

Process and Implementation Evaluation of Public Health AmeriCorps: Focus Group

May 20, 2023

Introduction

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 is doing to build a deeper understanding of the varied perspectives and experiences of implementing Public Health AmeriCorps. The discussion will focus on the processes and experiences of implementing Public Health AmeriCorps (e.g., outreach and communication methods, program management, recruitment and retention, training, support to grantees, etc.) and will be key to identify any gaps in resources and program delivery. 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 or your organization will be identified with the quote. **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. JBS 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. We want to hear from everyone. 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 others have said with those not in the room 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.

FOCUS GROUP 1: MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TOPIC

Ice breaker question – all focus groups

[Moderator: Request that participants respond to the following question in 2 sentences or less. Sort of an elevator pitch]

1. How would you describe your Public Health AmeriCorps program to another person who has never heard of it?
 - a. Very briefly, describe how your program relates to Public Health AmeriCorps goals of 1) Meeting public health needs of local communities by providing support in state and local public health settings and **advancing more equitable health outcomes for underserved communities** and 2) **Creating pathways to good quality public health-related careers** through onsite experience and training, with a focus on recruiting **for AmeriCorps members who reflect the communities in which they will serve.**? *[Moderator: Emphasize briefly; bold text can be used to paraphrase]*

Managing your Public Health AmeriCorps program – all focus groups

[Moderator: Let's begin with Managing your Public Health AmeriCorps program. Managing Public Health AmeriCorps program involves overseeing and coordinating a team of AmeriCorps members who work to improve public health outcomes through various interventions and initiatives. This includes program planning, recruitment, training, and monitoring of progress towards program goals.]

Public Health AmeriCorps has two goals: to meet the public health needs of underserved communities, and to create a pathway for the members to begin a career in public health.

1. Can you describe the ways in which your organization manages and addresses these two goals? *[Moderator: If capacity or capacity building is mentioned, probe to explore participant interpretation.]*
2. What type of technical assistance and training that you find useful (or that would be helpful) for your organization to address these two goals? *[Moderator: Public Health AmeriCorps team provides opportunities for grantees to connect and receive program updates (policy, regulations) through the Grantee Exchange]*

Successes and challenges – all focus groups

3. At the completion of the first year, how will your organization document and share its successes?
 - a. What information is your organization collecting to measure the impact of your program?

- b. What do you hope the impacts of your program will be? [**Moderator:** *probe on the following: members getting jobs in the field of public health, expanding access to health promotion or health prevention services*]
 - c. Can you describe the most challenging aspects of managing your program? (e.g., recruiting members, managing and training members, arranging assignments for members, retaining members, placing members who completed service into employment, addressing AmeriCorps-specified requirements.)
 - a. Why are these challenging?
- 4. Besides the reports your organization submits to AmeriCorps, do you have to prepare other monitoring reports for your Public Health AmeriCorps grant? What do you do internally to support the level of reporting your organization has to do?
- 5. What do you think works well with AmeriCorps's reporting process?
- 6. What do you believe doesn't work and how would you change it?

Recruitment and Retention focus group topic

- 7. Please describe your organization's recruitment strategy. What type of experience, skills and education do you look for when recruiting members?
- 8. What successes and challenges have you encountered in recruiting members for your Public Health AmeriCorps program?
 - a. [*Moderator probe*] What recruitment strategies have worked? What recruitment strategies that have not been effective?
- 9. How can AmeriCorps support you/your organization with member recruitment?
- 10. What can be done to support Public Health AmeriCorps members?
 - a. [*Moderator probe*] Have you had the opportunity to connect with other Public Health AmeriCorps grantees? If so, how has this helped to bolster recruitment methods?
- 11. Can AmeriCorps support you/your organization with member retention?

Concluding questions all focus groups

- 12. Are there other issues, best practices, or challenges that you would like to share that we didn't ask about?
- 13. 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 focus group! This has been very helpful. Your thoughts and opinions will form an important part of this evaluation and will help to improve PHA programming.*

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 _____.]

FOCUS GROUP 2: MEMBER TRAINING AND SUPPORT TOPIC

Ice breaker question – all focus groups

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Managing your Public Health AmeriCorps program – all focus groups

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Successes and challenges – all focus groups

3. At the completion of the first year, how will your organization document and share its successes?
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 6. What do you believe doesn't work and how would you change it?

Member Training and Support focus group topic

7. How does AmeriCorps support your organization in developing public health training experience for members that would help them begin a public health career? What additional support, if any, can AmeriCorps provide?
8. Please describe the ways in which the CDC TRAIN training facilitates achieving a balance of meeting community public health needs and supporting members create a path to enter a public health career?
9. What feedback if any have you received from members about their experience with the training, including CDC TRAIN?

Concluding questions all focus groups

10. Are there other issues, best practices, or challenges that you would like to share that we didn't ask about?
11. 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 focus group! This has been very helpful. Your thoughts and opinions will form an important part of this evaluation and will help to improve PHA programming.*

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FOCUS GROUP 3: PARTNERSHIPS TOPIC

Ice breaker question – all focus groups

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Partnerships focus group topic

Public Health AmeriCorps grantees engage different partners as part of their program. Those partners could be with local or state health departments, community-based organizations, community colleges, coalitions, secondary schools.

7. Is there a core group of partners who have been with your Public Health AmeriCorps program from the start?
8. Have you added or lost partners?
 - a. If LOST partners, what was the reason for any partners leaving?
9. Are there challenges in building these partnerships? Please describe how your organization is addressing /has addressed these challenges.
10. Are there other types of organizations that you want to partner with but have not done so? Why?

Concluding questions all focus groups

11. Are there other issues, best practices, or challenges that you would like to share that we didn't ask about?
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