Research and Evidence Webinar Series:

Creating Successful Volunteering and National Service Opportunities: Best Practices and Benefits

February 10, 2022
Please be advised that all lines have been muted to avoid background noises and to allow for greater engagement.

Please use chat feature to submit any questions throughout the presentations. Select Everyone when submitting your questions. We will read your questions for you.

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Welcome and Introduction
Creating Successful Volunteering and National Service Opportunities: Best Practices and Benefits

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Volunteering is a Social Contract

- People have lots of options for how to spend their time. Netflix is a top option.
- Some folks want to volunteer in community organizations!
- If organizations do not make good use of their time, volunteers walk away.
- The quality of the volunteer program and the quality of volunteer engagement with mission determines how volunteers see their experience.
Volunteer Administration: Real Work!

- Interface with staff to define volunteer roles
- Craft policies and position descriptions
- Project an inviting volunteer work environment
- Regularly recruit prospective volunteers
- Interview and screen for good matches
- Connect volunteers with appropriate staff
- Facilitate training of volunteers
- Train staff in working with volunteers
- Ensure proper supervision of volunteers
- Facilitate regular communication with volunteers
- Collect relevant assessment information
- Organize appropriate recognition of volunteer work
- Communicate value of volunteers to stakeholders
What do we know about volunteer management capacity?

- 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity (VMC) Study, funded by AmeriCorps and the UPS Foundation
  [http://webarchive.urban.org/publications/410963.html](http://webarchive.urban.org/publications/410963.html)

- 2018-2019 VMC-2 Study, funded by AmeriCorps
  [https://volunteeralive.org/volunteer_management_capacity.php](https://volunteeralive.org/volunteer_management_capacity.php)
Professor Jeff Brudney
The advent of the episodic volunteer

Figure 4. Distribution of Long-term, Short-term, Face-to-face, and Virtual Volunteers in 2019

- Long-term volunteers in face-to-face assignments: 46%
- Long-term volunteers in virtual assignments: 6.8%
- Short-term volunteers in face-to-face assignments: 41.7%
- Short-term volunteers in virtual assignments: 5.5%
Professional volunteer resource managers are a distinct minority.

Figure 5. Volunteer Management Spheres

- Volunteer responsible for volunteer administration: 13.6%
- No staff or volunteer as volunteer manager: 21.3%
- Staff volunteer manager devoting at least half-time to volunteer administration: 23.8%
- Staff volunteer manager devoting less than half-time to volunteer administration: 41.4%
Most nonprofits have a problem recruiting volunteers.

Figure 8. Percentage of Nonprofits that Cite Various Challenges as a Big Problem, a Small Problem, and Not a Problem in Their Volunteer Programs

Recruitment
- Recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers
- Recruiting volunteers available during the workday
- Recruiting volunteers with the right skills or expertise
- Having more volunteers than the organization can accommodate
Are recruitment and placement practices in place?

Adoption of Volunteer Management Practices

Recruitment and Placement
- Matching of volunteers to appropriate tasks or jobs
- Screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers
- Written policies and job/position descriptions for volunteer involvement

- Adopted to a large degree
- Adopted to some degree
- Not adopted
Are volunteer support practices in place?

Adoption of Volunteer Management Practices

- Regular supervision of volunteers
- Liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers
- Recognition activities, such as award ceremonies, for volunteers
- Training and professional development opportunities for volunteers
- Training for paid staff in working with volunteers

Legend:
- **Green**: Adopted to a large degree
- **Light Gray**: Adopted to some degree
- **Black**: Not adopted
Are communication practices in place?

Adoption of Volunteer Management Practices

Communication
- Communication of value of volunteers to volunteers
- Regular in-person communication with volunteers
- Communication of value of volunteers to the board of directors
- Regular technology-mediated communication with volunteers
- Communication of value of volunteers to funders
- Communication of value of volunteers to the general public

Legend:
- Green: Adopted to a large degree
- Light green: Adopted to some degree
- Black: Not adopted
Are assessment practices in place?

Adoption of Volunteer Management Practices

Assessment
Regular collection of information on volunteer numbers and hours
Annual measurement of the impacts volunteers have
Calculation and communication of organization’s return on investment in volunteers
Regular review of volunteer experience or performance with individual volunteers

Adopted to a large degree  Adopted to some degree  Not adopted
Connecting Dots

• Volunteerism is a primary way that citizens engage their communities. **People need engagement.**

**Organizations need engagers.**

• Social contracts to engage don’t happen without real work. **Organizations must invest in VMC if they want returns from their volunteers.**
Connecting Dots

• Volunteer administration is hard. Before the pandemic short-term, shallow assignments gained popularity. During the pandemic, virtual engagement increased.

• Too few organizations are investing in the people and practices that lead to happy, productive, and committed volunteers.
Connecting Dots

• Over one in five organizations have **no written policies or position descriptions** for volunteers.

• Almost half do **no training of staff** to work with volunteers.

• One in three collect **little to no information** on what their volunteers bring to operations.
What can we do?

