

AmeriCorps Impact Webinar 5 Transcript

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

Welcome to Leveraging Transformative Resources to Meet Community Needs and Ignite a Lifetime of Civic Engagement. AmeriCorps service and the investments in service building activities provides opportunities for citizens to be agents of positive change, dedicating themselves to solving community issues within the support of local stakeholders.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

Today's webinar will discuss complimentary perspectives that contribute to our understanding of national service. Our speakers are Samantha Spinney, principal investigator from ICF on the bundled study associated with the Volunteer Generation Fund. Kayla Paulson, service enterprise Program Administrator from Alive. Michelle Raymer, senior Volunteer Engagement Officer, Iowa Commission of Volunteer Service. Lisl Hacker, director of Training and Technical Assistance, Massachusetts Service Alliance. Shane Dermanjian, Research Analyst from the Office of Research and Evaluation and Program Reflection with Emily Stock, Project manager for Volunteer initiatives AmeriCorps.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

There'll be plenty of time at the conclusion of the presentation to ask our panelists your questions. Please be sure to place advanced questions and comments in the chat. We'll be collecting your questions for the question and answer time block towards the end of the webinar.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

And now here to welcome us and set the stage for the discussion is Jehyra Asencio Yace, research analyst with the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation. Jehyra.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Thank you, Katy. Can you hear me? Good day, everyone, and thank you all for joining us here today. I am Jehyra Asencio Yace, a research analyst team coordinator at the Office of Research and Evaluation. We hope that this webinar will help you better understand how to leverage AmeriCorps resources, be those funding national service members and our volunteers and research data to meet community needs, but also to ignite that lifetime of civic engagement. Next slide please.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

So to set the stage here today consistent with findings from other national level studies, AmeriCorps and census data show that the stability in the national volunteering rate dropped during the pandemic and data like gallop's more recent poll indicate it has yet to rebound to pre-pandemic levels. Things have changed drastically, some would say, and we not only see it in the data but also know it from the work of practitioners in the field.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Organizations are struggling with recruitment and retention of volunteers, but our research findings also show us promising organizational practices, program models and positive benefits that national service member and volunteers experience across the board. This is why we are bringing you today experiences and program models implemented by our state commissions using volunteer generation fund grants and

other important partners like Service Enterprise and the latest results of our member exit survey data. The menu that we have cooked up is large because we strongly believe in thinking of AmeriCorps as a braid full of resources that can and should be leveraged to improve our communities including the lives of our National Service members and volunteers. Next slide please.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

To give you some background, three years ago our office tasked the research firm ICF with conducting bundle evaluations in high priority areas of work. These bundled evaluation projects all have a capacity building and peer learning component that have helped us better understand the needs of evaluation and how we can better partner with our programs.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

One of the bundle evaluations being completed looks at models implemented by nine state service commissions that receive Volunteer Generation Fund grants in fiscal year 2020. The Volunteer Generation fund was a program established by the Edward Kennedy Serve America Act on 2009 that provided funding to state service commissions to build the capacity of state and local volunteer organizations to recruit, manage, and train volunteers. In 2022, the scope of the VGF program was expanded to include other type of nonprofit organizations and entities. This year the VGF cohort has 18 grantees nationwide focus on increasing volunteer recruitment and retention. The descriptive study that we were talking about represents the first effort to examine the models and approaches being used by state service commissions since the in inception of the program. We are using a case study approach which will triangulate findings from all available state data and then conduct a cross case analysis to tell the program level story of the VGF 2020 cohort. Next slide please.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

So ICF also reviewed literature published in the last decade on volunteer management strategies including recruitment and retention and volunteer outcomes. We found volunteer management best practices like matching volunteers to roles based on interest, supporting them professionally and emotionally, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, providing training and learning opportunities, and also providing feedback and recognition. And we also found some recruitment practices, best practices like communicating your organization's investment in volunteers, matching volunteer motivations to messaging and being explicit in inviting diverse populations.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

I must say that these are volunteer management best practices that involve regular non-episodic volunteering under normal conditions. However, volunteer management practices for other conditions, for example, natural disaster, health emergencies, and during economically challenging times may vary. These situations come with volunteer management challenges on accounting for overseeing and mobilizing volunteers.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

At least five grantees in our studies structured their VGF grant program model entirely or in part around supporting volunteer management in disaster or crisis response, including some grantees who specifically addressed the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be unique to the grantees that were working mostly during 2020 and 2021. New updates will be published on this literature review that will look at some gray literature and non-publicly available evidence-based practices including a new report from

the Do Good Institute and research on the service enterprise model. So I invite you all to stay tuned because we will very soon now in summer be publishing that new updated literature review report in our evidence exchange.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Now I will pass it on to Samantha Spinney, our project director of the Lifecycle Evaluation Project to share more about our VGF findings. Thank you.

Samantha Spinney:

Thanks so much, Jehyra. Greetings everyone. My name is Samantha Spinney, I'm a research and evaluation manager at ICF, a large research organization and I'm serving as the principal investigator of the Volunteer Generation Fund evaluation. Right now we are still in the midst of wrapping up our study, but I am excited to be here today to share some preliminary findings with you all. Next slide please.

Samantha Spinney:

Overall, the purpose of our evaluation is to learn more about how State Service Commissions who received a volunteer generation fund grant in fiscal year 2020 are using their grant to support volunteer management. We have a total of nine state commissions who are included in the study. We've worked closely with these commissions to collect a range of data, qualitative and quantitative to tell the story about how VGF is implementing or impacting volunteer management in those states. Next slide please.

Samantha Spinney:

One of the key findings we've learned so far is that state commissions are using their funds to support training and can capacity building activities on a range of volunteer recruitment and retention strategies. Helpful recruitment and retention strategies that we've heard about so far included writing stronger volunteer position descriptions to link skilled volunteers to positions to and to increase recruitment, retention and buy-in, creating easy entry activities to get volunteers in the door and remove complicated onboarding tasks, recruiting different types of volunteers including a younger generation of volunteers and skills-based volunteers, aligning volunteers to tasks they enjoy doing, demonstrating appreciation for volunteers to increase long-term retention. These are just some examples. There are several that we've heard.

Samantha Spinney:

One thing we've heard also, again and again, however, is that strategies depend on the type of volunteers, size of organization, capacity of organization, staffing, et cetera. Strategies are not one size fits all. For example, if organizations need long-term volunteers, they may not be able to utilize strategies focused on surge recruiting. We also heard that strategies specific to very large or very small organizations were not always applicable universally. In addition, smaller organizations with fewer staff found some appreciation techniques difficult to integrate, such as doing the calculations to demonstrate the exact return on volunteer investment. Next slide please.

Samantha Spinney:

We've also learned about emerging topics in volunteer management. Given the timeframe of our study, the COVID-19 pandemic has been front and center with many commissions using their VGF grants to support organizations in responding to the pandemic. We heard from several organizations that during the height of the pandemic the need for volunteers increased exponentially while volunteer

engagement simultaneously became more challenging. Some program recipients voluntarily and involuntarily stopped the use of volunteers while others adapted to online volunteering or used enhanced risk mitigation measures such as providing personal protective equipment to volunteers.

