Virtual Meeting Tips & Best Practices

Rules of Engagement

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Use the “Raise Hand” feature located under “reactions” to be recognized to come off mute and ask a question during the Q&A portion of the Webinar.

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Double Trouble: Reigniting Civic Engagement through Pandemics and Disasters

June 22, 2023

Office of Research and Evaluation
Welcome & Introductions

Andrea Robles, PhD
Research and Evaluation Manager, AmeriCorps
To support AmeriCorps’ mission, the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE):

- Identifies national service and volunteering trends
- Conducts research and builds scholarship on civic engagement
- Measures national service impact
- Promotes evidence-based models and program expansion

Knowledge and evidence can be used to improve the service experience, and strengthen organizations and communities.
Conducts research and builds scholarship on civic engagement

National level civic engagement and volunteering

In 2002, AmeriCorps sponsors a volunteering supplement in the Current Population Survey

National Academies of Science (NAS)

Recommendations: Use different measurement approaches to improve the understanding of civic engagement, social cohesion, and social capital
Different measurement approaches...

- Tap into more complex relationships among the topics
  - By using experimental, in-depth and longitudinal studies
  - By conducting more research of these topics at the subnational or local levels

To address these recommendations, ORE launched:

- Research Grant competition with universities
- Local level research: with Participatory Research approaches

- Participatory Research
- Community
- Action
- Research
Why does this participatory research suit AmeriCorps?

Mission: To improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

Community

Action

Research
Today’s speakers:

- Megha Patel, PhD, Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE), research analyst, AmeriCorps
- JoAnn Burbridge, Community Partner
- Dr. Denae King, Texas Southern University
- Dr. Suzanne Pritzker, University of Houston
- Matthew Robbins, Research Assistant
- Joetta Stevenson, Community Partner
- **Reflections**: Katrina French, Disaster Services Specialist, Disaster Services Unit, AmeriCorps
- **Q&A Facilitator**: Emily McDonald, ORE, research analyst, AmeriCorps
Setting the Stage

Megha Patel, PhD
Research Analyst, AmeriCorps
Reigniting Civic Life Series

https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/webinars

March 15, 2023
What is Civic Engagement? Exploring New Paradigms

April 26, 2023
Community-Based Research as a Vehicle for Civic Engagement and Community Impact

June 8, 2023
Leveraging Transformative Resources to Meet Community Needs and Ignite a Lifetime of Civic Engagement
Building Connection During a Time of Disconnect
Building Connection During a Time of Disconnect

Jo Ann Burbridge, Community Partner
Dr. Denae King, Texas Southern University
Dr. Suzanne Pritzker, University of Houston
Matthew Robbins, Graduate Research Assistant
Joetta Stevenson, Co-Researcher
Two universities partnering with three communities
How did COVID shape the way community members experience civic engagement?

What facilitators and barriers to civic engagement did they experience?

How did prior natural disaster experiences shape civic engagement during COVID?
The context of our research: **Houston, during COVID**

Three communities identified as at high risk for COVID spread, directly impacted by prior natural disasters

3 years after Hurricane Harvey:
- **154,000** homes flooded
- **100+** deaths
- **$125 billion** in damages
- **Impacted communities** still working to recover

Study interrupted by Winter Storm Uri:
- **130,000** homes damaged
- **43+** deaths
- **4.5 million** TX homes and businesses lost power
- **49%** of Texans lost running water for 2+ days
Our approach: Community-based, participatory action research

By the community
Co-researchers worked alongside university team to develop plan
- 3 communities
- 9 co-researchers
- 2 languages

With the community
Co-researchers recruited participants, and facilitated virtual focus groups & interviews, between Jan & May 2021
- 128 participants
- 20 focus groups
- 9 interviews with key informants

For the community
Co-researchers conducted preliminary analyses and developed recommendations
- 5 thematic categories highlight civic experiences
- 9 highlight challenges and opportunities
- 3 highlight civic influences of natural disasters
Working with Co-Researchers – Successes and Challenges

• Technology access

• Virtual Relationship Building
  • Building rapport – how do we build trust and better understand communities?
  • Used co-researchers’ knowledge of their communities

• Technology/Coordination/Scheduling
  • Participants not having access to a computer/mobile phone
  • Created Zoom tutorial
Perspectives of a Co-Researcher

• Role in community
• Co-researcher training
• Recruitment process
• Connection in a time of disconnect
• Takeaways from findings
COVID Study Findings

- Facilitators and Barriers of Civic Engagement During COVID
- Disaster-Related Findings
## Community members’ perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID Fear and Stress</th>
<th>Responses to COVID Precautions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;COVID really stops, cause you don’t want to get sick or anybody else sick and stuff. That's what shut us away from everybody.&quot;</td>
<td>“Not being able to come together and be as one group, physically greeting, seeing faces, hugging people. I think I miss that the most, being able to greet and hug someone, someone I haven’t seen.&quot;</td>
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<td>“I think with the pandemic, it's putting a strain on everything. It has affected my community involvement...it has impacted it so much and it's stressful and I try not to let it stress me out.”</td>
<td>“Let’s use the drive-ins, the theaters. Let’s use the basketball courts, let’s use the schools, let’s use the first floor of parking garages, let’s use parking lots of grocery stores, let’s use sports stadiums at colleges and universities. Let’s use apartment complexes and they have community centers, let’s use the churches, indoor theaters with 6 feet.”</td>
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<td>“Life has changed a lot. It changed our life, we are asking God that this ends soon so we can continue our lives like normal, all of us. I believe and wish it, we are all wishing the same.”</td>
<td>“We are all grown and we make choices...So if you want to wear a mask and I don’t, of course you are not hearing what we are enforcing, but I can’t make you do that. I can’t make you care... if people don’t care, you just can’t make them care.”</td>
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### Community members’ perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

