

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large steel arch bridge spanning a deep canyon. The sun is setting on the right side of the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that illuminates the bridge and the surrounding landscape. The river below the bridge is a dark green color. The sky is filled with scattered clouds, some of which are lit from below by the setting sun.

**Project Impact**  
**IDAHO**  
**AMERICORPS**

**2018**



This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under an AmeriCorps Grant. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position that is endorsed by, the Corporation for National and Community Service or the AmeriCorps program.



# Table of Contents

Preface .....	1
Introduction.....	1
PCEI AmeriCorps.....	7
Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families.....	25
Lewis-Clark Service Corps .....	39
Serve Idaho .....	49



## Preface

Serve Idaho, the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism is excited to offer four Project Impact reports compiled by Serve Idaho and three of our operational AmeriCorps programs.

At Serve Idaho our mission is to promote collaborative efforts among private and nonprofit organizations, schools and state and local government's agencies to advance national service programs and volunteerism throughout the state. We meet this mission through the administration of Idaho's AmeriCorps grants to address critical community needs through a year of dedicated service.

Our programs work diligently to meet critical needs through the use of AmeriCorps members in areas of education, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures. With Dialogues in Action (DIA), a consulting firm specializing in evaluation, our programs worked from January through June of 2018 to learn how to evaluate various levels of impact throughout their programs. This was done through DIA's graduate level instruction in day long modules once a month. Among these areas of impact include the AmeriCorps member experience and the power of volunteerism.

The evaluations consisted of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation strategies in an effort to produce program adjustments and innovations. This evaluation process was financially supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

We hope you find these reports informative and see the passion and excitement the AmeriCorps members and program staff have for the services they are providing and the myriad of problems they are solving.

We would like to thank Dialogues in Action for their support and the AmeriCorps program staff for their hard work in compiling these reports and their continued commitment to addressing real community needs throughout Idaho's communities.

*Renee Bade*

Program Manager  
Serve Idaho

PROJECT IMPACT IDAHO AMERICORPS



## **Introduction**

### *What is Project Impact?*

#### **Introduction to the Project**

The aim of Project Impact is to develop in nonprofits the ability to do credible self-studies of their impact. As such, this is a capacity-building project. The reports in this compendium are written by the nonprofit teams and represent the findings from their data collection and analysis.

This project follows the traditions of participatory evaluation. In a participatory evaluation approach, those who are doing the work also become the evaluators of the effects of the work. This requires capacity-building for the teams, for a self-study form of evaluation requires the development of skills, theoretical understanding, practice in the techniques, and attention to fidelity of implementation in order to ensure the proper level of rigor.

The development of evaluation capacity takes time and iteration. It requires both instruction and practice – training in some of the leading techniques of research accompanied by ongoing applications and practice. This project recognizes the power of partnership, the enrichment of cross-pollination of ideas among like-minded organizations, the durable impact of a learning community, and the potential inspiration for a sector when exemplars are developed and elevated.

Project Impact takes teams of leaders from nonprofits through a process of discovery about the power of evaluation. The idea is to develop the ability to see and communicate the effects of the programs on the people they are designed to serve. There are three primary movements to the project: (1) Intended impact, (2) Inquiry, and (3) Implication.

## **Project Design**

The project begins with a focus on the work of identifying and clarifying the intended impact of each of the participating programs. Once the ideas have been developed and indicators identified, the teams then design a questionnaire to collect data about quantitative measures and a qualitative interview protocol to collect qualitative data. These data are analyzed. Themes are identified and then translated into findings. From the findings, the teams develop program responses and communiques of their impact.

The fundamental elements of the Project Impact follow an arc of evaluation design:

### ***Part 1 - Intended Impact***

This project begins with the identification and clarification of what effects are intended through the work of each of the projects. Each team develops an articulation of intended impact to include the components necessary for evaluation design.

#### **A. Main Ideas of Impact**

Each team identifies and crafts ideas of impact to frame the intention of direct impact for the program. In some cases, these ideas are mapped in relation to the secondary and tertiary impacts of the program to gain clarity about the fundamental notions of desired effect as a direct consequence of the program or service rendered

#### **B. “What We Mean”**

From these primary ideas, the teams then develop a brief explication of the meaning of their ideas of impact. This translates ideas that are occasionally technical and into messages accessible to all.

#### **C. Quantitative Indicators**

Teams then identify Quantitative indicators for each of the ideas. The aim is to generate five or six of the most critical indicators for each idea, paying attention to the data power, proxy power, and communication power of each of the key ideas. As well, the intent in this step is to identify a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral indicators that can be measured through metrics.

### D. Qualitative Indicators

Teams also identify qualitative indicators in this stage. These indicators are articulations of the structural and qualitative elements of growth and development that signal progress toward key ideas of impact. The qualitative indicators become the basis for the protocol construction to inform the in-depth interviews in the inquiry phase.

### E. Principles of Change

Recognizing that an underlying logic exists for each program, the teams articulate the rationale for their intervention. This step connects what they do (action) to what will result from what they do (outcome). Each team builds a set of principles that explain why they do what they do in the way they do it. In so doing, the underlying philosophy of logic is exposed and can then be examined through the data from the evaluation.

This section of the project leads each team to develop a clear theory of change, including the outcomes, indicators, and principles embedded in the particular approach that is implemented by each team.

## *Part 2 - Inquiry*

In the inquiry stage of the project, each team designs and implements a strategy for data gathering. These take two forms: a questionnaire to collect quantitative data and an in-depth interview to gather qualitative data.

### A. Quantitative Data and Analysis

For each of the quantitative indicators, teams construct items for a questionnaire. Since these projects are not intended to provide experimental or quasi-experimental inquiry, the attribution of effect is built into the questionnaire items. The questionnaire is deployed, in most cases, to the entire population of recipients the program reaches. Data are analyzed mostly using measures of central tendency. The teams then design displays of the data and narrative for their report.

### B. Qualitative Data and Analysis

The development of a qualitative design encompasses a number of steps, including the following:

1. **Protocol Design.** Each team designs an in-depth interview protocol that uses the *Heart Triangle*<sup>™</sup> method of question design. These produces a protocol of about nine sequences of questions (18 questions in total) to be used as a guide for

seeking data about the awareness and reflection of subjects' structural shifts and developments of growth and progress.

2. **Sample.** Each team identifies a sample of subjects using a purposeful stratified technique to identify a selection representing of the population being served.
3. **Data Collection.** Interviews are convened, most lasting between 45 minutes and 1 hour in length. Data are collected via notes during the interview, and then augmented immediately following the interview to provide a substantive rendering of the interview.
4. **Data Analysis.** Team members apply a four-step model of analysis to each of the interviews. This process provides them with an accessible version of analysis and interpretation to illuminate the primary themes from each interview. While the process is accessible, working through the data from each interview four times using different lenses of analysis each time provides a rigor to the analytical process that yields insight far beyond what is overt and obvious in the data.
5. **Thematics.** Through a guided and facilitative process, the entire data corpus is then examined. Themes are mapped through meta-analysis of the emerging insights.
6. **Findings.** The teams then examine each of the themes to discover and communicate the findings. These are rendered with explanation, illustration from the raw data, and significance.

### ***Part 3 - Implication***

The intent of the project is not to leave teams simply with a report about their program's effects, but rather to use the insights from the evaluation to guide the further development of the program. This takes two forms:

#### **A. Program Adjustments**

The team then takes each of the findings from the evaluation and considers possible program adjustments informed by the discoveries of the evaluation. This keeps the evaluation relevant for program application and improvement.

#### **B. Program Experiments**

In addition, the teams work to identify potential design experiments that they might run as an implication of the insights gained through the evaluation.

In this stage, the teams also begin to develop a report of the evaluation findings as well as other possible communiques of their discoveries to staff, stakeholders, funders, and other members of the community.

## **Explanation of the Reports**

The reports from the AmeriCorps programs in this cohort are included in the following compendium. These include highlights from the three movements of the Project Impact. For each participating organization, there is an explication of the primary findings from the evaluation accompanied by the programmatic responses of strategy and design. Since each organization has unique strategy and ethos, each report exhibits unique character and personality. Each report also includes both “prove” findings (evidence of impacts being achieved) and “improve” findings (areas for attention and further development). These reports are windows into the effects of the work of these organizations in the lives of the people they serve.





## *Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute*

### **PCEI AmeriCorps**

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Joan Hoffman

*with Judith Brown, Sandra Kelly and Heather Huston*

### **About Us**

PCEI is a nonprofit organization based in Moscow, Idaho. Our primary program areas include: an on and off-site Environmental Education program, a Watershed Restoration program, a 26+ acre Nature Center, and an AmeriCorps Program.

The Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute is all about “connecting people, place and community” and the mission is to increase citizen involvement in decisions that affect our region’s environment.

The PCEI AmeriCorps Program strives to connect our member activities to the mission of our overall organization. It is for this reason that we have chosen to evaluate the impact our program has specifically on the Members that it places.

### ***Description of the Program***

We have identified two significant problems in the state of Idaho: 1) At-Risk Ecosystems and 2) Environmental Awareness and Stewardship Deficiencies.

Our program intends to specifically address these problems by placing between 10-14 full or part time AmeriCorps Members to complete projects that 1) restore and enhance our natural environment, and 2) educate and engage community members in ways that will lead to informed, environmentally-conscious choices contributing to a healthier environment.

These two problems, prevalent throughout the state of Idaho, are inherently interrelated, and the Members will conduct projects that provide mutually beneficial outcomes. To that end, our Members will: 1) treat and improve unhealthy ecosystems by completing hands-on restoration projects in watersheds, wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitats, and 2) develop, support, and/or implement both youth and adult environmental education and outreach programs, in an effort to increase environmental literacy in areas including water and energy conservation, local food systems and security, wildlife conservation, sustainable community planning, and land use.

In addition, our AmeriCorps Members leverage volunteers who will be engaged in both restoration activities and community education and outreach events, in order to maximize the work accomplished, establish a stewardship ethic among residents, and create sustainability.

As addressed in the description above, the intended recipients of our program services are: 1) the acres/miles of land that are being treated and improved; and 2) the community members who are being educated and engaged in areas of Environmental Stewardship. The goal is that the services provided by our Members will have a long-term positive impact on the ongoing improvement and enhancement of our environment. However, after some discussion of the relationship between PCEI's overall mission and the mission of the AmeriCorps Program, for the purposes of this evaluation report, we are examining the impact the program has specifically on its Members. In the future, we intend to evaluate the impact the program has on the sites into which we place Members, the community members, and the land itself.

### *Intended Impact*

The following are the intended impacts for our AmeriCorps Members.

1. **Members become lifelong Environmental Stewards.** Members have a broad understanding of environmental principles and practices (such as how communities relate to each other and their natural surroundings, how to do that sustainably, as well as basic facts and terminology); Members take care to protect and preserve

their natural environment; members educate and engage community; Members frequently choose professions with an environmental focus.