Samantha Spinney:

Once State Commission implemented a COVID-19 resiliency grant through which the commission was able to reach a new group of nonprofit organizations, many of which they would have been unlikely to have reached without the grant, we also heard that some organizations had success with volunteers, specifically organizations whose volunteers mostly work outdoors or those trained in medicines such as nurses. Training and capacity building provided to volunteer organizations on engaging volunteers during COVID-19 included learning how to operate with fewer volunteers, record volunteer trainings and use volunteers virtually.

Samantha Spinney:

In one state, VGF supported volunteer management training shifted to focus on how to identify best practices and enhance accessibility in volunteering during the pandemic. We also heard a lot about diversity, equity and inclusion or DEI efforts in volunteer management. DEI was also front and center for many commission staff and volunteer organization staff with whom we spoke. We heard about some of the challenges organizations have had in recruiting a diverse representation of volunteers, noting that not all sectors of the population have the same privilege in being able to contribute time or financial resources to support volunteering.

Samantha Spinney:

Some representatives from volunteer organizations noted that they had an overrepresentation among more privileged groups as volunteers. They perceived those with more privileges having more time to volunteer. To address this challenge, several commissions use their VGF grant to support training and capacity building on how to convey information to engage diverse volunteers either through volunteer position descriptions or other communications. One state shared they learned to consider that even the word volunteer is not used in all communities. In some cases DEI topics were addressed specifically in trainings. In other cases, a DEI lens was used to inform trainings. Next slide please.

Samantha Spinney:

Commissions and the organizations they serve also shared some of their biggest challenges and needs. In general, many commissions shared that they had lower levels of participation in trainings compared to pre COVID levels. We heard this across commissions and across different program models being used. We heard about challenges with data in general. Participants from one state share challenges measuring volunteer retention. We also heard challenges related to data collection and management more generally. In another state, we heard about challenges managing and tracking volunteer data and desiring more training and support in this area. We also heard about the desire for more networking opportunities, training recipients wanted existing networking opportunities to be expanded or continued beyond the life of a training cohort. And finally we heard from a couple states that their training participants wanted more specific content about DEI topics in the service enterprise training curriculum used in those states.

Samantha Spinney:

Next slide. We also heard about several outcomes from VGF grant sponsored activities. Through VGF training and capacity building efforts, commissions were able to create volunteer management networks. This allowed organizations they served to engage and collaborate with other organizations to get ideas and stay relevant in volunteer management. Commissions and the organizations they served also cited expanded reach to new organizations and volunteers with new strategies. As a result of the grant. We heard about improved volunteer onboarding by streamlining and updating the orientation process. Several organizations also cited a better alignment of volunteers to needs. Organizations described learning this skill through the service enterprise curriculum and being able to apply the skill to more effectively use volunteers.

Samantha Spinney:

Multiple commissions and sub grantees also cited being a leader in the county or state, the go-to organization on volunteer management topics. Several organizations also cited the approachability of service enterprise in helping them to think about volunteer management at a systems level, which made it less intimidating and more feasible. We heard about improved volunteer descriptions to link skilled volunteers to available positions, which ultimately increased volunteer recruitment and retention commissions and organizations also described continued training opportunities where organizations who took initial trainings were more likely to come back for more and then complete additional trainings. And finally, we also heard about how organizations who participated in VGF funded trainings or other programs were better prepared in the end to apply and qualify for larger grants. Next slide please.

Samantha Spinney:

Overall, we've also learned about different volunteer management models used by the VGF grantees. Service enterprise was the most predominant model with over two thirds of the grantees in the study describing using this model. One state also adapted the Stanford Pathways model to develop a customized volunteer management model for their state. And another cited the human resource management model. Though it's also worth noting that this grantee also used Service Enterprise.

Samantha Spinney:

Anyway, these are some preliminary findings that we've been able to generate so far. We're still finalizing our work and we'll be sharing the final report and other materials this fall. Please stay tuned.

Samantha Spinney:

At this point I'd like to introduce Kayla Paulson, the next presenter whose session will be all about the service enterprise model that we kept hearing about in our study. Thank you.

Kayla Paulson:

Well, thank you, Samantha. As she said, I'm hoping by now you've heard Service Enterprise enough that you're at least a little interested in knowing what it is. I'll quickly introduce myself. My name is Kayla Paulson, I spent a little over the last decade as part of the AmeriCorps family, ran an RSVP program, part of a VGF Volunteer Center sub-grantee through the state commission, and even dabbled a little bit as an AmeriCorps director in an interim state as we were wrapping up one program and it transitioned to the next organization. So now I have the privilege though of being part of Alive and serving as the service enterprise program administrator on the national level. So I get to continue working with all the amazing

AmeriCorps grantees, state's, commissions, and our hubs. Let's go ahead and move to the next slide and we'll find out a little bit more about service enterprise.

Kayla Paulson:

So service enterprise, if you're asking, I'm hearing it from a state commission standpoint, but I also saw we've got some amazing RSVPs that have logged in today. I will tell you it is a national accreditation and strategic volunteer engagement. So any nonprofit organization that's using volunteers to help them meet their mission, it is great for it. And as an AmeriCorps sponsor grantee, depending on which program you're in, it will help you amplify your programming and maximize the funding that you have. For Senior Core, it can help your stations be more impactful and have opportunities that really create those outcomes that you need for your reports. It also helps them put in some pieces to better track that your senior core members are the ones helping them get those outputs and outcomes.

Kayla Paulson:

For AmeriCorps, it's going to help with the recruitment, the training, supervising those members and quite often helping them better engage community members as volunteers to deliver the mission and help them, whether it be with their VAD or with what they're working on in a traditional AmeriCorps program. For VGF, it's a change management program that focuses on organizational capacity to engage volunteers. I think I'm just going to leave it at that and we'll move to the next slide.

Kayla Paulson:

So it's a little confusing. It's like AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps now. So I'm a quick run through the three key terms and players. So we've got service enterprises and those are what we call organizations that go through the program and get accreditation. They fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills throughout the whole organization and amazing ways to help achieve their social mission. The service enterprise program, it's a program at that. It's that cross-functional multi-level brings together an organizational team that solely focuses on making it so that volunteers can help them deliver their mission. They attend the trainings, they go through the whole process, and it's about a year long change program. Then how does Alive do it all across the country? Because if you know, we've got amazing members across the country, but we don't have offices across the country. So we are working with training and implementation hubs. Sometimes they are state commissions. We've got universities, we've got regional volunteer centers, very local volunteer centers that are all partnering with us to help bring this program and the amazing outcomes that it has to their local communities.

Kayla Paulson:

Let's jump to the next slide and check out our guiding principles. So one of the things I absolutely love about Service Enterprise, it's all research based. Everybody has pulled together the research to make sure that we're seen on True Path and we're getting new research from those that are participating in that dataset every single time we have new people join the program. So the guiding principles, we need a volunteer ecosystem. It can't just be the nonprofit sector and I know I'm preaching to the choir probably. There are many of us that are like, "Ooh, we know this." But now we have research that really proves we need to have faith-based organizations, school districts, corporations, philanthropy, government, and nonprofits, all together playing important roles to achieve better outcomes with our communities. And that volunteer engagement needs to be, not shouldn't be, but it absolutely needs to be a core strategic function, not an add-on.

