

CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation
AmeriCorps Capacity Building Webinar

ANDREA: So, hi everyone. Thanks for joining us today, and welcome to our June 2018 webinar. My name is Andrea Robles and I am from the Office of Research & Evaluation at the Corporation for National & Community Service, also CNCS. Our office's objectives are to support our agency's mission by building knowledge on civic engagement, volunteering, and national service. As some of you know, we conduct in-house research, but also fund research through competitive grants to researchers, scholars, and dissertators at institutions of higher education.

And we also support research and evaluation of our programs and grantees. Our webinar series is one way we share our ongoing research and findings. Today we are very excited to host another Research & Evidence webinar titled "AmeriCorps Capacity Building and Financial Effects on Non-profits." Before I move into introducing our speakers, we'd like to cover a few housekeeping items as this is the first webinar we are hosting using our new platform Adobe Connect. And I'm going to pass it over to Emily who is a much - an expert on this at this point.

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EMILY: Thank you all for your patience as we get started with Adobe Connect. We want to let you know the webinar today will be recorded and posted online following the presentation. Unlike previous webinars, there is no dial-in phone line for this presentation. All audio is broadcast over the internet using your computer speakers. All participants will be in *listen only* mode until the question and answer session following the presentation at which time you can ask a question using your computer like a phone by selecting the right-hand feature from the menu above.

You can also ask questions at any time during the presentation by using the question and answer, or chat boxes below. As we mentioned earlier, this webinar will be recorded, and if you experience any technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat boxes. And I believe that takes care of all of our housekeeping items.

ANDREA: Thank you, Emily. So we all love new technology, but then sometimes we have a few glitches, so hopefully like Emily said, any questions—just put it in the chat box. So now we'd

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like to introduce our speakers. We will begin with introductory comments from Dr. Lily Zandniapour who is a Research and Evaluation Manager here at CNCS, and has been researching this topic for many years, and continues to champion his work at CNCS.

This will be followed by two presentations. The first presentation is "Expanding the Footprint: How Habitat for Humanity Affiliates Expanded Capacity for National Service Programs." The presenters are Doctor Daniel Cooper, who is the Executive Director for Center for Equitable Cities at Adler University; Doctor Judah Viola, Ph.D., College of Professional Studies and Advancement at National Louis University; and Doctor Bradley Olson, Associate Professor of Psychology, Co-Director of Community Psychology Program, National Louis University.

They conducted an evaluation and wrote a report titled "2013-2016 External Evaluation for Habitat for Humanity's National Service Programs. And the report can be found in our evidence exchange, and we can tell you more about that in the Q&A. The second

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presentation is "Measuring Impacts of National Service: Lessons from Research". The presenter is Doctor Daniel Teles, and he is our 2015 Research Grantee and the first dissertator we funded through our Research Grant Program to universities.

He is now research associate at the Urban Institute. And finally we will have concluding remarks from Bethany Cannon, who is the specialist in the Long-term Volunteer Department at Habitat for Humanity International; and Anthony Nerino who is a research analyst at the Office of Research & Evaluation here at CNCS; and [unintelligible] who suggested this topic for this webinar.

And I want to give a special shout out to Bethany Berggren for agreeing to join us because this webinar coincidentally fell on Build-a-Thon week AmeriCorps numbers participate with Habitat for Humanity across the county. And I know that our CEO, Barbara Stewart, is also involved in the Build-a-Thon, so thank you for taking the time to do this. After the speakers' presentations, we will conclude with a question and

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answer period. Please feel free to ask any questions or provide comments in the chat box. We will be sending out a post-webinar survey so please let us know your thoughts on this webinar, but also ideas for the future webinars. I will now hand this over to Doctor Lily Zandniapour.

LILY: Thank you, Andrea, and good afternoon, everyone.

I'm going to be brief, but I wanted to say a few words regarding the topic of today's webinar before handing it off to our presenters. Over the past few years, there's been an increased recognition of the importance of organizational capacity by grantmakers in the private and public sectors. Funders are increasingly recognizing the value of supporting organizational capacity in the non-profit sector.

The main reason for this attention is that time and again grantmakers are seeing firsthand that for organizations to deliver on their mission, achieve, and document their impact, you need strong, sustained capacity. This capacity covers many different areas including leadership, fiscal management and fundraising, evaluation and learning capacity,

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collaboration, communications, and technology to make a few.