2. **Members have self-efficacy.** They believe they have the power to produce positive effect in their communities. Members want to make a difference and they know they can. Members are informed community leaders. Members educate others about actions they can do that will have positive effects on their communities.
3. **Members have a sense of place.** Members have a connection with the community they live and serve in. They have a fondness for their community and are proud to be Members of the community. Members want to take care of their community.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

To collect and compile the data needed to inform this evaluation, we put together a team of four PCEI staff members who each played a part in the process. Staff members included Joan Hofmann, PCEI AmeriCorps Placement Coordinator, Judy Brown, PCEI AmeriCorps Program Director, Heather Huston, PCEI Program Manager, and Sandra Kelly, Office Manager.

We conducted a qualitative evaluation, through personal interviews and a quantitative evaluation, through an online survey.

## *Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis*

### **DESIGN**

Our interviews included a series of 18 questions, each relating to either the Know-Believe, Do-Become, or Feel-Love categories identified in the Heart Triangle Method of questioning. These were adapted from the Project Impact training. The questions were designed to collect data that related to the Members' awareness of growth or change in their personal lives and/or of their perspectives of their future.

### **SAMPLE**

With various time constraints and a limited staff, we were able to reach out to approximately 20 current and alumni Members, of which 9 committed to the interview. The 9 interviewees included 3 current Members and 6 alumni (3 from 1-2 years past and 3 from 3-5 years past).

We conducted one-on-one interviews mostly using Skype, with some interviews occurring over the telephone. Each of 3 staff team members interviewed 3 AmeriCorps Members or alums. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Each interviewer took notes (raw data) during the interviews, and followed a 4-part process after the interview to get a clear picture of the overall interview and identify themes. Once themes were identified, another process of analysis provided us with our final findings.

## *Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis*

Our quantitative evaluation was conducted through an online survey with SurveyPlanet.com. We designed a survey of 26 questions, which included retrospective, short answer, ranking and scale type questions.

We sent the survey to 57 current and past Members and 37 responded. The survey service provided us with results, which we will discuss throughout this report.

## **Findings**

### *Finding 1: Independence Starts With "I"*

Data from interviews indicate that the autonomy and responsibility given to the Members during their AmeriCorps terms greatly increased their confidence levels and skill sets in both their professional and personal lives. Members are often given a great deal of responsibility and autonomy in their positions from the start of their terms. While this can sometimes be overwhelming, most Members reported feeling that the responsibility handed to them from the start was instrumental in their ability to confidently handle most personal or professional challenges that did or may come their way.

Members talked about being challenged mentally and physically and how they gained important skills as a result of having to figure out how to get through the tough times. They also spoke about how they were pushed beyond their comfort levels and this was a confidence builder. The skills they learned ran the gamut from how to live on a limited salary to how to sharpen a tool to remove weeds. They increased their skill sets as a matter of necessity. They learned, especially in the nonprofit world, that resources are often limited. Sometimes a supervisor would hand their Member a project and run out the door to go to a meeting. Or sometimes there weren't enough funds to purchase appropriate tools for a particular project so they'd have to come up with creative ways to make it happen. Real roadblocks necessitated finding another way. They also talked about learning a new language as a result of being thrown into all aspects of the professional settings. This taught them how to communicate effectively.

In our interviews, Members shared,

[It] was stressful, and now I have stress management skills. Those are real skills. When you get into a professional job you already have all these skills.

There were challenges with the designing of the irrigation, because at the point I hadn't really been trained. I had to find the resources, to make sure I was doing it right. I got a lot of knowledge after doing that. I had to have the ability to learn on the fly.

It was important to see what could be done outside instead of in a theoretical framework...I'm able to address diverse audiences. It built independence. It really builds you up, like 'I can do anything!

Results from our online survey indicate that the number of Members that were very comfortable with public speaking (as in a classroom or presentation type setting) increased by 25% from the beginning of the program to the end.

Further evidence of the increase in confidence in their abilities to make a difference in the environment is found in the results of the survey. 17% of the surveyed Members said that they "Very Much" had the knowledge, skills and ability to participate in and facilitate activities that make a difference in the environment, before their term of service. After their service, that number rose to 51%, clearly indicating a change as a result of the program activities.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

One of the intended impacts of our program is to provide Members with experience that will develop leadership skills, and in so doing, prepare them for successful personal and professional futures. Members clearly indicated this was the case during their terms. More experience provides more learning opportunities. With knowledge of how to manage stressful situations and relationships in and out of the workplace, individuals gain confidence and feel empowered. They will seek out new opportunities more readily. They not only want to make a difference but they see that they can. They also know how to provide similar opportunities to others.

## **POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

### **Adjustments**

Because it can be, and, in fact, is overwhelming and stressful for new Members to be handed such heavy loads of responsibility at the start of their terms, we believe this is an area

upon which we can improve. This is clearly a common theme we have discovered through these interviews, and therefore intend to add this into our topics covered in the Pre-Service Orientation.

## **Experiments**

We are interested in actually requiring Members to create blogs (instead of just suggesting) or journals, and requiring weekly reflections that can be shared with the Placement Coordinator (and their supervisors if they so choose.) The purpose would be to open up an alternate place for reflection about their service.

## ***Finding 2: I Got Thrown to the Wolves (so I Learned How To Lead the Pack)***

While many Members saw the value of the autonomy and responsibility given to them as described in Finding #1, some Members spoke of significant overwhelm, frustration and emotional strife at certain times during their terms. They spoke of the need for more contact, support, direction and resources from their direct supervisors, the PCEI AmeriCorps staff or their fellow Members.

Members expressed concerns like

This work can be overwhelming. I've had to do so much so fast. So I did what I could. I could have done a really good job if I'd just had 1 or 2 focuses (and if it wasn't so last minute.)

I wanted more structure and direction and on the ground leadership, but the being open and allowing is a different type of leadership and being part of that even if I'm frustrated with the greater context was positive.

Sometimes I get anxious and lose sleep over it.

It's a small nonprofit funded by donations. We don't have the tools necessary. We borrow tools from my landlord...we want to do some project and then we don't have the money for it and we have to scramble.

It was super frustrating watching a really well-oiled machine with passionate people be disassembled - really awful. I found myself asking, "If \_\_\_\_ was here what would she be doing right now?"

I felt on edge a lot of the time because I didn't know what to expect.

Not surprisingly, current Members talked about this more negatively than alumni. Alumni said that they were left to their own devices but mostly noted that those experiences added to their skill sets. Current Members expressed dissatisfaction and even anger about the lack of supervision, or the upheaval that happened to be occurring at some of their sites. Perhaps this was due to the experience in a professional setting being a first for many of them, and that they perhaps expected the experience to be different than it was. Alternately, the alumni have had more experience, and now understand this to be par for the course, especially in nonprofits. Alumni can recognize the long-term impact after having had several other experiences on which to base it.

## SIGNIFICANCE

While, ultimately, the lack of immediate guidance and support that some Members felt contributed to important positive learning opportunities, the instances of strife should not be overlooked and efforts should be made to address this concern, so as to enhance all Members' experiences and prevent Member drop-out. This finding serves to improve our program. While there is a "Productive Zone of Disequilibrium" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017), Member feedback tells us that there is a need for more of a balance. Even some extra time allotted for them to talk about their experiences with other Members, the host site staff or PCEI Placement Coordinator might help them manage the stressful times. Members need to know ahead of time what they can expect – an explanation of the messes that could present themselves during their service terms. They need to understand the particular vision, so they know that while it may be difficult at times getting there, the end goal is worthwhile.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

Given these findings, we have identified the need for a *clearer* vision amongst the 3-part team about the responsibilities, milestones and outcomes of the term of service. We can provide more opportunities for reflection and communication amongst the team Members, but to reduce the instances of unnecessary stress is top priority.

- The purpose of the Member project needs to be more clearly identified and defined. This will be a main component of the initial training/orientation.
- We will further develop a clear framework for Members and supervisors which will include: An introductory overview, a purpose statement, impact statements to read and commit to - a structure of opportunity, if you will.

- We will encourage sites to require their Members to put together a guide for the next AmeriCorps Member joining their team.

## **Experiments**

We will develop a Checklist of Success that is visual and actionable, and will outline Member, Site and PCEI AmeriCorps staff responsibilities throughout the term. This will cover both AmeriCorps program items as well as Host Site items. This will also include such things as Member gatherings, monthly social exchanges, etc. All team Members will use this as a talking tool for proving and improving all aspects of the program, as well as creating an atmosphere of comfort and ease. We will use this mid term to see where Members and sites are in the process - what's working? What's not working?

## ***Finding 3: Act a Professional. Be a Professional.***

The professional exposure and immersive nature of the Members' positions at their sites and within their communities increased their knowledge of jobs and careers in and out of this field and gave them the knowledge and skills that ultimately led them to being hired for full-time positions.

In our interviews, Members described developing a real sense of how a community functions and the moving pieces amidst it. Consequently, they said, they learned to network because they exist in a professional setting and are therefore in regular communication with other working Members of the community. One Member said that as a result of his service activities, he had to get out and talk to people in the community and therefore learned about various aspects of the community that he "never knew existed...through my AC work. I was more engaged with community members than ever before, business people, farmers market... It opened up new sides of community."

Many alumni attributed getting their future jobs directly to their PCEI experience. Alumni shared that the skills and direct experience they got through their service with PCEI was highly rearded by potential employers and made them more competitive for positions. Alumni described employers valuing things such as:

- The service aspect of the AmeriCorps positions, and the dedication and commitment that that kind of service requires;
- The language they now speak as a result of their experience, a language that directly relates to their new positions;

- Their ability to identify key players, and to have some understanding of varying roles in the professional realm, such as funders, stakeholders, city, county, and state government entities;
- The ability to learn on the fly;
- The ability to problem solve and work as a team.

Alumni report through the online survey that they have been able to find gainful employment and many are further engaged in environmental work as a result of the program. Results from the survey show that over 68% of those that responded applied for a job in an environmental field following their term of service. Of 24 Members that responded to this question, they had a total of 49 jobs since completing their service. Of the 49 jobs, at least 50% were in environmental fields. Members are employable and engaged in the field of service that they came into the program wanting to explore. Members shared,

The Florida position...it's the coordinator position. I applied for fieldwork and they saw that I was a coordinator from PCEI and I think that's why they gave me that (job). I think I was accepted because of my PCEI coordination and refuge work. At first I wasn't hired for that spot but when they saw what I did with PCEI and Deer Flat, that fit...

Personally, the impact was solid. (I think I have) the current job with the state of Washington because of the work I did for PCEI and local farmers...Things I learned while in (the program) still apply today.

I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do for a career when I graduated from college. I thought GIS related work in an environmental context might be what I wanted to do, and by the end of my term I knew that it was what I wanted to do...PCEI was a nice stepping stone. My term there gave me a lot of good skills.