Kayla Paulson:

We also need to make sure that we're really bringing in the right volunteers that will contribute their lived experiences, time and talents to help meet community needs rather than just responding to the volunteers that are already at our organizations or that are easy for us to connect with. We need to seek out volunteers that help us and that are part of the communities that we're wanting to help serve. In order to get a return, one must invest. That means time of our staff. That means resources, infrastructure, all of that. Organizations need to bring that to the table in order to make volunteerism great.

Kayla Paulson:

I've also added DEAI here because as you heard with Samantha's report out, we recognize that that is an area of opportunity and we're looking to seek the right individuals to be able to help us look at this from a very holistic standpoint and make sure that we're not only bringing in those pieces to the curriculum, but we're also making sure that we have it so that as we bring it to organizations, we help them on their curves. Now let's check out those outcomes and findings on the next slide.

Kayla Paulson:

So again, it's all based in research and when they were doing the research, here are five ones that they really found out. Organizations are significantly and markedly stronger when they've got a strong volunteer management model. They also are better led and managed, not just volunteers but staff, AmeriCorps members. We also know that they are more adaptable, sustainable, and capable of going to scale. I saw that in my own community when we've had natural disasters and COVID. Our service enterprise were our shining stars and really helped save us in a couple pinches. Also, operating as a service enterprise really requires that you have well-developed human resource management practices. Again, this program affects both paid human capital and volunteer human capital.

Kayla Paulson:

We also know, and it's probably one of my favorite moments over the decade of working in service enterprise, that they're equally as effective as their peers without volunteers, but I almost half the median budget. And one organization that I was working with when we did the numbers and we crunched the value that their volunteer service brings to the organization, it was a mere couple of thousand dollars off from their actual cash budget. So let's jump to the next slide and see how Service Enterprise works for organizations.

Kayla Paulson:

It really helps an organization go through a holistic process to really engage strategically throughout an organization, bring those volunteers in, invite them to share what their unique talents are and what experiences they can bring to us. So sometimes that might mean an organization needs volunteer engagement 101 type of thing. We've got a wonderful training series that can help get not only the volunteer engagement professional, but those program managers, individuals that are working with volunteers can take that training series and have a really good baseline for strong volunteer engagement. The organizational change management program that is the heart and soul of service enterprise and it really helps them work through that transformation.

Kayla Paulson:

It's a year-long process quite often, though I have seen some overachievers knock it out pretty quickly. But it helps them integrate those changes and create a true cultural change within their organization and for their communities. A diagnostic and debrief, quite often when you're like, "I know we need to change something." But what do we need to change? Where's our area of opportunity? What's the lowest hanging fruit? That's what the Diagnostic and Debrief does. Our amazing partners at UT, they help us with the RGK center and they have a diagnostic that we're able to leverage, have organizations take it usually about 10 people or so, and it lets you see where your areas of opportunity are and where your shining stars are. Some things that you might just need to polish and you're really there already.

Kayla Paulson:

It's a national network. I heard Samantha and maybe Jehyra both say it already, that networking with our amazing peers, being able to share resources and examples that we've got from each other. Alive is putting that in place and making sure that we have communities of practice for the organizations. We've been networking for almost a decade as hubs, but making it so that we really have that national network for those service enterprise organizations. Also, continuous learning and improvement. As a certified organization, they do get a discount on our membership. If you join as a hub, your hub staffers and active workforce get to join. But Alive has amazing academies and communities of practice that help build up on what you're already doing well and sometimes inspire you to think outside the box of how you've always done it. Even if it is something doing well, it can always do better.

Kayla Paulson:

Lastly, our hubs offer training and coaching. That isn't prescriptive. It's not everybody has to have this exact model. It's taking the time to build a relationship with the organizations and as a former RSVP director, I loved doing it with my stations because I really got to know them. I got to know what their needs were. I may be selfishly also sometimes encourage them to get training and coaching that would help get the responses back that I needed for our grants. So let's dive to the next slide and look at it from a hub perspective.

Kayla Paulson:

So again, to quick give a explanation of those hubs, implementation and training hubs are organizations that are delivering the program for us across the nation. So it might be a national entity, it might be a very local one or as you heard, we've got a lot of state commissions. Plug and play. The curriculum is ready to go. That is Alive's responsibility along with some pretty amazing volunteers and pro bono volunteers. We work to really build that curriculum up. It has the volunteer engagement training program as part of if you want. Then you do a diagnostic and debrief, which has all the materials you need, the full service enterprise curriculum that takes them through that training and change model, and then additional training and coaching topics as you need. We've got some prebuilt ones, but we also encourage hubs to use what they already have in their wheelhouse.

Kayla Paulson:

Now just getting the plug and play isn't always as helpful as you need. We have a lot of times staff turnover. Also, as we have new hubs come on, we provide a lot of training and technical assistance. So if you need support with marketing and communications, maybe national network with our monthly trainings, it's a pretty great group. You'll hear from a couple of our participants in a moment. And then we've got regular train the trainer opportunities. Some can be done in person, some virtual looking at

what our community needs. And so far we haven't said no to hubs when they're needing help. So I always tell people Challenge me, I'd love to say no, but I'll probably say yes if.

Kayla Paulson:

Let's jump to our next one and look at the recommendations. So we heard Jehyra and Samantha both lean in on some of these earlier, but volunteer recruitment and retention strategies, all of these are looked at and addressed as part of the service enterprise program. We dive into position descriptions, we empower organizations with links that our professional peers in the for-profit world have been using for a long time to create position descriptions. We make sure that we look at how are we creating those, I call them first date opportunities. I don't know if everybody likes that term, but low barrier, low commitment ways to engage and connect to really see if you even want to get to know the organization much beyond that, and making sure we're thinking about where we're at, things where we're meeting with people where they are.

Kayla Paulson:

Next slide. Here's some big pieces of how we're building those ladders, asking what barriers are. It's listening in and leaning in as we need to from people. We've also seen on the next slide, the sustainable, adaptable and scalable piece of it, and I think our hubs are going to shine a little bit of light on that. And I will close out with my last slide of promising practices and training.

Kayla Paulson:

So again, it's available for nonprofits, government entities, and proprietary healthcare organizations. Right now we service the whole nation. I did have somebody ask me if we can head to Australia. I'm going to say yes if we get some other things in play in a couple of years, try not to say no, but if you need anything, I'll drop my info in the chat again and I'd love to connect with you at ServiceEnterprise@volunteeralive.org.

Kayla Paulson:

Now I'm going to hand it over to the amazing Michelle Raymer and let her introduce herself.

Michelle Raymer:

Thanks, Kayla. Hi everyone. I'm Michelle Raymer, I'm a senior program officer for Volunteer Iowa. I am a former Vista alum, a Return Peace Corps volunteer. Have had about 15 year experience in the volunteer engagement profession and have been with Volunteer Iowa for almost a decade now. So if you want to go to the next slide.