Historically, grantmakers prioritize projects support over capacity support. However, we're currently witnessing a rise in the number of philanthropic and grantmaking organizations that are taking note that without strong capacity, you can't succeed in meeting problematic goals. Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, in their publication "Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity", report that based on their 2014 survey results 77 percent of staffed foundations in the U.S. provide some kind of capacity-building support to nonprofits. In addition, 27 percent of those that support capacity building reported that they had increased their support in the past three years.

CNCS's work is funded mentally about capacity building of individuals-mainly national service members, the nonprofit organizations they work with, and the communities they serve. That said, the agency has increased its attention and focus on capacity

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building and measurement of capacity change in the past few years. For example, the agency made investments in capacity and evidence building through its programming during the past administration in Social Innovation Fund.

A national assessment of that initiative showed the program was successful in strengthening the capacity of its grantees in different areas, but particularly in evaluation and evidence building. The agency's flagship program, AmeriCorps, has invested in capacity building through the Commission Investment Fund. CNCS has also invested in the development of a Capacity Assessment Tool that it plans to roll out in the next few months, so there will be more to come. With that, I now turn it over to our first presenters that are gonna be talking about the Habitat for Humanity study. Thank you.

JUDAH: Thank you, Lily. We're very excited to be here today to share the findings from an evaluation project that demonstrates ways in which Habitat for Humanity, with the support of CNCS, was able to grow its capacity through leveraging the members of

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AmeriCorps and VISTA national service programs. Habitat for Humanity International is one of the biggest recipients of CNCS National Service members, and therefore is a great test case for better understanding the potential of this capacity-building effort on the part of CNCS to grow the value of capacity building to strengthen the nonprofit sector.

Our agenda for today is to talk through why it was important at this time to evaluate the National Service Program. We'll share a little bit of terminology to make sure we all understand the terms we're using in the conversation today. We will share the evaluation research questions, talk a little bit about the design and measures that we used, and share our findings and lessons learned. So there were four main reasons for evaluation Habitat for Humanity's National Service Program over the last several years.

The first had to do with internal program improvement—the formative type of evaluation where we were trying to help Habitat for Humanity International better understand trends related to its

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recruitment, training, and retention of national service members. Secondly, they were interested in expanding the use of national service among local Habitat affiliates across the country. The idea was that if we had a better understanding of what the strengths and challenges are with the program, and were able to share this information across Habitat for Humanity, or local affiliates would be interested in participating.

Furthermore, they were interested in documenting outcomes to demonstrate the value of national service capacity building partners for potential funders, as well as current funders, and volunteers who would want to get engaged. And lastly they wanted to share information like webinars such as today about a model that they feel really is working well in the community. So when we use the terms "members" for the rest of this presentation, what we're talking about AmeriCorps National Members and VISTAs.

If we say "HFHI", we're talking about Habitat for Humanity International, and if we use the term "host

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affiliates”, we mean local independent Habitat for Humanity affiliates that hosted AmeriCorps National and/or VISTA. So the evaluation design for this study technically is called a quasi-experimental nonequivalent matched-pair repeated measures design, but what this means in lay terms is that we compare host affiliates-those that hosted members-to similarly situated non-affiliates, and we also looked at changes over time.

Our evaluation was participatory in nature in that we worked hand in hand with multiple stakeholders including Habitat for Humanity International, local host affiliates, members, and alumni. The sources for our data varied. We tried to engage multiple stakeholder voices, which allowed us to try and glean our findings and have more confidence in the reliability and validity of what we learned. We heard at the beginning of a service year from host affiliates-particularly from the leadership in those affiliates.

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Sometimes they were called host site managers, other times they were the executive director or associate director that were responsible for the budget of the organization. And we use variables to match affiliates that hosted and didn't host on things like the size of their budgets, their staff size, and the number of volunteers or houses that they build annually. This enabled us to look at the impact and capacity of members on affiliated outcomes.

We also completed pre- and post-surveys of National Service Members and VISTAs, and this enabled us to get member perceptions of their experience during the year. And finally, we heard from alumni-folks who had participated in the past, at least a year prior all the way up until about ten years prior, to understand what the impact of participating in the National Service Program was on their career trajectory as well as future interests.

In terms of evaluation research questions, we'll talk about two main evaluation question types and three sub-questions in each of the categories. The first

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category of questions that we focused on had to deal with whether affiliates experience an increase in capacity compared to the similar affiliate that didn't host. We measured the number of families that both hosts and non-hosts were able to serve. We measured the number of volunteers that each group engaged.