The experience I gained at PCEI made me competitive...and this was a very competitive position. Also, one of my interviewers said he specifically looks for AmeriCorps background.

I learned about coming into a project cold, taking on something new and very different from anything I'd ever done before, learning to adapt and work with others, communication skills, and I learned about myself.

## SIGNIFICANCE

In order to develop the next generation of Environmental Stewards and community leaders Members need to understand what career possibilities exist and have the skills and knowledge to attain positions in these fields. If they understand the language and can speak it, and if they have a clear sense of the various kinds of professional paths they can follow to make positive change in our world, then there is a much better chance that that change can be achieved.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

- PCEI Staff and Host Sites will provide more information about career options in related fields of which Members may not be aware.
- PCEI Staff and Host Sites will provide more trainings on public speaking, classroom management, networking, and more.

### **Experiments**

- Ask Members to generate and submit a 2-year plan, including job search, personal growth opportunities etc.

### ***Finding 4: Discovering the Real in Ideal.***

The professional experience the Members have/had contributes/contributed greatly to a change in their perspective about what it takes to be an Environmental Steward. They came in with lofty ideals, and went out with practical realism. And as a result of their service, they feel they have a more solid understanding of what they can really do to affect change.

Particularly with younger Members, just coming out of college or graduate school, there was a sense that “the state of our environment is really bad, and I’m going to make it better, and how difficult can it really be? You just go out there and teach people how to recycle!” But what Members commented on was the significant challenges they found in being a part of a larger machine, such as being a Member of an organization that must work with other organizations, and procure grant money to do good things. They learned, as a result of their service work, that there are many more steps to completing projects than they ever realized. They learned that there are many different paths to take to reach the same destination. Some are straight. Some are windy. Some are rocky. They learned that nature has its own way and there are some things you can’t control. They learned new and different perspectives for issues they thought they fully understood. One Member talked about how the experience got

her out of the “academic bubble” and into the real world reality. There were “Aha...” moments.

So, while the ideal has not changed (a clean and healthy environment) Members learn there are many varied and valuable ways to move in that direction. And often it was something different than what they thought.

The PCEI AC program helps Members learn how to get started putting ideals/lofty goals into action.

I’ve learned that environmental stewardship can be less obvious and a little more informal/less direct.

Problems can result from something as simple as the Forest Service putting up a gate across a Forest Service road.

The Master Garden program is of interest to people and so they come, and then they learn about stewardship practices.

The process is part of the solution. Especially with facilitation, you need to go slow to go fast.

Failure of the education system in rural areas. It’s a big detriment to foundations of building environmental stewards. They don’t have the contextual framework of their environmental impacts.

The more you get out in the world the more problems you see. It doesn’t seem as easy to get things done but also you see how you can collaborate and make solutions.

One thing I learned was - who are we serving? Are we getting to the people who really need this message? Opened me up to social impact. Can’t separate environmental issues from social issues. [I began to understand] that there are so many issues... It opened up the whole social justice environmental impact, equality and equity within the environment... opened up all sorts of possibilities...helped me look for jobs (because he was more open to the gamut of opportunities...Can work in tandem, collaboration... how to connect people and different types of people.

I’ve learned that doing small things well is valuable. I used to think about BIG things and feel overwhelmed.

I can’t fight everything and now I know work/life balance is important.

I was set on working for a nonprofit, and [I have learned] that there are good things that come from government positions and for-profit entities.

Coming together in consensus to solve a problem is stewardship.

## SIGNIFICANCE

In order for Members to effect change as Environmental Stewards, they need to know how to get there efficiently and effectively. The sometimes challenging lessons they learned as a result of working in real world scenarios provides them practical and realistic ways to solve the identified environmental problems.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

- Get listings of presentations and lectures in the areas that Members serve. Require Members to participate in one per month.

### **Experiments**

- Have selected Members write a short description of what they hope to accomplish in their lives as Environmental Stewards and how they see accomplishing those things. Then have those same Members write it again at the end of their service. Note the similarities or differences.

## ***Finding 5: Learning To Lead, Leading To Learn.***

Through opportunities to observe, experience, and reflect, Members developed a deeper understanding of what it means to be an effective leader.

The professional experience Members had at their sites offered them a deeper understanding of what leadership means, both by providing them with opportunities to observe varying leadership styles (both effective and ineffective) as well as to act in their own leadership roles, and then to reflect on both. Some leaders with whom Members worked, for example, their own supervisors or teachers whose classes came to field trips, lead by expressing their authority and pulling others along. Some lead by being a part of the group and guiding the “followers” to the solutions. Some stood in front and some stood beside. By being in a position of observing, experiencing and reflecting, Members said they learned what being a leader *doesn't* mean, and what not to do if you want to be an effective leader.

Members learn to lead through observation, interaction, and reflection, within the context of a deeper understanding of people and relationships. They have the daily opportunity to

observe and interact with many different people in a professional setting that brings with it frustrations as well as joys. This trickled into their personal lives as well, teaching them some important lessons about the nature of human beings. While we afforded them many opportunities to reflect on their experiences, such as providing them with a journal, and suggesting they create blogs, it seems that the actual interview process was impactful in this way. As they spoke, they came to further conclusions about the effect this program had on their understanding of people and relationships.

Members also learned about leadership by working with volunteers, youth, and adults, and by actually practicing leadership skills. They experienced first hand what works and what doesn't. One Member said, "You have to meet them at their level. You have to present (information) in a way that means something to that specific demographic." Other members expressed similar sentiments:

During the service term, there was lots of frustration and uncertainty that contributed to my being a strong environmental steward. So I wanted to provide leadership so people don't feel that frustration. There was a lack of leadership and bad communication. I am learning from the miscommunication and have gained skills. It's important to be clear how you communicate issues with people.

I think being adaptable is important for being a leader and being able to admit to needing help – the idea of a team. My idea of what being a leader means has changed a lot. (Thought it was about forging ahead of the group but actually it means staying beside the others and finding mutual benefits).

## SIGNIFICANCE

This finding matters because Members clearly indicated that the constant interactions with so many different members of the community, both professional and personal, affected their understanding of working relationships, and what it means to lead effectively. Without effective leadership, there can be very little long-term impact. With effective leadership, people are empowered, inspired, capable, and confident.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

- Provide more specific leadership training or other resources to reinforce the learning that comes from their hands-on experience.
- Increase opportunities for Members to delve into specific community issues.

## Experiments

- For each cluster, select 1 Member to coordinate a group discussion/presentation for a Team Meeting.

### *Finding 6: Home Is Where the Heart Is.*

Our quantitative evaluation showed that the nature of the program does immerse Members in the communities in which they serve and that this creates for them a sense of place. They care about their communities and are passionate about making positive contributions. They put their heart into the community, meet interesting, like-minded (and not-so-like-minded people), make lifelong friends, and call it home - Sometimes for the long haul and sometimes just for the time they serve, but it was clear in our conversations with those we interviewed that for some this was the first time and that this impacted them in a deep and meaningful way.

(The work) connects people and different types of people.

This idea of contributing to the betterment of community in a physical way is a grounding experience that makes me feel a belonging and camaraderie.

My service term reinforced my connection to the community.

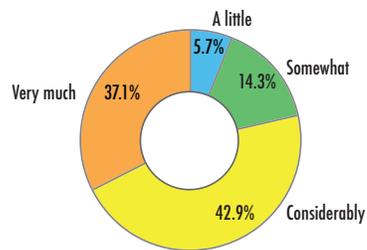
It gave me a sense of community with the people that worked there. PCEI staff Members felt close and I have remained close with those people.

I'm in Idaho and I'm working here and it's my community. I've almost been with Idaho Rivers United for a year. I feel like I'm effective here... it's a long term investment... in my community of Idaho.

Figure 1 shows that 42% of the surveyed participants said their engagement in their communities was “considerably” higher than it was before their service, and 37% said it was “very much” higher.

When asked “How much has any knowledge you gained about

Figure 1. I am more engaged in my community.



community issues and about how a community functions transferred to the community or communities you lived in after your term of service,” 31% of the Members that responded said that it transferred considerably. This information is significant in that having a sense of belonging in a community does have an effect on how you behave within that community and what you do to nurture it.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

In order to be successful and content in life, there are components that need to be in place. One of them is a sense of belonging. It is our intention to create a program that offers opportunity to get involved in one’s community, both through their direct service, and as a consequence of their service, through social and networking opportunities. Members shared that because of various aspects of their positions, they were able to meet and learn about many people from many walks of life, whether they be class participants, community stakeholders, government employees, volunteers or staff members at their sites. That the Members speak of the positive impact this had on their lives speaks to the success we’ve had in helping them find their sense of place.

## **POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

### **Adjustments**

We feel this is an area we could easily improve upon by creating more opportunities such as tours of the community at the start of service, presenting the Members with more opportunities for learning offered by other Members of the community, and providing Members with lists of activities happening in the community each month. We also would like to make the community even more aware of the presence of the AmeriCorps Members by sending out newsletters more regularly, posting more on social media, and providing more networking opportunities where they can meet key players in the community.

Additionally, one Member noted, “It’s a struggle for me because I live in X and sometimes I feel a little isolated. There’s a difference in the people and community in X vs Y.” We felt this was important information and in the future will suggest and encourage Members to live in the communities they serve if and when possible.

### **Experiments**

It would be interesting to set up coffee dates for each Member with a community Member of their choice. Members continually talked about how they enjoyed seeing many different faces of the community so giving them an opportunity to choose one person in the

community they'd like to talk to would give them an even more in depth understanding of at least one of those faces.

## **Steps Forward**

- In order to get a broader understanding of the impacts of our program on all of its key players, we intend to add some deeper, more personal, heart-based type questions to the final exit evaluations.
- The evaluation process has been valuable to us and has given us a better understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, particularly our strengths. We want to market our strengths to the public. We intend to update our website in order to do so.
- Members are asked to create blogs as a meaningful way for them to reflect and describe their experiences. We intend to make the blogs a requirement rather than a suggested activity.
- Members discussed the desire for more variety of professional training. While we do not have it in our budget to provide expensive trainings, we are hoping to utilize free or low-cost community resources to give them the opportunity for further skill building.

## ***Final Notes in Regard to the Evaluation Process***

We have learned a great deal during this process, most particularly in regards to methodology for the evaluation. From the PCEI AmeriCorps population, we chose to sample groups of members serving during various timeframes. We sampled current members, and alumni from 1-2 years back, and alumni from 3-5 years back. We interviewed 9 Members, and surveyed 37.

- Unfortunately, we did not set up the survey in such a way that we could differentiate between answers from current Members vs. alumni. Members were not required to identify themselves so many of them were anonymous. Therefore, some of the results cannot be specifically related to one group or the other or even both. For future evaluations, we will be more intentional in selecting our sample groups with more attention to the impacts we are measuring and the particular slice of the program that we are evaluating.
- We need to design the survey and interview questions so that they apply more directly to the various groups that we are sampling. For example, some of the

questions in the survey could not even be answered by one sampling group because the questions were designed in a before/after manner and that group had not yet completed their term.

