AmeriCorps Staff Development Series

Orientation for New Program Staff

Text Transcript

Barbara Reynolds: This is Barbara Reynolds of CNCS. Thank you very much for joining today's webinar. It is my pleasure to kick off our session today. Hopefully you can hear me on the phone, and you're able to see the slides and the screen in front of you. There are a couple of things I just want to draw your attention to before we switch our views to go to the actual PowerPoint presentation. If you haven't yet, please drop your location in on the map on the screen. You can see already, I think, along with me a lot of names, a lot of location bubbles. It's great to see so many people on with us today, so many different parts of our country represented. Thank you for doing that.

There's also a quick little poll question here just trying to get a sense of folks on the phone, how long you've worked with your programs. Can you take a second and finish that poll as well? We will go ahead and get started. All right, at this point, hopefully, you can see a slide in front of you. It's a little bit bigger than the original tiny little icon we had. It says technology check. As you can see, for today's presentation, we'll have a couple of things in the web links for you. We have posted the PowerPoint as well as the training evaluation for today's presentation. You can see on the screen, we are recording today's presentation, so I just want to make sure that you know that, and that you're comfortable being recorded.

Once we complete our session today, we'll take the recording. We'll have some technical changes to make to it, and then we'll post it on the Knowledge Network, so you can see on the slide now where that presentation ... this presentation will be loaded. We will use the chat box feature throughout today's presentation. We have all of our phone lines muted. You guys can see that. We're going to keep the chat box open. Then as we speak, as we move through our content, I want to invite you at any time to add a comment, add a question in the chat box. We'll keep a casual eye on the chat box as we're giving our remarks. Then we'll have a specific Q&A portion of today's agenda as well.

I just want to make sure that you guys are hearing me since we're in the eerie world of webinars. If you could please test that chat feature, and just send a short greeting to your colleagues, just say, "Hey, how's it going," over in the chat box, so we can see who's here. Great, thank you. Yes, I see lots of hellos, lots of greetings. Great, thank you so much. Yes, keep it coming. If you haven't had a howdy to share yet, please do. This is the equivalent in a real person training of going around the room, so we can see who is on with us today. Thank you. Okay, as I said, we'll keep using the chat box. You place anything at all that you would like to share with your colleagues. As you can see, everyone can see the different pieces that are being typed in. Please feel free to use that.

Today's presentation is part of our annual series. It's the AmeriCorps Staff Development Webinar Series. In general, what we want to do for any of the presentations that we have including today's is really build core knowledge in program and grant management areas, so things that are global issues and really important for all of us to do in AmeriCorps. We hope this series, any of the sessions in the series altogether, will give all of our commission partners and our program colleagues just a break from the day to day demands of your work. We know you have a lot going on with your grant management, your member management. We hope this is just a chance for you to take a step back.

Today's session is part of the series for 2018. As you can see, we've covered a couple different things so far this year including both orientations for new commission staff, and for today, for our new program staff. Coming up later this year, you'll see a variety of topics from the ever popular criminal history checks all the way down later in the year to data quality monitoring. If you haven't already joined any of these webinars, please do. We'd love to see you on the future sessions. Our target audience today, again, we are particularly talking to, I think, and the content is geared towards folks that are new in your AmeriCorps program, so new staff of national or multi-state programs or tribal programs.

We also hope today's content though will help give you ideas, help give you visuals, or just things to think about if you are not yourself a new staff member, but you are responsible for orienting and training new folks. Welcome to everyone, and no matter what your position is. As I said, we hope today's information will be useful if you're new. We hope it's going to give you an overview of some of the core knowledge and skills that we think AmeriCorps program staff need. We want to point out some things that we've learned, I think, over the years. We're joined today by a couple of great guest speakers to share their expertise as well.

On the slide now, you can see my face and name, again, along with my compadre here at headquarters, Curtis Cannon, our program officer. You can see him. He no longer has a beard. I think, in the interest of just full disclosure, we should be honest. There's no bearded Curtis with us today. Curtis joined our corporation staff here in 2016 as a program officer as you can see. Before coming here, he was the executive director of the New Mexico Commission. He brings that particular experience having worked with a number of sub-grantees all around New Mexico. He also has about 15 years of nonprofit community development and volunteer coordination experience, so really just a vast array of experiences and knowledge to bring to his remarks today and to his role as a program officer.

I came on staff at CNCS since 2013. Like Curtis, I also came from a commission. I worked in the great state of Maryland. Before working in the commission, I worked in an AmeriCorps program in Maryland. Between me and Curtis, I think, we have a good amount of commission experience, a good amount of programming experience, and I forgot to mention, Curtis is also a proud two-term alumnus. He's got that particular member experience as well. For today's presentations, you can see we're going to go through several different items. Curtis and I will talk through what CNCS views, I would say, through our lens what key program staff knowledge and skills are. We have some thoughts for you about how to phase in the learning for this knowledge, and how to build these skills over time for our new staff.

We're going to look at what we recommend for week one when you have someone new coming in. In month one, we're going to break down in some detail the relationship between CNCS and our program grantees and partners, and offer again some of the experiences that Curtis and I have had in our various roles, and also some of the feedback we've received from our grantees and from programs over the years. As I said, we're joined on today's call by two great guest speakers from the International Rescue Committee. Natalia Lopez and Fiorella Morales are on the line with us. You can see them under the presenters in Adobe Connect right now. They'll be sharing with you some of their real-world experience and expertise in just a few minutes as well.

We have a few resources that we'll share at the end. As I said, we'll pause officially for Q&A as we get further along in the presentation. That is what we are doing today. I'm going to jump in with the first ways of our agenda to talk a little bit again about the core knowledge and skills from the CNCS's perspective that we think program staff really need. Now, I think, it's helpful at the beginning of this discussion to acknowledge a couple things. First of all, when we're talking about AmeriCorps programs, national programs, multi-state programs, tribal programs. We of course call that group of people as prime grantees. You may see that term in some places in that presentation, and that's what we mean by that.

We very much view, and we hope you view as well that we, the corporation and our prime grantees are both in a funding relationship. We know CNCS receives the funds from the funders. We grant them out, and in equal measure, an equally important, we see ourselves as partners with you. We know in order to fulfill our mission with AmeriCorps, in order to have strong member service experiences with strong programs around the country, we really depend on each other. I think, it's important as we're talking today about program staff expectations, I just really want to put that frame on it that we are coming to you as both your partners and your funders as well in the grant making sense.

First of all, what are the key areas of knowledge, core knowledge that program staff should know? I want to, again, say Curtis, and I'm sure, will repeat this. We don't expect, CNCS doesn't expect and I certainly don't personally expect that new program staff know all of it, know everything about each of these categories all at once, and certainly not right at the beginning. Globally if you will, these broad categories that we think program staff should learn overtime, and become very familiar with, if not expert in, over time are these broad categories. We're looking of course through you, our grantees and our partners, to know a lot about CNCS, about the organization. We want you to have a good grounding in AmeriCorps itself, the program, what's behind it, where it came from.