And as you might imagine, the number of new homes built, and homes rehabbed, was of key interest to Habitat for Humanity. The bottom line they were looking at had to do with the extent to which using National Service Program increased the number of homes that they were able to build and the efficiency with which they could build. The second category of questions had to do with whether members felt that they'd benefited from participating in the AmeriCorps or VISTA program.

Within this category, we ask several questions of members and alumni about whether they value the training and mentorship they receive, whether they felt they've learned new skills that they'd be able

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to apply in future work settings, and we also explored within the alumni how the national service experience impacted long-term interests in civic engagement.

DANIEL: Hi everyone. We're gonna walk through some of the high-level findings, but the answers to those questions we found was a resounding "yes" for just about all the question we had asked, which brings me to increased capacity. So the first, which was something that [inaudible] increased the number of builds and rehabs.

FEMALE: Hi, we're having a little trouble hearing you.

DANIEL: Okay, sorry about that. Is that better?

FEMALE: Yes, much better.

FEMALE: Can you start that again? Sorry.

DANIEL: I will talk into the microphone. So first and foremost, affiliates who hosted service members, on average completed nine more builds and 26 more rehabs during the evaluation period. Ultimately, this helped meet the goal of serving families and communities—especially in areas where an affiliate who had targeted a hard-hit area that had been through a lot of foreclosures or a recession, this proved to be

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very beneficial in terms of having a concentrated impact.

Second, in terms of volunteer engagement, hosts who used members engaged more volunteers than similar-sized affiliates. This translated to a substantial difference in the number of volunteers. On average, this translated to hundreds of volunteers were engaged with Habitat for Humanity affiliates because of the Service Member Program. So this next slide I'm just gonna walk you through some of the survey results.

This was done with affiliates, a host site manager, and executive director. Prior to hosting a service member, we asked them what their expectations were of how well members would contribute to increasing the quality of families served, the numbers of partners the affiliate has, the number of homes rehabbed or restored, or the pace of building. We heard from affiliates that this is what they were hoping to see improvements on by enrolling in the program, and you can see the bars in blue show the percentages that

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agree with this question after the period of using a service member.

So each category, with the exception of the number of partners the affiliate has went up substantially- especially the pace of building. We saw at the beginning there wasn't a huge expectation that members would increase the pace of building, but after the program, 60 percent - 59 percent agreed that the pace had in fact picked up because of the contribution the members were making.

So I'll talk a little bit about the benefits of service, thinking about the evaluation model and triangulating between what the affiliate got out of it and what the member got out of it, we'll transition to the members themselves. So we surveyed both members and alumni and we found that some of the top three most common mentioned themes were folks valued the homebuilding experience they got, leadership skills that were imparted, and also project management.

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So they also felt that the year of service helped their chances of finding a job, or receiving a promotion, or making a career change. So there was a very strong workforce development component to this that we saw through the surveys with alumni and service members. So here's a breakout of these meaningful service year benefits. So we asked at the beginning of the survey period and at the end if they thought this would increase their chances of finding a job, or getting a promotion, or getting a career change.

And this, particularly in terms of getting a promotion or making a career change - we saw some pretty big improvements. And that was especially true for the national members, and not quite as true for VISTA's. VISTA's and national numbers, as Judah explained, had slightly different roles within the affiliate. And Brad will talk a little bit more about the meanings of some of these findings at the end.

So in terms of providing a pipeline to a career in housing and community developments, a lot of members

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thought that their experience led them on a career path to choosing to do this work. For example, 34 percent of alumni went on to work for an affiliate. What we heard often from affiliates is that a member was so helpful in helping them set up systems and processes that they didn't want to lose this, and needed to keep the momentum going.

And so the National Service Program actually does provide a good pipeline for Habitat affiliates to recruit strong employees. And finally, and this is something that we think is very important: a lot of the members felt more connected to the community they served and the families they were serving as opposed to just doing work that keeps someone in an office, a lot of members shared that they were able to get out in the community and make contacts with the people they were serving.

So we saw significant increases in members saying after their service here they felt connected to the people in communities they were serving. And so here's the graph that just breaks that out a little

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bit so you can see at the beginning of the survey period about 50 percent felt that they would be or were connected to the partner families that moved in a positive direction up to 63 percent, for example.