**Advocate internally for resources**

- Convince boards and top management teams that returns from volunteers only comes from investments in capacity to work with volunteers.
What can we do?

#2 Get a pro VRM in place

- Make the job more than half time!
- Look to Certification in Volunteer Administration [https://cvacert.org/](https://cvacert.org/)
- If we can use AmeriCorps members in these slots, they can benefit from serious training.
What can we do?

Build your volunteer program

• Adopt the practices that make sense for your situation.

• No accidents: Build strategic approaches to recruitment, placement, support, communication, and assessment.

**VMC = People + Practices**
Thank you!

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Creating Successful Volunteering and National Service Opportunities: Best Practices and Benefits
Motivated to Serve: Recruiting and Supporting Diverse AmeriCorps Members

MATTHEW HUDSON-FLEGE, PHD
AMERICORPS WEBINAR
FEBRUARY 10, 2022
The Challenge

AmeriCorps members are diverse in terms of age, education level, and motivation to serve. How can AmeriCorps program leaders better understand, recruit, and support these diverse members?

Research Methods

Analyzed data from the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study*  
Analyzed data from the AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Survey*  
Conducted interviews with AmeriCorps alumni

*These studies were funded by the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation and are available at: https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/evidence-exchange
AmeriCorps Member Profiles

Public Servants
Gappers
Wanderers
Young Idealists
Public Servants

Recent College Graduates

High level of Public Service Motivation

Joining AmeriCorps to springboard career in nonprofit/public/helping sectors

*Approximately 1/3 of Young Adult AmeriCorps Members*

Example: Andrea Rosado
Gappers

Recent College Graduates

Low-Moderate level of Public Service Motivation

Joining AmeriCorps to either
  ◦ discover new career pathways
  ◦ take a “break” before launching their career

Approximately 1/3 of Young Adult AmeriCorps Members

Example: Ariel Cochrane-Brown
Wanderers

High School Graduates with some college or work experience

Low-Moderate level of Public Service Motivation

Joining AmeriCorps to find direction & purpose

*Approximately 17% of Young Adult AmeriCorps Members*

Example: Alex Harvey

*Note: Young Idealists represent greater racial, gender, & economic diversity than AmeriCorps members as a whole*
Young Idealists

Recent High School Graduates

High level of Public Service
Motivation

Joining AmeriCorps to make an impact in “the real world”

Approximately 17% of Young Adult AmeriCorps Members

Example: Matthew Hudson-Flege

Note: Young Idealists represent greater racial, gender, & economic diversity than AmeriCorps members as a whole
Audience Poll

If you served in AmeriCorps, which member profile **best** describes you as an AmeriCorps member?

a. Public Servant
b. Gapper
c. Wanderer
d. Young Idealist
e. None of these
f. N/A- I never served in AmeriCorps
Interview Takeaways-
Why they Joined

Wanderers- needed a job; opportunity for new direction
Gappers- needed a job; opportunity to enter nonprofit sector
Public Servants- preparation for graduate school; opportunity to refine career interests within the public service realm
Young Idealists- wanted to make an impact right away; didn’t want to go right to college

*All- opportunity to do meaningful work*

Food for Thought: Some members didn’t know they were joining an AmeriCorps program until late in the interview process, or even on their first day! Others had a very narrow impression of what AmeriCorps was based on people they knew who had served.
Interview Takeaways - Recruiting Messages

Wanderers - technical skills learned; education award & health benefits

Gappers - career opportunities; education award & health benefits

Public Servants - career & personal growth opportunities; education award

Young Idealists - hands-on service opportunities & making an impact; education award and supporting career growth

All - Desire to hear authentic stories/testimonials from “people like me,” and an aversion to overly polished marketing campaigns.
Interview Takeaways:
Member Support

Helpful:
◦ Learning new skills (construction)
◦ “On the Job” training from more experienced members
◦ Open-door policy from program staff

Needed:
◦ How to best use Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
◦ Preparing for life after AmeriCorps
◦ Professional growth & development support
Applying these Lessons to College Advising Corps

Recruiting:

Determining which program highlights to emphasize based on prospective member’s profile.

Matching a prospective member with a current member/alumni who was “in their shoes”

Member Support:

Personalized professional development coaching.
A Resource: *Joining AmeriCorps*

A book for prospective AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps program staff, and educators.

Answering the questions:
- What is AmeriCorps?
- Should I join AmeriCorps?
- How do I join AmeriCorps?
- How do I make the most of my experience?
- How do I prepare for life after AmeriCorps?

Available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) or at [www.joiningamericorps.com](http://www.joiningamericorps.com)
Thank You

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Reflections
Creating Successful Volunteering and National Service Opportunities: Best Practices and Benefits

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Q&A Discussion
Creating Successful Volunteering and National Service Opportunities: Best Practices and Benefits

Questions?
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Thank You!

- The slides and recording will be available at AmeriCorps Impact Webinars.
- Visit: https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/webinars for past webinars and for more information on AmeriCorps Research and Evaluation: evaluation@cns.gov.