- Once the interviews and surveys were completed we looked for themes collectively and within the 3 groups. There was a general sense that Members from the alumni groups had more positive feedback about the value of their experiences than did the Members from the current term. Given that they had more time to reflect on the meanings and value of the day-to-day challenges, this was not particularly surprising. Again, we feel we could have predicted that result, and might therefore consider different sampling in the future.
- Also, because our interviewee group was relatively small, there could have been some themes that we assumed were across the board but for which we don't necessarily have proof. There is definitely some room for interpretation with the kinds of interviews and analysis we did, but for the most part we are confident that the findings that came from the process are an accurate portrayal of the Member experience.

One of the many interesting “aha” moments that came out of this process is that, because of the nature of the AmeriCorps program and its accessibility to people of all ages and in varying stages of their professional lives, the experience can and will likely have varying impacts on the Members. It may be a life-changing experience for one person because they are 18 years old and have never been in a professional world vs. the retired 60-year-old who is interested in giving back to his or her community. It could be interesting to sample different age groups for a different take on the impact of this program.

All of that being said, the benefits of sampling current and alumni Members is that we get perspectives on both the “prove” and “improve” aspects of an evaluation. To that end, this sampling was effective.

## **Conclusion**

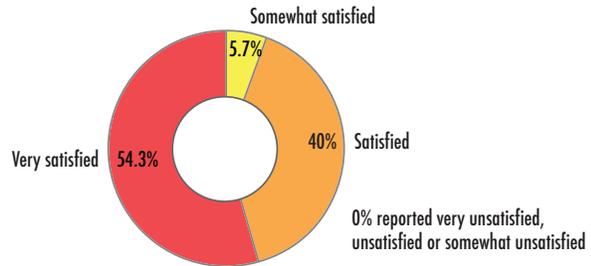
The process of evaluation that we have undertaken has provided us with the knowledge that our intended impact, where it relates to the Members, is evident. It has also provided us with some very useful information that will help to improve our program.

Earl Gray Stevens said, “Confidence, like art, never comes from having all the answers; it comes from being open to all the questions.” Our evaluation informed us that confidence is an outcome of the AmeriCorps experience for many of our Members. The experience provided

them challenges and opportunities to reflect and learn. They increased their skills sets and developed confidence, and as a result are becoming lifelong environmental stewards, community leaders and feeling a sense of place within their communities.

When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the impact the PCEI AmeriCorps Program had on their lives, over 94+ % said they were either Satisfied or Very Satisfied (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with the PCEI AmeriCorps program.



When asked to describe what would have *enhanced* their experience as an AmeriCorps Member, the most common answers were:

- They wanted more training, both at their sites and from the AC program. (32% of those that answered)
- They wanted more opportunity to join with other AC Members in the program for support, collaboration and team building. (21% of those that answered)

While the positive impacts are evident, there are areas that need attention so as to *improve* the member experience We look forward to implementing some of the adjustments and possible experiments referred to above in an effort to increase the impact of our program on it’s members in positive ways.

**Idaho State**  
**UNIVERSITY**



*Idaho State University*  
*Institute of Rural Health*

## **Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families**

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*Barbara Cunningham, Project Director*

*Jana Bodily-Roan, Grants Administrator*

*Kayla Fielder, Career Path Intern*

### **Introduction to Organization**

The Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families (IHCF) program at the Institute of Rural Health at Idaho State University had 62 AmeriCorps members enrolled during the 2017-2018 program year. The AmeriCorps members have addressed the health needs of Idaho's low-income children and families in rural underserved areas by strengthening existing partnerships in thirteen placement sites across Idaho. Of these placement sites, three are in Idaho's Panhandle region. One is in the Wood River Valley, six are in southwestern Idaho, and three are in southeastern Idaho. By the end of the year, the AmeriCorps members were responsible for the engagement of 14,500 participants in health education and health screening activities. These resulted in improved access to health care in Idaho. In addition, the

AmeriCorps members leveraged an additional 1,120 community volunteers who were engaged in assisting the AmeriCorps members at their placement sites.

## *Description of Program*

### ACTIVITIES

Many Idaho residents are from rural, low income, and underserved areas. They therefore face significant healthcare challenges. Families from low-income backgrounds are often uninsured, may have language barriers, and frequently lack access to healthcare due to lack of transportation, income, or limited health literacy. Idaho's children and families continually struggle in economic terms. The needs addressed by IHCF are as follows:

- Lack of adequate access to healthcare due to poverty
- Childhood obesity
- Lack of preventative healthcare
- Homelessness
- Dental health professional shortages
- Mental health professional shortages

To address these needs, AmeriCorps members served as community resources, conducted health screenings (sight, hearing, blood pressure, height, weight, and blood sugar), and engaged in many types of health education activities (biological, environmental, psychological, physical, and medical sciences). The health screening interventions resulted in increased knowledge of available health care services and community resources. Additionally, health education activities resulted in health behavior changes and more preventive health screenings.

### INTENDED IMPACT

The AmeriCorps member's service activities, educational activities, and health screenings have been well received by the communities in which they serve. Along with having an impact on the communities, the IHCF program also intended to impact the AmeriCorps members in a positive way. The impacts the IHCF program intends to instill in its AmeriCorps are:

1. Members develop a lifelong commitment to community service
2. Members become invested in healthier habits
3. Members pursue a career in a health-related field

## **Evaluation Methodology**

The aim of the evaluation was to identify the type and quality of impact the Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families program was having on active members. To understand this, two broad research questions were explored:

1. What type and quality of impact is the program having on active members?
2. What aspects of the program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, the following measures were completed: (a) ideas of intended impact and indicators were developed and refined, (b) the team implemented a mixed methods outcome evaluation which was designed using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) findings were identified, and (d) the implications to those findings were considered for future program improvement and innovation.

This project began with a focus on identifying and clarifying the intended impact of the IHCF program. Once the ideas of impact were developed, the Heart Triangle™ model (a model used to highlight areas of human impact) was used to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact focused on the mental, behavioral and emotional changes in active members that indicated the achievement of the intended impacts. These indicators were then used to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to measure progress toward achieving intended impacts.

### ***Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis***

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, an in-depth interview protocol was designed to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from the program. A purposeful, stratified sampling technique was used to select a representative sample from the population of members who served. The overall sample used for analysis included 62 AmeriCorps members: 13 stipend members and 49 education-award-only members. The IHCF sampling strategy worked well with the exception of education-award-only member interviews, which conflicted with final exams and graduation scheduling.

The interview team consisted of two staff members in addition to other team members. Interviewers who did not participate in the Project Impact cohort meetings were trained in qualitative data collection and analysis prior to conducting interviews.

One-on-one interviews, lasting between forty-five minutes and one hour in length, were conducted with a sample from the identified strata of the population. Interviews were recorded and the interviewers took notes. The notes were analyzed immediately after the interviews to obtain a substantive rendering of each interview.

The data was analyzed inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Interviewers implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. The interviewers familiarized themselves with the data by reviewing it four times, each time thinking through a different aspect of what the data revealed about the research question. The data was then divided into four categories to serve as an initial set of codes. Finally, initial themes were generated based on the pervasive insights from the data. This process allowed us to interpret the meaning and significance of the data from each interview.

Next, all of the data analyses and initial themes were brought together and the next two phases of thematic analysis (reviewing themes, defining and naming themes) were implemented. A team reviewed the initial themes to identify the overarching themes that emerged from the full scope of the data analysis in order to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. These themes were mapped visually and examined in various ways to gain greater definition of the features, causes and catalysts, new or surprising insights, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. Then the most significant and meaningful discoveries were determined and brought forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report. (See Appendix A)

### *Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis*

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, a questionnaire was designed to collect data on quantitative indicators of impact. This instrument was administered to 62 members and was responded to by 50 members, an 81% response rate. The data was analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. Key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data were identified and these discoveries were incorporated into the related findings. (See Appendix B)

The most significant findings from this evaluation are described in the following narrative.

## Findings

There were several common themes that emerged from our research. The following findings will be explored in this report:

1. Organization
2. Documentation and Paperwork
3. Connectedness
4. Feedback
5. Healthy Choices
6. Making a Difference
7. Developing Awareness
8. Confidence
9. Knowledge
10. Action

### *Finding 1 - Organization: Tick Tock, Tick Tock:*

Members let us know that time management, goal setting, planning, having routines, balance, accountability, and communication skills are at the heart of their success in AmeriCorps and life. One member learned the value of being organized and prioritizing occupational therapy services from her first-hand experiences in a rural area with few occupational therapists. As such, she had to be well organized to be able to offer the maximum available services to her patients in the time allowed. In addition, the same member related her experiences to her own family responsibilities and said she learned that healthier habits also include having an organized family routine. She works with children regularly and witnessed that children's behavior is greatly affected by routine. Another member stated, "I learned how important it is to be organized and on time. Before AmeriCorps, I would just show up and help with the service. Now, I know what goes on behind the scenes, and I have more appreciation for it." Based on member experiences expressed through the interview and survey process, the

**"I learned how important it is to be organized and on time. Before AmeriCorps, I would just show up and help with the service. Now, I know what goes on behind the scenes, and I have more appreciation for it."**

importance of organization is evident in creating a well-balanced lifestyle.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

A person can have the best idea in the world, but if they cannot execute it and get it off the ground, it will go nowhere. Having organizational skills allowed the members to provide their services in an effective manner, without being impeded by needless clutter. Organizational skills are not only important during the member's service term but in life after AmeriCorps. In the future, these skills will also help members establish an organized lifestyle that will influence both work and home. Time management skills are critical in a well-balanced lifestyle. There are only so many hours in a day; if you do not use your time wisely, it will run out and you will have nothing to show for it.

## **POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

In the past, members were given a planner. However, with so much new and current technology, the benefit of the planner was unknown. As a result, in recent years, a planner has not been distributed. In the future, members will be asked if they would use a planner and if they would prefer a paper or electronic version. In addition, an all-encompassing online AmeriCorps calendar for members may be useful. Documents with tips and tricks for time management, training, and goal setting will be available for members use.

## ***Finding 2 - Documentation and Paperwork: Paper Handcuffs***

Documentation and paperwork put members in paper handcuffs. Many members expressed frustration with the time and process it took to complete these tasks. Members commented that finding where to enter their time online was quite the learning curve and, for some members, was the most frustrating part about their experience. Members' comments included statements like "...the act of doing it [entering hours] is not hard, but figuring out where to put the hours was difficult." Data tracking took up a lot of time that members would have rather spent with their patients/clients. One hour spent with a client would mean several hours of paperwork, which is not a direct benefit to the client. One member commented, "There are probably ways to put skilled people in contact with people, as opposed to paperwork."