BRAD: Okay, so thanks Judah and Dan, and this is Brad Olson, and we're just about to move to Daniels' presentation, but just to summarize: clearly CNCS - this model is truly building capacity. Daniel has covered many of the quality and non-qualitative findings of our last evaluation. And now we're really sort of currently in an attempt to replicate these results and to look at some qualitative findings.

And some interesting pieces that have newly arisen new questions about what are the active ingredients that are [inaudible], but essentially we've heard that the members are constantly bringing new energy and ideas. [inaudible] a fresh perspective.

FEMALE: We're having trouble hearing you, Brad.

BRAD: I'm sorry about that. Okay, so-

FEMALE: Brad, a little louder.

MALE: You're breaking up.

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BRAD: [inaudible] are bringing new energy and ideas. The model is very-

FEMALE: You're breaking up, Brad. I think you need to get closer to the microphone.

BRAD: Okay. Okay, is this better here?

FEMALE: Now we can hear you, yes.

BRAD: You can hear me? Okay. So just to summarize, the new members coming to the affiliates are bringing new energy and ideas, the model is just overall very cost-efficient for the affiliates; it's bringing about sustainability-we're finding that many of these members stay on for the affiliate and work for quite a few years post their service year. Just huge benefits in terms of organizing volunteers, bringing on new volunteers, recruiting new potential homeowners, media policy work, all kinds of different advantages.

Just one of the interesting kind of paradoxes we're finding is that some of the smaller affiliates are choosing not to apply for the CNCS funding-they sort of feel like they're not big enough to be able to staff a new member for a year; they don't have enough

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builds. And so the irony is that those affiliates who could really benefit from this model most are sometimes reluctant, and so we're doing a very in-depth case study of a [sic] affiliate in Florida that's very small but has grown quite a bit doing this through this CNCS program, and they're just giving us remarkable pieces of the ways that capacity is build by taking this chance and benefiting from this program. So I will stop there. Thank you very much.

DANIEL: Hello. Thank you for having me. My name is Daniel Teles. I'm a research associate at the Urban Institute, and I'm gonna be talking about measuring the impact of National Service, really thinking about lessons from my own research about what data exists, and talking about how difficult it is to do what Judah, Bradley, and Daniel did for more than one organization at a time. And I should start with a [unintelligible] - I am one of the AmeriCorps - a former AmeriCorps with Habitat for Humanity.

There I am, and one of the 34 percent apparently of members that went on to work for the affiliate. So

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the first real issue we had - I had in my research was figuring out where the AmeriCorps actually are. And when I say this I mean both physically where they are and how to define where we might see an impact. So that comes down to which nonprofits or local agencies are sponsoring the AmeriCorps, where are the sponsors located, where are the programs with the AmeriCorps participating in located, where are the AmeriCorps living, where are their members working, and with whom?

Which nonprofits or local agencies do they work day to day (which could sometimes be slightly different than who is sponsoring the AmeriCorps)? There is information available - public information thank you to CNCS on sponsor locations for all AmeriCorps in the state profiles. The link is on the slide here. And more recently, CNCS is sharing open downloadable data. There's a link to some right there, and I'm sure there's more that I've even come across.

The amount of open data has been increasing significantly over the last few years. The

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interesting thing about this data is that what we get our program locations as listed in the state profiles, right? So it's relatively straightforward to find a home base of each organization that sponsors AmeriCorps if that's what's of interest to the researcher, or to an analyst, or to anybody trying to find this information out.

What gets trickier is determining where the AmeriCorps members physically perform their service. With Habitat for Humanity, as we heard before, I imagine Judah, Bradley, and Daniel were able to speak with the - it sounds like they spoke with the affiliates. And if you can go on a case-by-case basis with any individual nonprofit, you can find exactly where people are working, but that's not the data that's sort of legally required of them to report to the states or nationally.

Additional complications come in the case of the NCCC AmeriCorps, which go on spikes throughout the country in tracking down where they were in each specific spike. In my personal research, I was interested in

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the impact on donation revenue, so the home base of each sponsor was what I was looking for, and that's what there is data for. But if we wanna think about impacts on outcomes, impacts on capacity-things like that, this could get a little trickier.

The next question I thought about was, "How do I define impact", right? So I think of impact as a change that happened because of something. So the first question is, "What is that something? Is it the AmeriCorps? Is it the actual service hours? Is it their physical presence? What are we talking about?" And the second is, "What is the thing that could change?" In my case that research has to do with the finances of the nonprofits, but if we wanna think about capacity building or other long-term outcomes, that can be a little more complex.

