

FALL 2015 INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR OPERATION AMERICORPS GRANTEE

TARGETED RESPONDENT: These interview questions are intended for Operation AmeriCorps grantees. The interview will be administered to the grantee-designated representative of the grant contact organization.

CONTENT: This document contains interview questions to be asked of grantees as well as reminders of previous document requests as needed.

Sample call introduction (assuming prior communication to set up the interview):

Hello. This is (name) and I am with the Office of Research and Evaluation at the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS). I'm calling to talk with you about your experiences thus far with the Operation AmeriCorps grant process and learn more about the project for which the grant was awarded. Is this still a good time to talk? [If not, reschedule and note new date/time]. Great! Before we get started, let's go over a few quick points before we get started. This is part of the national evaluation of Operation AmeriCorps, which is being conducted by me and my colleagues in the Office of Research and Evaluation at CNCS. [If applicable: I also have my colleague [NAME] on the phone with me today to take notes and help with some of the questions.]

Our interview today will last about an hour, and we'll mainly be covering questions about the structure and capacity of your program, as well as your experience with the grant making process. We really appreciate candor, so feel free to be as honest or blunt as you want.

I'd like to start off by asking for your permission to conduct this interview. All information (audio and written) is confidential and interview responses will be stored in a secure location that is only accessible to members on the study team. Only study team members will see individual responses that can be linked to you and all personally identifying information will be redacted from the transcripts of this interview. Data files and study reports will be shared with CNCS only after study team members have examined the data to be free of information that directly identifies you. Additionally, disbursement of the current Operation AmeriCorps grant is in no way tied to what is discussed in this interview. With this in mind, are you ok moving forward with the interview?

___ Check when gives verbal permission and enter time/date ___

I'd also like your permission to audio record our conversation solely for the purpose of note-taking. All information (audio and written) is confidential. Is this okay?

___ Check if gives verbal permission and enter time/date ___

We recognize each grantee is in a different place with regard to Operation AmeriCorps and the implementation of your project so if there are questions that you are not familiar with or that you aren't sure of the answer to, it's not a problem. Also, if you think of anything after our conversation today, you are welcomed to email us with additional thoughts or helpful documents.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. **How did you hear about Operation AmeriCorps? Can you tell me about how the decision to apply was made? Prompt: This would include who was involved in that decision, what motivated you, and the process for making the decision.**

2. **What is your Operation AmeriCorps project looking to accomplish? How will you know if the project has accomplished its goals? Ask for documents outlining the strategy and structure of the project, such as a logic model or mission and vision statements, if the organization has not already sent.**

3. **“Operating partners” are the individuals, groups, and organizations carrying out the activities of this project, involved in the decision-making, communicating regularly with other partners, and sharing strategy, information, and resources to make this project happen. Who would you call “operating partners” for the Operation AmeriCorps project? What formal agreements are there, if any, among and between operating partners? Ask whether there is documentation of partners available if the organization has not already sent.**

4. **What brought this group of operating partners together? When did this take place?**

5. **Which components of the Operation AmeriCorps project are different partners responsible for? How are these different components coordinated among partners? Ask whether there is documentation of the working relationships among partners, such as an organizational chart or written agreements, if the organization has not already sent.**

6. How are communications and decision-making managed among operating partners? What systems are in place to support this management? Prompt: This would include data systems and other information-sharing platforms as well as established processes like a newsletter or regular meetings.

7. Among the operating partners, which organization would you say is primarily responsible for administering the project? This may be your organization. By “administering” we mean carrying out activities such as overseeing the coordination of activities, managing communications and other information-sharing, convening partners and supporters as needed, and/or dedicating staff to this administration work. Could you describe the activities that this organization carries out for your Operation AmeriCorps project?

8. “Peripheral supporters” are the individuals, groups, and organizations occasionally receiving information about and advising on the direction of the project, advocating for the project either to community members or influential leaders, and potentially providing financial or other resource support. Who would you call “peripheral supporters” of this project? What formal agreements are there, if any, between project partners and supporters? Ask whether there is documentation of supporters and the agreements between them and project partners if the organization has not already sent.

9. What CNCS programs, if any, have you been a grantee of prior to being awarded the Operation AmeriCorps grant? If not a past grantee, move to Question 10. If a past grantee: How does being a grantee through Operation AmeriCorps compare to being a grantee in years past? Prompt: What was different about the grant-making process? What do you perceive to be different about program operations?

10. In general, how easy or complicated did you find the Operation AmeriCorps application process to be? How many CNCS points of contact did you have? Now that you are managing your grant, how many CNCS points of contact do you have? How would you compare this process with other non-CNCS grants you’ve applied for?

11. What challenges have you encountered in the beginning months of your Operation AmeriCorps project? How are you trying to overcome them?

12. What do you think will be your greatest challenges or barriers to achieving the goals of your Operation AmeriCorps project? What factors do you think will be critical to achieving success?