Michelle Raymer:

For those of you who aren't familiar with state service commissions, Volunteer Iowa is Iowa State Service Commission. We have the same mission as AmeriCorps to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through a service and volunteering here in Iowa. As many of you I'm sure already know that are on the call and as you'll hear and some of the results from the member survey that are coming up, volunteering and national service have the power to be incredibly impactful, not just to the recipient of that service but also to the volunteer themselves. We know that strategic volunteer engagement extends the budget and the missions of nonprofits, but that also the volunteer themselves experiences physical and mental health benefits, employability experience and skills, youth experience, academic, improved academic outcomes and communities build social capital

when people are volunteering, it really helps strengthen the fabric of communities. And so therefore, for all of those reasons, that's why we really want to help promote service and to make sure that Iowa's a place for all citizens are empowered through service to support their community and make their communities better. Next slide.

Michelle Raymer:

So how we approach this work is we're guided by our state service plan. So every three years it's developed. It's like our blueprint for service engagement in Iowa and our dream for what service could look like. We develop it using input from stakeholders. We do focus groups, interviews, surveys, town halls to help inform what we put into that plan. And this chart helps demonstrate how we like to think about that work. So we often think about it as supply and demand. We know that there needs to be the supply of opportunities for people to volunteer or there needs to be the demand for the volunteers. So there needs to be organizations that have really high quality opportunities that are doing mission impactful work for people to participate in. There needs to be a supply of people who want to volunteer, who want to help in their community, who see themselves as someone who volunteers.

Michelle Raymer:

And there needs to be that infrastructure, that connection point that helps bring everybody together. So the Volunteer Generation Fund really helps support all of our work in this space. We use it to help pilot and scale effective approaches to expand volunteering, to expand the capacity of volunteer centers across our state, to encourage skills-based volunteering, and to really help make sure that volunteering is thought of as a solution for local problems or challenges that are happening. And so as a state service commission, we have the unique space where we're able to learn about what's happening nationally, best practices or other things that we're hearing and bring it to our local communities through training and technical assistance and coaching to help share with people about what those promising practices are. And on the reverse, we're able to listen at grassroots promising programming that's happening and help lift that up and share with our colleagues in other states so other people can benefit from what we've learned.

Michelle Raymer:

We're also able to help make sure that federal resources that might not otherwise be able to be accessed by rural or underserved communities, that it's possible for them to access that through sub-grant or training or other programs that we can provide. So we're pleased to serve in that unique role that we can really help to grow and expand service across the state. And so having been in that space for decades and knowing that volunteer engagement is really relationship-driven work, having that ongoing funding through the Volunteer Generation Fund has really helped us to build this infrastructure where each year we're able to build on what has worked in the past and learn from what hasn't worked to grow and expand service. So next slide.

Michelle Raymer:

So these are a short list of some of our volunteer Generation Fund activities that we use to help expand that volunteer side of service. So obviously a lot of AmeriCorps programs are focused in on enrolling people as members or volunteers through RCP and different branches of AmeriCorps. The Volunteer Generation fund is unique because it's getting everybody else out there in the community to think about how they can volunteer and thinking, helping all those organizations think about how they can really leverage those talents and skills. So I'll talk about service enterprise more and really focus on that talking

about the impacts of service enterprise. But a few other practices that we've seen a lot of success is grants to volunteer centers who do a lot of our work locally. So we do sub-grants, sliding fee match scales, so that way our local sub grantees, depending on their community if they're serving a rural philanthropically underserved community, it's a lower match rate.

Michelle Raymer:

So making federal grants accessible to them. We have volunteer centers that are based in standalone organizations within United Ways. We're able to pilot new models within a community college or city government. So it's been really exciting to learn from what works best in one community, doesn't always work best in the other and find those different pathways. We are also doing a lot of different trainings. So we have a volunteer engagement training program that's a entry level webinar series for new professionals to the field, a more intermediate level series on engaging skilled volunteers, which helps build the capacity to participate in service enterprise in the future. So a pipeline of training opportunities.

Michelle Raymer:

We also have a statewide volunteer opportunity database called Get Connected where nonprofits can post things public can search for them, and we partner with our local volunteer centers to host that. We engage volunteers and help support communities in preparing to respond to disasters by making plans for how they'll manage volunteers and spontaneous volunteers in disaster and in their disaster recovery work and are piloting new things whether it's with youth volunteering or we're trying a new thing with city volunteer engagement trainings to train cohorts of teams from cities to think about how volunteers can support their work.

Michelle Raymer:

Knowing that here in Iowa some communities, there's not a network of nonprofits, it's the local government. And so helping to identify additional roles. So we do a lot of different interventions, but service enterprise has definitely been one of the most promising. So next slide.

Michelle Raymer:

Here in Iowa, we started implementing service enterprise when it rolled out with a national pilot in 2013. So one thing that wasn't mentioned a service enterprise is actually born out of the Volunteer Generation fund and the State Service commission in California creating this program. And then it eventually went into a national pilot in 2013 that we participated in. And I had just started at Volunteer Iowa at the time, and the executive director had shared with me, "We really see this as a game changer for the field." And we have certainly seen that as we've implemented it. So we started by doing a cohort of hubs with volunteer centers in our SVP programs who we thought might be have a capacity to potentially provide the service locally. And with that developed a model where Volunteer Iowa serves as the main hub for the state.

Michelle Raymer:

So we help provide training and the diagnostic to organizations going through the process in central Iowa or in areas that don't have it offered locally. But then we also have some local hubs serving other areas of the states. People have that access and commitment at a local level with local leaders who know their local communities helping provide that process. So in addition to working with that network of sub hubs to help provide the trainings, we also offer quarterly calls statewide to everyone who's

participated in service enterprise. So last quarter we talked about youth volunteering and showcased a certified service enterprise who has developed a teen volunteer program that's really outstanding. And in the next quarter are planning to have someone talk about how to engage volunteers in volunteer engagement, how to have volunteers help support manage other volunteers. So a lot of great support has come through that network. And we've also had volunteer centers and RCPs become certified service enterprises and their host sites and stations become service enterprises, and vista members serving with our service enterprises. Next slide.

Michelle Raymer:

So as we've gone through it, a few benefits in the outcomes in app outputs that we've seen from service enterprise. We've had over 70 organizations become certified as a service enterprise. And as we do that, we've just seen this dramatic shift in their organizational culture about how they think about volunteering. So I recall one diagnostic debrief meeting. I was sitting down with an organization that was addressing homelessness and we were talking through the results and the executive director said, "We always just had our volunteer coordinator managing our volunteers, but we should have every single staff person in our organization thinking about what volunteers can do to support them. Because if every staff person had a team of volunteers who were helping them in their day-to-day work, we could accomplish so much more." And just to have those light bulb moments with so many organizations as we walk them through this process has been really transformational.

Michelle Raymer:

We also hear often from organizations, I remember one that was more in a healthcare setting was saying that now when they have team meetings or leadership meetings and they're planning new programming or new things they want to try, whenever they bring something up, the first question is, "Well, could we have a volunteer do that." Or, "Could a volunteer help with that?" Or, "How could volunteers help make that happen sooner or expand how much we can do with that?" So they're already thinking, how can we bring in volunteers with everything we're doing to support that work and expand it and strengthen it?