Additional complexity comes from the fact that the AmeriCorps part of this, or the complex system that's going on, we have the government giving grants to nonprofits, nonprofits applying to grants from the government; we have nonprofits applying to within the

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government: CNCS or AmeriCorps. We have the general public applying pressure on their legislators, but also donating money to the nonprofits who are then in turn - who are also asking them for funds.

And those known profits are producing some sort of outcomes that might be in general more interesting. One of the impact on outcomes then - what my research was in the impact sort of on the donations, and fundraising, and financial details going on within the nonprofit. So what is easy to do for nonprofits is to count dollars. And we can do that generally by looking at - we could go on to one of the many websites that shows this stuff, or looking at their tax return data.

The National Center for Charitable Statistics releases data - I've got the link here, this is what I've used in the past that's build in the 990 forms sent in by nonprofit organizations. And that is going to show things like their total revenue, the revenue from donations and grants, total expenditures. There's actually a lot more data in there, but it

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becomes the more-refined piece of information we're looking at, the more difficult it is to compare across organizations and across years.

So the question is: what does - how many questions can we really answer just looking at the financial data-these tax returns of nonprofits? Of special interest to me is that we know that the returns aren't gonna show outcomes. We don't know if there's capacity building going on. And they also have very incomplete data on physical in [inaudible] contributions and absolutely nothing about volunteered time.

I was interested in looking at the impact of AmeriCorps on volunteer numbers, and came to the conclusion that that data just simply wasn't available in a large scale to look at that. It's difficult to link that to whether those volunteers - and I was interested in linking that to whether those volunteers donated more money, again the data's just not available to my understanding to determine something like that at this time.

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Part of their reason for that is there's no centralized data set on volunteering. There's nothing analogous to this tax return data. We do get some diffused data that differs from one AmeriCorps sponsor to the next AmeriCorps-sponsored report: how many different volunteers were leveraged by the AmeriCorps? And we can find survey data on volunteerism from National Public Survey Data such as the American Time Use Survey or the Current Population Survey.

But the issue in these both public and other academic surveys is that there's no way to link these to the specific nonprofits. We know what type of organizations people volunteer for, but not the specific organizations or the specific times that they're doing the volunteer work. So better tracking of volunteers is needed. National volunteerism data comes almost exclusively from these surveys, and because we can't match that to the information on the nonprofits, we don't have a sense.

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There's no one place we can go nationally to determine which nonprofit organizations are working with more volunteers than others, other than going to each nonprofit one by one individually. Then even when we can find this information, there's an additional difficulty in linking the data. So the Employer Identification Numbers are most commonly used things to link one organization to itself again in some other data set.

That is on all of the tax return data. And nonprofit EINs are public anyway because those tax returns end up public. I would like to see more data sets include them because it would make it easier for us to compare what's going on from one source of information about the nonprofit sector to another. My experience has been that generally when we want to link - try and match organizations to themselves using multiple different sources of data, we have to do that based on the organization name, and that can be very tricky.

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We're sort of hoping that there aren't two nonprofits with similar sounding names that could be confused for each other. And finally, there's the issue of tracking and measuring outcomes, which again I think while as an economist I'm interested in what's in this and IRS data, and what's going on with the nitty-gritty with fundraising and revenue. I think for a larger audience it's things like capacity and outcomes that are of much more interest.

Unfortunately there's very little information about outcomes and it's very difficult to compare outcomes across organizations. So maybe within two organizations that are affiliated with the same national entity, you could compare outcomes: how many houses did this organization build or how many people were fed. But comparing across organizations is very difficult. And even beyond comparing across, there's just no national repository of outcomes data, so it's difficult to find out what impacts there are on outcomes if we can't even find outcomes across the board in any one collected [unintelligible].

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So the question I'd like to pose to the audience that people start thinking about is: what outcomes should be used to measure the impact of national service? If we're interested in something beyond what's going on with revenue and expenditures, and what are the actual outcomes that could be - that national service members are having. How would we want to measure that? Where would we start with collecting that data? Thank you.

FEMALE: Thank you, Daniel, and Daniel Cooper, and Judah, and Bradley. We are going to just have some concluding remarks from Bethany and Anthony, so Bethany...