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<tr>
<th>Information Access During COVID</th>
<th>Trustworthiness of COVID Information</th>
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<td>“It is much <strong>easier to participate when one has access to all methods of communication</strong>, all social media. Spreading that information by all those methods like Facebook or WhatsApp or Zoom...to give us the opportunity to participate.”</td>
<td>&quot;I am so distrustful in how they disseminate the <strong>information</strong> about the problem, to where I'm really distrustful about them even having, how they gonna disseminate the information about the solutions.”</td>
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<td>&quot;It has definitely been challenging for the senior citizens. Living with mom, she is <strong>not very technology advanced</strong>. She has not participated in any of those Zoom calls or anything.”</td>
<td>&quot;The vaccine, it’s trash, they just completely dropped the ball...Too many avenues for information, so it is <strong>kind of hard to focus on the information when I got 5 different channels telling it to me</strong>. If we can just figure out how to disseminate information through one hub per se, it just seems like it will go a lot easier.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;It has to be something <strong>written</strong> for those of us who aren't on the internet to look at Facebook everyday.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;It’s like we are out of the loop all the time... We never in the loop...Nobody ever communicates with us on this side. So, we basically never really reached out to over here.&quot;</td>
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Community members’ perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

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<th>Unmet Community Needs</th>
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<td>“You locked down the city. You taken the playgrounds away, you taken the clubs away, you have taken the restaurants away. You know <strong>you have done all this, what is the next plan to service us</strong> with all of this shot, since we have the shot now? ...How are you giving it to us?”</td>
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<td><strong>&quot;We are over-shadowed by other communities</strong> because they are getting everything in their communities: parks and water distributions and vaccines and you know COVID test, and we don’t have that in our community.”</td>
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<td>“We couldn’t get the sites in our community. <strong>They didn’t value the fact that we were bringing to them, specific information</strong> about, uhh, about people not having transportation. People needed a walk up site, in addition to a drive up site.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The way the world is now, <strong>that doesn't really work for our community, because our community is a technology desert.</strong> Y’all talk about food deserts, we’re a technology desert. We have technology within our homes and some of the people, but is more or less still the cellphones.”</td>
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"With the floods and all the things that come to this city"

“Why is my community hit harder than this community or that community? And why don't I have the resources to help my community heal or grow? Why don't I have that as other communities do? ...Why are communities of color treated differently than other communities?”

“Why they can't get together and come through our neighborhood? I mean our neighborhood is one of the worst flood neighborhoods... And they make all these promises the last six years and nothing happens... If I call the city, they just add it to the list. I mean how long is the list?”

Photo: Staff Photographer Houston Chronicle
"Let me say that we haven’t fully recovered from Ike or Harvey. You still have people who are still suffering from Ike and haven’t got the services they needed as far back as Ike. So, Harvey just made it worse, so not receiving the services and the help before the pandemic. The pandemic just slowed it that farther down because the process changed.... the aid has just gotten that further behind. So, we were behind in the beginning before, and we that much farther behind now."
"The people are there anyways if there is COVID or if there is no COVID"

“If we were to get another hurricane, I don't think nothing catastrophic would change. People would still be willing to go out and help. I think people would still be willing to volunteer their time. People would still be willing to give what they can to those in need depending on their situation, because of how we are when these things and events occur.”

“When you got somethin' like COVID which I don't understand as being a natural disaster, you reduce me not in my nature but you reduce me to my survival instincts, now. And even though I want to help you, I'm afraid to do so because I'm afraid that helping you may hurt me.”

“It opened our eyes to how far we had got away from each other because we started checking back on each other. Instead of like I say, coming home, running in your house, and shutting the door, that loneliness and that apart from each other, the ice and the snow and the broken pipes and the lights out kinda brought us back together to reality that we do need each other.”
Community Partnership

• Experience with the study
• Using preliminary findings
  • Community COVID testing and vaccination
• Future funding
Takeaways

• Overall great experience
• Challenges occurred since this was a new experiment for all
• Obtained rich research which has the potential to impact the three underserved communities positively
AmeriCorps Reflection

Katrina French
Disaster Services Specialist,
Disaster Services Unit
Disaster Services Unit

Mission
The DSU leads the agency’s engagement across the disaster services cycle with federal, state, local, nonprofit, and other partners. The DSU’s role as the central hub for the agency’s disaster-related activities ensures that AmeriCorps engagement in this area is appropriate, consistent, and coordinated.

Functions
• Training and Technical Assistance
• Coordinates the agency’s Disaster Services Strategy
• Disaster Services Operational Command and Coordination
Q&A Panel Facilitator

Emily McDonald, PhD
Research Analyst, AmeriCorps
Q & A Panel Discussion:

- Megha Patel, PhD, Research Analyst, AmeriCorps
- Suzanne Pritzker, PhD, University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work
- Matthew Robbins, University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, Graduate Research Assistant
- Joetta Stevenson, Fifth Ward Super Neighborhood #55, President
- Denae King, PhD, Texas Southern University
- JoAnn Burbridge, Sunnyside Community Redevelopment Organization, Board Member
- Andrea Robles, PhD, Research and Evaluation Manager, AmeriCorps
- Katrina French, Disaster Services Specialist, Disaster Services Unit, AmeriCorps
Thank you for attending today's webinar

The recording and support materials will be provided in the next two weeks at:


To inquire about the work presented in this webinar, please reach out to Evaluation@cns.gov