We obviously expect and we really rely on our program partners and grantees to know your community, and know the needs of your community, and how that works. We're looking to you, of course, to be experts in your AmeriCorps program, and to know your AmeriCorps members really as fully and as deeply as possible depending on the size of your program. Those are our broad categories of knowledge. Curtis and I are going to talk these through, so I just want to point this out as an outline. Then now, we are going to go through for a few minutes, we're going to go through these topics in a little bit more detail just to flesh out what we mean. When we're talking about knowing CNCS, what is it about the corporation that we really hope our new program staff and all program staff will know?

We obviously want everyone to be aware of the founding mission for the corporation, and in broad strokes, the programs overall, not just AmeriCorps that exist under CNCS. We want you to the extent that it's appropriate to know the org charts, and how the agency is structured, and Curtis and I are going to walk through that in just a little bit. We hope overtime that you'll get to know the names of all the various staff at CNCS. We know there's a lot coming at you.

Then certainly, we hope and that we think is a great idea, if you know the staff working in your state, so the CNCS staff that are in the state office or managing the state offices where you are, super, super important to meet those people early on, and build relationships with them.

We also of course in terms of CNCS, we want you to know, to learn first and then become very familiar with all of the different communications that we have. Obviously, we have a ton of information on our website. There are lots of emails, lots of messages that come out to you. We really want you to be aware of all that, and to read stuff, keep up with it, et cetera. I think, that's often a big challenge for folks. We want you to the extent that's appropriate for you to be comfortable with and familiar with the legislation that created the corporation, so the National Service Community Service Trust Act. That's a lot going on there. We want you to know the federal budget process, so where CNCS ... where we get our money, how it works, and then really what that means for you, for programs as well as for our commission partners.

It is the unique world that we live in of course, being federally funded, and it brings all of the great resources as well as all of the great processes as well. Then finally, under CNCS, pretty much everything else. We want program staff to know and really manifest in real life all of the rules and regulations that govern our work. We want you to be aware, and we, I think, go to great lengths to make you aware of funding opportunities. We want you to be really familiar for all the mechanics of how our grants work, so the applications, the terms, the conditions. Once you receive grants, we want you to know about how our monitoring works, et cetera, so those are all the ins and outs if you will of how CNCS conducts our business.

From that CNCS overarching area of knowledge, now, we're going to look at AmeriCorps specifically. Here, we're looking at the AmeriCorps program underneath the CNCS overall. Again, looking for building knowledge over time, we want our program staff, grantees, and partners to know obviously, and help us fulfill the mission of AmeriCorps specifically. We want everyone to know and be looking at the same general AmeriCorps program cycle, how things work, best practices for program development and member support obviously, things that we all share. We very much want you to know where, and be able quickly to find resources online to support the work that you do. Then we, of course, know that you over time will get to know your colleagues.

You'll get to know all of the diverse programs within our network, maybe particularly within your states if you're a single-state program, or your region, or nationally if you serve the entire country. Again, I just wanted to point out some of the key pieces that we look at and we think about when we talk about getting to know and becoming really familiar with AmeriCorps. I'm going to turn it over to Curtis now. We're going to keep going down the knowledge train.

Curtis Cannon: Thank you, Barbara. These are common elements of getting to know and continuing to learn about your community. AmeriCorps program staff are expected to know the demographics and the needs of communities where AmeriCorps members serve. Program staff are also expected to know about existing resources to support the program as well as community, state, or regional institutions that offer resources to program staff, members, and sites. Finally, program staff are expected to learn and build relationships with key contacts and leaders in their communities. As part of this activity, it's good to keep an eye out for notable AmeriCorps alumni in your state as well. Along with the broad categories of knowledge already discussed, program staff are expected to be oriented to and build their knowledge of the ins and outs of their program over time.

Specifically, staff should become very familiar with the current year grant requirements including knowing the budgets in depth if that's appropriate for your program officer position. Staff are also expected to learn all about the program or agency's board. Who's on the board? What are the members' terms, and how do board members support and interact with program staff and AmeriCorps members? Over time, it's also helpful to learn about the history of the AmeriCorps program, how it has evolved over the years, who and where the program alumni overall, and not just notable folks in the community. In addition to your program, specific information, it's important to learn about program evaluation, and as CNCS defines it including the theory of change and logic models.

Along with overall program details, staff should quickly and fully learn all the approved performance measures and CNCS' evaluation requirements that pertain to their program and program grant cycle. Finally, program staff have the great privilege of interacting with AmeriCorps members on a regular basis. This is the fun part. AmeriCorps program staff are expected to know all the details it can about the members, including basic demographics of the group, details on all the member's position and service activities, their performance results during the service term, and their plans for life after AmeriCorps. Again, ideally, all the AmeriCorps programs will design and implement a comprehensive alumni program that allows staff to stay in contact, track life after AmeriCorps, and more.

Next, we'll talk briefly about the types of skills AmeriCorps program staff need to be successful and lead effective service programs. There are broad categories that represent overall categories of skills that CNCS expects program staff to acquire and continue to develop over time. This list is not comprehensive, and it is not expected that program staff will be able to do all of these at once. This list does focus on the AmeriCorps functions of the program rule. You can see the list of expected skills is a mix of communication skills and attitudes as well as specific actions like providing training, and enforcing program rules. Possible phases of learning, with all the necessary knowledge and skills in mind, how do AmeriCorps programs know what to teach new staff and when?

There's no exact science to determine the best way to orient new staff to your program. There are a number of factors that will impact how you do this including your location, the amount of time you have, the new staff learning cycle, your own teaching and coaching style, your work environment, and specific job duties. Based on CNCS' experience both from our role as a federal funder and our staff's experience at programs and commissions prior to joining CNCS, we have some proposed topics to include in the first week a new program employees is on the job as well as things to cover in the first month.

Again, our focus here is exclusively on program staff who are funded by CNCS, and have a role in AmeriCorps grant management. At the very beginning of a new employee's tenure, please be sure she learns about the AmeriCorps prohibited and unallowable activities in general, and how they apply to program staff and members. We want to be sure staff are fully aware that their work time is being charged to an AmeriCorps grant, and that there are specific restrictions on how they can spend that time. Similarly, please be sure a new staff know how to complete their time sheets appropriately, including allocating their time between grants if that's relevant for the position. It's very hard to go back and correct time sheet mistakes later on down the road.

Other good topics for the first week on the job include introducing new staff to relevant CNCS personnel, setting up their eGrants account, getting usernames and passwords, getting on CNCS and ASN, it's AmeriCorps State and National email LISTSERV's, and learning how to navigate CNCS websites and the Knowledge Network. Once your new program staff makes it past the first week, where do you go next in the Ameri learning journey? Here are some recommended topics to cover fully in month one. These topics fall heavily on the structure of CNCS, AmeriCorps grant making, and what it's like to work closely with CNCS. These are recommendations for month one content. Each program will adjust the schedule that best meet the needs of the new employee.

