



Ideation AmeriCorps Post-Event Notes

2016 Symposium

The 2016 AmeriCorps State and National Symposium was held on September 21–23, 2016, in Alexandria, VA. The Symposium was the required annual grantee meeting for State Service Commissions and national and tribal programs funded in the 2016–2017 grant year. An Ideation AmeriCorps event was held at the Symposium. 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. The session was open to commission staff, AmeriCorps program staff, and Senior Corps project staff.

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

Ideation AmeriCorps events were also held at the CNCS headquarters in Washington DC in December, 2015 and at four 2016 Regional Training Conferences. You can access notes from past Ideation events on the CNCS website.

(Notes are broken down by table group. Each table group was focused on a different CNCS focus area.)

Focus area: Education

Challenge discussed: Student loan debt (for AmeriCorps members)

Table notes:

- Tax on education award is an issue
- Help members understand the financial aid process
 - Prevent the debt from happening
- Increase education award to match the national average
- Earn four awards (instead of 2) to match four year university
- Transfer education awards to siblings or cousins if AmeriCorps alumni does not require it
- More match opportunities from colleges and universities
- Admissions counselors involved (work bottom to top)

Focus area: Economic Opportunity

Challenge discussed: Engaging opportunity youth

Table notes:

- Flexibility with AmeriCorps regulations with programs focused on opportunity youth and other special populations (retention rate, training hour limits, cost per MSY, 20 MSY minimum for competitive)
- AmeriCorps as a workforce development pipeline
- Education award as IDA investment or alternative opportunity
 - Example: one university in IN gets over \$2 million in education awards



- Department of Labor apprenticeship programs
- Relations with for-profit training experiences 'social enterprises'
- Increased clarity on how to use the education award

Focus area: Environmental Stewardship

Challenge discussed: Drought in the West

Table notes:

- Role of national service:
 - Infrastructure development
 - Job skills training
 - Education / Awareness
 - What is environmental stewardship? Interconnectivity of systems and impact.
 - Employers for National Service
 - Evidence – Evaluation – Application
 - School intersection with environment
 - Work in public housing to establish urban agriculture, green jobs training program
 - Employers of National Service reach out to oil companies, coal industry, etc.
 - Defining the problem, educating voters, job education / training / employment opportunities.
- STEEP (Google it!): Social, Technology, Economics, Environment, Politics

Focus area: Disaster Services

Challenge discussed: Toxic water crisis

Table notes:

- Existing programs: NCCC (education, distributing water filters, etc.)
- Sharing state to state national service resources
- Involve community members
- Public education: watershed health and its impact
- Increase awareness
- Role in monitoring and testing
 - In standard setting
 - In response and recovery
- Identify and admit/accept when problem is identified
- Use service learning (as part of science curriculum)
- Higher education-based program could focus on water health issues
- Disaster prevention as a model

Focus area: Healthy Futures

Challenge discussed: Opioid abuse epidemic



Table notes:

- Role of national service:
 - Prevention programming
 - Front lines: get addicts off the streets and into services
 - Recovery: engage those in recovery in AmeriCorps opportunities
 - Drug courts / Adult probation
 - Help those who are in recovery get jobs
 - Train all AmeriCorps members (awareness toolkit, for self, team, and beneficiaries)
 - DOS Toolkit: partner with recovery programs
 - Take back events (for example: provide a means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications)
 - Recovery center recruitment pipeline
 - Transition into AmeriCorps post recovery (integrated approach)
 - Social enterprise (food service, etc.)
 - Case management approach to AmeriCorps programs management
 - AmeriCorps program focusing on providing peer mentoring for those in recovery

Focus area: Veterans and Military Families

Challenge discussed: Variety of challenges facing veterans and military families (suicide, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness/housing, transient students, employment, and financial literacy)

Table notes:

- Role of national service:
 - Humanities based approaches for substance abuse and mental health
 - Assistance dogs; train the veterans who train others
 - Conservation/environmental programs
 - Veterans serving veterans at colleges (whole needs; not just GI Bill)
 - It is noted this could be challenging to sustain
 - Traders, certifications for veterans and their spouses/dependents
 - Could have a Professional Corps for mental health programs
 - Make military skills more transferable through resume and employer training
 - Expand current financial literacy to add a military/veteran component
 - Younger, female, and/or LGBTQ veterans need a special focus, because Veteran Affairs is perceived as older veterans-focused.
- Problem for AmeriCorps: Veterans leaving service for full-time paying jobs needs to be a positive exit.
 - Note: Programs may build into their program design the goal of employment promotion. Acceptance of an employment opportunity by a participant serving in a program that includes in its approved objectives the promotion of employment among its participants can be counted as a compelling personal circumstances exit and lead to a pro-rated education award.