Michelle Raymer:

We've had another organization that works in building homes. They said that before this process, the rest of their colleagues thought of their department as a vending machine. They'd go up, they'd push the button, they'd say, "We need five volunteers right now," and expect the volunteers to just come. And then after going through this process, all of their colleagues see them as a resource where they can go to them for support in developing thoughtful volunteer roles and support and recruiting and training those volunteers. But now they're more of consultants to all of the departments to think about how they can engage volunteers well, instead of just reciprocal, like you ask for them, we send them over. And that change and how they're approached and how their organization sees volunteers has really allowed them to flourish and support that growth in volunteerism.

Michelle Raymer:

We've also heard from an executive director who shared, he only went through the process to get his volunteer engagement professional, his coordinator to stop asking him to do it. And once he went through, he was like, "This changes how we do things." He's like, "I would've paid 10 times more to go through and would've happily have done it. I just didn't ever think about it." And so for many organizations, it's the first time their leadership team has come together and sat down to talk about

volunteer engagement and talk about what volunteers can do in a strategic way instead of a reactionary way. And that has been really impactful. So with all those things, we've seen an increase in volunteers, which wasn't necessarily ever the point of service enterprise to have more volunteers. It was to improve the volunteering. But we've seen as organizations improve, they've increased the number of volunteers significantly.

Michelle Raymer:

Even through the pandemic, we saw our certified service enterprises were able to pivot and adapt and have more people brought in. Our local Des Moines botanical Gardens was reached recently featured in the Chronicle Philanthropy because they actually are at a spot now, where they have more volunteers than they did pre COVID. In part because of how they've engaged volunteers to help be leaders of other volunteers and grow their model. We've seen a huge increase in skilled volunteers. We had a local animal shelter who mentioned that they... Because they started asking what skills volunteers had. Someone said they had skills in security systems. And so when they were researching a new security system, they were able to tap that volunteer who could help lead their request for proposals and review them and select the best company. That was definitely outside of the skillset they had and something they never would've thought of before.

Michelle Raymer:

We've also seen just among the profession in Des Moines and central Iowa of our volunteer engagement professionals, and then this has also been seen in other areas of the state that there's a lot of growth and improvement in the field that we've seen that our certified service enterprises have more retention of their volunteer engagement professional, that people are staying longer and seeing opportunities to rise into more leadership roles because they're thought of as part of the leadership team. And we've seen the network strengthened. So our local association, many of the board members have gone through service enterprise and the level of conversation has also just increased. They're able to talk with their peers and educate their peers, and it's really lifted everyone in the process. So we've seen so many tremendous benefits that wouldn't have been possible without service enterprise, and it's truly made a big difference in the landscape of volunteerism in Iowa.

Michelle Raymer:

And so with that, I will pass things over to my colleague, Lisl Hacker over in Massachusetts.

Lisl Hacker:

Great, thanks so much, Michelle. It's really wonderful to be here this afternoon with you all. So my name's Lisl Hacker, so it's starting to become an outdated reference, but like the eldest daughter in the Sound of Music, I still think they put it on TV every year, but I'm pretty sure that nobody watches TV any more because of all the streaming services.

Lisl Hacker:

So I've been with our state commission in Massachusetts for I think eight or nine years now. I am not an alum, but I am married to an alum, so I feel like that counts, and have known about AmeriCorps for a long, long time. Prior to working at the commission, I actually worked at a large national direct and came on to work with the commission specifically around the work that we do with our VGF grant. So I think we can go to the next slide.

Lisl Hacker:

I think Michelle did a great job, I think, of talking in depth about the benefits of service enterprise. We also do service enterprise in Massachusetts, so I don't repeat everything that she just said because we've seen very similar results to everything that she just said. I'm going to talk a little bit more about how this funding, the VGF funding or state funds, we're also very lucky to be generously funded by our state legislature have allowed us to create a pipeline for organizations to build their civic engagement abilities and their volunteer management strategies so that they can eventually, hopefully evolve into an AmeriCorps program or a program that could support a grant like AmeriCorps given the complexities of running that we all know it takes to run an AmeriCorps program. I think in our work at the Massachusetts Service Alliance falls into three buckets. So we obviously have our AmeriCorps work, which is very robust, and I think now we're close to 30 programs and 1800 members across the state.

Lisl Hacker:

So that takes up a lot of what we do. But we're also very lucky to have a state sponsored core program called Commonwealth Core. It's modeled after AmeriCorps but at a much smaller scale. So organizations only need to have two to four full-time members or three to six half-time members. It's a little bit of a mashup of National direct or state, national and Vista. So members do half direct service, half capacity building at organizations, but it's the same model and that members are paid a stipend and they serve about 10 months. And then we have the other activities. I put VGF supported activities, but it's also state funded supported activities that we are able to do for the field in general around service and volunteerism. And that takes us to the next slide.

Lisl Hacker:

And I would say that these VGF and state sponsored initiatives are the ones that really are addressing the immediate needs in Massachusetts, the ones that are arising in the moment.

Lisl Hacker:

So for example, COVID, and I'll talk a little bit about that in a second, but it allows us to be a little bit more responsive and flexible to what's happening in the moment and to help the organizations as they're struggling through a current challenge. So for example, what was already mentioned I think at the very beginning was that volunteer rates have not come back after COVID. They have not gotten back to the levels yet that they used to be at. So this is a focus of ours right now, for example, on these funds as well as our state funds allow us to be able to do that. Or with AmeriCorps and Commonwealth Court, it's a little bit more prescribed in terms of how to implement those programs and what they're responding to at their respective programs. So we've had VGF since 2010. So we've really also been able to build on these resources over the years and build out programs and build relationships with organizations across the state through the various things that they were able to offer from these funds.

Lisl Hacker:

And that is really the key to an organization really becoming introduced and familiar with a commission, understanding the value that we have and that we can bring to them, and then helping them build their capacity over time to be able to take on more and more robust programming. So our main initiatives that we have with these funds are service enterprise as has already been talked about a lot. And now actually it's more like we're up to I think 130 organizations and certified about 75% of those. So we feel very proud and bought into the curriculum and have seen tremendous change in growth in organizations that have gone through this as many of the same examples as Michelle mentioned. And

then we're also able to offer a few different mini grants. So one is a youth development volunteer initiative grant that we offer.

Lisl Hacker:

It's like a \$10,000 grant to better engage volunteers and youth development programming or youth as volunteers. So that's been a great way to get to know new organizations across the state. And then we also have a service learning grant that we're piloting right now. It's not on this list, but that is another way that we've gotten introduced into more the school district world of things and education programming. And then we were able to switch gears during the pandemic and offer a COVID resiliency or recovery grant. And these were four, I think first they were four, and then were \$5,000 grants to organizations to really help them shift gears with volunteers during this time and then build back post-COVID. And then we have some one-off trainings that we do in the fall and the spring and a big conference that we do every year, every other year, sorry, that engages a bunch of attendees from organization statewide.

Lisl Hacker:

So if we go to the next slide, we'll see that these we're located in Boston as the state commission. There's a ton of resources located in Boston that tends to be where a lot of the population is in the eastern part of the state, but it is a priority of ours as a commission to really make sure that we're serving the entire state. We're a small state, I know. I'm sure there are a lot other states on here that are like, it's more challenging given to how geographically large you are. We're small geographically. We are bigger in population. But these opportunities have really allowed us to build relationships in other areas of the state. So as you can see with service enterprise, that's really spread out. These are the participating organizations and groups from Western Mass up to north, the northern part down to the Cape.