In the first month, be sure new employees become very comfortable with the structure of CNCS, including how the different CNCS units interact, and what this means to programs. CNCS staff contact information, key acronyms and terminology, overall information on CNCS grant making like the types of prime AmeriCorps State and National grantees, and the group general grant-making cycle, and how the relationship with CNCS works. With all of the necessary knowledge and skills in mind, how do AmeriCorps programs know what to teach news staff and when? There is no exact science to determine the best way to orient new staff to your programs. There are a number of factors that will impact how you do this including your location.

I'm sorry. Excuse me, CNCS org chart, went to the wrong slide. Now, I'd like to talk quickly through some of the content of the items listed under the month one orientation topics. We know in real time, you would linger much longer on these topics. Again, these are only recommendations for how to handle this material. Each program will tailor the format and content of the new staff orientation as appropriate. Let's start with a structure of the corporation. CNCS is an independent federal government agency. This is the simple version of the CNCS org chart as of April 2018. You can access a printable version of this on the CNCS website. CNCS is led by a bipartisan board of directors whose members are nominated by the president, and confirmed by the senate.

The board sets overall policy and direction for the agency and its programs, and provides guidance to the agency's chief executive officer. The CEO is also nominated by the president, and confirmed by the senate. The CEO oversees the agency, which includes about 500 employees operating throughout the U.S. and its territories. In this chart, you can see the major units within CNCS. Programs will be in frequent communication with state and national grant management and the trust. You'll see the program officer, grants officer, and trust officers highlighted here. CNCS staff contacts, let's talk more about these important CNCS staff contacts for just a minute. It's good to know that all prime grantees have three contacts with CNCS, the program officer, the grants officer, and the National Service Trust officer.

Your program officer or PO is your primary point of contact with CNCS. He will support you in the implementation of your program responsibilities, and help resolve issues that arise concerning your grants. POs also work closely with other units at CNCS to provide supportive programs, and can help you connect to other CNCS staff and units if necessary. It is critical that you have regular contact with your PO including but not limited to a regularly

scheduled check-in call each month. Next, let's talk about the grant officers or GOs. GOs work in the CNCS office of grants management, and are responsible for fiscal issues concerning your grants. GOs review your federal financial reports, and monitor financial management systems for compliance with AmeriCorps requirements.

Please copy your PO on correspondence sent to your GOs so that they are aware of ongoing discussions. Finally, we have our trust officers who work in the National Service Trust, which administers the ELI Segal Education Awards that AmeriCorps members receive upon successful completion of their term of service. Trust officers are the primary contacts for issues related to the education award such as forbearance, education award payments, and student loan interest payments. Please copy your PO on correspondence sent to trust officers as well. Key terminology and acronyms, for new staff, navigating the maze of Ameri-speak can be a big challenge. To help bring new staff up to speed, programs may provide a glossary of key terms and acronyms, which we won't go over here, or a cheat sheet to reference some new employees to come on board.

For basic new employee orientation, be sure to explain the terms on this slide early and often. These terms and acronyms are pervasive in AmeriCorps grant management. A glossary is posted on the Knowledge Network to help with this orientation task. It includes these terms along with a number of other items to help new staff learn the lingo. You can access the glossary via the web link, and connect.

Barbara Reynolds: Hey Curtis, I'm going to stop you for one second. I just want to check and make sure our visuals are still working. It looks like on my screen, we may have had an interruption in Adobe Connect. We're going to pause here for one second. I want to make sure that you guys are seeing everything. Great! It looks like it's coming back on. Yes, we need to be able to see the chat box as well, the chat feature. We're trying to get that going. I'm still seeing the big slides without the chat box. One second, I just want to make sure that we are able to see folks if you're typing in questions and comments. I'm sorry for the pause. Just one second, I want to make sure that we're good.

Okay, it looks like Adobe Connect is coming back online. I think, Curtis is going to go ahead and keep going. Let me [inaudible 00:26:35].

Curtis Cannon: Can you read that?

Barbara Reynolds: We can, okay.

Curtis Cannon: Okay. Sorry about that.

Barbara Reynolds: Nope, thank you. Thank you. Sorry for the interruption.

Curtis Cannon: Types of prime grantees, next, we'll talk quickly through the types of grantees that receive AmeriCorps State and National funds directly from CNCS. These are called prime grantees. They include national direct grantees or multi-state AmeriCorps programs, programs managed by Indian Tribes and U.S. territories, and state service commissions. National direct grantees or multi-state AmeriCorps programs are programs that have operating sites and place AmeriCorps members in service in at least two states. The headquarters or parent office of the program applies to CNCS directly for AmeriCorps funds, and manages the program and grant funds in the various locations.

An Indian tribe is federally recognized Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community including any native village, regional corporation, village corporation, or a tribal organization. State service commissions are boards of 15 to 25 individuals nominated and appointed by a state's governor. The commission oversees the implementation of national and community service and volunteer initiatives in a particular state, U.S. territory, or the District of Columbia. Most commissions employ a small professional staff to manage the AmeriCorps grant portfolio and direct other state initiatives. State commissions provide funding to single-state AmeriCorps programs throughout annual grant competitions.

Now, I'll turn it back over to Barbara to walk through the CNCS grant cycles and process.

Barbara Reynolds: Great! Thank you so much, Curtis. Before I jump into the magic of the money, I do want to just do a quick check, and get some audience feedback. I want to make sure that you guys are seeing everything okay, and that you're hearing everything okay. First off all, I just want to get a sense in the chat box if you could type in, "Me, or yes" we want to get a sense of how many folks are on with us today work with state service commissions. If you are a commission staff person, you could just type a yes or a, "Hey, that's me," or, "Right here, commissions rock," whatever you want into the chat box here.

I see lots of yeses there. Great, thank you. Thank you so much. I just want to see if there are any folks on from a tribal program. Any tribal AmeriCorps folks on the line today? Yup, I see some folks typing in there. That's an okay. Me too. Perfect! Then just for the third category to connect with what Curtis was talking about before, how many folks with us are staff as Natalia and Fiorella are from a national program, a multi-state program, national direct? Anyone there? Yup, I see some yeses. I see Jean, Melissa, Dimitri. Great, thank you so much. Perfect! Thank you for that pause and

interactivity. It does my heart good to confirm again verbally that you're hearing us and seeing everything okay. I just wanted to get more of sense of who is in the room.

As Curtis said, I'm going to talk briefly and pretty quickly, again, trying to frame these remarks as if, and really directed to very new staff, so very, very basic introductory level information just to model for you the beginner level content we hope new staff will have. Then obviously, over time, as Curtis said, we'll build that. In very broad strokes, CNCS has multiple grant programs, that in broad strokes, we're going to look at the three buckets if you will, the three type of grant programs that CNCS works from. That's of course competitive, formula, and special. For the competitive cycle, we oversee several cycles a year. The competitive grant cycle is the national competition for program and planning grants on.

