

ServeOhio 2012 AmeriCorps Communications Guide

Introduction

We know you are busy with recruitment, seeking resources, administering and developing programs and supporting members. Public and media relations may not be your first priority. Why should it matter?

Public and media relations matter in order to gain and build support so your program is successful. It matters since you can tell your meaningful story better than anybody else. Taking the time to communicate helps



attract resources to your program from volunteers, sponsors and funders.

You engage in public relations each time that you talk about your program. You probably memorized your elevator speech after the 100th “What is AmeriCorps?” question. You likely know how to tailor your message depending on your audience.

Public relations simply means developing and managing a deliberate and strategic approach to publicizing your message. Additionally, maintaining relationships with media outlets help publicize your program, acknowledge your funder, and strengthen your voice for those whom you serve. Further, sub-grantees are responsible for assuring that the proper ServeOhio acknowledgement occurs – a healthy relationship with reporters and media ensure better accuracy and less reporter errors. Finally, positive media relations strengthen your organization as a trusted and credible resource in your community.

This is where ServeOhio asks for consistency in core messaging so that our strong partnership continues. ServeOhio funds and administers state AmeriCorps programs, where provisions require proper communication to illustrate our important relationship. This guide will serve as your resource for media relations, event planning and signage as outlined in provision 1.3 and 1.3.1 of the Ohio AmeriCorps Supplementary Provisions Program Year 2012-2013. Always refer to ServeOhio staff with specific questions not addressed in this guide.



SERVE OHIO
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

What's inside?

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About ServeOhio

ServeOhio, Ohio's commission on service and volunteerism helps solve Ohio's critical economic challenges by administering AmeriCorps funding that targets areas of education, opportunity, healthy futures, veterans, environmental stewardship and disaster services.

Mission: To Strengthen Ohio Communities through Service and Volunteerism.

The Ohio Legislature established ServeOhio in 1994, under the original name of The Governor's Community Service Commission. ServeOhio operates under authority pursuant to Section 121.40 of the Ohio Revised Code. ServeOhio is purposed specifically to administer grants in Ohio under the federal National & Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Today, the largest of these grants is the AmeriCorps program, where Ohio currently has 21 partner organizations and over 600 AmeriCorps members.

The broad mission remains the same – to strengthen Ohio communities through various types of service and volunteerism. ServeOhio also works with volunteer administrators, coordinators and non-profits to promote volunteerism throughout Ohio.

Funding

The Ohio General Assembly and the Corporation for National and Community Service fund ServeOhio. ServeOhio leverages federal, state and private dollars to operate and fund AmeriCorps State programs.

Staff

ServeOhio staff provides service-leadership, AmeriCorps programmatic assistance, communication support and professional development. As of July 2012, there are 6 staff members at ServeOhio.

Commissioners

Commissioners play an important role in developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to encourage and expand community service programs throughout the state. Currently, there are 16 Commissioners where Bill Russell is Chair as of July 1, 2012. Visit www.serveohio.org for a complete list of ServeOhio commissioners.

ServeOhio AmeriCorps Portfolio

The 2012-13 AmeriCorps Portfolio includes 21 programs (six competitive and 15 formula) which support over 600 members. 2010-11 member highlights:

- Provided nearly 818,000 hours of service;
- Leveraged nearly 28,000 volunteers;
- Served nearly 47,000 disadvantaged youth and children.

Ohio AmeriCorps Supplementary Provisions Program Year 2012-2013

ServeOhio added a new media provision to the Ohio AmeriCorps Supplementary Provisions Program Year 2012-2013:

1.3 Sub-grantee must credit ServeOhio for its support and use the name “ServeOhio, Ohio’s commission on service and volunteerism,” and/or current logo on communication, marketing and media materials as outlined in ServeOhio’s communication guidelines. Detailed instructions, guidelines and training to be provided. Failure to comply is a factor considered by ServeOhio when making continuation funding decisions.

1.3.1. Acknowledgement of Support: Publications created by members or grant-funded staff must be consistent with the purposes of the grant. The AmeriCorps logo and ServeOhio logo must be included on such documents. The Sub-grantee is responsible for assuring that CNCS and ServeOhio acknowledgment appears in any external report or publication of material based upon work supported by this grant.

Acknowledging ServeOhio

Sub-grantees must acknowledge “ServeOhio, Ohio’s commission on service and volunteerism” in all AmeriCorps communication, marketing and media materials, including, but not limited to, publications, press releases, newsletters, emails, websites and brochures. Use “ServeOhio” in all mentions after the official title. Continue to use “CNCS” when referencing the Corporation for National and Community Service.

All sub-grantee websites must post the ServeOhio logo, in addition to the AmeriCorps logo.

See the Sample Press Release below and the online “ServeOhio Media Training” PowerPoint training for specific press release examples.

Compliance

Sub-grantees are responsible for assuring that AmeriCorps publications acknowledge ServeOhio. During site visits with the ServeOhio AmeriCorps Compliance Officer, sub-grantees must show examples of proper ServeOhio logo use, printed acknowledgement and marketing materials. Sub-grantees shall fully demonstrate to the AmeriCorps Compliance Officer that their organization is part of a statewide service effort by using the ServeOhio logo and title, where applicable.

