AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

The AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation surveyed program managers at twenty-five AmeriCorps*Texas State service programs during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 service years, as well as 1,368 members who had successfully completed the 2010-2011 service year, to assess 1) the *impact* that AmeriCorps*Texas programs have on their respective communities, 2) the *value added* of AmeriCorps to Texas, and 3) the *organizational and management structures* that are commonly associated with impactful, value-adding AmeriCorps*Texas programs.

Overall, both AmeriCorps*Texas program managers and AmeriCorps*Texas members report that their AmeriCorps programs and their service, respectively, have a positive impact on the clients that they serve, as well as on the communities in which the programs operate. AmeriCorps*Texas members, by and large, perceive their service to be very effective, believe that their service made an important contribution to the community, perceive that their service was very helpful to the community, strongly agree that they made a difference in the life of at least one person, and say that they left behind either the start of something important or part of a real solution as a result of their service.

AmeriCorps*Texas service programs are cost effective and provide value to the community. The average regionally adjusted value of AmeriCorps*Texas service programs is $13.24 an hour, with an added net value of $6.29 an hour, per member. The added net value results in a benefit to the community of at least $1,800 to nearly $10,700 (depending on member type) per member throughout the course of a service term.

The organizational structures and program management characteristics that are associated with impactful and/or value-adding programs include the following:

> ➤ Member development as high program priority
> ➤ Organizational systems and management
> ➤ Fiscal oversight and assurance
> ➤ Securing community support
> ➤ Service clarity
> ➤ Orientation quality
> ➤ Communication quality

The recommendations suggested in the report offer a new perspective and actionable steps that AmeriCorps*Texas programs can immediately take to further strengthen their program operations and bolster their programs' impact and added value within their respective communities.

Introduction

Service programs seek to produce a range of outcomes at the individual, organizational, and community levels. A great deal of research on national service covering all three levels of effects has been completed to date, including both statewide assessments and national evaluations. Some of it has been methodologically sound and resulted in useful ideas related to policy and program implementation reform. This is the case of the recent large scale assessment of the impact of AmeriCorps on the individuals who serve. Because the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) invested in a comprehensive experimental design covering eight years and 4,000 participants and non-participants, we now know exactly what happens both in the short and long term to members' civic engagement, personal growth, job skills, and social capital as a result of serving for a year.[1]

We do not, however, have a corollary body of reliable data on community impact. While an immense volume of research has been conducted on the community impact of national service, it is far more uneven in methodological quality. In the 1990s, in need to prove to critics in Congress that "work was getting done," the Corporation commissioned a bevy of community impact studies that tracked program outputs in excruciating detail, though few of these studies saw the light of day and none shaped subsequent program development during the formative years of the national service movement. Later, a group of studies comparing the costs and benefits of community service were conducted and these proved more fruitful. Though they were far from exhaustive and far from perfect in terms of design, these studies avoided the obvious pitfalls related to collection of incommensurable output and short-term outcome data.[2]

The AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation, as commissioned by the OneStar Foundation, builds on what has been learned over the past two decades when it comes to measuring the community impact of service and drivers of effective programs. This evaluation looks not only at the impact that AmeriCorps programs have on communities, but examines why some programs

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[1] See Abt Associates, Longitudinal Study of AmeriCorps, Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, 2008.
[2] For a comprehensive review of previous studies of national service, see Peter Frumkin and JoAnn Jastrzab, Serving Country and Community: Who Benefits from National Service? Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

produce more benefits than others. To better understand what works and why, this evaluation focuses on answering the following three questions:

- ➢ What is the impact that AmeriCorps programs have on communities in Texas?
- ➢ What is the value added of AmeriCorps to Texas?
- ➢ What are the organizational and management structures most commonly associated with impactful, value-adding programs?

AmeriCorps* Texas Statewide Evaluation: A Multi-Methods Approach

The approach to the AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation is comprised of four main elements: a cost-benefit analysis using new methods; a participant perception survey focused on community impact; an organizational structure and management study of the nonprofits charged with training and placing members; and profiles in program implementation to show the interaction of community impact with program design and implementation.

Element One: Measuring the Value of AmeriCorps Service across Texas

Volunteering is a vital part of our economy and a critical part of the fabric of many communities. What if these volunteers were fully paid for their services? Or put differently: What would organizations have to pay for the work done by members if they had to employ regular workers? AmeriCorps programs are not allowed to displace paid employees, so although the question is analytically useful, it is also hypothetical.