The members' paperwork at the beginning of their service goes on for multiple pages. This process is time consuming and requires direction from the Program Director on what to fill out and where to sign. Not only do AmeriCorps members find this process tedious, but staff members also find that this process gives them a headache because AmeriCorps members

cannot start their term until this paperwork is completed. In frustration with the amount of time it took to start his/her service, one member stated, “Sometimes I feel like I am doing something so far removed from what I am trying to do. Sometimes I felt like I just want to help others, so why do I have to do all these background checks?”

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

If members cannot complete these processes, they will not be successful in the AmeriCorps program – meaning the program will in turn fail. The paper trails need to be accurate and conform to necessary guidelines but also give members more time to spend with patients/clients. The paperwork should be a period for reflection, but instead it is seen as a waste of precious time.

## **POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

The paperwork can be made easily accessible by offering online options on our website. Online options can also include simplifying the process by offering downloadable files and electronic signature options. This will be tested on staff before putting it to use during recruitment. Also, during Pre-Service Orientation, the paperwork process and reason for the paperwork can be explained.

## ***Finding 3 - Connectedness: Red Rover, Red Rover***

Members felt more connected to themselves and their communities through the program. As one member said, “Joining my community, it is not about money, but it is about helping and sharing the skills that you have.” Statements like this from our members showed us how much more connected to their communities members feel. Some even mentioned how becoming more involved in their community made them “...want to be a lot more involved...” in their own community and how much more committed they felt to the wellbeing of it. Self-commitment was measured by confidence. The members emulate confidence throughout almost every single interview. “I seem more confident in myself and more outgoing,” one member said when asked what changes others have noticed (about them) and commented on. Self-commitment was also exuded through their commitment to pursuing a career related to their service activities. Most members stated that they plan on taking further steps to follow through with a degree in their related field. Members had to finish tasks such as completing remaining classes, passing boards, and finishing clinical hours. One member mentioned, “I need to refine these skills [related to health service] so I am able to translate information better to patients/clients.”

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

When members feel connected they are more likely to be fully engaged and interact with the communities they serve. By being involved in their communities, they will be able to contribute to the needs of their community and gain a sense of belonging. In addition to being connected to their community, it is also important for members to feel connected as an AmeriCorps team so that they feel empowered to create change.

### POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Members were not feeling as connected to the AmeriCorps team as they were to their communities. Through the use of social media and group meetings, members can feel a sense of connection as an AmeriCorps team. By participating in monthly conference calls by attending the Serve Idaho Conference, members will be inspired to participate and get to know their team members.

### *Finding 4 - Feedback: Testing, Testing, 1, 2, 3!*

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? In other words, is there feedback? Most people would agree that there is feedback. AmeriCorps members use feedback to help improve their service. Such feedback allows them to make healthy choices and expand their knowledge base. Members receive feedback daily throughout their term of service and especially through their mid-year and end-of-year personal evaluations given to them by their site supervisor. In addition, members gather feedback on their service performance while collecting data from their placement site. In the same vein as a tree falling, members learn that if the data is not documented, it did not happen. Members have the opportunity to give, as well as receive feedback. They give it to their placement site and the AmeriCorps Program through their monthly meetings, personal spotlights, and monthly reports. The Project Coordinator is always available to give and receive feedback via in-person meetings, phone conversations, emails, and text messages. Besides receiving feedback in the form of data however, one member explained that she receives it in other ways such as with a smile or with a thank you. Members use feedback to improve their service impact.

**Besides receiving feedback in the form of data, one member explained that she receives it in other ways such as with a smile or with a thank you.**

### SIGNIFICANCE

Growth comes from feedback. Feedback should be taken seriously but not personally. Feedback benefits the giver, receiver, and the community because it involves all three entities

listening to one another. Every time one speaks or listens, the actions and tone of voice provide feedback. Thus, feedback occurs every single day. Consistent feedback is important because it reinforces or instills good habits. Feedback encourages diversity and improves critical thinking skills.

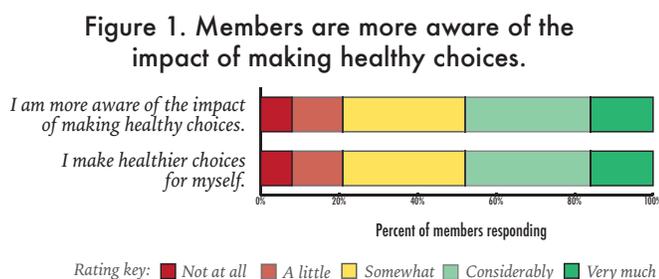
## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

An experiment worth trying is to practice giving and receiving feedback. The program rewards members with congratulatory cards, letters, nominations for rewards, and AmeriCorps swag. However, this can be improved by offering rewards more often and creating new opportunities to give and receive feedback. One such opportunity would be to have members reflect about their experiences in a journal, planner, and/or blog.

### *Finding 5 - Healthy Choices: Preach What You Teach*

It would make sense that members would only make as much impact on others as they can make on themselves. There is a circle of impact surrounding members and the community they serve. As one member said, "... if you take care of yourself you can take care of others ... if you cannot take care of yourself you will not reach others." Answers like this sprinkle our interview data. Members became inspired to change their habits based on the consequences they saw resulting from poor choices of their community members. The quantitative data also shows that members are becoming more aware of the impact of making healthy choices, and that they are changing their behavior to make healthier choices for themselves. About 44% of members reported they were

considerably or much more aware of the impact of making healthy choices as a result of their service. About 43% of members also reported that they were making considerably or much healthier choices for themselves (see Figure 1).



## SIGNIFICANCE

One of the anticipated impacts of the program was that members would become invested in healthier habits. Throughout the data, these influences seem to have aligned with this impact for our members. A member stated, "I feel like I am more aware and therefore proactive about my own health." Through

the program, members say that they have either realized the importance of healthy choices or that the program has reinforced pre-established healthy habits. As members make healthy choices themselves, they are inclined to share that positive impact with others.

#### POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Members could be encouraged to create and challenge each other to improve health related habits e.g. step counting, water intake, and adequate sleep.

### ***Finding 6 - Making a Difference: Small Acts Lead to Big Changes***

Through small acts of service, big things can be accomplished. Many members commented that they believed, through their service activities, they were making a difference. Working with patients and seeing their accomplishments helped them to know and feel that they were making a difference. Members explained that through their service and educational activities they were making a difference in the lives of the people they served and in their own lives. Members were able to take note of the small but important changes with the families they serve. A member reported that “AmeriCorps puts you with other people that want to make a difference and I feel this attitude carries over into all aspects of my life.” Another member explained that knowing she has some control and an outlet to intentionally make a difference in someone’s life feels good. Furthermore, the member explains that through her experiences she sees “that there is hope and we can make a difference.”

#### SIGNIFICANCE

Realizing that even small acts can lead to great accomplishments empowers the members to develop a lifelong commitment to community service. Through service activities, the members become more aware that they can serve and make a difference. Members seem to be more likely to engage in service activities.

#### POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Acts of kindness and service among our members and the communities in which they serve will be emphasized in the future.

## ***Finding 7 - Developing Awareness: Lights on, No One Home***

It does not matter if you leave the lights on at home if no one is there; the power company will still send the bill. Remaining oblivious to problems or needs in a community does not mean they are not affecting community members. Some of the members stepped into the program not realizing their community had needs such as the ones they were placed there to combat. One member mentioned, “What you think of when you think of community is not real until you are face to face with it.” Members also explained that they were not aware of the extent of how physical therapy preventative care for elderly populations was severely lacking in Idaho. Through direct service activities, members are gaining actual real world experience regarding community health needs versus indirect classroom instruction.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

By connecting members to the needs of their communities, not only does the program help members build investment in themselves by making healthy choices but also in their community. In turn, this should lead members to develop a lifelong commitment to community service, which is another impact of the IHCF AmeriCorps program. The members cannot commit to their community without being aware of the community and its needs. Recognizing the needs of their communities, members may also pursue a career in a health-related field because they see the value it holds for their community.

### **POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

Members will be trained to conduct needs assessments in their respective communities.

## ***Finding 8 - Confidence: Exit Comfort Zone Here!***

Members let us know that with each new experience comes new growth and confidence. Many times in life in order to gain experience, one has to exit the comfort zone. One member said, “I need to continue to learn and hone my skills. I also feel that the more practice I get, the more my confidence grows.” Another member said, “I have great confidence in my abilities. I am increasing my confidence in my ability to communicate and articulate with those from different backgrounds. I am good at having a large network and connections in this field.”

The Socratic path to self-confidence is to have confidence in your own beliefs and not be swayed by the opinions of others. The Program Coordinator reinforces the importance of experience and how it relates to confidence by pointing out to members that their on the ground, roll-up the sleeves experiences are irreplaceable. Once they experience the “real”

world for themselves and with others, they gain a confidence that cannot be found in textbooks.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Confidence does not just happen. It takes hard work. A reference to this hard work theory was popularized by author, Malcolm Gladwell, who explained the “10,000 hours theory”. The theory holds that 10,000 hours of “deliberate practice” is needed in order to become a world-class champion in any field. Since Gladwell’s theory was published in 2014, there have been a number of critics of the theory. With members serving daily in the field providing health screenings and health education, they are gaining valuable experience that they will take with them into their future pursuits.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

A discussion with members about confidence and the “10,000 hours theory” will be conducted. Such a discussion could reinforce the value of their on the ground, roll-up the sleeves experiences and in the process give them even more confidence that they can take with them after they leave AmeriCorps.

## ***Finding 9 - Knowledge/ Experience: Knowledge Is Power***

Knowledge, education, and learning experiences help to shape our beliefs and actions. Many members explained that through their education and knowledge they were able to be more aware of their own health and how to help their patients or clients. For example, members were more aware of becoming ~~burnt~~ burned out and instead of pushing through would practice appropriate self-care. Education and learning take discipline and hard work, once members gained the knowledge they needed to help others, their confidence increased. “You need to have the confidence that you do know something, and that you can help people...” says one member talking about characteristics that are important to her membership. Members became motivated to help others make healthy choices and reinforced their desire to make healthy choices themselves. Some members mentioned the position gave them opportunities to network and therefore they were able to learn a lot from people already in a similar field. This led us to believe that our work is keeping members on track for the intended impacts. A member stated, “I have had to push myself out of my comfort zone.... at many levels which was a learning curve.”

## SIGNIFICANCE

Many members are in school and mention that their classroom lessons do not include the politics and logistics that go into positions like the ones they are in school for. This means our program is giving them the experience that they would not otherwise receive. The program aims to benefit the members as much as it does the communities served. The experience our program provides to its members creates confidence that benefits the member when applied to the needs of their community.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Members will continue to gain knowledge through their experiences in the program. A continuous learning environment will be provided throughout the service term. A variety of learning opportunities will be provided to expand members' knowledge through service activities.