Lisl Hacker:

We have a couple of organizations now that we're working on who are on the vineyard, which is that cool triangle shaped island down there. Really can't wait to do a site visit out there. Might have to make it a week long site visit. So we really would've been able to geographically expand who we're able to support with initiatives like service Enterprise. And the next slide as well will show some of our proposals that we've received and then funded as a result because of, again, we're getting out into these networks. And then once we've worked with a service enterprise and they see our value, they're happy to promote the work that we do within their region and connect us maybe to a local connector out there like United Ways. We don't have volunteer connectors in Massachusetts the way other states do, but we often use either nonprofit networks or United Ways in that way.

Lisl Hacker:

So you can see that we are receiving proposals from all different regions, of course a lot from the greater Boston area, but when we make our funding decisions, we're very cognizant of geography as a criteria for how we're selecting programs. Again, because we know there's a wealth of resources available in the Boston area, not just from us, but other foundations and organizations that are not necessarily accessible in other parts of the state. So when you can see what we've received versus what we funded, we more equally distribute the funds into different regions in order to build those networks and those regions. And then we're building the capacity of these organizations in those regions. Well, because if you were to look at our AmeriCorps map, which I didn't include here, but it's on our website,

there's a lot that are concentrated in the greater Boston area of AmeriCorps programs. So Next slide please.

Lisl Hacker:

So you can say the same thing with our COVID resiliency grants. Again, spread out really diverse across the state and that is a real goal of ours to hit as many regions and build those relationships. Not only are we looking at geography though, we're also looking at diversity and mission area for service enterprise. We have worked with organizations anywhere from a very large three hospital healthcare network, which has thousands of volunteers and employees to an all volunteer run food serving organization or a two part-time staff run conservation organization. So we're really hitting all different mission areas. Next slide please. You can see the also size in terms of budget sizes, and this was really important to us as well. And another piece of criteria that we look at when looking at what organizations we want to support. We do want to diversify our portfolios in terms of how large they are.

Lisl Hacker:

And this often equates to budget size and staffing tend to align, but we were really happy to be able to support three organizations that are under \$75,000 as an operating budget, 13 under \$500,000 and 18 under a million to really... I think when we can support these types of organizations, our return on investment tends to be much higher. And again, these are the organizations that maybe don't have the capacity right now already in place to have a volunteer coordinator, to have volunteer management systems, to have even a volunteer database.

Lisl Hacker:

They don't have those things because they don't have the budgets to be able to support those things. So our funds can go to build those things in those organizations. A lot of times we do see the money going towards supporting staffing to manage volunteers to support a database, to support maybe trainings for volunteers or setting up a training system. Especially during COVID, we saw a lot of asynchronous or online trainings being developed now for volunteers, which has allowed organizations to be able to recruit different types of volunteers, where before. A volunteer had to be available to attend a training at like 9:00 AM on a Wednesday. Now they can watch the training in their own home at their convenience and then start volunteering after that. So it's really been an interesting shift that we've seen and these funds have really helped with that shift. Next slide.

Lisl Hacker:

And so then this brings me to the main point of all of this, which is we really use these funds and have seen great success in these funds as a point of entry to working with the commission and service enterprise. I'm counting that too. So the mini grants as well, service enterprise, so that we're getting to know them, we're really supporting them, building relationship with them, building volunteer management capacity within their organization. And then we'll suggest to them, "Hey, have you thought about Commonwealth Core? Is that something you might be interested in? Or hosting a Vista or becoming a host site with one of our existing AmeriCorps programs," if their missions align. With what we have, but we have a lot of different types of AmeriCorps programs.

Lisl Hacker:

So it could be environmental work, it could be mentoring, tutoring. We have the opportunity for that. So connecting them with our current AmeriCorps portfolio. And then we've seen that happen. And then

from there, going on to maybe becoming a full on AmeriCorps program after that. And we have a bunch of examples, a handful of examples where organizations have taken this exact path to becoming an AmeriCorps program within our network. And the great thing is by the time they become an AmeriCorps program, they have such this longstanding strong relationship with us that it tends to go very smoothly once they become an AmeriCorps program. A great example of this is, we had a Habitat for Humanity that went this route. We had a Perkins School for the Blind that is gone this route. Sometimes in between the Commonwealth Core and AmeriCorps or simultaneous, they might have a planning grant with us.

Lisl Hacker:

We're also able to offer planning grants. So that's a huge benefit as well. But again, because we know them and have built the relationship with them, we feel confident in them becoming a successful AmeriCorps program and have already set them up with many systems. And I'll just say that this same trajectory can happen with potential member recruitment and member development as well. And then when you're looking at trying to increase civic engagement overall. Because if they're getting a service enterprise grant and a mini grant or a mini grant, they're working with volunteers. Then what we've often seen is those volunteers that they're already working with might become the members a Commonwealth Core member. They tend to be more diverse in age, our Commonwealth core. So that has been really, really great.

Lisl Hacker:

And then from there, if they go on to become an AmeriCorps member, they already have a pool of potential members waiting for them because they've built this volunteer pool. So this same trajectory could happen. It's not an immediate fix to recruitment, but it's a more longer term fix to turning volunteers into potential service members in the long run.

Lisl Hacker:

So with that, I believe that that's my last slide. Yeah. And I'm going to turn it over to Shane.

Shane Dermanjian:

Okay, thank you. So I'm here to talk about.... Oh, sorry, Shane Dermanjian, Research Analyst at the Office of Research Evaluation. But I'm here to talk about that we heard all this incredible research about evidence-based service enterprise models that support the capacity of organizations to attract potentially episodic volunteers in or even get AmeriCorps members into the mix. And a lot of what I do in my position here is taking a look at, once the AmeriCorps member is in that AmeriCorps door, what do the outcomes look like for that member? And we can measure that using the AmeriCorps member exit survey. Next slide, please.

Shane Dermanjian:

So what is the member exit survey? We'll call it the MES. So basically every member who enters AmeriCorps is given this survey. So that's people who leave after a day, after a month, people who finish their entire service term. Every member is given the survey. So since a remodel in 2015, we've had over 350,000 responses to the survey with a pretty good response rate of around 75 to 80% of members completing the survey each year. When taking a look at those who didn't finish their surveys, you're looking at around 50 to 70% of those members who do complete the survey still. So this is a fairly representative sample of all members really. So the MES, it gauges members' experiences, feelings,

sentiment, attitudes, all the above about how members feel about their service. And it's a key component in helping figure out the strategic goal this agency has around member development. Next slide, please.

Shane Dermanjian:

And what does that look like? We have the member exit survey, follow the member theory of change amongst some other lines of inquiry. But basically we're saying that members, they do great service and great work in their communities, they build capacity of organizations, they do all these great things, but they also build a little bit of themselves. They become more empowered and prepared to take on the world. They're a bit more civically engaged. They want to work to strengthen their community and they dedicate their life a bit to service of others. And we have these four pathways that we use to track how these members are becoming empowered in such ways. Next slide please.

Shane Dermanjian:

So we have these four pathways. The first being cultural competency, one is civic engagement, another is life and career skills. And the last is getting things done, which is all about having that grit to get you through adversity and challenges that come your way. Next slide please.

