

AmeriCorps Seniors Evaluation:
SDP Stations Interview Protocol

Introduction

My name is _____ and I am a researcher at JBS International and this is my colleague _____ at Education Northwest. 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 build a deeper understanding of efforts to scale and sustain the AmeriCorps Seniors Demonstration Program (SDP) to expand the impacts to reach more people. This evaluation will also examine outcomes of the SDP activities on volunteers. JBS International 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 or your organization will be identified with the quote. Our conversation will take about **60 minutes**.

Each of you received a link to the consent form. Do you have any questions about the consent form? Could each of you please verbally confirm that you are willing to participate in this conversation today?

Confidentiality

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)

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, we will present 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.

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? OK, let's begin.

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

Section 1. Activities

We are going to focus on the work you do with your organization and the work you do with the community and more specifically discuss the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the AmeriCorps Senior program and the services provided during this pandemic.

1. What **types of current services does your AmeriCorps Seniors program** provide to the community?
 - o Were you providing any of these services before your SDP program?
 - o How did you provide these services? [*Moderator: This question is asking how AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers provided service activities to beneficiaries: in-person; remote – virtual, phone call, Zoom; hybrid – in-person and remote?*]
2. Could you share how the AmeriCorps Seniors program has **impacted the clients receiving services**?
 - o What makes the program successful?
 - o In your opinion, what are some lessons learned to maximize the benefits for the clients served in this program?

Now, I would like to ask about your experience with your AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers.

3. Could you share **how your station engages volunteers** (i.e., such as how did the program keep volunteers engaged, or kept connectiveness or support among volunteers)?
 - o As you may know, SDP grants included temporary waivers and flexibilities of AmeriCorps Seniors Policies and Guidance due to Covid. To what extent did these temporary waivers and flexibilities contributed to the capacity of your station to recruit and retain volunteers?

Section 2. Effects of Covid on Programs

Next, we'd like to discuss the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on your station and the services you provided during this pandemic.

4. How did Covid **impact your AmeriCorps Seniors program's service delivery**? If applicable, how and why did they **change their service delivery**?
 - o How did it **affect the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in how they provided services** (for example, volunteers working at food pantries now delivered food outside people's homes)?
5. In addition to the changes you've already described, how has **Covid-19 impacted the AmeriCorps program at your station**?
 - o What impacts did the pandemic have/still have on your **ability to engage volunteers in serving your community**?
 - o What types of changes/fluctuations did your program experience in your ability to serve the community because older adult volunteers needed to quarantine/social distance (or other Covid-related reasons that decreased the older adult volunteers pool)?

Section 3. Volunteer Experience

We are interested in learning about how you think your volunteers might also benefit from their work as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer.

[Moderator: Listen and probe for programmatic components that affect volunteer satisfaction, health and psychosocial outcomes, such as physical and mental well-being.]

6. **Using the chat function/whiteboard/etc.**, please write down 2 or 3 positive benefits you have observed with the volunteers as a result of their volunteer work. [Could provide an example or two to get started, e.g., “making friends” or “feeling a sense of purpose”]
7. Now, let’s discuss what you wrote.
 - o Can someone tell me more about how is AmeriCorps Seniors currently helping your volunteers experience these benefits? How are you helping volunteers experience these benefits?
 - o How might you increase or expand volunteers' experience of these benefits?
 - o What kinds of supports could AmeriCorps Seniors provide to help promote these benefits?

Section 4. Client Experience

Now, we would like to discuss partnerships and contributions to beneficiaries. Using the chat function/whiteboard/etc., please write down 2 or 3 positive outcomes that you expect or heard your beneficiaries experience as a result of the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer's work. [Could provide an example or two to get started, e.g., “improve staffing” or “meeting the needs of the communities”]

8. Now, let’s discuss what you wrote.
 - o Can someone tell me more about partnerships or relationships with beneficiaries (clients) you are currently working with?
 - What are some of the ways you engage with your community?
[Moderator: Probe for help with volunteer recruitment efforts, partner with other local organizations to provide services to the community? Others?]
 - o What are the impacts that the AmeriCorps Seniors program has had on the clients you serve?
 - o How might you increase or expand beneficiaries' positive outcomes?

Section 5. Replicating Program & SDP Policies and Guidance

We would like to discuss the possibility of replicating this program somewhere else or scaling up this program.

9. We understand that the SDP program funding cycle is limited. Would you know if the AmeriCorps program grantee plans to continue or expand the program after completing the SDP funding cycle?

- o If the program continues, would your station continue to host the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers? Why?
- o If no, why not?
 - What processes could AmeriCorps Seniors put in place before exiting the community so that beneficiaries/clients continue to receive services?

10. Could you see this program being scaled?

- o Could you describe what the biggest impact would be if the program were to be expanded?

11. What are some best practices and lessons learned that would be helpful for expanding or replicating a program like the one at your station?

12. What resources would you need to expand or replicate the program?

We would like to discuss the possibility of adopting the SDP policies with other AmeriCorps Seniors traditional programs.

13. Could you describe the process and capacity that is needed when working with the AmeriCorps Seniors program?

- o What challenges do you currently experience when reporting about your station to AmeriCorps Seniors **[Probe: Have difficulty in using or accessing AmeriCorps online reporting systems, don't have enough time to report on a consistent basis, too much work to report out on the station roster, don't have enough staff to help with reports/administrative work.]**
- o Is there anything particularly good or helpful about the reporting systems?

14. To what extent did the temporary waivers and flexibilities of AmeriCorps Seniors Policies and Guidance impact the service experience for...?

- Volunteers?
- Beneficiaries and the community?

Section 6. Closing

15. 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 _____.]