To answer these questions, one must calculate the opportunity cost of using volunteers, which would give us a sense of the value of this work. The Independent Sector, a coalition group representing funders and grant seekers in the nonprofit field, uses the average hourly wage in the U.S of $21.79 per hour when valuing volunteer labor. To calculate the real dollar value of volunteer labor, another recent study estimated the average hourly rate for volunteering by surveying nonprofit managers and asking them what they would pay for the work done by volunteers.[3]

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[3] See Hager and Brudney (2004) and The Independent Sector estimates
http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html. "The value of volunteer time is based on

In *Serving Country and Community*, Frumkin and Jastrzab look nationally at the value of the main service programs, and the numbers appear encouraging. For VISTA and NCCC, volunteers serve on a full-time basis, which translates into 1700 hours per person. For State and National programs, there is a combination of full-time, part-time, and reduced part-time status. According to the Fiscal Year 2007 Congressional Budget Justification from CNCS, there are approximately 45 percent who serve full time, 16 percent part-time (which ranges from 900 – 1699 hours), and 39 percent reduced part-time (which ranges from 300 – 899 hours) for State and National programs. Using the more conservative Independent Sector rate for the hourly value of volunteering, the net benefit for each program turns out to be high, and the benefit-cost ratios are positive. For State and National, the ratio is 3.52. For NCCC it is 1.45, while for VISTA, the ratio is 2.27.

Supporting the overall validity of the conclusion that the benefits of national service outweigh its costs are the results of a meta-analysis conducted by Perry and Thomson (2004). In their cost-benefit meta-analysis, they collected 14 studies of volunteer programs, from the 1960's through the 1990's. These programs include AmeriCorps State and National, VISTA, conservation and youth corps programs, Foster Grandparents, and other civic service programs. Table 1 displays a summary of Perry and Thomson's cost-benefit meta-analysis. Across 14 studies included in their analysis, there were 73 programs evaluated, with 65 being distinctly separate programs. Several studies researched the same volunteer programs, but in different years. The most extensive cost-benefit analysis was conducted by Aguirre International as part of an impact analysis of AmeriCorps State and National programs. They looked at 44 State and National programs between 1994 through 1996. Across the 44 programs, the benefits were valued at $53 million and the costs at $36.7 million, or a benefit-cost ratio of 1.44. Looking across all the studies, the overall average benefit-cost ratio is 1.61. It is particularly interesting that the benefit-cost ratios have not changed since the 1960's when some of these studies were first conducted.

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the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Independent Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits."

Table 1: Summary Results from Previous Studies

Author and Study	Program Type	N	Years	Benefit-cost ratio
Aguirre International, Making a Difference	AmeriCorps State and National Programs	44	1994-1995	1.44
Booz, Allen, Public Administration Services, Cost-Benefit Study of the Foster Grandparent Program	Foster Grandparent Program	1	1965-1971	1.14
California Conservation Corps, 1976 - 1979	California Conservation Corps	1	1976-1979	1.2
Carlson and Strang, Volunteers in Service to America	AmeriCorps VISTA	1	1994	1.4
Control Systems Research, Program for Local Service	Program for Local Service	1	1972	1.9
Frees, et al., Final Report: National Service Demonstration Programs	National Service demonstration projects	1	1993-1994	1.3
Jastrzab, et al., Impact of Service	Conservation and Youth Corps programs	8	1993-1994	1.04
Neuman, et al, Benefits and Costs of National Service	AmeriCorps for Math and Literacy, Project First, East Bay Conservation Corps	3	1994-1995	2.51 – 2.58 2.02 – 2.15 1.59 – 1.68
Public Interest Economics—West, Economic Impact of California Conservation Corps Projects	California Conservation Corps	1	1979	1.2
Shumer, YouthWorks AmeriCorps Evaluation: A Cost-Benefit Analysis	Education enhancement, Juvenile crime, Construction training of at-risk youth	3	1994-1995	1.23 – 1.65 2.94 3.90
Shumer and Cady, YouthWorks AmeriCorps Evaluation: Second Year Report 1995-1996	Education enhancement, Juvenile crime, Construction training of at-risk youth	3	1995-1996	1.34 – 1.93 2.15 1.94
Shumer and Rentel, YouthWorks AmeriCorps Evaluation: Third year Report 1996-1997	Education enhancement, Juvenile crime, Construction training of at-risk youth	3	1996-1997	2.26 1.65 2.45
Wang, Owens, and Kim, Cost and Benefit Study of Two AmeriCorps Projects in the State of Washington	Washington State AmeriCorps programs	2	1994-1995	2.4 (2% discount rate) 1.8 (5% discount rate)
Wolf, Leiderman, and Voith, California Conservation Corps	California Conservation Corps	1	1984-1985	0.96
Total		73		1.61[4]

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[4] This is an average benefit-cost ratio. Ranges were converted into an average ratio so that each study had a single benefit-cost ratio. Then, the average was taken across 14 benefit-cost ratios.

