

**AmeriCorps Seniors Evaluation:**  
**Grantee Focus Group**  
**FGP/SCP/RSVP**

**Introduction ~ 8 minutes**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ with JBS International. JBS is an independent contractor. Thank you so much for volunteering to take part in the focus group discussion. I know you are busy, and I appreciate you taking the time to join me for this conversation today. I also want to introduce my colleague \_\_\_\_\_ who will take notes during our conversation.

***Introduction***

To briefly introduce you to the purpose behind this discussion: Our conversation today is part of a national evaluation that AmeriCorps Seniors is doing to understand how the pandemic affected the programmatic structure and service delivery among AmeriCorps Seniors grantee organizations, and the volunteers service experience. This evaluation will also examine the role of stipend, compensation and benefits on volunteers' recruitment and retention, motivation to serve, and economic wellbeing. JBS is an independent contractor. The information we gather is for the purpose of the evaluation. The report will not identify you or your organization. The report may contain some quotes, but neither you nor your organization will be identified with the quote. Our conversation will take about **75 minutes**.

**Each of you received a link to the consent form.** Do you have any questions about the consent form? To help us focus on our conversation, I would like your permission to record the conversation to facilitate transcription and analysis. **(if yes, switch on the recorder)**

***Confidentiality***

**The recording is to help me focus on our conversation, and to be sure that I report your experiences accurately.** The recording and our conversation today will be kept confidential. The notes from the interview will not include any personally identifiable information about you. Again, JBS presents the evaluation results in summary, and not for any specific grantee or organization. Please provide candid answers. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer, you do not have to do so, but we would like to capture everyone's insights.-It is important that only one person speaks at a time. In order for people to feel comfortable sharing information, we ask that you not share what your colleagues have shared with those not in the discussion today.

***Ground Rules***

There are no right or wrong responses to the questions. You can speak openly about your experiences. If you don't feel you can answer a question, that is okay, but please try to provide as much information as you are able.

Do you have any questions before we start? (ANSWERS if any) OK, let's begin.

**AMERICORPS SENIORS  
GRANTEE GROUP PROTOCOL**

**Ice breaker question – All AC Seniors Programs ~ 8 minutes**

*[Moderator: For our discussion, we are going to focus on how the Covid pandemic affected your program structure, service delivery, and your volunteers and the communities you serve].  
To start...*

- Please briefly introduce yourself – state your name, the AmeriCorps Seniors program you are with, and your role at the program and how long you have been in that role.

**Section I. AC Seniors Stipend & Benefits – SCP, FGP ONLY ~ 25 minutes**

*[Moderator: Let's begin by discussing the AmeriCorps Seniors stipend. We would like to better understand how grantees feel about the stipend volunteers are receiving and how you believe it affects how your organization recruits and retains volunteers.]*

1. How does the **stipend** make it harder or easier for your organization to recruit volunteers? How about retaining volunteers? *[Moderator: As needed, probe for additional details and specific examples.]*
2. In which ways do you think the **stipend** affects volunteers' economic well-being? *[Probe: volunteer's ability to purchase certain goods that could not be afforded otherwise]*
3. Beyond the stipend, are there **other potential incentives** AmeriCorps Seniors can provide to make volunteering more sustainable? *[For example, transportation reimbursement, meal vouchers, other examples they can give]*
4. How, if at all, did your volunteer recruitment strategies **change as a result of the pandemic**?
  - a. What were your biggest challenges? How did you overcome them?
  - b. Were these changes short-term or have they been more permanent?
5. How, if at all, did your volunteer retention strategies **change as a result of the pandemic**?
  - a. What were your biggest challenges? How did you overcome them?
  - b. Were these changes short-term or have they been more permanent?
6. In your opinion, what **factors do you believe lead to volunteer attrition / volunteers leaving** the program?