BETHANY: Hello. Just to mention since it seems to be a theme, I'm Bethany Cannon. I work with Habitat for Humanity International, and I, too, am a Habitat/AmeriCorps alum, and got hired on after my service, so it does tend to be a trend. And I am at Build-a-Thon, so happy to join you all. We have about 400 AmeriCorps members in Raleigh, North Carolina, for a week we're building 12 houses and some home repair projects as well.

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We're very happy to have Barbara Stewart join us for that. She was excited to pick up a hammer. I just want to talk for a minute about why this evaluation has been important to us, and how we've used these findings. Because this evaluation compared Habitat affiliates that host members to affiliates that do not in similar situations, it has been a great way for us to really clearly demonstrate the impact of the AmeriCorps program for affiliates.

We've been able to show affiliates that may be interested in the program but have never hosted exactly how AmeriCorps members can help them reach their strategic goals and serve more families. We at HFHI hold applications each year for local Habitat affiliates that are interested in hosting AmeriCorps members, and it's really important to us to have a competitive host site application process in order to select sites that will be the best partners for HFHI for this program, so this data has been really helpful to demonstrate the program's value especially to affiliates that have never used it.

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It also has give us a way to show how AmeriCorps members build capacity. Particularly we learned in the study that during the year that we researched, only host affiliates that had AmeriCorps members saw in increase in homes built, while on average non-host affiliates saw a decrease that year, so it really showed the ability to buffer maybe difficult years having an AmeriCorps member. And we can clarify the "how" of how AmeriCorps members create this impact.

Most of our members - not all, most of our members serve as construction crew leaders, so they're out on build sites leading volunteers with different teams. And, in essence, we learned that host sites served or engaged 70 percent more volunteers than non-host sites, which is just a huge number to be able to see the impact. It basically tells us that each AmeriCorps member - their impact is multiplied exponentially by the fact that they're leading volunteers.

And I think it gives an example for why so many more houses are able to be built when AmeriCorps is

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involved. We've also used the results of the study to recruit AmeriCorps members-particularly by highlighting the skills and knowledge that alumni said that they learned, as well as the fact that 34 percent are hired after their service, which is a major draw for a potential candidate. And they've also been helpful results in demonstrating to internal stakeholders the impact of the program.

And by that I mean other HFHI departments and leadership. We have consistently received support within our organization for the program, and our government relations and advocacy office has seen the value and made us a priority initiative for advocacy, which is greatly appreciated, and we've been able to mobilize alumni and our networks for advocating for this program, and the great impact that it has.

We've also been able to use the results to inform our program design and make improvements. So for instance, if AmeriCorps members noted additional training or resources that they needed, we've been able to incorporate that into future programming. And

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it's given us some direction for a deeper dive, so we are actually currently working again with Judah, Dan, and Brad for our next external impact evaluation.

And we're asking more questions around the difference between larger cohorts - so an affiliate that has maybe 15-18 members consistently versus affiliates that maybe only host one or two, and to see how those - what's the difference in experience in impact and in value of the program to those affiliates. So we're gonna do some qualitative studies this year to get some case studies on that. So really appreciate working with Dan, Brad, and Judah, and it's been a great - the study's been very helpful to us in the past and we look forward to another great impact study.

FEMALE: Thank you so much. We should use you more often. So I'm just gonna turn it to Anthony for some last closing words, and to start us off with the Q&A.

ANTHONY: Thank you. I won't talk for very long. I know there's a bunch of questions. I see them popping up in the feed here, but I wanted to thank Doctors Cooper, Viola, and Olson, and Doctor Teles for the

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research that they've done that has brought us to this point. I read the study about two years ago, and was intrigued by it, and brought it to the attention of some of the folks in our office, and when the opportunity came to talk about this in a broader way, I suggested it for the webinar.

But personally in looking at our past history, on looking back at what we've been doing, it occurred to me that organizational capacity has been the one outcome that has been hiding in plain sight for 50 years. Our programs go back to 1965, and in particular the Senior Corps & VISTA programs, and they were predicated on the notion that we would be building capacity both in communities and within organizations.

And if you look at the anecdotal studies that have covered that whole period of time, it appears that they do. And you can even draw links to what was reported then, to what I see in the more rigorous research that was presented today with regard to ties to the community, the shaping of the member, the

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increased ability to deliver services and goods, and importantly, and not talked about very often, is the sustainability of a program.