### ***Finding 10 - Action: Ready, Set, Go***

Now that you have the skills, put your thoughts into ACTION! Members explained that through their service and education experiences they were motivated to act, and seek out volunteer/service opportunities. In addition, they were motivated to take care of themselves so that they can take care of others and be a good example. Members stated they were more aware of their own needs when it came to mental and physical health because they wanted to be able help others. A member commented, "It really helped to be a part of an organization that addresses community needs. It is something new to me to desire wanting to make a difference in my community." More than half of the interviewed members mentioned how much more likely they were to serve their community. These same members mentioned that it is their belief that by offering their skills to battle community needs, they hoped other members of the community would also be more likely to serve.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Action relates to all three of our impact statements in that members are more likely to commit to a healthy lifestyle, community service, and pursue a health related career if they are attracted to taking action in situations that serve others and not just themselves. Members' ability and desire to take action and combat needs in communities is a significant sign that the program has impacted the members as intended.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Members will be encouraged to seek out service opportunities and will be recognized for their creative efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Although these findings indicate the program is not far from its intended impacts, they also indicate there are some aspects that could be improved. For example, keeping members organized was a reoccurring theme from project impact data. To alleviate this finding, a calendar of events our members are allowed/able to attend would not only help them stay organized but also keep members connected with one another. Another change would be to offer a tips and tricks document on time management, training, and goal setting to be posted on the website for members use throughout their membership. A frustration with paperwork is the shuffling back and forth of it. To remedy this frustration, paperwork will be offered on the website and may be downloaded, filled out electronically, and emailed. A goal formed from project impact for IHCF is to connect members and encourage networking. In addition to monthly meetings, members will be encouraged to connect with one another over the program's social media platforms. With the afore mentioned improvements in mind, Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families will have a positive impact on AmeriCorps members and the communities in which they serve now and for years to come.



*Lewis-Clark State College*  
**Lewis-Clark Service Corps**

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*Rebecca Fromdahl*

*Barbara Syska*

## **Introduction to Program**

Lewis-Clark Service Corps launched in 1994 as Idaho TRiO AmeriCorps. Once it merged with Treasure Valley AmeriCorps Consortium, it was renamed Lewis-Clark Service Corps. The program provided tutors and mentors throughout the State of Idaho and over the border into Washington State, and was set to commence its 20<sup>th</sup> year when the grant was not renewed in 2013 and the program, including two state offices and numerous host sites in K-12 schools, prisons, and colleges, had to close. In 2016, Lewis-Clark Service Corps relaunched under a grant from Serve Idaho, the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism, with a more limited scale and reach than its previous incarnation.

Lewis-Clark State College again hosted the program, which currently places AmeriCorps members in K-12 host sites, including public schools, charter schools, and out-of-school programs in Idaho. Members tutor economically disadvantaged students or students with special or exceptional needs in Literacy and Math. Host sites can choose to have full-time or part-time members in their programs. Students are identified by classroom teachers and/or through standardized test scores to receive 50 tutoring sessions of at least 20 minutes each

with an AmeriCorps member. Members work closely with classroom teachers and instructional aides to improve the students' academic performance.

The AmeriCorps program's intended impact at the start was that 70% of students tutored would demonstrate improved academic performance in math and/or literacy using the instrument of standardized pre-and-post test scores. As time has progressed and in consultation with school district personnel, we have seen the need to modify our measurements due to changes in tests and in response to member and supervisor feedback regarding the dose, which in this case is the number of sessions.

Although the grant itself seeks to improve student academic performance and measures that impact, we have focused on what the member is getting out of it as well. We want them to reflect on their AmeriCorps service, and discover how service has transformed them. Through *Dialogues in Action*, we created a plan, and we have been learning a lot about the member experience through this process.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

To evaluate our program, we wanted to show the data that our performance measures do not measure. We talked about the other players in the equation, including site supervisors, classroom teachers, volunteers, and AmeriCorps members. We wanted to know how experiencing the program affected them, and discover, in turn, how this experience influenced the way they interacted with the students. In the end, we chose AmeriCorps members and alums as our subjects.

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact service with Lewis-Clark Service Corps is having on AmeriCorps members. To understand this, we explored two broad research questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our AmeriCorps members?
2. What aspects of our program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began with a focus on the work of identifying and clarifying the intended impact of the Lewis-Clark Service Corps program. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact focused on the mental, behavioral and emotional changes in our AmeriCorps members that indicate we are achieving our impact. We then used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to measure our progress toward achieving our intended impact.

### *Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis*

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our program. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. Our population size was 10 current AmeriCorps members and many former AmeriCorps members who kept in contact with Lewis-Clark Service Corps through our alumni Facebook page. Our sample size was 20 current and former AmeriCorps members, of whom 14 participated, and we drew our sample from the following strata of our population:

- Current members recently graduated from high school
- Current members who had completed college and embarked on a first career prior to joining AmeriCorps
- Alumni pursuing a career after their AmeriCorps service

Our interview team consisted of three staff members. Interviewers who did not participate in the Project Impact cohort meetings were trained in qualitative data collection and analysis prior to conducting interviews.

We then convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length with a sample from the identified strata of the population. Interviewers took notes during the interviews and filled in the notes immediately after the interview to obtain a substantive rendering of the interview.

We analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Interviewers implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes and identifying themes) for each interview. The interviewers familiarized themselves with the data by reviewing the data from each interview four times, each time thinking through a different aspect of what the data reveal about the research question. The data were then bucketed into four categories to serve as an initial set of codes.

Finally, initial themes were generated based on the pervasive insights from the data. This process allowed us to interpret the meaning and significance of the data from each interview.

Next, we brought all of the data analyses and initial themes together and implemented the next two phases of thematic analysis (reviewing themes, defining and naming themes). We reviewed the initial themes as a team to identify the overarching themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined them in various ways to gain greater definition of the features of the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

## *Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis*

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact.

In order to get a good slice of our AmeriCorps members, we included current members and alums with diverse characteristics, including age, gender, education, job experience, location, and program. We interviewed six members, and 14 current and former members completed the quantitative survey.

We administered this instrument to 20 current and former members and had a response of 14, a 70% response rate. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings.

The most significant discoveries from this evaluation are described in the findings that follow.

## *Limitations*

We realized immediately that having the current and former members choose just one challenge (rather than rank them from most to least challenging) and one inspiration (rather than rank them from most to least inspiring) was not giving us the information we needed. Further, by including living on the AmeriCorps living allowance in the challenges, we were muddying the data, since by far it was the most difficult thing our members had to deal with. We created a second version of the survey that had the option to rank the challenges (without the living allowance) and inspirations, and we began to get much better data. Another thing

we did not anticipate is that the respondents would not chose an answer for before serving and after serving, and we had two that just chose before OR after. Since we could not determine which one they were talking about, we had to exclude that data. Though we had some incorrectly completed surveys and the issue of the living allowance muddying the “challenges” data, we still received valuable information from the members, and it was a great experience interviewing them and having them explain their own feelings and discoveries.

## **Findings**

### *Finding 1: “I Love AmeriCorps!”*

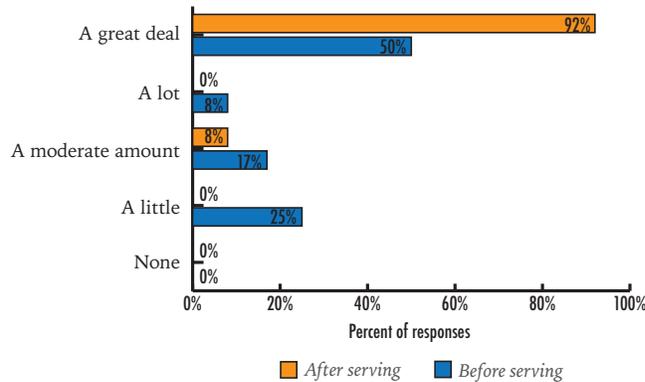
Most current and former members we surveyed entered into their AmeriCorps year already believing that service was important. Our quantitative data showed that half of members believed a great deal in the importance of service before their AmeriCorps year, but in our interviews a few said that they were just too busy to notice the role of volunteering in their communities or had not felt motivated to find out how they could help. After their service year, the feeling that service was important increased to 92% on the quantitative survey. The members we interviewed shared with us that planning and participating in service projects, such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and Idaho@Play, helped them network, organize, and gain confidence in serving. They began to look at their communities with fresh eyes—the litter in the park led to questions about how the community needed to help remove broken bottles and other hazards to kids playing there, for example. The former members, who were at least five years post-service, shared their insights about service and how they were continuing the ethic of service in their current positions. “I love AmeriCorps,” one exclaimed, throwing her hands up in the air, a big smile on her face.

We realized that our AmeriCorps program already attracts people interested in serving, but through their year of service, that conviction grew stronger along with their awareness of community needs and how they could take an active role in bringing positive changes, whether by picking up trash in the park or mobilizing a group of volunteers to improve a playground. One member said she went from the person who says, “This is bad, someone should do something about it,” to a person who believes “I can help start a movement to solve this problem.”

Lewis-Clark Service Corps already collects reflections and great stories from members about their service. What we can do is to look at new mediums to publicize the great service work they are doing and to include it in our training and communication with them. Celebrating their accomplishments and making them aware of how others are serving should

continue to be a regular part of what we do. In addition, we plan to reinvigorate our Lewis-Clark Service Corps alumni facebook page and outreach. We knew our members had gone on to great careers and continued to participate in service in their communities, but speaking to them during Project Impact gave us such a warm feeling as they described how they have woven service into their careers, from grant writing to advising foreign college students.

Figure 1. Belief in the Importance of Service (n=14)



## Finding 2: “I Can Do This!”

We wanted to dig into how members felt about tutoring students-both in terms of their knowledge and skills, but also their level of confidence. Our group contained several adults with previous student teaching or teaching experience, as well as recent high school graduates completely new to education. All of them, however, were new to the one-on-one and small-group tutoring in literacy and math they would be doing in cooperation with the classroom teacher and classroom aides. The majority (58%) said that they had a moderate amount of knowledge and skills before entering into their AmeriCorps year, but by the end, 83% said that they now knew a great deal about tutoring.

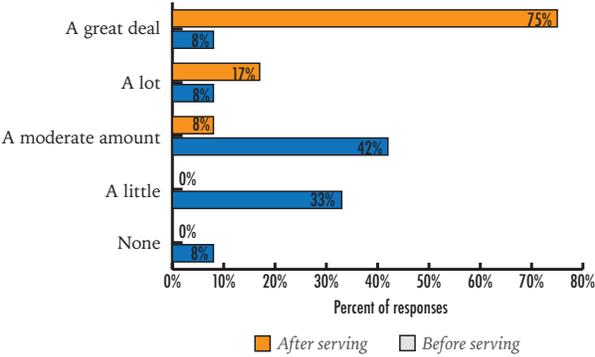
From our interviews, we knew that confidence in tutoring stemmed from their experiences, including trial and error, as well as the training given to them by the classroom teachers and professional development training, such as Idaho STARS. Forty-one percent of the members had little or no confidence in tutoring students before they began their service. By the end of service, 92% had a lot or a great deal of confidence in tutoring. One member reported that she learned to embrace “a certain level of crazy” in the profession, learned how to work with the student’s team, and really began to see how “if you are passionate about what you’re doing, it shows!” For her, the takeaway was really seeing for the first time the teachers’ love for the students. However, the year was not easy—some members reported

getting off to a rocky start with the staff, but feeling more confident as they spent time with the students and felt the staff’s trust and appreciation.