That's where you guys know, hopefully, that the multi-state and national competitive grants are made in this competitive cycle. We also work with our commissions. Our commission partners as well is part of that competitive cycle. The amount of funding in this particular cycle is determined each year by our annual appropriation. That's, again, that connection to the federal budget process. In this example, in this context, the AmeriCorps oversees the formula grant cycle as well. The formula grant cycle usually occurs in the spring, early summer. The timing will vary exactly. The amount of funds that are available in the formula grant process are based on a state-based allocation, so the formula grant cycle is only something that's done again in this context with commissions, and so this is another grant cycle, another grant opportunity that CNCS has with our commission partners.

Then finally in this setting, this special grant cycle category, there are several different types of special grant cycles. You can see here tribes who fall into this category. In some years, we'll have targeted priority or planning priority grants. We may have specific program development grants. It really depends on the priorities as our administration of the organization, and again, the available funding. The timing and amount of funds vary again just like the formula cycle or the competitive depending on the grants. We may offer special grants for programs, so for AmeriCorps programming and or planning grants, so for organizations around the country that are interested in exploring AmeriCorps, but don't yet have access to your know if they want to try to recruit AmeriCorps members.

All of these, I think, you guys know but it's worth saying the grant cycles at this point. Grants are submitted in eGrants, and that is where they are managed as well. Just to pull back, again, in a very, very broad stroke, big picture way, to look at the overall grant making cycle, so we just talked about the types of grants, the buckets of grants that we make. There are five main phases, I think. I think, that's fair to say for our grant making. One of our key functions obviously is to fund programs and organizations around the country. The guidelines for the grant submission and the use of our funds each year are detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO. If that is something that is new to you, welcome. Welcome to the NOFO land.

The NOFO is typically published in the early fall. I think, the exact timing will vary a little bit, but it usually is starting to come out, and be digested in August, September, sometimes, October if we're running late. Along with the NOFO, we also publish detailed grant application and instructions for all prime grant applicants. For competitive grants, formula, and for special, the applications in the competitive cycle, the written or the electronic applications that are submitted in eGrants usually are due in January. After the the grant applications coming in eGrants, we internally go through the grant application or review process or GARP. The large GARP process is called GARP grande, which I find just delightful.

I love to let people know that the large competition that we do every year, the review process is called GARP grande. It occurs over several months, and involves many, many people at CNCS who review all of the applications that come in. Once the applications are reviewed, clarifications are administered, and planning decisions are made, each grantee receives a notice of grant award, or an NGA. Again, I'm hopeful that this is very basic information, and these terms are familiar to you. If you are on the webinar today, and the notice of grant award is not a term that you're familiar with, please write it down, and check in with your colleagues as soon as we hang up today. It's a pretty big deal for you to know about that, and know where to find it.

Once the notice of grant award goes out, it is a big deal, because it gives you the total dollar amount of your grant as well as the time period that you'll be operating in. Once the funding steps have been taken, then we enter into monitoring and reporting. That's where for our staff at CNCS, Curtis and his program officer colleagues will be working closely with our program partners, with our commission folks around the country over the course of the year to keep an eye on the program performance measures, how the member enrollment and completion rates are looking, just basically how the programs are performing, and in reporting on that as you move through the year. Then the final step here in the federal grant process is closeout and audit.

It is obviously, closing out a grant is a very standard step, and auditing as well from a federal grant making, a federal government perspective is a natural part of our cycle. It is just part of the fun if you will of the grant making. Curtis and I have just talked through some general information about what we hope new program staff will know, what they'll be able to do either right when they're hired or pretty soon after they're hired. We walked you through in a short way, in a really brief way some of the information, general information about CNCS and AmeriCorps. Now, we want to turn our attention a little bit to the relationship with CNCS, with the federal funder. Again, we just think based on our experience, Curtis' experience and mine as well as the experience of our colleagues, these are some pretty big categories that are really, really helpful for you when you're new to your job.

We just want you to have this information right up front. We think it helps you get your AmeriCorps legs. It helps you really communicate well, and be positioned well to be successful. As you can see on the slide, we're going to talk a little bit about the year-at-a-glance, some overall program developments, concepts, look a little bit specifically at the role of a program director. There's a set of expectations that we have for that person or those people, look a little bit at communications. Curtis is going to talk with you about his job, his role as a program officer and his compadres, and then we'll wrap up with some helpful tips we hope about working with CNCS, some of our agency culture, nuances, I think, that are very, very helpful.

From a year-at-a-glance perspective, again, if you are brand spanking new or pretty, pretty new to your program, you may not yet have gleaned the way that the calendar year flows for the corporation. This simple, simple chart that you see in front of you now is meant to just capture the notion that our year flows in quarters, that we have quarterly milestones for our grant making, quarterly milestones for reporting as well as events that happen each quarter that are super important for program staff like the symposium as well as national days of service, things that will happen in January, in April, in March. As you can see on the slide, there are days of service, national days of service each quarter that are also, I think, very important for folks.

I think, a lot of times, it's challenging when you're new to know exactly what is due to CNCS and when, so again, we just wanted to give you a sense of the general flow of the year. No matter where we are in our year-at-a-glance, no matter what kind of partner we're working with, if it's a commission, or a program, no matter what kind of grants we're talking about, if you receive a competitive grant, or formula grant, or a special grant, we hope and we work with our program grantees to follow a very, very basic program development cycle. These concepts, I think, are incredibly simple, and are not anything that are out of the ordinary in terms of general program development, but I think, it is helpful to think about it through the lens of an AmeriCorps program.

We expect that every program is going to design, implement, and evaluate your program activities, whatever they are, and wherever you are to get your AmeriCorps members serving. We think in the grant application itself, we actually ask everyone to articulate the vision for your program, the need in your community, the way that the AmeriCorps members will help meet that need and fulfill the vision for your program. You guys know we asked you to set performance measures, so in this first phase, the visioning phase, we think the grant application itself is really a good tool for capturing a lot of those concepts. We also think once the visioning and overall design work of an AmeriCorps program development happens, then the mechanical work it goes under the foundation building phase.

Here, what we mean under foundation building are really specific items like, creating policies and procedures, creating member position descriptions and service agreements, determining your internal controls, and the tools you're going to use to screen your AmeriCorps members, so all the paperwork if you will, or the electronic paperwork that we use to run the AmeriCorps programs. In this simple model, the implementation phase, from our thinking is where the actual visible AmeriCorps service occur. In the implementation phase, programs are enrolling ... They are recruiting and enrolling AmeriCorps members. They're training them. They're deploying AmeriCorps members in whatever way the program design has occurring.