So what I want to say with regard to this particular research is I'm thrilled that it's happening, but it's not enough. What I think we need to look at is: how does this apply outside of a Habitat for Humanity Organization which allows us to do these kinds of studies? How does it work on the ground with a single organization that doesn't have a comparison group. How do we do that type of research? And more importantly what sort of changes occur internally, organizationally in a program that are brought about by this increased capacity.

It's not just what we produce, it's what we do and how we do it that are also of real importance to understand. So I'm issuing a mild challenge to say this isn't the end, it's the beginning. And I think everybody does believe that, but I would like to see us move in that direction. That said - wait a minute, I'm not supposed to say anything. Okay, nevermind.

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That said, I want to turn it back over to Andrea, and she will start with the questions. Thank you very much for listening.

ANDREA: Well thank you, everyone. So now to jump into the Q&A: so for our online audience can you ask a question by typing it in the Q&A box? You can also ask a question using the microphone by selecting the right-hand feature from the menu above, and we will grant you microphone rights in the order the questions come in. So we have a few that already have started, so I'm just going to pose those and see if others come in. So, Judith Romley [phonetic]: how did the affiliates use their volunteer service members? And I think that's for-

JUDAH: Bethany, feel free to jump in here. This is Judah. But what we heard was a variety of things for AmeriCorps National Service members. The most common thing that they did was to be supervisors at the build sites and to be volunteer coordinators, but there was a long list and variety of things they did. The VISTA members were more likely to be doing capacity-building projects, setting up systems internally, or working with the teams that do their

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restores, and doing more off-site kind of central office type of work. But Bethany, feel free to jump in if you want to add any texture there.

BETHANY: Yeah, thanks. I would say the majority of our national members are construction crew leaders, but we do also have people who work at volunteer coordinators, family services, coordination, outreach coordination, and then we have some VISTA - we have members that also help us with resource development, creating partnerships, like you said project management - so a variety of different roles, but mainly just around the services that we provide.

FEMALE: Thanks. Another question. Let's see, from Jono McKinney: you stated the model was very efficient. Please explain how you assess this.

MALE: That's a very good question. What does our operational definition of "efficiency"? But we're really going by the perception of the affiliate, so we did our insight visit in Seminole County, Florida, and just reading on some of the quotes that heard from the smaller affiliate, you're essentially cost the affiliate \$13,000, and we are essentially able to

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double our number of builds than we would without AmeriCorps members.

And then we're really focused more on AmeriCorps members than VISTA. The members bring fresh ideas at a low cost, capacity building for more homes annually. I think one estimate that we heard was 85 percent. I would need to look where that came from, but they said that through the CNCS able, the affiliate was able to take on essential partnerships such as with the Orlando affiliate that they could not have done otherwise.

And that given the ADDIS [phonetic] member program, they were able to service 22 additional families in the year. And ultimately, what they describe as a once very sad state volunteer program, they were able through the AmeriCorps members to increase that volunteer program by 53 percent, so that's sort of one case example, but in general, when we say "efficiency", we mean that they're able to build more homes at a quicker pace by adding AmeriCorps members, and doing that work they wouldn't have otherwise been

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able to do at a low cost. The low cost being rather than hiring a full-time employee that might cost 30-40 thousand dollars, it's costing within that year about \$13,000.

FEMALE: Okay, thank you. So we have one from Vivian Mercado: Is New York City [unintelligible] connected under the umbrella of AmeriCorps? I don't exactly know what that is. Do any of you?

MALE: We were hoping you would.

FEMALE: Vivian, we see that I think that you need to explain a little bit more of what you mean, so that would be great. Do we have any questions that people want to read? Because if not, I want to turn to the two questions - one that Daniel posed when he was trying to do the work. Let's see, what other outcomes or what other - I'm sorry I don't have the question in front of me - but what other outcomes can we look at to see the impact of AmeriCorps? That was one.

And then Anthony asked, "Where do we go from here? This is a larger scale, rigorous evaluation. What do we do with the smaller one-site programs?" Anyone can jump in. It doesn't have to be just the speakers. So

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Judah, and Brad, and Daniel, do you have any ideas in terms of what does with the smaller organizations or-

MALE: What we do with the smaller affiliates, and how they could be more effective, or in terms of - oh, in terms of evaluation?

FEMALE: Yeah, like how do you take these organizations that are more a single organization rather than an affiliates, and do some evaluation work on that?

MALE: I guess what I'm thinking about is where do you find or how do you match up an organization that's a standalone organization in terms of its mission and its organization structure with a reasonable comparison. You know, an organization that is technically the same thing, and is situated the same way.

