healthy eating and safety
- Engage military spouses as members

Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenges discussed: Human trafficking, healthy eating, nutrition, youth mental health, suicide prevention

Table notes:

- Members as community builders
- Youth Mental Health First Aid program model
- Train whole community
- Mentoring program that partners with school counseling
- Rural members in Alaska are working in suicide prevention



Southern Regional Conference (April 2016)

Focus area: Disaster Services

Challenge discussed: General disaster service

Table notes:

- Disaster kits and disaster preparedness for school children
- Escape plan pillowcases for children
- PetCorps – The idea would be to offer a place for families and their pets during times of disaster. Many times shelters do not allow animals to join families. This often results in many families, particularly the elderly who chose not leave their homes during disasters for fear that their pets will perish.
- Disabled Shelters
- Using members to fill in spots in nonprofits during disasters
- Volunteer coordination
- Long-term focus
- Large number of national participants trained
- Percent of each AmeriCorps program trained and ready to go
- Education about kinds of disaster for state populations

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Re-entry for formerly incarcerated individuals

Table notes:

- Programs that target community re-entry individuals for service
 - These members could be placed in programs which do not have vulnerable populations
- Programs for currently incarcerated individuals could use AmeriCorps members to offer:
 - Offer job skill training
 - Work on conflict resolution, healthy choices, etc.
 - Develop partnership with corporation to hire those released from prison
- Programs in halfway houses, depending on area needs/opportunities
- Programs could try to address how to reduce incarceration to begin with
 - Programs in schools could work to redirect at-risk students
 - Use AmeriCorps members to work with children in schools to address conflict resolution
 - More 'synergy' of school programs (example: reading program and after school programs)
 - Program could target the children of incarcerated parents/caregivers

Focus area: Education

Challenge discussed: AmeriCorps members' and education award

Tables notes:

- 'Coaching' through the entire process to learn about loans and the different choices
- Public Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) – 10 year loan forgiveness for those in service.
 - How can we educate members about this?



- What else could the education award be used to support, like housing during college?
- Look for partnerships with higher education to support members
- Look for corporate sponsors for scholarships, programs (i.e., Wells Fargo financial literacy programs)
- Can more institutions match the education award for college students?
- Look for partnerships with higher education to support members
- Have a different focus for urban versus rural needs

Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenge discussed: Opioid addiction

Table notes:

- National service programs can:
 - Connect resources (VISTAs)
 - Build capacity for current resources
- Reentry program
 - AmeriCorps State and National could recruit members for reentry
 - Part of something more
 - Coping mechanism
 - Group mentoring for sense of community and learning new coping mechanisms
- Mentorship program
 - Group setting
 - Community
 - Learning new coping mechanisms
- Prevention program
 - Targeted at young adults and teens
 - Mentorship
 - Peer support models