**Section I. AC Seniors Benefits – RSVP ONLY**

*[Moderator: Let's begin by discussing the AmeriCorps Seniors compensation to RSVP volunteers. We would like to better understand how the current benefits affect your organization's ability to recruit volunteers and the volunteers' daily lives and circumstances. We also would like to get your insight on potentially providing a stipend to RSVP volunteers and how you believe it would impact recruitment and retention.]*

1. To your knowledge, how have the **benefits** affected your organization's ability to recruit volunteers? *[Moderator: As needed, probe for additional details and specific examples on how benefits are affecting recruitment.]*

2. If AmeriCorps Seniors **provided RSVP volunteers with a stipend**, in what ways do you think a stipend would affect your organization's ability to recruit? [**Probe:** *Help bring in new volunteers from the community, able to help more clients in the community, bring more brand awareness/visibility to AmeriCorps Seniors program/RSVP, other*]
3. Beyond the stipend, what **other potential incentives** can AmeriCorps Seniors provide to make volunteering more sustainable? [**For example,** *transportation reimbursement, meal vouchers, other examples they can give*]
4. How, if at all, did your volunteer recruitment strategies **change as a result of the pandemic**?
  - c. What were your biggest challenges? How did you overcome them?
  - d. Were these changes short-term or have they been more permanent?
5. How, if at all, did your volunteer retention strategies **change as a result of the pandemic**?
  - c. What were your biggest challenges? How did you overcome them?
  - d. Were these changes short-term or have they been more permanent?
6. In your opinion, what **factors do you believe lead to volunteer attrition/volunteers leaving** the program?

## Section II. Effects of COVID on Service Delivery & Experience – All Programs ~ 30 minutes

**[Moderator:** *Next we'd like to learn about the **effects that the COVID-19** has had on volunteerism and your program's service delivery, your stations, including the impact these changes had on your program's beneficiaries.]*

7. What are some of the current **ways you engage with the communities you serve**? [**Moderator:** *Probe for help with volunteer recruitment efforts, partner with other local organizations to provide services to the community? Others?*]
  - a. How have these community engagements changed since Covid?
8. How are/were stations identified, partnerships formed, etc.?
9. What **changes to AmeriCorps policy** allowed **your stations to continue to serve communities during Covid**? [**Probe:** *Temporary volunteer allowance, Grantee matching funds waiver, Extension of FRR and PPR reporting, support to pay grantee staff, service activity flexibility, etc.*]
  - a. What were your biggest challenges? How did you overcome them?
10. Were there any **newly developed service(s)** your program/stations **provided during COVID**? If yes, why did you need to develop a new service(s)? What have been the impacts of these new service(s)? Did any of these new services become permanent in your program, and why?
11. How did Covid **impact service delivery at your station(s)**?
  - a. Did your **activities and services remain the same**? Did you continue providing the same services in the same way before Covid? [*For example,*

*tutoring children in-person, delivering food or distributing food to older adults in-person, no social distancing required]*

**[Moderator:** *If a respondent said changes were made, ask...*]

*[Examples of modifications might include shifting to virtual volunteering or training, requiring volunteers to take safety precautions, etc.]*

b. Why did you **change your delivery**? Were these changes **short-term or have they been more permanent**?

c. How did it **affect your volunteers**?

d. How did it **affect your beneficiaries/clients**?

**[Moderator:** *If respondents mention that they **did not have volunteers at their stations** ask...*]

e. How did not having volunteers in your program impact the ability of a station to serve their community? *(For example, hours of operation reduced, there was a decline in the number of beneficiaries served, etc.)?*

12. What **challenges** do you **currently experience when reporting about your stations** to AmeriCorps Seniors **[Probe:** *Have difficulty in using or accessing AmeriCorps online reporting systems, too many stations to track, don't have enough time to report on a consistent basis, too much work to report out on the station rosters, don't have enough staff to help with reports/administrative work.]*

#### **IV. Concluding questions – All Programs ~ 8 minutes**

13. Is there anything else you would like to **share with AmeriCorps about how COVID impacted and/or continues to impact your program**?

14. Of all the things we've discussed today, what would you say are the **most important points** you'd like to express?

**[Moderator:** *Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this discussion! This has been very helpful. Your thoughts and opinions will form an important part of this study to understand the effects of COVID and its implications for the AmeriCorps Seniors program.*

*If there is anything you would like to share with us or any concerns you have regarding this interview, you can call me at \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_.]*