Overall, these prior studies have consistently shown that volunteer programs are cost effective. From tutoring to clean-ups and conservation projects, schools and communities benefit greatly from the services of volunteers.

This evaluation recast the outcome or impact question to ask whether AmeriCorps creates significant economic benefits that can be measured and compared to the costs of operating these programs by translating the myriad social impact measures into a single commensurable measure, one that is understandable to the policy makers and the public. At the core of this approach is an estimation of the real value of member service based on a survey of managers charged with overseeing AmeriCorps projects. This new approach to estimating the social value added of service involved the following innovations:

- Improving the estimation of service value over all previous studies by using a more precise measurement scale.
  - In establishing a value for members' service time, we did not assume that all members would be compensated equally. Rather, we took a scaled approach that took into consideration necessary education and skill level, thus differentiating between values of service time of a low-skilled high school student and a skilled person with a high school diploma, a college educated generalist and a highly skilled professional. By using a scaled approach, we have developed a far more precise measure of the "replacement cost" of AmeriCorps volunteers. Additionally, rather than apply a single "replacement wage" to all members, we took a more fine-grained approach that probed site-to-site variations in member contribution valuation.

- Including regional variations in labor costs to add nuance to the analysis.
  - In calculating "replacement wages" for members' service, we broke from convention and chose not to use the national data on the average wage level. Instead we used regionally adjusted wages as our benchmarks. As the result, the calculation of social value added is more precise.
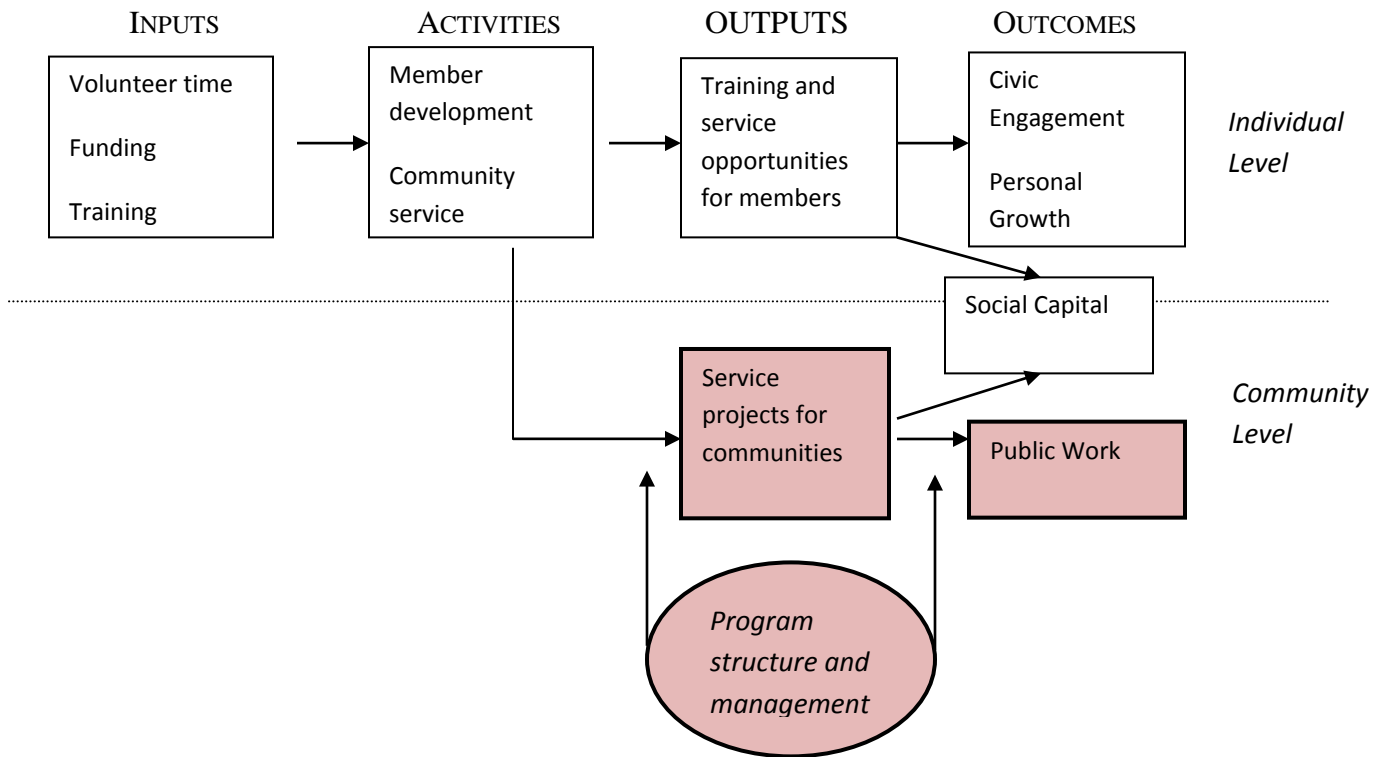
Element Two: Impact Reported by Corps Members

