

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Understanding the Value of Service in Participants' Experience and Outcomes

Focus Group Sampling Strategy

Based on available contact information, focus group participants from AmeriCorps and Senior Corps will be identified by different means. The sampling strategy for each is presented below.

AmeriCorps Participants

Currently serving members of AmeriCorps as well as recent alumni (i.e., completed service one to two years ago) will be targeted for participation in focus groups. Using the information contained in the CNCS portal, a database that includes at least the following information will be created:

- Participant full name
- Contact information (i.e., email address, mailing address, phone number)
- Program (i.e., State and National, VISTA, NCCC)
- Name of AmeriCorps program officer
- Project(s)
- Dates of service (i.e., start and end dates for service, where applicable)
- Veteran status
- Contact information for project sponsor (for VISTA)
- Whether program is a state commission or grantee (for State and National)

This database will include all currently serving AmeriCorps members as well as all alumni who completed service between one and two years ago.

Using this database, a random sample of individuals will be selected from the entire population in the database. Both participants who are currently serving and recent alumni will be included in the sample. As part of this sampling strategy, we will oversample veterans, as this is one area in which targeted focus groups will be scheduled. As such, it is important to ensure that enough veterans will be willing to participate to meet the needs set forth in the Summary Focus Group Selection Strategy. Additionally, a portion of the selected sample may be focused in certain geographic areas to increase the likelihood that in-person focus groups can be scheduled. If it is not possible to schedule in-person focus groups, they will instead be facilitated over the telephone. Ultimately, between 36 and 54 AmeriCorps members or recent alumni will be scheduled to participate in a focus group (9 total focus groups, with 4-6 participants each). However, because of the required composition of focus groups, specifically that some focus groups will include only Veterans and others will include only Individuals with Disadvantaged Circumstances (IDAC), a larger number of individuals will be included in the selected sample.

Once the sample of participants is identified, the program officer, the state commission and the project POC will be notified (in that order) via email of ICF's intent to contact prospective participants. Following the notification of these stakeholders, each prospective participant will be sent an email that explains the project and what the focus group participation would entail if he/she agrees to participate. This email will direct the prospective participants to a short online pre-screening survey, which will include a few questions that will help determine the individuals' willingness to participate in a focus group and whether the individual should be included in one of the three designated focus groups: Veterans (current or alum); Individuals with Disadvantaged Circumstances (IDAC) (current or alum); and General Members (current or alum). When potential participants complete the pre-screening survey, their

updated contact information (if applicable), preferred method of communication, employment status, and IDAC status will be added to the database. The information in the database will then be used to select individuals for participation in the focus groups. The Summary Focus Group Selection Strategy document provides an illustration of the strategy by which participants will be selected into the respective focus groups.

Senior Corps Participants

Given there is not contact information currently available in the CNCS portal for individual Senior Corps volunteers, ICF will work with the state offices to identify projects from which we can sample participants for the focus groups. Each of those specific projects is run under a Senior Corps program by a grantee and subgrantee organization. Project directors for the targeted projects will be contacted by ICF to request help in recruiting current or alumni volunteers to serve as focus group participants. Specifically, a dataset will be created that includes at least the following information:

- Senior Corps program (i.e., Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents, RSVP)
- Name and contract information for the Senior Corps Program Officer
- Project Name
- Project location (i.e., address)
- Project Director name and contact information (i.e., email; phone; address)
- Number of volunteers by project
- Whether program that manages the project is a state commission or competitive grantee
- Indication of projects that are likely to have Veteran volunteers

Based on this information, a sample of projects will be selected. The projects targeted in the study will be based on data Senior Corps provides on the number of volunteers by project. Projects known to have high numbers of Veterans serving will be oversampled to ensure adequate Veteran participation in this study. Geographic area may also be a factor in the selection of projects to target in order to facilitate the scheduling of in-person focus groups. For the selected projects, an email will be sent to the Project Directors requesting that they send information about the research study to their volunteers. This information about the study will include the web address for the focus group pre-screening survey as well as a request for participation including contact information for the ICF researcher.

Once information is gathered about Senior Corps members who are willing to participate as well as their availability, focus groups that align with the Summary Focus Group Selection Strategy will be scheduled. In the end, between 24 and 36 Senior Corps volunteers will be selected to participate in focus groups (6 total focus groups with between 4 and 6 participants in each).