The actual service is underway if you will in the implementation phase. Then finally, in the cycle of program development, obviously, it all comes around. It all goes around. It comes around. We look through our AmeriCorps program partners to evaluate the work, obviously, to specifically measure the service activities as part of the program design and the program grant, but obviously, we want you to even go bigger, and to evaluate the overall impact and the longer-term impact of your service over time as your AmeriCorps program develops. Hopefully, that makes sense. I think, a lot of times, we'll use these terms. We'll talk about foundation building. We'll talk about vision and implementation.

We're just want to give you a sense of where we're coming from when we do that. I mentioned a minute or two ago, for CNCS, there are particular expectations, or when we think about AmeriCorps program directors, that particular

job, the person in your program who's the designated lead, and is the main point of contact for us as the funder. There are certain things that we expect that person will do. I will say I know that program designs and structures really vary, so you may not use the word program director or the term program director to define this person. That's okay. We don't require that anyone and everyone are called program directors, but just to give you a sense, for whoever is designated as the lead and whatever title that they have, these are some general expectations.

What we think are examples of program director duties. You'll know in some cases, AmeriCorps program will have a single program director in a single location. In other cases, there'll be multiple program directors around the country or around the region, and the expectations and the duties that you see on the slide in front of you may be divvied up amongst multiple people, and that's totally fine. Again, there's no hardcore requirements for how this works. We know that's going to vary. In the next couple of slides, we just want to show for you quickly, I think, there's a lot of text here, so it may not be ... We're not going to read everything that's on the slide here, but I do want to show in a little bit more of a sense of a year-at-a-glance.

We did the quarterly milestone a minute ago. When we talk about the program directors role, and start getting a little more detail about what it looks like to work as a program director, I think, one of the big challenges we know occurs for program staff, and I think, Curtis and I both talked about our experiences, it's the fact that we all live in multiple years. We live in multiple program years if you will, grant years. In this example, you can see here January through June. The next slide will show you the second half of the year. This is a sample of a program director's work plan to show the flow of a particular year. The sample obviously is just quick, high-level, not meant to be in any way comprehensive, but it's meant to illustrate for you the different job functions, the key program functions, things like financial management, member support, et cetera.

I think, though in this example if it's legible on the screen for you, and I'll just tell you. The print is a little too small. In this short example, you can see the confluence of the current year activities, things like having member training, having site supervisor training, dealing with real-time current year activities, and then the overlap of planning for the next program cycle. In January for instance, you'll see the program director is responsible for submitting next year's grant application, the competitive grant application that's due January-ish while simultaneously recruiting for new AmeriCorps service sites and new AmeriCorps members.

This example will not apply to everyone of course, depending on your program design, but I think, it is an illustration again of that overlap in the different years that we all have to live in. In the second part of the year, again, you can see that confluence between the current grant year and the next year as well as future planning tasks. This could be the part of the year when current members will be wrapping up their service and maybe completing their terms. Program staff may need to exit members in the portal, so some of those really fine tasks that are very time sensitive. At that same time, program staff could be recruiting new members, screening them, doing history checks, et cetera.

I mentioned a few minutes ago the importance of the notice of grant award, right, when we were looking at the different steps in the grant making cycle. On this example, we specifically call out that the program director will immediately review the notice of grant awards. I cannot overemphasize this. I think, Curtis would back me up that this particular task honestly is universally applicable. As mindful as we are of all of the different program designs and staffing structures, it is 100% true all of the time that folks should be grabbing that notice of grant award as soon as you receive it. I just want to draw your attention to that in this example. Here, again, you can see some of the ongoing tasks like monitoring.

You can see different communications throughout the year and throughout the program design, so with members, with sites, et cetera. Again, this is a meant to be a role model if you will of a work plan, but we definitely wanted to give you a sense of what we think of as a possible year for what the program director is dealing with. Then finally, just a quick example. I mentioned a second ago, getting to know and being really familiar with CNCS communication, each month, we have a few recurring things that occur. We have on the first or second Tuesday of the month, we have optional conference calls with all of our program grantees and all of our commissions. You'll receive information about that via email, and you can check in with your program officer.

You hopefully will have a monthly call setup with your program officer, and we may in a particular month have a program staff webinar like we're doing today. Again, I just wanted to walk you through some of that general information. Now, I'm going to turn it over to Curtis to talk more specifically about the program officer.

Curtis Cannon: Thank you, Barbara. As we noted earlier, the AmeriCorps state and national program officer or PO can help programs manage the communications and requests from multiple CNCS units, and the PO is the primary point of contact for direct program grantees. These are the key elements of the PO's job, portfolio management of a group of direct

grantees including training in technical assistance. The PO's portfolio includes both direct programs and commissions. PO's also provide grant process support such as NOFO development, grant reviews and clarifications. POs are active in committee work, both within AmeriCorps state and national, and other units within CNCS. Each PO has a group of AmeriCorps state and national direct, and commission grantees as I mentioned.

In this capacity, the PO monitors grantee performance such as portal compliance and progress on approved performance measures, reviews and clarifies grantee progress supports, connects grantees with resources and opportunities to support their work, and finally, helps resolve or troubleshoot grant issues such as completing grant amendments in eGrants. Some communication basics, these are the ongoing ways that programs communicate with POs. They include a combination of electronic, in-person communications, and they may include on-site meetings or visits to the program for monitoring visits, TTA visits. To maintain the best communication with your PO, be sure to keep these things in mind. Keep your grants in the CNCS contact information up to date. Actively sign up for CNCS communications, and stay in constant contact with your PO.

To help your PO be your best champion supporter, which is what we're here to do, be sure he or she has all of your great news as soon as possible, as well as any community or program news that will impact your program or members significantly. Each year, there are multiple opportunities for you to expand your program's communication and relationship with CNCS. There are often opportunities for you and your staff to share, advise, and volunteer for CNCS activities. So Sharing: to regularly share information across the agency, be proactive about collecting and sharing powerful stories and images. Share these stories with CNCS via your program officer on the CNCS website and through social media. Together, these images and stories build our ability to tell the national story of service, and to keep us all connected to our shared mission of service.

Advise: in addition to collecting and sharing great service stories and photos, you also may be invited to provide input on core agency functions via the federal register, surveys, conference calls, or in-person meetings. Please be on the lookout for these opportunities, and share your experience and insight as often as you can. We really rely on leaders in the field to offer new ideas, challenge processes, and expand our discussion of important topics. Volunteer: you absolutely can volunteer. You and your staff can volunteer to help design or deliver aspects of CNCS or AmeriCorps state and national's work each year. For example, you may receive invitations to help test new grant reports or training materials, speak on panels or webinars or coordinate service projects.