Should an inaccuracy occur, such as a reporter’s error or incorrect use of the ServeOhio name, the ServeOhio Compliance Officer will also take into consideration the program’s swift corrective action.

Host Sites

Program Directors are responsible for ensuring that host site staff are trained with ServeOhio provisions 1.3 and 1.3.1, media communication requirements and public relations associated with the organization's AmeriCorps program. Host sites must show examples of proper ServeOhio logo use, printed acknowledgement and marketing materials.

Hosting a Public Event

ServeOhio strongly encourages sub-grantees to identify and invite ServeOhio Commissioners and staff, local elected officials, local media, business partners and community partners to ensure an active event that shows the strength of the statewide partnership. Sub-grantees should designate 1 or 2 spokespersons at each event who are familiar with core messaging, communication and the elevator speech.

These items should be included at or take place at public events:

- AmeriCorps Logos, Signage and Clothing (*required*)
- Introduction of Stakeholders
- Testimonials
- Presentation
- Information Packet with Statistics
- Photo Opportunities
- Action and Visuals
- "AmeriCorps Member for a Day"
- Sponsor logos on printed materials.

Tip: Keep a list of "validators" who can speak easily and enthusiastically about your program! Designate them as a potential spokesperson and call them for a quick quote.

We strongly encourage you to include these items on your PR checklist:

- ✓ Acquire Resources and Logos
- ✓ Compile Contact Lists
 - ✓ ServeOhio Commissioners and Staff
 - ✓ County Contacts
 - ✓ Business Contacts
 - ✓ Legislators
 - ✓ Board of Education
 - ✓ Local Media
- ✓ Compile Information Packets
- ✓ Spokespeople – 1 or 2 spokespeople to communicate message

Samples

Use these samples as templates or to create your own, compliant messaging. See additional examples in the “ServeOhio Media Training” PowerPoint online training document:

Sample “Accomplishment” Core Messages

Commemorating X Years of Service to the X Community

COMMUNITY

- (Program) has provided (list services)
- (Program) members have contributed (x) hours over (x) years
- More that (x) people have been helped by (program) over the past (x) years

STATE

- Ohio AmeriCorps members provided a total of nearly 818,000 hours of service.
- Ohio AmeriCorps members leveraged nearly 28,000 volunteers.
- Ohio AmeriCorps members served nearly 47,000 disadvantaged youth and children.

NATION

- AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 women and men in service each year.
- Members are placed in areas of education, healthy futures, economic opportunity, veterans, environmental stewardship and disaster services in 15,000 nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country.
- Mobilizes 3.4 million volunteers annually
- Leverages \$480 million in outside funding and donations each year

Sample Press Release

DATE

CONTACT: Name

PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

[LOCAL PROGRAM] Celebrates Community Service with [TYPE OF EVENT] and Highlights Involvement with AmeriCorps

[HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT] participates in [ENTER EVENT] with community members

OR

Local community members join forces with [LOCAL PROGRAM] to [ACCOMPLISH WHAT IN THE CITY]

More than XX volunteers and AmeriCorps members serve at the event

[CITY, STATE]—To [DESCRIBE REASON FOR HOLDING EVENT], more than [NUMBER OF MEMBERS] from [PROGRAM NAME], a program funded by ServeOhio, Ohio’s commission on service and volunteerism, have come together today to [DESCRIBE SERVICE EVENT/ACTIVITY].

[HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT] joined the [EVENT/SERVICE ACTIVITY] on [DATE] to [DESCRIBE INVOLVEMENT]. Other participants included [NAME ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS].

“For [ENTER YEARS IN EXISTENCE] years, [PROGRAM NAME] has helped [LOCAL COMMUNITY] to [DESCRIBE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHT ACCOMPLISHMENTS],” said [HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT]. “Thanks are due to ServeOhio, which administers the AmeriCorps grant that supports [LOCAL PROGRAM].”

Across Ohio, members in AmeriCorps programs similar to [PROGRAM NAME] work hard to help solve Ohio’s critical economic challenges by improving the lives of thousands of our most vulnerable citizens. Every day, they help children learn to read, rebuild communities struck by environmental tragedies, transform failing schools and revitalize communities. They do this through direct service and by mobilizing thousands of additional volunteers. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides AmeriCorps funding to Ohio and throughout the nation.

“[LOCAL PROGRAM] AmeriCorps members serve our community with tremendous dedication and enthusiasm,” said [PROGRAM DIRECTOR]. “Without their assistance, we would not be able to provide the services vital to the health and well-being of our community.”

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[LOCAL PROGRAM BOILERPLATE]

ServeOhio, Ohio’s Governor-appointed commission on service and volunteerism, administers AmeriCorps funding that targets areas of education, opportunity, healthy futures, veterans, environmental stewardship and disaster services.

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all

ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps and AmeriCorps. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.