Beyond conducting an assessment of the value added of AmeriCorps in Texas, we distributed a survey to all current members at the conclusion of their service about the perceived impact of their service in the community. One of the best ways to get at the question of what impact the program has had in a community is to go directly to those involved in doing the work. While collecting proxy measures of community impact is not perfect, the survey still provides a triangulation point for examining program managers' assessments of social value added.

Element Three: Organizational Traits of High Value Creating Programs

A critical part of our approach focuses on the organizational determinants of successful implementation. Building on the first two parts of the evaluation and treating them as dependent variables, we constructed a database of organizational, management, and financial characteristics that could serve as independent explanatory variables. Our goal was to understand what organizational and management structures were associates with success.

It is useful to think of national service as an integrated system that works at both individual and community levels simultaneously. To clarify how these levels operate and how they differ substantially from one another, we sketch a theory of change with two levels and four stages leading toward the fulfillment of the many goals of service. Described in greater detail in Frumkin and Jastrzab (2010), the "General Theory of Change for National Service" (see Figure 1) illustrates how at each level of analysis it is possible to sketch out a series of causal linkages leading from the inputs that are needed, to the activities or processes that take place, to the outputs or units of service that are produced in the short run, all the way to the outcomes that the efforts ultimately generate.

Figure 1: General Theory of Change for National Service

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	
Volunteer time Funding Training	Member development Community service	Training and service opportunities for members	Civic Engagement Personal Growth	*Individual Level*

Social Capital

Service projects for communities → Public Work

Community Level

Program structure and management

The national longitudinal study of AmeriCorps illuminated quite fully the linkage between program and individual outcomes. In Figure 1 above, we highlight the three elements that we focused on in this evaluation, which do not overlap with data already collected on a national basis.

We collected a broad array of organizational data, including financial and management measures, such as budget size, revenue diversification, liquidity, overhead rate, and a host of other metrics of financial strength that were constructed from publicly available 990 tax forms and organizational budgets. In addition, we collected data from the AmeriCorps*Texas programs on a host of program management issues, including the size of the AmeriCorps program, the length of time the program has been in place, ratio of staff to members, program manager experience, and other factors that might drive program performance. Our goal in this part of the

evaluation was to document and illuminate the link between program performance (both measured in terms of social value added and in terms of member perception of social impact) and program structure and management.

<u>Element Four: A Series of Case Studies Showing the Breadth of Service</u>

Finally, to add depth and richness to our evaluation, we wrote four case studies showcasing different AmeriCorps programs in Texas. We selected a group of programs that represented the full breadth and diversity of service programs undertaken every year by the recipients of OneStar support. The case studies focused on the ways in which members go about contributing to communities and the many different organizational contexts within which they find themselves operating.