For these types of opportunities, check in with your PO, and let him know that you are interested in this type of engagement. Again, making the most out of your PO relationship, I want to take just a minute to encourage you to think about how you can work with your PO to maximize that important role. As Barbara and I have said throughout this presentation, your PO is your frontline support, your best champion and your best resource within CNCS. We know we all have different work styles and communication needs. It is entirely appropriate and welcome for you to talk to your PO about your needs. Let him or her know how you want to use those monthly checking calls to make the most out of the time, and let him or her know if your needs are not being met.

I and all of my PO colleagues want to be the best resources we can for grantees, and I want to encourage you to speak frankly and directly with your PO to help make that happen. Now, I'm going to turn it back over to Barbara to talk about some of the nuances of CNCS agency culture.

Barbara Reynolds: Great! Thank you so much, Curtis. Yeah, I feel like for just a second, we've put on our volunteer manager hats, and we're like, "You can volunteer." Thank you. Before I jump into the agency culture again, I just want to do a quick audience check to make sure you guys are still hearing me and seeing us. Curtis is talking a lot about you PO relationship, and your PO being your frontline support. If you could and if you know, take a second and type in the name of your program officer. Any of Curtis' grantees are on the line, you want to type that in. Hey Curtis.

Curtis Cannon: Hey.

Barbara Reynolds: If you don't mind, just give us a sense of who you work with, and this is again vital program officer role here at CNCS. I'm just taking a quick gander of the chat box now. Great, Daniel. I see Rose. Wonderful! That's terrific. Margaret, awesome. Yes, these are all the people I'm physically looking at several of those people right now as we are talking to you today. Terrific! Great, thank you so much. Again, I just wanted to get a sense of that. If for some reason, you're on with us today, and you're super new, and you haven't yet met your program officer, right after you find out what a notice of grant award is, I would say, reach out to your PO. If you're still unclear, reach out to me and Curtis. We will help figure it out with you.

As we said, we've talked through some of the mechanics, I would think, some of the business of our grant making and how things work, and the roles that we have in our relationship. I think, it's useful to just take a quick second, and

have a moment of reality related to working with CNCS. As any federal agency is, we are a bear to work with. I think, it's useful for us to acknowledge that, and for any of our program grantees, anyone to know what you're getting into, right? You can see on the slide in front of you, as we've said, we are a federal government agency. We have to deal with the president's budget, congress. We have federal government procurement rules and laws. There's a whole lot of federal government action.

In addition to that, and all the resources that being a federal agency brings, and all the rules that it brings, I think, it's also good to know though that within this organization under CNCS, that we are made up of multiple units. As Curtis and I shared to you and talked about a couple minutes ago, there are a bunch of different departments within CNCS. There are about 500 employees. We are not a monolith. We are not a single brain living in a single hive. I think that that's incredibly important to know in your role if you are interacting with different departments at CNCS, different staff. As you guys can see in the chat box, if nothing else, you have different program officers, right? You have really different human interactions with CNCS.

Again, that brings great resource. We have lots of expertise and passion to bring to you, and that we want to bring to you, and it brings diversity, that we have different communication styles as our partners do around the country. I think that that's important to keep in mind. It is the corporation we are, CNCS, and we are made up of a whole bunch of very different people. Then finally, I just want to note within all that, with the federal role that we have within all of our different staff, we send out a lot of communications. I mean, to me, when I first went to the commission, one of the biggest stresses that I had was trying to manage my inbox, my email inbox, because I would get every single day easily 10 different emails from different people at CNCS.

It wasn't like my program officer was bombarding me. It was multiple, multiple units. That was very overwhelming. It took me some time. It took me some real discussions with my program officer to figure out how to manage that. Again, just in the interest of full disclosure, I want to say, we do send out a lot of communications, and the different departments and the different units in CNCS do not coordinate this communication. It's not in any way intentional that you may receive 10 emails from five different departments at CNCS. We're not ganging up on you intentionally. It is entirely a happy coincidence that we are all wanting to speak with you at the same time on the same day.

Having said that, I think, this is a good opportunity to note your role when you are receiving a lot of communications. If you're getting overlapping requests, conflicting requests for information or deadlines, or anything like that that you're receiving, and you just feel conflicted by that, this is a great opportunity to engage your program officer. As Curtis said, be really direct. Be really frank about it. We very much all want you to be able to manage the communications, manage the different humans, the different personalities within CNCS, and then with us, manage the federal world that we live in. The best way that we can do that is to stay in communication with each other.

For today, as Curtis and I have gone through, we've looked at a few basic and introductory pieces of information. We have for our new program staff, that it's useful for you right now, or if you are working on new staff orientation for your program. Next, as I said, we're going to be joined by two leaders in the field, and folks who are doing this in the real world. We have on the line with us, Natalia Lopez and Fiorella Morales. I don't know if you guys saw in the map when we first started, but they are joining us not from this state. They are in other parts of the country, and they will talk to you a little bit about that in just a second. First off, we're going to hear from Natalia.

Natalia, as you can see on the slide in front of you, is a senior program officer who manages volunteer and intern operations for U.S. programs, and oversees the program management for the national AmeriCorps programs at IRC, so she has quite a big hat, a big role that she plays. She has been in her organization since 2010. She like me and Curtis, I think, comes from a volunteer management background having worked with the United Way in New York City, and has just great experience and great leadership in the field. Natalia will be our first speaker. Then as you can see on the slide, she is joined today, and we are joined by Fiorella Morales as well. Fiorella is the volunteer operations manager, and she has, I think, just joined headquarter staff this year.

I think, Fiorella, may be a newer program staff, and it's great … this is a great combination, we think, with both perspective from Natalia and Fiorella will be super useful to illustrate, and really go deeper on some of the concepts that Curtis and I have been sharing. It's my pleasure to welcome our guest speakers. I'm going to turn it over to Natalia. Take it away.

Natalia Lopez: Thank you. I just wanted to check that everyone can hear me okay.

Barbara Reynolds: Yes. We can hear you.

Natalia Lopez: Okay great. Thank you. Well, thanks again, Barbara and Curtis, for the introduction. Again, thank you for inviting us to speak on today's call. We were very excited to join in and talk a little about our best practices with onboarding both HQ staff and field staff to our AmeriCorps programs. Before I get started about the onboarding activities that we conduct, I just wanted to point out to give you an overview of what the International Rescue Community or IRC does. Generally, the IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disasters to survive, recover, and gain control of their future.

The IRC works in over 40 countries and in 28 U.S. cities. Our work in the U.S. involves providing services to newly arrived refugees and asylees. Last year, the IRC helped over 10,000 refugees and special immigrant visa recipients resettle in American communities. The IRC has two national direct AmeriCorps grants or also referred to as prime grants. This year, we placed 41 AmeriCorps members in 19 U.S. program offices. AmeriCorps members provide support to the IRC clients and the areas of job training, job placement, and health and wellness services. We have been running our job placement and job training AmeriCorps program for the past five years, and our health and wellness AmeriCorps program for the past three years.

