

AmeriCorps Seniors COVID Effects Study Fast Facts

Study Summary

AmeriCorps Seniors programs provide opportunities for older adult volunteers to be socially and physically active thus promoting healthy aging. This was especially important during the public health pandemic so older adults could continue to be engaged during a time when Americans were facing an increase in social isolation. To continue serving communities and engaging older adults, some AmeriCorps Seniors projects adopted new volunteer activities and strategies to deliver services to their beneficiaries while other grantees continued to operate like pre-COVID without adverse consequences to volunteer recruitment and service delivery. This study will gather information on how AmeriCorps programs adapted to serve through the pandemic and the lessons learned related to programming and operations. For example, we hope to understand innovations in programming, effective recruitment and retention strategies, what support volunteers need to continue to serve in challenging times, and the impact volunteers have on grantees meeting their goals in their communities.

Study Background/Goals

This study has four research objectives that tie directly to implications for the program. These four research objectives were refined through preliminary research, collaboration, and communication with Field Working Groups (FWG). These objectives are to:

- Examine if the stipend supports volunteers and offsets the cost of service and what other incentives volunteers would suggest
- Examine the programmatic and service delivery changes adopted since the pandemic
- Examine the connection between these changes and volunteer/beneficiary experiences and outcomes
- Examine the effectiveness of programmatic components adopted by SDP grantees
- Examine the ways in which grantee organizations were able to serve their community and volunteers





Why is the study important?

This study builds upon existing for AmeriCorps Seniors. This program:

1. Remains a strong public health intervention that promotes healthy aging for the volunteers
 - Improves the mental health of older adult volunteers. This has particularly become of importance as the US Surgeon General has outlined the “crisis of loneliness”
2. Addressed community needs amid a national emergency
 - AmeriCorps Seniors delivered services during the Covid-19 pandemic to address older adult isolation, establishing and supporting contact tracing, vaccination sites and providing vaccine education, transportation, and registration, supporting students and families for successful transitions in returning to the classrooms)
3. Further demonstrates the effectiveness of AmeriCorps Seniors programs to policymakers, private funders, and community partners.
 - ROI study estimates that the AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and Senior Companion Program (SCP) generate an ROI of \$3.50 per funder dollar. FGP alone has an ROI of \$2.75 per funder dollar, while SCP has an ROI of \$5.08 per funder dollar.
 - FGP & SCP contributed to significant savings in healthcare expenditures and assisted living expenditure savings from their improvement in health outcomes of participants, volunteers, and caregivers.

Year 2 Activities (October 2023 - October 2024)

Q1	Hold Field and Technical Working Group meetings to: Develop Technical Assistance materials, select programs and stations & Collect contact information
Q2	Coordinate with selected grantees (reminder only a select number of grantees will be tapped for data collection and coordinate with selected stations for data collection with an estimated start of June 2024
Q3	Field and Technical Working Group meetings and potential interviews with selected grantees at the Convening meeting.
Q4	End data collection estimated by November 2024, begin data cleaning and analysis, and Year 2 Annual webinar presentation.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



What happens if my program decides not to participate in the study?

There is an option to opt-out, AmeriCorps Seniors would like to understand and meet with grantees first before they decide not to participate; AmeriCorps Seniors wants to know what challenges they would have and what support can be provided to participate in the research.

Can I self-nominate my program to participate?

Because we will not have the opportunity to include **ALL** the AmeriCorps Seniors programs, we will be conducting a random sample. The sample selected would be representative of the AmeriCorps Seniors programs and be less likely to be biased.

How is my program going to be selected to participate in the study? How are volunteers selected?

A sample of programs will be drawn from the funded and active programs in FY2023. Volunteers will be selected randomly from selected programs.

What is the process for survey data collection?

We are currently developing training and technical assistance materials to help selected grantees with the entire administration process. It provides information from the time a grantee gets notified that they are selected, to how to distribute surveys to selected volunteers, to how surveys will be returned to JBS. We will also explain the monetary incentives for completed surveys and how and when those distributions are made to grantees and survey participants. We will meet with the Field Working Group to review and make revisions to the training and technical materials based on their feedback.

Then, before actual collection starts, we will contact the selected grantees and present the study, review training and technical assistance materials via a webinar, communicate with grantees on key dates, and conduct follow-ups with grantees as needed.

Once selected grantees provide us with a list of volunteers, we will conduct a random sample from that list. The grantee then contacts the selected volunteer to ask for their participation. If they consent, grantees could help distribute the paper copies to the selected volunteer, or JBS can send the surveys out. JBS will provide self-returned envelopes to send the survey back to JBS. Grantees will share with JBS the number of surveys their volunteers completed and submitted. We will work closely with the program to make this process as clear and burdenless as possible.

When is data being collected?

We are projecting for data collection to start in June and run through the end of November/early December.



Will I get help through this process?

The training and technical materials will include clear instructions and templates. We will have a toll-free 800 number that grantees and survey participants can call if they have any questions. We also provide an email address to our survey administrator where you can send your questions.

How much time will it take to participate?

We estimate selected grantees will be involved in data collection for the surveys for about 6-8 weeks from beginning to end (random sampling, recruitment and obtaining consent, survey completion and submission).

Selected Grantees tasks for surveys include the following:

- Create lists and send them to JBS for a random selection (list of current volunteers, former volunteers, SCP caregivers/clients)
- Contact selected volunteers to introduce the study and obtain consent
- Send/email JBS list of contact info for selected volunteers, former volunteers, SCP caregivers/clients who consented to participate
- Send out survey, including materials for mailing back paper surveys, to selected people
- Mail completed paper surveys back to JBS
- Send/email JBS AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Survey Tracking Sheet (# of surveys completed)
- In addition, a few of the sampled grantees will be invited to participate in a focus group (75 min)

What is the monetary honorarium for participation?

Type of Participant	Incentive per completed response
Grantees	\$20
Current Volunteers	\$30
Former Volunteers	\$40
SCP caregivers/clients	\$30
SDP case studies	\$30

Will there be restrictions on how the grantee uses the incentives received?

We are not placing restrictions on how grantees use their incentives outside of existing operational policies and practices.

Questions/Contact

- If you have any questions about any part of this survey, you are welcome to contact Dr. Melissa Gouge, AmeriCorps Research Analyst: Phone Number 202-606-6736, Address 250 E Street SW, Washington, DC. 20024.
- For questions about the survey or this study, please contact the JBS help desk at 800-207-0750 or Email: AmeriCorpsSeniorCOVIDStudy@jbsinternational.com
Hours: Monday - Friday 10:30 AM to 6:30 PM Eastern Time (7:30 AM to 3:30 PM Pacific Time)