Even members who already had experience in the education field acknowledged growth from the experience, and we realized that nothing beats hands-on, immersive experiences with students to strengthen their skills and confidence. The experience also helped them with their choice of career, either strengthening their conviction to become a classroom teacher or pushing them towards other careers related to education.

We will continue to give them ideas and strategies in our training, from working with staff and teachers to managing their expectations in the early part of their service. Knowing ahead of time that they will be going through the stages of service (much like the stages of culture shock), can help them understand that doubts and difficulties are normal, and that most members report coming out the other side as more confident and effective tutors.

Figure 2. Confidence in Tutoring Students (n=14)

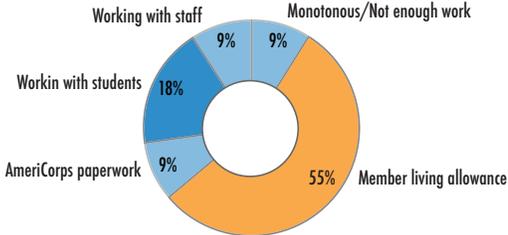


**Finding 3: Challenges & Rewards of Service**

A crisis of confidence was only one of the challenges members faced during their service year. The member living allowance was by far the biggest challenge for them.

In the second survey, we removed the living allowance as a challenge, and it had an effect on what they chose. Without the economic piece, they ranked the challenges differently. A larger sample size might show the differences more clearly.

Figure 3. Biggest Challenge During Service



Challenges, Ranked (without living allowance) (1 most to 5 least)	
Working With Staff	1
Overwhelmed/Too Much Work	2
AmeriCorps Paperwork	3
Monotonous/Not Enough Work	4
Working With Students	5

We also wanted to know what they found most inspiring, and it was overwhelmingly watching their students’ progress. Seeing “the light go on” was extremely rewarding for them, and it was bittersweet when a student would “graduate” out of their tutoring sessions because they had reached the benchmarks in their plan.

Inspirations, Ranked (1 most to 5 least)	
My Students’ Progress	1
Learning More About Education Profession	2
My Personal Growth	3
Conferences/Professional Development	4
Learning About More Ways to Serve	5

Clearly, living on the member living allowance test members’ limits, and it is a factor our program cannot control; however, we can offer members as many resources as possible and a forum to share and vent about living in the poverty zone. Working with school staff is another factor we can help prepare them for, especially if they understand at the outset that it will take time to learn to work smoothly with classroom teachers and other staff.

Despite the hardships and challenges, the members felt inspired by the experience, and found it especially gratifying to watch their students’ progress. It was also a litmus test for many about how (or even if) they wanted to be involved in the education profession. One member closed the year with NOT wanting to be in the classroom anymore to accepting a job as a classroom teacher because he realized he actually loved the profession but needed to feel like he had more autonomy (which he did not have as an AmeriCorps member). Another felt

that she wanted to be in education, but not necessarily in front of a classroom.

We will continue to support our members through the joys and trials of their year of service, and we will provide them with the means to reflect on what service means to them.

### Conclusion

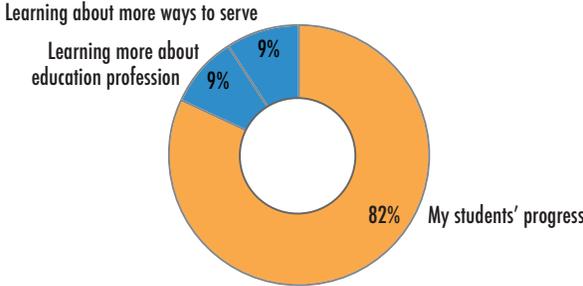
Working through Project Impact as a team has helped look at our program and identify the ways that it is doing well and what we need to review and rework. Due to the distance between sites and members, we have not had the same opportunities for team building and group reflection, so we will look into better ways to facilitate this.

Our members emerge from a year of service with more knowledge of tutoring and confidence through their hands-on experiences with students in the classroom. We can continue to encourage this through training and reflection opportunities. In addition, their belief in the value of service increased throughout the year, and they saw community challenges with new eyes and an increasing confidence that they could plan and organize projects to meet these challenges.

Going forward, we will weave this data into our training and celebrate our members' accomplishments more often. We will also focus on how they can use their experiences during their service year on their resumes. We will continue to survey members and use the data to prove and improve our program and the member experience. We can survey them after PSO, mid-year, and at the end of service to monitor their experience and provide additional help as needed.

In the future, we hope to use these methods to about our AmeriCorps members, but also site supervisors and students. In this way, we can strengthen the program and help it fulfill its mission to help students.

Figure 4. Biggest Inspiration During Service







## **Serve Idaho**

### **The Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism**

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*Renee Bade, Program Manager*

*Heather Uhi, Grants Officer*

*Kirstin Mann, Project Coordinator*

## **About Us**

### ***Our Mission:***

*To Encourage Volunteerism and Community Service*

Serve Idaho promotes collaborative efforts among private and nonprofit organizations, schools and state and local government agencies to advance national service programs and volunteerism throughout the state. We are here to Serve Idaho!

We meet our mission through:

1. Administration of Idaho's AmeriCorps grants to address critical community needs through a year of dedicated service.
2. Leadership of Idaho's promise to ensure that young people have the resources they need to be successful.

3. Hosting the annual Serve Idaho Conference on Service and Volunteerism to provide volunteer management and professional development training for national service members, volunteer administrators representing the public and private sectors, service-learning educators and community volunteers.
4. Hosting the Idaho's Brightest Star Awards to recognize Idaho's outstanding volunteers.
5. Leadership in national days of service including Martin Luther King Jr. Day, AmeriCorps Week and Idaho@Play.

### *Intended Impacts*

Our work toward our mission is designed to help us achieve the following impacts:

- Idaho organizations embrace the power of volunteerism
- AmeriCorps members grow and develop professionally and civically.
- Our AmeriCorps program directors are self-reliant leaders.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact current Idaho organizations are having in the population we are serving. To understand this, we explored two broad research questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact do Idaho organizations/volunteer leaders in Idaho have on volunteerism?
2. What aspects of their program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began with a focus on the work of identifying and clarifying the intended impact of Idaho organizations embracing volunteers. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact focused on the mental, behavioral and emotional changes in Idaho's

organizations that utilize volunteers that indicate we are achieving our impact. We then used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to measure our progress toward achieving our intended impact.

### *Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis*

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our program. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. Our population size was 652 Idaho nonprofit organizations. Our sample size was 9 and we drew our sample from the following strata of our population:

- Idaho nonprofits with a staff size of 0-5 (either part time and/or full time)
- Idaho nonprofits with a staff size of 6-10 (either part time and/or full time)
- Idaho nonprofits with a staff size of 11-15 (either part time and/or full time)

Our interview team consisted of 3 staff members.

We then convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length with a sample from the identified strata of the population. Interviewers took notes during the interviews and filled in the notes immediately after the interview to obtain a substantive rendering of the interview.

We analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Interviewers implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes and identifying themes) for each interview. The interviewers familiarized themselves with the data by reviewing the data from each interview four times, each time thinking through a different aspect of what the data reveal about the research question. The data were then bucketed into four categories to serve as an initial set of codes. Finally, initial themes were generated based on the pervasive insights from the data. This process allowed us to interpret the meaning and significance of the data from each interview.

Next, we brought all of the data analyses and initial themes together and implemented the next two phases of thematic analysis (reviewing themes, defining and naming themes). We reviewed the initial themes as a team to identify the overarching themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined them in various ways to gain greater definition of the features of the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data.

We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

## ***Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis***

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact. We administered this instrument to Idaho’s community members or volunteers or those who consider themselves to be both and had a response of 213 individuals. Of those responses, 110 were community members and/or volunteers, 23 were organizations utilizing volunteers and 80 were individuals who were considered both. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings.

The most significant discoveries from this evaluation are described in the findings that follow.

## ***Limitations***

Due to the limited time of our study, we were only able to conduct 9 interviews which is not statistically significant for the purposes of this study.

Additionally, due to time constraints, we utilized our Serve Idaho State Service Plan survey for the purposes of collecting quantitative data. As this survey was created before this study began with the same sample population, only some of the questions overlap with the intended impact. As such, only those questions that reflect our indicators are included in the findings below.

## **Findings**

### ***Finding 1: What Were You Expecting?***

Data from interviews indicate there are a myriad of expectations each volunteer walks through the door with. These expectations encompass the motivations of why they volunteer, how they will be communicated with and how they will be thanked. Our interviewees found it is up to them as Volunteer Coordinators and organizational staff to find out what those expectations are and how it aligns with the needs of the organization. As one interviewee shared,

When I first started I had a very altruistic view of why people volunteered. I thought they did so to give back and didn't care what task they completed as they wanted to contribute. Now I know people want something or need something in return. A volunteer pay-off. Knowing that, we now frontload the payout when meeting with volunteers. We let them know what to expect from the get go.

Data from interviews also suggested volunteers are sometimes unaware of the exact needs of the organization.

What I find perplexing about volunteer management are people's motivations for volunteering. For some people, it is strictly about themselves and what they want to do for the organization as opposed to the needs of the organization. I think there is a struggle between volunteer's expectations vs. reality.

Data suggested Volunteer Coordinators and organizational staff found value in setting these expectations in the beginning of that volunteer's service. "I've really started beefing up and creating a strong orientation and really focus on trying to build up those volunteers. This also starts by creating clear expectations and creating avenues for them to actually do some of that meaningful work."

Data from our interviews also suggested that organization staff need to understand the volunteer's expectations on how they like to be thanked and how much reassurance they need validating the impact they are making. One interviewee shared,

Volunteers often want to make an impact on our [service recipients]. The impact on [our service recipients] is real, but it is not always visible. This is frustrating for volunteers who want to see results from their relationship...we have become more seasoned as an agency to see indicators during the screening process or shortly after match to ensure they are having their expectations met.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

An intended impact of Serve Idaho is for Idaho's organizations to become an effective volunteer leader. Understanding how a volunteer's expectations play into recruiting and retaining volunteers is essential for volunteer coordinators and organizational staff to become effective leaders.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

*Internal:* At Serve Idaho, we hope to empower Idaho organizations to effectively use volunteers and engage them in meaningful service. One of the ways in which we do this is through training provided at our annual Serve Idaho Conference, which focuses on volunteer management best practices. We intend to add a training which discusses volunteer expectations to our upcoming conference.

