

Operation AmeriCorps National Evaluation
Spring Focus Groups- Protocol and Questions
Document 1: National service members and volunteers

Respondent Names:

OPAC grantee:

Facilitator Names:

Date:

Duration of session:

Follow up items:

Hi everyone, my name is [facilitator names] from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Let's cover a few quick points before we get started with some questions. First, we want to thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about the Operation AmeriCorps project you are a part of; our discussion today is going to help us get a better sense of how things are unfolding for the project. Second, we want to remind you that your responses to the questions we'll ask you today are confidential, and are only going to be used for the purpose of the national evaluation of Operation AmeriCorps. Your data is being protected and you won't be personally identified or linked to your responses. We also ask that you do not share the responses of any other focus group members outside of this room.

We'll be recording today's interview to make sure we don't miss anything important. The recordings will be transcribed, and then your identifying information will be removed. Do we have your permission to record the conversation? Finally, we want you to know that you can be as honest or blunt as you want; we really want to make sure that we're capturing the realities of how the Operation AmeriCorps program is running, so there is no need to hold back on your answers and we encourage you to be honest. Do you agree to participate today?

Ok, the way this will work is that we have a short list of questions, that cover capacity your program is building; the different service streams your program is using, and how they're interacting; and early evidence of outcomes. That said, please feel free to bring up thoughts and reactions you feel are relevant to the conversation at any time, as well as respond to what other focus group members are saying. This is intended to be an informal group conversation, not a rigid, one-on-one interview.

Q1: Interaction of Service Streams Questions:

We want to start off by talking about national service member and volunteer activities. We note that [insert known CNCS streams of service and other volunteer types] are involved in this project. Are there any others that need to be included?

- When did you start serving as part of this project?
- Can you describe what you and other members from your CNCS program (such as AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, or Senior Corps) or volunteer group are doing as part of the Operation AmeriCorps project?

- How are you tracking and reporting your activities?
- Can you tell us about how you are being managed and supervised?
- Have you had your role, responsibilities, or activities changed since you started in the fall? If so, how have they changed?
- Tell us about how you interact with other national service members and volunteers in your service.

Q2: Community Capacity Questions:

We want to talk a little about your understanding of what this Operation AmeriCorps project is trying to accomplish and how it's being implemented.

- How would you describe the goals of this Operation AmeriCorps project?
 - How were these goals first communicated to you? Have they changed at all since you began serving?
 - What part do you see your service playing in reaching these goals?
 - Do you feel all national service members and volunteers on this project have a clear understanding of its goals? Why or why not?
- What organization do you see as the primary coordinator or administrator of this project?
 - What does this organization do that makes you see them as the primary coordinator?
 - What different organizations or community groups do you interact with regularly in your service?

Q3: Early Evidence of Outcomes:

We're going to move on to early evidence for outcomes. We realize that many Operation AmeriCorps projects are new, and that one year is really not enough time to see a lot of progress on the outcomes you're working towards. Regardless, we wanted to ask you about what kind of preliminary progress you're seeing towards achieving the project's outcomes.

- Do you feel the project's desired outcomes are being achieved? Can you provide examples of why you feel this way?
- Is there anything that you feel is working out better than you expected? Why do you think so?
- What sort of barriers or challenges are you experiencing?

[After finishing question list or reaching end of scheduled time] Thank you so much for speaking with us, this has been really insightful. If you think of anything in the coming days that you want to tell us about, please feel free to email me or [note taker's name] directly. Thanks so much for your time and your service!

Operation AmeriCorps National Evaluation
Spring Focus Groups- Protocol and Questions
Document 2: Project beneficiaries

Respondent Names:
OPAC grantee:
Facilitator Names:
Date:
Duration of session:
Follow up items:

Hi everyone, my name is [facilitator names] from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Let's cover a few quick points before we get started with some questions. First, we want to thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about your experience with the Operation AmeriCorps project [insert program name if different]; our discussion today is going to help us get a better sense of how things are unfolding for the project. Second, we want to remind you that your responses to the questions we'll ask you today are confidential, and are only going to be used for the purpose of the national evaluation of Operation AmeriCorps. Your data is being protected and you won't be personally identified or linked to your responses. We also ask that you do not share the responses of any other focus group members outside of this room.

We'll be recording today's interview to make sure we don't miss anything important. The recordings will be transcribed, and then your identifying information will be removed. Do we have your permission to record the conversation? Finally, we want you to know that you can be as honest or blunt as you want; we really want to make sure that we're capturing the realities of how the Operation AmeriCorps program is running, so there is no need to hold back on your answers and we encourage you to be honest. Do you agree to participate today? [If under 18 years of age] Have you brought your permission slip signed by a parent or guardian allowing you to take part in this focus group?

Ok, the way this will work is that we have a short list of questions, that cover the kinds of activities you've taken part in, the AmeriCorps members and volunteers who have helped you, and if you've seen benefits from being in the program. That said, please feel free to bring up thoughts and reactions you feel are relevant to the conversation at any time, as well as respond to what other focus group members are saying. This is intended to be an informal group conversation, not a rigid, one-on-one interview.

Q1: Interaction of Service Streams Questions:

We want to start off by talking about you're the activities you've taken part in and your interactions with AmeriCorps members and other volunteers.

- Tell us about the activities you take part in as part of this program.
- Can you tell us about interacting with AmeriCorps members and other volunteers?
 - What sort of activities do you do with them? How often?

- Can you tell us who helps you when you're in the program? Do you know if they are AmeriCorps members?
- When did you start taking part in this program?
 - Has anything about the program changed since you started?

Q3: Early Evidence of Outcomes:

We're going to move on to early evidence for outcomes. In other words, we want to understand if you're seeing any positive changes or benefit because of this program.

- What do you think this program is trying to achieve (what are its goals)?
- Why did you decide to take part in it?
- Do you feel taking part in this program is helping you? Why or why not? Please provide examples of changes you've seen in as a result of this program.
- What do you find particularly helpful about this program?
- What do you feel is missing that could make the program better for you?

[After finishing question list or reaching end of scheduled time] Thank you so much for speaking with us, this has been really helpful. If you think of anything in the coming days that you want to tell us about, please feel free to email me or [note taker's name] directly. Thanks so much for your time!