On the screen, you see a very small organizational chart. This by no means is the full organizational chart at the IRC. I modified the chart to focus on staff who's directly involved with our AmeriCorps programs. As previously mentioned, Fiorella and I both work at the IRC U.S. program's headquarters office. My direct supervisor is a senior director for resource acquisition and management. He oversees a team of seven staff including myself. I am the senior program officer, and oversee volunteer, intern in AmeriCorps management for our U.S. program offices. Fiorella is a volunteer operations manager, and coordinates directly with AmeriCorps members and supervisors. She also helps with some specialized volunteer projects.

Then the last box you'll see, 19 field offices. I thought spreading it out into 19 boxes would make it really, really tiny to see. We have 19 field offices who participate in IRC's AmeriCorps programs. Each AmeriCorps member placed in one of those offices have a direct supervisor who helps support with recruitment, onboarding, and management of the AmeriCorps members locally. In the next few slides, I'm going to be discussing first the practices for onboarding headquarter staff as well as then talking about the orientation we provide for field staff who are involved with our AmeriCorps programs. In this slide that you see right now, just a quick overview about orientation for our HQ staff.

As Barbara mentioned, Fiorella joined our headquarters team in February of 2018, so she's been with us for a couple of months now. She previously worked at one of our IRC U.S. program offices, where she supervised three AmeriCorps members in her role there. Fiorella herself is actually an AmeriCorps alum. We were excited to have her come onboard, and with her vast experience both in field work and also in AmeriCorps service. For myself, to help prepare for her onboarding, there was a couple of things that I put into action before she came on board, and discuss with her when she first started. The first thing was that I created an orientation guide. I would say it was about eight pages long. That provided an overview of the IRC headquarters team, and included important links, videos, and e-Learning modules for her to review within the first few weeks of her onboarding.

The information was specific to CNCS AmeriCorps program policies and IRC AmeriCorps program resources. In addition to that, I did one thing that you should note. I'm located in Seattle, and Fiorella is located in New York. We do a lot of virtual communication, but once she first started, I did travel to New York, and I spent a week reviewing the information with Fiorella. She also had some time to review things on her own. The second part of it is using some HR resources that we already had that existed within the organization. The first thing was creating a 90-day action plan. That plan outlined primary tasks that she had to get to first, and meetings of individuals she should meet with, both internal and external staff, and make those plans.

I think, that was really important, because as many of you know, when new staff come on board, there's already 80 million things going on, and it's like, "Okay, we train you, but you also have to jump into this project right now." That 90-day action plan really outlined where she had to start in addition to reviewing some of those orientation resources. Then the second part of that was creating a goal-setting form, which outlined more of a yearlong plan with specific outcomes, and also determining professional development activities that you would conduct throughout the year. This is really small, but these are snapshots of some of the materials that I created for Fiorella when she came onboard.

The one on the left-hand side, it does show a couple links. All those links, one thing I want to note is we do have a security cloud platform that we put in all our resources that are for internal staff, especially because we work a lot now virtually. Anytime she needs to access those links, she can go into that cloud platform called Box to access the information. It may be a document, a video, e-Learning module. It's easier for her to access that anytime. Some of the information like I mentioned earlier, we reviewed together when I was in New York, and some of the information she can

easily click on and review during her first month. Then I'm just going to hand it over to Fiorella so she could talk a little bit about her experiences with the highlights and challenges of onboarding.

Fiorella Morales: Great! Thank you, Natalia. Can you hear me? Can everybody hear me?

Natalia Lopez: Yes.

Fiorella Morales: Perfect! Thank you very much. This is Fiorella speaking again. In this slide, I'm going to talk about my experience and some highlights and challenges that I have encountered myself during the onboarding training process. I'm going to start with the highlights doing the onboarding process. Firstly, my overall feedback about the training is that I found it extremely helpful, informative, and very necessary, because it provided me with very specific information about the function of the organization and its mission as well as of the AmeriCorps program and CNCS. I felt that it was very necessary for me to understand all of this really early on. That was very, very helpful.

Another highlight is that I really, really like that I was able to have a conversation with Natalia, who is my supervisor about my performance and professional development goals early on. I think that setting short and long-term goals early on gave me a sense of direction. I knew what I needed to do to accomplish in the next 30, 60, or 90 days. I felt like it was definitely a start of a strong manager-employee relationship. I very much appreciated that to have some clarity on my role, and also direction and expectations from my supervisor. Overall, as I mentioned, I found my onboarding training very helpful, because it also allowed me to learn information that I needed to know in order to do my work at my own pace and during my own time.

As some of you may know, that a lot of time is invested into building resources for trainings as well as conducting the actual training, so I greatly benefited from reviewing the self-guided orientation that Natalia worked on as it allowed me to go back to review information and resources with just one click. Although I've been in my position for nearly four months now, I still heavily rely on that self-guided orientation. I use it regularly because it's very hard to remember all information during the first couple of weeks that you start. That's certainly been very, very helpful for me. Moving on to talk about challenges. As you know, we're working within 19 offices, and each IRC office is quite unique, and mainly because of the different populations that each office is serving, and the different types of programs and services.

I found this to be a challenge because it was very hard for me to remember and trying to understand not only how the organization functions as a whole, but also, how each office operates. That was a challenge. It's still a little bit of a challenge now, but being that I've been in communication with the offices and the staff, so I'm becoming to familiarize more and more about how each office operates. Now, learning how to navigate employee relationship, so navigating employee relationships, so providing guidance to both field staff that supervise AmeriCorps members, and the AmeriCorps members can sometimes be very challenging, because I'm not there on a day to day basis.

As you know, I'm based in New York, so we have AmeriCorps members across the country, and they're based in different states, so that's been a challenge not to be there in person sometimes, but I've managed to be in communication with them virtually and on a regular basis. Also, another challenge will be navigating expectations and results. Sometimes, members believe that there are some things that they could change, but they don't really have a grasp on the bigger picture, so ensuring that the member understands that although we appreciate their feedback, their ideas. Unfortunately, there are certain things that offices cannot do, so just setting realistic expectations with them sometimes can be a little bit difficult.

It still is now, but it's something that I'm working on. Another challenge is that right now, we have members log their hours in one system, and also log data-related services provided to clients in a separate system, and throughout the year, there have been issues that come up in regards to entering information. This has been an ongoing issue, but it's getting a little bit better with time. Luckily, we have a great support from our information systems team over at our headquarters also available to field staff. Despite the challenge, at least, I know that there are supporting guidance from other people in the organization. I'll let Natalia now move on to talk about the next slide.

Natalia Lopez: Thanks, Fiorella. Now, let's just talk a little bit about the orientation that we provide at the headquarters to our 19 fields staff supervisors, AmeriCorps supervisors. Prior to members starting, we hold a three-part virtual webinar series for staff that review specific program policies and any updates to the program. We help them prepare for member recruitment. We continue reiterating how to best support members throughout their service year, and also how to best collect program outputs and outcomes through our data systems. We then follow up with materials and resources that staff can have access through, and which they can access through IRC's internet site as well as viewing recorded trainings.

