

## Ideation AmeriCorps Post-Event Notes

Ideation AmeriCorps took place on Tuesday, December 15, 2015 at CNCS offices in Washington, DC. The half-day event engaged participants in collaborative discussions and activities designed to identify both the unique challenges facing diverse communities today and ideas for cutting edge, scalable solutions through the AmeriCorps platform.



A summarized version of event notes, broken down by session, are provided below. For more information on Ideation AmeriCorps, please email [ASNInformation@cns.gov](mailto:ASNInformation@cns.gov).

### Session 1, What are the Challenges Facing America Today?

*(Large group discussion provided the following points.)*

- Most recent Gallup poll (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx>)
- Youth homelessness, including rural communities
- Civic engagement
- Infrastructure – bridges, roads, bike paths
- Bullying
- Air quality, water quality
- Health access in rural areas
- Declining rural communities
- Veteran suicide, mental health
- Access to fresh foods
- Relationship between law enforcement and communities
- Diverse, new communities
- Heroin opioid epidemic
- Income disparity, education
- Literacy, high school graduation rates
- Ageism related to poverty, housing for elderly
- Chronically unemployed
- Prison, recidivism
- Housing, ownership, especially in minority communities

### Session 2, How can AmeriCorps address those challenges?

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

#### Veterans and Military Families

Challenge:

- Lack of robust services and support for reserve families. Need a multi-faceted approach



#### Role of national service:

- Resource connector
- ASN members as 'caseworkers'/liaison
- VISTAs could develop access to resources

#### Strategies/ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Veterans could serve as disaster responders (Team Rubicon is an example)
- Coordinate service lists for programs from National Guard to Army Reserve (hard to find who needs services now)
- Member places on base
  - When not deployed, work to strengthen network and community connection
- Members provide continuous support
- Follow caseserver (caseworker) model (without displacement)
- Continue to engage beneficiaries as volunteers. Be careful of burden
- Peace time > pre-deployment > deployment > post-deployment
- Supplement the existing networks and resources
- VISTA/ASN Member create resource binder
- Educate family on community services
- Evaluation situation for other needs
- Member go to families (support, identify resources in community, help them access resources)
- Look at Health Leads Model
- Partner with Department of Defense for cost share

#### Who will serve?

- Military family member (i.e. spouse)
- Individual coming from family of service (someone who wants to serve their country, but not through the military, could join AmeriCorps instead)

#### **Economic Opportunity**

##### Challenge: Youth (16-24) Unemployment

- Low education level, no HS diploma or higher
- Unclear pathways to HS and higher education
  - College access
  - Alternative pathways
- Poverty, family issues, life circumstances
- Employment skill sets and the ability to communicate them
- Local economy
- Race, ethnicity – implicit bias
- Criminal records
- Lack of positive social networks with legal/sustainable job access
- Low wages
- Remove CNCS penalty for members exiting to full-time employment



- Program requirements for AC members too high- opportunity youth less likely to get an AC slot
- Do members need degrees?

(Existing) Strategies or solutions:

- Higher education
- Access to programs to higher education and skills
- Support network
- New hiring initiatives
- Good wages/incentives/secondary training
- Reinforcing systems/network (eg Public Allies)
- \$ that funds initiatives/data that shows programs work

How national service can address issues:

- Foster Care Corps
- Phoenix charter academy- graduate coaches for drop-outs
- Day care training, path to degree
- Colorado – La Puente – holistic approach with wraparound services
- Short- and long-term outcome data- lack of AC outcome data on Corps member employment
- Other program streams (education, health) that could address youth employment
- Programs that focus on student with off-track indicators to drop-out (attendance, behavior, course performance) in K – 12
- CASA – case managers/advocates - Re-entry jobs for felons and convicts

(New) Strategies or solutions:

- Nonprofit sector and AmeriCorps partner as employers; change recruitment, retention, advancement to address youth unemployment and leadership gaps (especially race and representation)
- Connections to youth homelessness, social service connections
- Codification of skills learned through service
- Scaffolded pipeline of supports for members, especially those with indicators of being on-track to unemployment or underemployment
- Showing and increasing communication about service as pipeline to employment
  - Network
  - Skills
  - Jobs
- Data on subpopulations of Corps members
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year service mentors
- TANF/public assistance recipient members

## **Education**

### **Table 1**

Challenge:



- Student achievement
- Opportunity gap
- Absenteeism
- Literacy/HS Graduation Rates
- Parent Engagement

Role of national service:

- Build community engagement to address challenges (part of unifying strategy to connect challenges)

Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Members:
  - Needs assessment
  - Volunteer recruitment
  - Asset mapping
  - Partnership development
  - Raising awareness
- Could consider:
  - Multi-year approach (instead of current 1 year), to allow for real needs assessments
  - Commission-based
  - Multiple streams of service could coordinate together (Senior Corps, VISTA, State and National, NCC)
- Existing programs:
  - Program collaboration
  - Alumni engagement
  - Education task forces (based on challenge areas, geographic location, etc.)
  - Metrics around community engagement

### Table 2

Challenge: Lack of coordinated resources; place-based, scalable, feasible, coordinated service delivery

Role of National Service:

Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Promising models
- Proven interventions
- Assessment model
- Local identity
- Best Practice sharing

Needs:

- Leverage resources
- Interventions that are less narrow
- Measure differently



- Working toward common goals and shared impact
- Results Based Accountability -- story behind the curve
- Share common problems
- Share Coordinated Partnership Model

Models/Interventions Available:

- Literacy/language acquisition
- Tutoring interventions
- School climate
- Family engagement
- Teacher training
- Out of school/ Extended Learning Time
- Civic and community engagement
- Case management
- STEAM
- Job/career readiness
- School readiness (Pre-K)
- Assets
- Leveraging volunteers
- Drug/gang prevention
- Safe
- Disaster
- College Access
- Health/nutrition
- Technology
- Special needs

Table 3

Challenges:

- Negative experiences of families
- Institutional distrust
- Disempowered families
- Lack of creditability
- Lack of evidence-based programs
- Difficulty of collaboration- handshake vs. hand off
- Confusion of start/stop, inconsistency

Opportunities:

- Positive calls home- holistic view of students
- Assigning member family caseload
- Connect families to available resources



- Advocate AmeriCorps (members as advocates)
- Empower families to solve challenges
- Parent teams- parents are experts (scale)
- Parents as members – “ParentCorps”
- 2 Gen Corps- parent and child together
- Fund in groups of practitioners
- Community/collective impact (handshake)
- ImpactCorps- priority points
- Priority funding for proposals developed through collective impact- operates like governor/mayor process
- Innovation AmeriCorps: application for funding AND waivers for specific AC requirements that would otherwise prevent the operation of the program.

#### CNCS topic trainings:

- Tech solutions? – higher level trainings
- Structures in place for collaboration
- Ownership of members and programs for decision-making
- Federal incentives to share resources ideas, members
- Connect training needs with exemplars, data-informed
- Funding stream, regional training institutes

Other information: there were 3 post-its- 1) handshake- opportunities and outcomes, 2) tech solutions, 3) strikes = experience

#### **Healthy Futures**

##### Challenge:

- Mental health and drug use
- Senior health care (isolation)
- Access to food – seniors, low-income
- Obesity
- Seniors
- Homeless
- Low-income
- Families
- Schools
- People with health conditions

##### Role of national service:

- Convener/capacity builder

##### Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Food training
- Homeless trained in cooking and also receive food (workplace and health)



- Identify and convene programs/companies/key players
- Transportation to get food
  - Carpool
  - Delivery
  - Transport to get groceries
  - Coop: food delivery
  - Community-supported agriculture (CSA)
- Utilizing healthy food (cooking, etc.)
- Community gardens
- Community refrigerator and freezer
  - Places of worship, municipality, library
- Use existing data to map where target population exists
  - Census
  - Extension
  - Colleges
- Develop curriculum/train the trainer
- After school parent cooking/nutrition
- Shared community meals and neighborhood prepared meals sharing

#### Program Design:

- AmeriCorps Members:
  - Convene groups
  - Develop curricula
  - Transportation plans
  - Build resources
  - Liaison training
  - Creative solutions
- Bring to the table:
  - Skills
  - Infrastructure
  - Ideas
  - Share resources
  - Sense of Urgency
- Measure by:
  - Knowledge gain about healthy food and preparation
  - Increased access to utilizing healthy food
  - Number of partnerships
  - Sustainability of activities

#### **Disaster Services**

#### Challenge:



- To effectively engage AmeriCorps programs and members in disaster preparedness/response/mitigation.

#### Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Consider what programs should do when there are no disasters and how they should keep members engaged.
  - Members can provide preparedness education during off time.
  - Disaster programs should have a good plan for how to engage members during time when there is no disaster.
  - Combine disaster interventions with other activities.
- Establish Alumni Disaster Corps
- Intentionally engage veterans in disaster work.
  - Veterans Disaster Corps
- Establish intra-state/commission level disaster response teams.
- Consider providing assistance with “economic disasters” and having members helping with the impact of natural or other disasters on local economy and individual jobs/businesses.
- Programming that addresses terrorism/gun safety/gun violence prevention.
  - Focus on prevention through education and trainings.
- Training/preparation of social service agencies.
- Legal services in cases of disaster
  - Assistance with small claims
  - Land and property ownership
  - Insurance
- Incorporate disaster preparedness into existing programs (e.g. Habitat for Humanity)
- Consider that it can be difficult to get people to care about the possibility of disaster and preparedness if they have not recently experienced a disaster.
  - Focus on training kids and youth
- Make AmeriCorps policies and regulations responsible and flexible for effective staff/member engagement in disaster work, within legal boundaries.
  - Consider impact on core service activities, logistics/coordination, \$, timekeeping
- Commissions must coordinate work with other states/countries since many disasters happen across borders.
- Require training for all members in disaster preparedness and mitigation (CNCS used to do that and require it)
  - Require that commissions and national directs designate and train a certain % of their member corps to be a disaster cadre.
- Provide mental/psychological support for members engaged in disaster to mitigate the impact of what they see.
  - Training
  - Peer support network
  - Program support
- Incorporate disaster preparedness trainings and curriculum into school-based programming.
- Engage the media and be very vocal and visible to the public about disaster work and the impact that not being prepared for disaster can have on people.
- Tie AmeriCorps programming to existing disaster preparedness initiatives in the state/locality.
- Develop partnerships and connections with different agencies and support services before disaster for a holistic response.

- Know what support networks exist and connect to them before and build relationships within the community.



## Environmental Stewardship

### Table 1

Challenge:

- Mobilization of human capital to build a park

Role of National Service:

- Service could involve asset-based community development and the orchestration of those assets
- Be inclusive of all programs (new, old, community-based)
- Consider coordinating AmeriCorps State and National and VISTA

Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Organize meetings
- Address rural-urban blight
- Inventory community assets
- Re-engage people

Extra Info from Table:

- Beneficiaries of these efforts: disenfranchised groups of people including seniors, immigrants, rural, urban, people without homes, students, veterans, people struggling with suicide
- Healthy Affinity Groups in Schools
- Artists

### Table 2

Challenge: Civic and Community Engagement

- People connecting
- People have the “agency” to **be the change** (CNCS mission)

Role of National Service:

- Civic education for why it’s important to connect, why it’s important to help
- Know systems
- Empowerment of individuals
- Educate policy makers, too

Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

### Table 3



Challenge: Access to clean water

Role of National Service:

- Repair old, leaky pipes
- Provide oil-in drain education
- Use and educate people about rain barrels
- Have members help people develop necessary skills
- New or existing programs
- Education/training
- Training farmers
- Monitoring water
- Mitigation
- Restoration of habitat
- Water quality varies by income and geography
- Rights
- Legal efforts

Strategies/Ideas for using AmeriCorps as a solution:

- Members could be recruited as post-prison opportunity, employment seekers, Civilian Conservation Corps-scale

Extra Info from Table:

- Post-it note: Food for Health: In Vermont, VISTAs facilitate farms providing food shares to families identified by health centers as having poor diets as part of their health condition
- Post-it note: Jackson County Regional Food Center, Jackson County, KY, [www.regionalfoodcenterky.com](http://www.regionalfoodcenterky.com)

### **Session 3, Where and How Do We Share Ideas?**

*(Large group discussion provided the following points.)*

#### **Where do you get ideas?**

- Public Health reports
- Various media and consider the frequency issues arise
- Governor's Service Council
  - Key stakeholders
- Regional outreach/listening sessions
- Meetings with key leaders (ex. Higher ed reps in the state)
- Note – it's important to meet people where they are
- Visits to service locations (and talking with key stakeholders)
- Important to also talk with detractors

- Pew – database of evidence based practices



### **How do you share ideas?/How could ideas be shared?**

- ASC
- Local sharing and geographic based sharing (ex. Serve Austin)
- Request – a National Service National Directory is needed
- Request – Could CNCS research ways to help facilitate this kind of sharing?
- Beg, Borrow, and Steal
  - Promise Neighborhood idea – training, meetings, and TA related requirement of program
- More opportunities for National Directs and State Commissions to meet and collaborate
- Issue area discussions with programs (Commission as convener)
- Working group (Criminal History Check example) to share expertise