MALE: Okay, one thing that we could do is to look to the funder. So in this case, if CNCS is providing funding for multiple organizations but they might only have one site or one type of service that they're providing, or they're a standalone organization. CNCS has that bird's eye view to be able to say which organizations are doing similar work and then partnering both with the organizations and with the

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funder allows you to compare cross-organizations that might be similar - either in size and scope or in mission.

MALE: Okay.

FEMALE: So we have a few people who have their hands raised, and [inaudible]. Judith? You have to un-mute. It's the microphone on the top part of your screen. You'd have to click on that.

FEMALE: In the meantime we can start a question from [unintelligible].

FEMALE: Okay. You have to speak right into your microphone.

JUDITH: There is nothing on the top of my screen. Okay, I'm talking as loudly as I can. What about organizations like [inaudible] that are working closely with higher Ed institutions to place many service members? It would be possible using some of your current investigators to come up with a simple research plan that could both gather for evidence but also help the participating institutions educate their own students in some aspect of community engagement.

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MALE: It's certainly makes sense to us in terms of working with higher education and where they're utilizing National Service members across many different organizations. We can come up with a systematic survey technique that would be asking a similar set of questions across the organizations.

MALE: One place this gets especially complex is the organizations that have service members doing multiple different types of service where the outcomes will be different, where some group could be working on schools and other people in a poverty program, all with the same - part of the same larger AmeriCorps program. And so I think what I'd like to see is some larger survey that gets at what are each of the - how many AmeriCorps members in each program are sort of working towards different goals.

FEMALE: Thank you. I see one person has their hand raised. Jono, could you say something so we can be able to hear you? Okay, well we'll move on to Colleen's question: was there any study done on how members fared during their year? With such a low stipend, it can be very hard for members to make ends meet-at least in our experience. I would be

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interested to see a study that evaluates their financial status and quality of life during the program, not just after. And whether members would have better outcomes with increased stipends? That's a great question. People weigh in on that? Or if you saw any of that during your research.

MALE: That's something that we've definitely heard. So we had some open-ended survey items that were at the beginning of the service year and the end, and we certainly heard that that is in fact a challenge for people. And I think to your point about raising the stipend, I think certainly that would be appreciated across the board, but I think what we saw is that people knew this going in. They sort of planned for a year of making a low wage before they went off to get another degree or to move on to the next professional opportunity. But certainly that is a hardship.

MALE: [inaudible].

FEMALE: We can't hear you.

MALE: We heard from a lot of the affiliate that somehow housing could be made available, that that actually worked out a lot better for the members, and that provided a much greater quality of life. So given

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that Habitat is a housing organization, sometimes that is possible, and that was always seen as very helpful.

MALE: One other thing that added to quality of life had to do with their ability to interact and socialize with other National Service members to learn about different ways to live in a thrifty way in that year in that particular location or geography; as well as just the quality of the relationship that they built, and the mentorship that they felt from supervisors at the site where they were doing their service.

FEMALE: Thank you, and just very quickly-I know we're almost at the top of the hour, but Jonah [unintelligible] has this question, and I'd just like to pose it: Conservation Corps are building on this Habitat model to measure how AmeriCorps members are adding to the capacity of our conversation partners. For first round, we are looking at impacts for forest service and state park partners. We're almost at the top of the hour. I'd like to give our speakers and Bethany if there's anything else to add. Judah's group, is there anything you'd like to say?

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MALE: We just want to thank you all for the opportunity and we feel like we're happy to share more information. Of course we've got a more detailed report so if anybody wants to follow up with us, we had information on one of the slides, and since the session will be recorded, you'll have access to be able to have our contact information. We're always happy to answer any evaluation questions, whether it's on this particular project or just kind of consultation.

FEMALE: Thanks, and we do have your paper on our Evidence Exchange. If you go to CNCS website, hit Research and Evidence, and in there you'll see "Exchange" and that's where you can find the evaluation paper. Daniel?

DANIEL: Thank you for having me. And again, I think reiterate if anyone has follow-up questions, my contact information was up there and feel free to shoot me an email.

FEMALE: Thanks. And Bethany?

BETHANY: Just thank you for the opportunity to share about the impact.

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FEMALE: Well, we hope you enjoy your Build-a-Thon week, and I wish you success. And thank you all for joining us this afternoon, and we'll be in touch. Thank you.

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