Shane Dermanjian:

So we'll start with civic engagement, and we have a forthcoming report that's coming out very soon that'll be put on the evidence exchange. And between the years 2017 through 2021 and the way that the years work for our analyses is if you've left service in that fiscal year, year and that year. So for all people who left service between 2017 and 2021, they all report very high levels of civic engagement behavior, like an aptitude for civic engagement. And furthermore, civic engagement isn't just voting, isn't just formal volunteering. It's all these other different components that make up what folks call civic action.

Shane Dermanjian:

It's not just belonging to an organization, it's not just a Tocquevillian view of things. It's a bit more like doing favors for your neighbors, staying in the know about sociopolitical issues, just feeling obligated to help your community. It doesn't have to be so formal. It can be quite informal actually. So across the board, pretty much once COVID started, once the 2020 elections started to happen, we saw some upticks. And a lot of this behavior of AmeriCorps members, they leave service and we ask after having served, "How do you feel about this?" And most feel that they want to stay engaged with their community, most feel that they have high level of attachment to that community and an obligation to serve it. Many feel that they have the confidence to adequately address community concerns, such as creating plans to get things done, getting others to care about the problem, organizing meetings, expressing your views in front of a group or even contacting elected officials. Next slide, please.

Shane Dermanjian:

And speaking of elections, I just said voting isn't the only part of civic action, but it is a part that is quite important. So we can show that members prior presidential elections vote more than the general public. And specifically we're looking at what we call youth voter, according to a Tufts University study for voters age 18 to 29. And that green dot there shows what the national youth voting rate was. And just a quick note, the 2016 election is in our fiscal year 2017. So our fiscal year starts in October, the election's in November, therefore it's in the number year after the actual election calendar year. But that's here

nor there. So we still show that no matter which way you cut it by program that all of the members they're voting more than the general population, rather, the proportion of members are voting at a higher rate.

Shane Dermanjian:

You see that there's a decline in between the 2016 and the 2020 election. And that's just the way time is working here. If you're 18 in the year 2019, you couldn't have voted in the 2016 election. You just weren't old enough. So that's why that looks like that. But you can see that there's even a bump in the 2020 election. Just overall there's more voting going on. And we've seen that, which a lot of members said that they voted in, that you have over 80% of our ASN and Vista members doing that. Next slide please.

Shane Dermanjian:

And then we did another analysis on cultural competency, which we call bridging differences. And by that we just mean do AmeriCorps members like serving alongside folks different from them? Do they respect the other values? Do they feel confident in interacting with folks different from themselves? And the answer is a resounding yes. No matter which way we cut it. And we looked at different demographics such as race, ethnicity, age group, educational attainment by program, all these different things, no matter which way you cut it, AmeriCorps members like people that are different from themselves, they enjoy working with others.

Shane Dermanjian:

And we did one thing with this analysis where we took one question in the survey that asked, did you serve on a team? How often did you? So folks who said that they serve on teams more often than others, or rather more often than folks who said that they serve less often on a team, they showed a higher rate of respecting values, feeling confident in their interactions and so on than people who did not serve on a team too much. So that leads itself into the notion that contact hypothesis where working with folks different from yourself, having those interactions, it makes you a bit more favorable to those groups. That's entirely in line with that hypothesis. Next slide, please.

Shane Dermanjian:

And then what we wanted to take a look at more recently was, okay, are the number of members who finished service which is greater than those who don't finish service, are they skewing the results? Are we really just getting skewed results from folks who finish service? They love it. AmeriCorps is great, AmeriCorps is awesome, are the people who don't finish it, are they're like, "I didn't like AmeriCorps, but there's not that many of us, so we can't skew the data in our favor?" And the answer is really no. It seems that even those who don't finish their service still report fairly high outcomes as far as feeling that AmeriCorps is a worthwhile experience. And we asked that was it worthwhile in furthering their educational goals, their professional goals, their personal goals? And it's gotten better, it trends in the right direction over time.

Shane Dermanjian:

So even though there's still like a 13 percentage point difference in '22 for those who finished versus those who did not finish, you still had 70% of those who didn't finish saying that AmeriCorps was a good thing when it comes to their educational goals. You're at three quarters for those who feel that their professional goals and endeavors were furthered by AmeriCorps. You had 86%, which is very high for

personal goals and so on. So at the end of the day, pretty much anybody who touches AmeriCorps reports very positive outcomes and they reignite that notion of civic life just by showing up to serve.

Shane Dermanjian:

And that'll be it for me. I'm going to hand it off to Emily. Thank you.

Emily Stock:

Great. Thanks, Shane. Hi everyone. Happy Thursday afternoon. My name's Emily Stock, I'm the project manager for volunteer initiatives, and I lead the days of service and Volunteer Generation fund grant programs at AmeriCorps. I'm new to the AmeriCorps agency, but I'm not new to national service or volunteering. I worked for 16 years with Habitat Humanity International in the volunteer division. My position at AmeriCorps, however, is new for the first time bringing together the two direct funding opportunities. The agency has that focus on building capacity to engage more volunteers to meet the needs of our communities. I'm really excited to be here working for AmeriCorps and to build up our support and resources to entities that engage volunteers because I truly believe that volunteers, formal and informal are vital to helping our communities and people thrive. The volunteering aspect of America's work is more than just the volunteer generation Fund and engage service grant programs.

Emily Stock:

It includes the work as you've seen here today of the Office of Research and evaluation of all the national service programs, the agency supports and the works that our grantees do to meet the needs of the communities. It involves all of us. I'm excited to see the outcomes of the volunteer generation fund evaluation and the member exit survey, so we as a sector can better enhance our work to support engagement of volunteers and American members to create a lifetime of service. Whether you learned about AmeriCorps program as a volunteer or your service as an AmeriCorps member sparked your desire to be a lifelong volunteer. It's the service to the communities that matter, and that's why we're all here.

Emily Stock:

As Jehyra started the call, AmeriCorps and census status showed that the stability in the national volunteering rate dropped during the pandemic. And data like Gallup's more recent poll indicates that it has yet to rebound to pre-pandemic levels.

Emily Stock:

That just means we have more enough opportunity and now is the time to make adjustments to rethink how we engage volunteers to get them back to service. I'm energized to hear the work that my peers in the volunteering sector have done and excited to see firsthand how Massachusetts Service Alliance and Volunteer Iowa have changed their programming and support of nonprofits based on lessons learned through their regular work, but also through the Volunteer Generation Fund program. I hope you have picked up some ideas today on how to engage volunteers in a different way through this conversation. So I want to thank all the speakers today for their commitment to service, and I'm excited to work with them in the future. Additionally, the service enterprise movement is very exciting to me. I love seeing this movement of support that is focused on engaging more volunteers.

Emily Stock:

I think the lessons today that we've learned are clear and to reiterate some of Kayla's comments which have also been reflected in the work from Michelle, Lisl and others today and through the evaluation results so far include we need a volunteer ecosystem that expands beyond the nonprofit sector. As we've heard, the faith-based organizations, school districts, corporations, philanthropy, government and nonprofits all have an important work to play in achieving better outcomes for our communities. Partnerships are important and necessary.