*External:* Data from our interviews revealed taking the time to clearly communicate at the beginning of a volunteers service, or before the volunteers service, the expectations of the volunteer and organization in terms of workload, organizational needs, how they will be communicated with (by both staff and service recipients), and how they will be thanked by service recipients to make sure they are in alignment. This would hopefully help mitigate any future problems.

### **Experiments**

*External:* We would suggest Idaho organizations wishing to better embrace volunteers experiment with informal/formal periodic check-ins to ensure expectations are being met and what they could do to better support both the volunteers' and organization's goals.

## ***Finding 2: System Blues***

Data from our interviews suggests organizational staff have a difficult time fully explaining the reasoning behind some of the systems they have in place to ensure compliance with various sources. As volunteers are not "here every day, doing the day to day minutia, they don't understand all of the federal regulations about why we have to do all the things we have to do. And we don't have time to really sit down and explain why we do each and everything we do, because we do have limited staff."

Data also suggests that when those systems are understood, there is still frustration amongst organizational staff to get volunteers to adopt these practices. One organization found that "getting volunteers to sign waivers is very challenging. Volunteers don't seem to understand the process and aren't willing to adopt the process."

Another said, "One of the things that frustrates me about using volunteers is that I create an entire binder that assists in answering every question with great detail. I explain the resources to the volunteers, but they don't even use the resources available to them to answer questions." Another organization found they "lost quite a few of our volunteers who did not agree with some of our new policies including background checks." Another organization

expressed, “Volunteers just do not understand our reasoning behind why we do what we do,” and had trouble getting volunteers to sign in and out, as well as follow safety protocol.

At times, our data also suggests these systems can also be organizational hierarchical systems. Volunteers will at times “go over [the organizational staff’s] head for different answers...even though [that staff member] would provide [that volunteer] with the same information.”

## SIGNIFICANCE

An intended impact of Serve Idaho is for Idaho’s organizations to feel dedicated to incorporate volunteers into processes to further the organizations mission. These processes include the current systems and procedures in place. If volunteers are not able to follow said processes, organizational staff will have a hard time engaging volunteers. This would have a negative impact on the mission critical work of each organization.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

*Internal:* Serve Idaho would like to continue to offer training on effective volunteer processes and how to ensure compliance at its annual Serve Idaho Conference.

*External:* Organizations struggling with getting buy-in from Volunteers on its mandatory processes should continue to educate volunteers on the necessity of its processes. Many of our interviewees found success in making this a component of the initial orientation process.

### **Experiments**

*External:* Organizations with limited staff capacity to explain, in detail, the regulations and “why” behind each of its processes could experiment with making a volunteer fill that role and explaining to each volunteer its necessity of the regulations.

## ***Finding 3: It’s all About People***

During our interviews, organizational staff and volunteer coordinators expressed just how much of “volunteer management is relationship management.” The importance of these relationships is essential to first creating a pool of volunteers who will be engaged within the organizations. One organization articulated, “Good relationships help make volunteers feel more bought in and empowered and that they have met expectations.”

One interviewee recounts, “I used to think volunteers could be plugged in at any level of the organization for the greater good. Now I am more intentional with the number of

volunteers I recruit as I realize I need to budget more time for interaction with them.” Multiple interviews suggested investing more time with volunteers is essential.

Affirming this notion, another organization found its volunteers “need more than a normal employee, they have to have different levels of interaction.” They went on to say,

I think I’ve definitely had to be more patient and really spend more time creating a personal bond with each of our volunteers...a lot of our volunteers come in not only because they want to get the job done, but also to socialize and to work to further the mission.

There are however, some challenges to strengthening bonds with volunteers and forming relationships. One volunteer coordinator found,

When I was new, it was a challenge as many of the volunteers had a relationship with the previous coordinator. I think over the years I have built more trust with them as they have realized I am not leaving anytime soon and that they can talk to me about issues even if it is uncomfortable.

Another challenge some staff faced when creating relationships is the type of volunteer the organization recruits and utilizes. One interviewee shared,

The lessons I have learned from volunteer management have changed my perception to realize that there are some people who are life-long volunteers and there are some people who are one-time volunteers, and you need to manage them differently.

Creating relationships with one-time volunteers offers it’s own set of challenges, but the expectation to work consistently with a one-time volunteer vs a volunteer who would like to serve for a longer period of time creates more intention and relationship building, as many of our interviews found.

## SIGNIFICANCE

As Idaho organizations continue to become better effective volunteer leaders, understanding the importance of relationship building is essential. As data from our interviews suggests, volunteer coordinators need to first understand what type of relationship that volunteer is looking for and then act accordingly.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

*Internal:* Serve Idaho will continue to research the ways in which volunteer leaders build relationships with volunteers. Many of our interviews talked about the importance of building relationships, but not ways in which they do this. Serve Idaho will continue to offer trainings that address the importance of building relationships as well as ways in which to do this.

*External:* Idaho organizations wishing to be better volunteer leaders should continue to assess what type of relationship that volunteer is wanting to have, and also, continue to build that relationship.

## **Experiments**

*Internal:* Serve Idaho will work to continue connecting with volunteer management leaders at SWIDVOS (Southwest Idaho Director of Volunteer Services) to potentially develop a survey to find data on how those same leaders best connect and build better relationships with their volunteers. This could then be integrated into a future training.

## ***Finding 4: Is There Anyone Out There?***

Our initial hypothesis suggested that the success of organizations' volunteer recruitment strategies would be tied to staff capacity. However, the data suggests the way in which organizations recruit for volunteers varies greatly depending on the type of volunteer needed, whether this be a short-term/one-time volunteer or a long-term volunteer.

Our data found organizations who recruit chiefly short term volunteers found success in "social media, word of mouth, and incentives." One organization with over 2000 short-term volunteers annually found success with "Facebook and Volunteer Match" and noted, "We generally don't struggle to find volunteers." Data from our interviews suggested Idaho organizations are able to employ similar recruitment techniques, such as "social media, websites, job fairs, save the dates, postcards, etc." when recruiting for one-time volunteers.

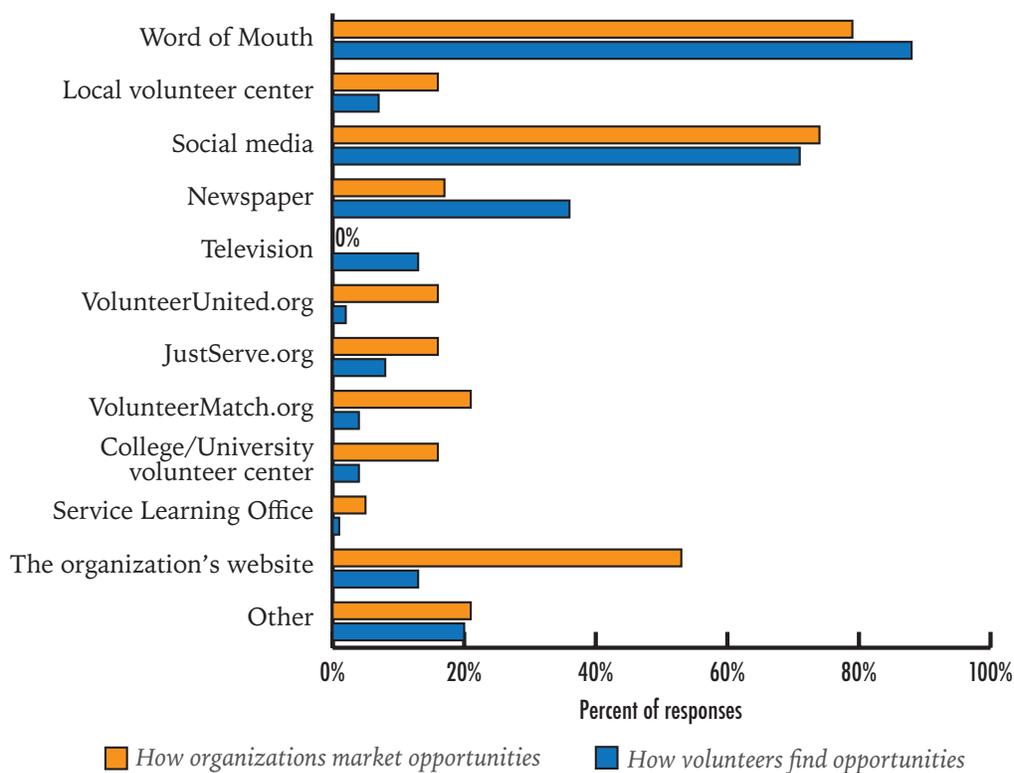
Organizations that frequently utilized long-term volunteers found success in direct asks. One organization found that "it has been helpful to frontload opportunities to businesses through lunch and learn opportunities. It is better to have a room with 5 interested people than a room full of 100 people that have no interest." Another found that "many of [their] volunteers are recruited via word of mouth, either by other volunteers or they have had family members that received our services."

Other organizations who only used social media tactics but look for long-term volunteers found recruitment a challenge, such as one organization who cited, "Getting the appropriate person has been really challenging. Not just in terms of recruitment, but getting a culturally appropriate person."

Data from our quantitative survey found 78.95% of Idaho organizations market volunteer opportunities most through word of mouth, with social media following at 73.68%.

Comparatively, data from our quantitative study found 88.42% of volunteers who responded learned about available volunteer opportunities from word of mouth, while 71.58% learned about volunteer opportunities from social media, This confirms our data sets and aligns with current recruitment methods. Our quantitative data, however, does not break down the correlation of which volunteer type aligned with which volunteer recruitment method, which is a limitation.

**Figure 1. Comparison of How Organizations Market Volunteer Opportunities and How Volunteers Find Them**



Data from our interviews also suggested over-recruitment is an effective strategy no matter what type of volunteer needed. One organization noted, “I now over recruit so when volunteers don’t show up, it no longer has an impact on the program.”

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Idaho organizations looking to employ volunteers to further their mission first have to begin with recruitment. Understanding the relationship between the type of volunteer they

need and the various methods to recruit them are important to integrate into their processes if they wish to be effective volunteer leaders.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **Adjustments**

*Internal:* Serve Idaho during its annual Serve Idaho Conference will look at how we can differentiate between the types of volunteer, one-time or long-term, and offer trainings on how to recruit for those varied audiences.

*External:* Idaho organizations looking to better understand why its recruitment processes are effective or ineffective should collaborate with or research other organizations who utilize similar types of volunteers and best practices they've employed.

### **Experiments**

*Internal:* During Serve Idaho's next annual report, we will research how we can integrate the two types of volunteers and how the type of volunteer effects recruitment strategies.

*External:* Idaho organizations can experiment with over-recruiting as this was found to be a successful tactic in volunteer recruitment.







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