Evaluation Model

The evaluation elements as described above can be depicted in the following evaluation model:

Figure 2: Evaluation model
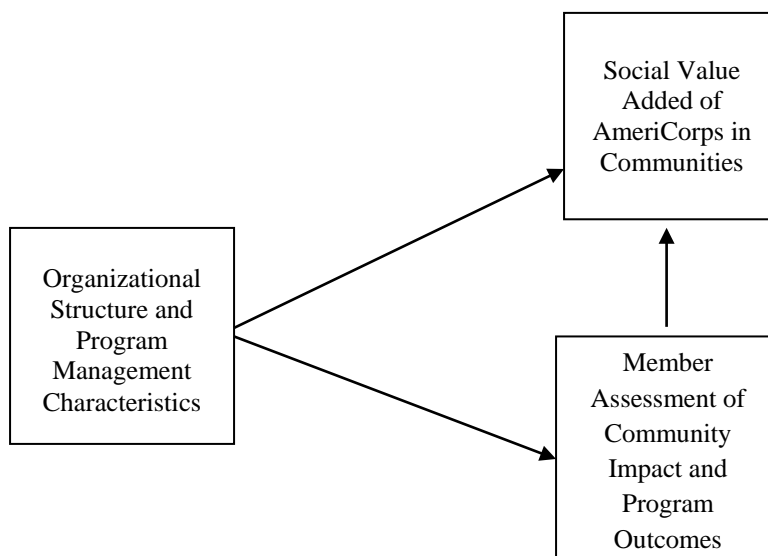
The evaluation was thus designed to investigate the organizational and management drivers of program success, measured both in terms of perception in community impact by members and

managers, and in terms of the monetized net value added of the program, measured using a cost-benefit approach. Additionally, the study also investigated the relationship between perceptions of community impact and new value added, to check for consistency or conflict. Taken together, these three major elements drove our data collection and analysis. They form the bulk of the exposition that follows in this report.

Methodology

Sampling Frame

The survey portion of this evaluation spanned across two AmeriCorps service years: 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Participants who were offered the survey regarding the 2009-2010 service year included 24 AmeriCorps State grantees and 17 AmeriCorps National grantees. Participants who were offered the surveys regarding the 2010-2011 service year included 23 AmeriCorps State grantees, 22 AmeriCorps National grantees, and 1,358 AmeriCorps State members who, according to program documentation supplied by the OneStar Foundation, had successfully completed their service. Contact information for all State and National AmeriCorps programs, as well as for all 2010-2011 State members, was also provided by OneStar. The primary contact person at each program is designated the 'Program Manager' throughout this report, regardless of the individual's actual job title or responsibilities.

Survey Development

Both the Program Manager Survey and the Member Survey were developed using questions derived from multiple sources. Several of the questions related to members' perceived efficacy of their service came from the Abt Associates and CNCS longitudinal impact study of AmeriCorps.[5] Other sources for question development included surveys that informed Frumkin and Jastrzab's book, *Serving Country and Community*[6], and an AmeriCorps State Program

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[5] Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni*, Washington, D.C., 2008.

[6] Peter Frumkin and JoAnn Jastrzab, Serving Country and Community: Who Benefits from National Service? Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Evaluation conducted by the Illinois Department of Human Services.[7] Once completed, both the Program Manager Survey and the Member Survey were reviewed and modified for relevance and appropriate language in conjunction with the OneStar Foundation, prior to their distribution.

Program Manager Surveys

The 2009-2010 Program Manager Survey included 68 total questions, while the 2010-2011 Program Manager Survey was comprised of 70 questions (see Appendix A). All of the questions in the 2010-2011 survey were identical to those in the 2009-2010 survey, with the exception of two new questions that were added in the second survey.[8] The Program Manager Surveys were constructed on the SurveyMonkey website (www.surveymonkey.com). Both surveys included the following question categories:

1. Program Structure
2. Member/Type Enrollment
3. Stipend
4. Staff Involvement
5. Team/Crew Leaders
6. Host Sites
7. Program Operations
8. Communication
9. Member Evaluation
10. Member Value Characteristics
11. Program Effectiveness

Member Survey

The Member Survey was comprised of 51 total questions and constructed on the SurveyMonkey website (see Appendix B). Many of the survey questions were identical to those asked in the Program Manager Survey, except that they were framed from the member perspective rather than the program manager perspective. Question categories for the Member Survey were the following:

1. Demographics
2. Service Location/Description
3. Program Operations
4. Service Value
5. Service Effectiveness

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[7] Illinois Department of Human Services. Attachment 35 – AmeriCorps State Program Evaluation. Retrieved November 17, 2010 from http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=39547

[8] Additional survey questions are #31 and #52.

Survey Distribution – Program Manager Surveys

The 2009-2010 Program Manager Survey was distributed to AmeriCorps State and National programs during the month of February 2011. Each program was assigned an unduplicated identification number, which corresponded to an individualized link on SurveyMonkey. The 2009-2010 survey links were sent separately via email to each program manager with a response requested by a required due date. Additionally, paper copies of the survey were mailed to each program manager. Program managers were given the option to complete either the paper copy or the electronic version of the survey via SurveyMonkey. Two State programs and one National program returned the paper copy of the survey. All other respondents completed the survey online.