Throughout the year, we also have an open line to all field staff to discuss any questions that they may have, or challenges that can arise. Being that we are a multi-state grant, we do not only use a phone and email for communication, but our organization also uses Skype as a communication tool. We have all those great tools to allow supervisors and field staff to contact us at any moment. One thing I also want to know is we are in constant communications with members as well as field staff, but we do also hold a mid-year review with field staff to go through any feedback we've received throughout the year by members as well as see if they have any feedback in addition to their general questions that they've sent out throughout the year.

Then this is just an example of the handbook that I mentioned. We do have these resources. It's pretty lengthy. As you know, there's a lot of information on there, but we like to split it up to provide information on how to plan, prepare, and manage your members, and what to do at the end of their service. Then this is the internet site that I mentioned. On the left-hand side, you'll see that there are columns that both AmeriCorps members and supervisors can access. There's a section specifically called supervisor resources that has access to those handbooks as well as recorded trainings, and all the files and information that they need to maintain at their local office.

Then I'm just going to turn it over to have Fiorella talk about the field staff highlights, and challenges.

Fiorella Morales: Great! Thank you, Natalia. For the field staff highlights and challenges, some are based on my own experience when I was supervising AmeriCorps members in my previous position, but there are others that are also based on feedback and comments that we receive from field staff supervisors. Starting with the highlights from field staff, which I've also can say that where some of my highlights when I was supervising AmeriCorps members is that field staff, or I thought also that the onboarding training process provides us or them, used to provide me with a better understanding of the programs. There are a lot of regulations and policies implemented into the AmeriCorps program and CNCS, so ensuring the field staff understand the program is essential to ensure compliance with all requirements.

The field staff has also found that the member and supervisor's handbook that Natalia showed in the previous slides was a great tool of resource pre and post onboarding as well as the webinars that are conducted throughout the year. I myself also found that these resources were very helpful as I was able to go back at any time for more information. For challenges, some challenges that were encountered by field staff, which at some point were also challenges that I encountered in my previous position, that the onboarding of new staff during the middle of the year certainly is challenging for everyone. It's challenging for the member, for the new staff, and staff at headquarters. For us here over at HQ, we require that during the transition, that another field staff supervises the member in the interim while the office recruits or on boards a new person.

Once a new staff is on board, Natalia and I over at HQ, we ensure that we'd share all training and resources with the new staff to ensure a smooth transition for them. Another challenge that I myself have encountered in my previous position, and that I've heard from other field staff right now that are encountering is that it's a lot of information, so specially for those that are starting during the middle of the year, but I think that having the members and supervisor's handbook to rely on to at any time, and having access to the recorder webinars, and just having that ongoing communication with field staff has certainly been beneficial for everyone. That's improved the collaboration with everyone.

Another challenge which it's on training on specific systems, which is the same as I said earlier when I talked about my own challenges now as an HQ staff. As you know, we have members log hours in one system, and log data-related services provided to clients in a separate system. This has been an ongoing issue, like I said, that we've been encountering, but things have continued to improve little by little with the guidance and support from our information system's team over at headquarters. That's it for my challenges.

Natalia Lopez: Thanks, Fiorella. Thanks, Fiorella, again. Just to wrap it up really quick, some of our next steps is as we mentioned earlier, we're going to continue updating our resources. As CNCS puts out new program policies, we ensure that those resources we provide to both HQ staff and field staff are updated as they come in. One thing I would love to hear maybe not on this call necessarily, but all of you saw my email in the beginning of this slide, but hearing from other organizations that are on today's call about what are some of your best practices when it comes to onboarding. The last next step for us is our data system is continuing to update those systems, and ensuring that there's sufficient training for all who are using those systems.

Thank you all.

Barbara Reynolds: Great, Natalia, thank you so much. Fiorella, thank you so much, you guys. I think, as we thought, as we hoped, as we were advertising, again, the level of detail and just the thoroughness, I really appreciate you walking us through that, both of you, both from the HQ perspective and for field staff. I felt like I heard a lot of overlap between what

Curtis and I talked about, the barrage of information, managing the different people. I know your challenge around data systems. Of course, obviously, that's something we share. I just really appreciated hearing from both of you. I'm really grateful. Thank you for sharing that information.

I just want to transition. We do have the chat box open. I know Natalia and Fiorella are still on the line with us. If there are any questions you have or comments you have for them about the IRC presentation, please feel free to use that chat box. I want to draw your attention to a few CNCS resources. These are things as you're looking at your orientation manual, your internet sites, your own programs, your own organizations, just making sure that you are aware of these resources. Curtis and I, I think, have talked about this in various ways throughout today, making sure, as we said, that you sign up for CNCS emails, so you can get that barrage of information we mentioned. There are also links to grant terms, GPR, et cetera, so just making sure that you can really see all that.

Let me take a second and see if there are any particular questions that you have for Curtis, for me, again, for Fiorella or Natalia. If you have any questions, type into the chat box. We'll collect them that way. We're all pausing right now to read the chat box. Please take a second if you have any questions for us. Okay, if there is anything, I don't want to cut anyone off. If you've started typing, please continue to type. I just want to be mindful of time. Please, as I said, if there are questions that you have that you want to get our feedback on, or there's information you want to share with us, please do either in the chat box now or in our emails after today's session.

Just to start wrapping it up a little bit, again, we have a post-webinar survey. You can link to it. We really invite you to take a second. It's just a few short questions. You can link to it in that web link box that you see on the screen in front of you. You'll also get a little prompting reminder after today's session in case you don't do that. You can also fill out the survey when you get that reminder. As we said, we're posting today's recording later this month. That will go up on the Knowledge Network, and you can access the slides, the visuals on the Knowledge Network now. If you want to try to get a bigger view of some of the screenshots that we shared with you, or some of that information, please feel free.

Next month, we are going to present another webinar in our series. Given the timing of the year and just thinking a lot about recruiting and screening and selecting AmeriCorps members, we're going to spend a session talking about criminal history check really from soup to nuts. We think this content would be useful for new folks, so if you are a new program staff, I definitely encourage you if your schedule allows for you to join this session, or log on for the recording afterwards. Definitely, if you are experienced and you're doing a lot of criminal history checks, you'll want to join us as well, and really talk with CNCS staff who are experts in that task. With that, I'm looking at the chat box. I don't see any particular questions or comments right now.

Again, I want to thank Natalia and Fiorella. Thank you both so much for your words of wisdom and your experiences for taking the time today. I want to think, Curtis, of course for his wisdom as a program officer, and all of you guys for joining us today for today's session. Again, please give us feedback. We love to hear from you, and improve these as we move forward together. We hope to see you on our next session in July. Thank you so much. Have a good afternoon.

Natalia Lopez: Thank you, Barbara.