Emily Stock:

Volunteer engagement needs to be a core strategic function of organizations. Volunteer managers are vital to the work and to our communities. The right volunteers can contribute their time and talents to meet community needs. Rather than just responding to the supply of volunteers, we need to seek out volunteers with the skills to help communities address their needs. And then right-size the support, which include accurate position descriptions and specific training and specific onboarding opportunities. In order to get a return, we must invest and DEIA needs to be a focus while all of our work to shift the narrative of volunteering, which includes, as we've heard from several people, engaging younger individuals.

Emily Stock:

And then finally, the concept of nothing for us without us working with the communities, not for the communities. I really look forward to seeing the full evaluation that will be released later in the fall and to continue to develop a strategy that supports our grantees and others to build the capacity to gauge more volunteers.

Emily Stock:

So I want to thank everyone for joining this conversation today. We are stronger together, and I want to turn the conversation back over to Jehyra now for question and answers.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Thank you so much, Emily. I loved your remarks and I wish we had more time to continue this conversation, but unfortunately, we are almost at time. We've had a very engaged audience. Some of the questions have been answered, and I am just looking regarding the employers. I think Michelle already answered some things in the chat, and you also touched upon that. There was also a question that said, what have we learned about volunteering and older adults? Oh, next slide, please.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Why have we learned about volunteering and older adults and why more don't volunteer? What gets them to volunteer? Why those volunteer to volunteer? So I would say that that's not exactly the research that we are discussing here today, but for the past 20 years, AmeriCorps has collaborated with the US Census Bureau to collect data on volunteering and civic engagement to take the pulse of our nation's civic health.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

So this is called the current population survey, civic engagement and Volunteering supplement. It's collected every two years, and our office leads that work, not the area that I am in. And it is the most robust longitudinal survey about volunteerism and other forms of civic engagement in the United States.

It looks at both formal volunteering and informal helping trends, charitable giving, and other civic behaviors.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

So I encourage you all to look at that amazing data set because the new survey report from 2021 actually covers volunteering and other civic behaviors from September, 2020, 2021 at the height of the COVID Pandemic. So I hope that answered your question. And I also wanted to ask Kayla, we got some questions about the research and evidence that has informed service enterprise, especially the diagnostic tool and the key characteristics that service enterprise programs have. I know that I think in the chat you posted the link to the key characteristics. So if you could quickly maybe one minute answer that.

Kayla Paulson:

Yes. So I will say over the last decade, it has evolved. We started off with eight characteristics, then they gained a larger dataset, went to 10. Now we're at three domains because we went up to 12 characteristics. The big takeaways, impact and outcomes. AmeriCorps is always preaching that to us. We know that is a huge factor. Establishing that foundation, making sure you've got the core functions and pieces in place so that you can successfully engage those volunteers. And then the best practices that focuses on volunteer engagement. So I dropped an 11 by 17, a lot of our organizations use this as a poster to help hone in on those characteristics. I would be happy to connect with you. If you go to our service enterprise site, I've dropped the link in a couple of times. Check it out, everything's there. Or there's a quick five-minute video, which sums up the characteristics beautifully also.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Thank you. Thank you so much, Kayla. And then another question that we got that I think it's important related to our study on the models that state commissions have used is the biggest differences between the service enterprise model and the other two models that we mentioned, the Stanford and Human Resources approach. So Samantha, if you could speak very quickly to that too.

Samantha Spinney:

Sure. So you all already heard a lot about service enterprise. I won't go too far into that. But as you heard, this model is about helping organizations strategically leverage volunteers to achieve operational efficiency and greater social impact. The human resources management model of volunteer management applies classic human resource management, workplace practices to the volunteer work environment. The model basically treats volunteers as unpaid employees. The Stanford University Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement model is a framework or approach to community engagement in the broad sense. The model is primarily used in higher education. It conceptualizes community engagement through six different pathways. Direct service is one of those pathways, but other pathways include things like community, organizing and activism, philanthropy, et cetera. The one grantee that uses that model, they adapted it specifically for the context of the work done by their state service commission. Now in terms of how these models have played out in practice is still to be determined. But do check back, check-out our final report for more information on this.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Thank you so much. Is there anything else that the panelists would like to highlight? Michelle, Lisl, Shane, maybe some comments on the MES data and how we connect that?

Shane Dermanjian:

Say the question one more time, Jehyra? My apologies.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Excuse me?

Shane Dermanjian:

Can you say the question one more time?

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

So any other thoughts or comments from you, Shane, the member exit survey data or from Michelle or Lisl? Okay, well, thanks-

Michelle Raymer:

I can just jump in and add. So in Iowa, we have been able to include a question in our behavioral risk factor surveillance survey that's done about volunteering rates. And we've seen in Iowa, like nationally, this volunteering in Civic, big life in America data that volunteer rates have gone down significantly. And so I think now is probably more important than ever that we really invest in volunteer engagement and in building that volunteer engagement infrastructure because we want to make sure we can bring back those volunteers, reintroduce volunteering as a part of daily life, as a part of people's behavior in order to really ensure that our communities can continue to thrive because we want to make sure that we reignite it and make it happen again. So that way the nonprofits have the support they need, and then people also experiences those benefits that we talked about earlier in that Shane mentioned in the member survey that our members receive.

Michelle Raymer:

And so I think the more that all of us can do to implement these resources, but also do whatever we can within our sphere of influence to really encourage and promote volunteerism and national service, the better.

Lisl Hacker:

Yeah. And I would just add along those same lines, we're really focusing on also engaging youth. So we're doing a lot more initiatives around youth engagement to build that pipeline into national service. So it's not only building the programs' capacity, but building the opportunity and inspiration in young people to want to serve, whether that's informally for their neighbors, like we saw as an increase during COVID or more formally through AmeriCorps. So we see it as doing both at the same time is really important. Building both the capacity of the individuals to serve as well as organizations.

Jehyra M. Asencio Yace :

Well, thank you again. This has been very, very inspiring for me and I imagine for the rest of the audience. I think with this, we conclude our webinar and I'll pass it over to our colleague, Katy.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

We're now at the close of our webinar. We'd like to thank our panelists for their presentations, Emily Stock for the AmeriCorps reflection, and Jehyra Asencio Yace for facilitating the discussion. To our

audience today, our webinar objective was to share how AmeriCorps and our partners can enhance civic engagement more broadly by making national service an appealing plausible option for all. Volunteer management and training practices, recruitment and retention strategies, individual motivations and perceived benefits all contribute to a united desire to increase meaningful opportunities for Americans to answer the call, to serve in their community and be agents of change.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

We hope we hit our mark and you join us for our next webinar in the Reigniting Civic Life series on Thursday, June 22nd from 12:30 to 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. The registration link is live now for double trouble reigniting civic engagement through pandemics and disasters. We look forward to seeing you in our next meeting or our next webinar.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

I'd like to extend a thank you to our Mathematica and Guardians of Honor colleagues for their technical support and coordination. This recording and support materials will be posted on the americorps.gov webinar under Impact Webinars within the coming weeks. Please feel free to share with your colleagues and networks. We'll also be sending out a post webinar survey, so please let us know your thoughts on this webinar and any ideas for future webinars.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

We hope you have a wonderful rest of the day, and thank you very much.