Follow-up reminder email messages that included the personalized survey link were sent to each program manager at one, three, and four week intervals. Reminder emails were only sent to program managers who had not yet completed the survey. All of the State programs completed the 2009-2010 survey, for a response rate of 100%. Twelve of the 17 National programs completed the survey (71% response rate). Any program that had unanswered questions in their survey was sent a follow-up email that included the missing questions, as well as a request for their completion. Most programs submitted their missing data and those responses were added to the dataset.

The 2010-2011 Program Manager Survey was distributed to AmeriCorps State and National programs in September 2011, and all follow-up efforts ceased by November 2011. The survey was sent via SurveyMonkey only, as described above. No paper copies were distributed due to the overwhelming majority having responded online for the first survey. Follow-up reminder emails, that included the personalized SurveyMonkey link, were sent at two, three, and four week intervals to each program manager who had not yet responded to the survey. Eight of the State programs who had not completed the survey by the one month mark were also sent reminder emails by OneStar. All of the State programs submitted responses to the survey (100% response rate), while only 11 of the 22 National programs responded (50%).

Due to the lower response rate from the AmeriCorps National programs, as well as a lessened ability to collect sufficient organizational data from each of the programs, National survey responses were excluded from the analyses. As such, the total sample size for the Program Manager Survey was 25 and only included AmeriCorps State programs.

Survey Distribution – Member Survey

The Member Survey was distributed in multiple waves from April to August 2011 to AmeriCorps members who had successfully completed and exited the 2010-2011 term of service. Members were considered 'exited,' or having completed their service term, 30 days after the end date of their service term. The total number of exited members who had successfully completed their service was 1,368.[9] The Member Survey was distributed in two ways:

➢ One month prior to members' end of service, a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey was emailed to all program managers for them to pass on by email to their members, requesting that they complete it by their end of service date. Follow-up reminder emails were sent to program managers after one, three, and five weeks had passed.

➢ Thirty days after members completed their service, evaluation staff sent an email to members' personal email address with a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey, requesting that they complete the survey. A final email reminder with the survey link was sent to members' personal email two weeks later. In both emails, a bolded statement at the very beginning of the correspondence requested that members not complete the survey if they had already done so.

The response rate for members completing the survey via an email link from their program managers was 62% (464/1,368). The response rate for members completing the survey via a direct email from evaluation staff was 38% (288/1,368). The total Member Survey response rate was 55% (752/1,368). All survey respondents completed the survey anonymously.

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[9] Exited total equals the number of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members who successfully completed their service. The total does not include members who left the AmeriCorps program early or were suspended, as they did not receive the survey.

Organizational and Financial Characteristics

In additional to the data collected from the Program Manager Surveys, we also collected organizational and financial data for all the AmeriCorps State programs. The sources from which we gathered these data included the following:

- ➢ Organizational Capacity Surveys (see Appendix C)
  - o Data were collected from all programs.
- ➢ Grantee Program Budgets
  - o Data were collected from all programs.
- ➢ 990 Tax Forms
  - o Data were collected from 15 programs only, as not all organizations are required to file 990 taxes.
  - o 990 tax forms were downloaded from GuideStar (www.guidestar.org), a publicly available online clearinghouse of financial and organizational information from nonprofits.
- ➢ Annual Organizational Budgets or Financial Reports
  - o Data were collected from 10 programs only, those whose organizations are exempt from filing 990 tax forms.
  - o All data were retrieved from publicly available financial documents downloaded from each organization's website.

The organizational and financial data that were collected spanned from 2008 to 2010, where applicable and available. For a complete list of organizations and sources of data, please refer to Appendix D.

Case Studies – Site Selection

The four case studies we wrote represent the qualitative portion of this evaluation. The case studies were designed to be descriptive and informative in nature. The primary intent was to show how different AmeriCorps programs operate in their respective communities. The primary criteria that were applied to selecting the four programs for case studies included geographic diversity, type of organization, and the number and type of members at each program.[10]

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[10] The average number of members at each program across both service years was 63. The median number of members was 43. We used 50 as the midpoint because it was nearly halfway between the mean and the median.

Figure 3: Case Study Site Selection Process
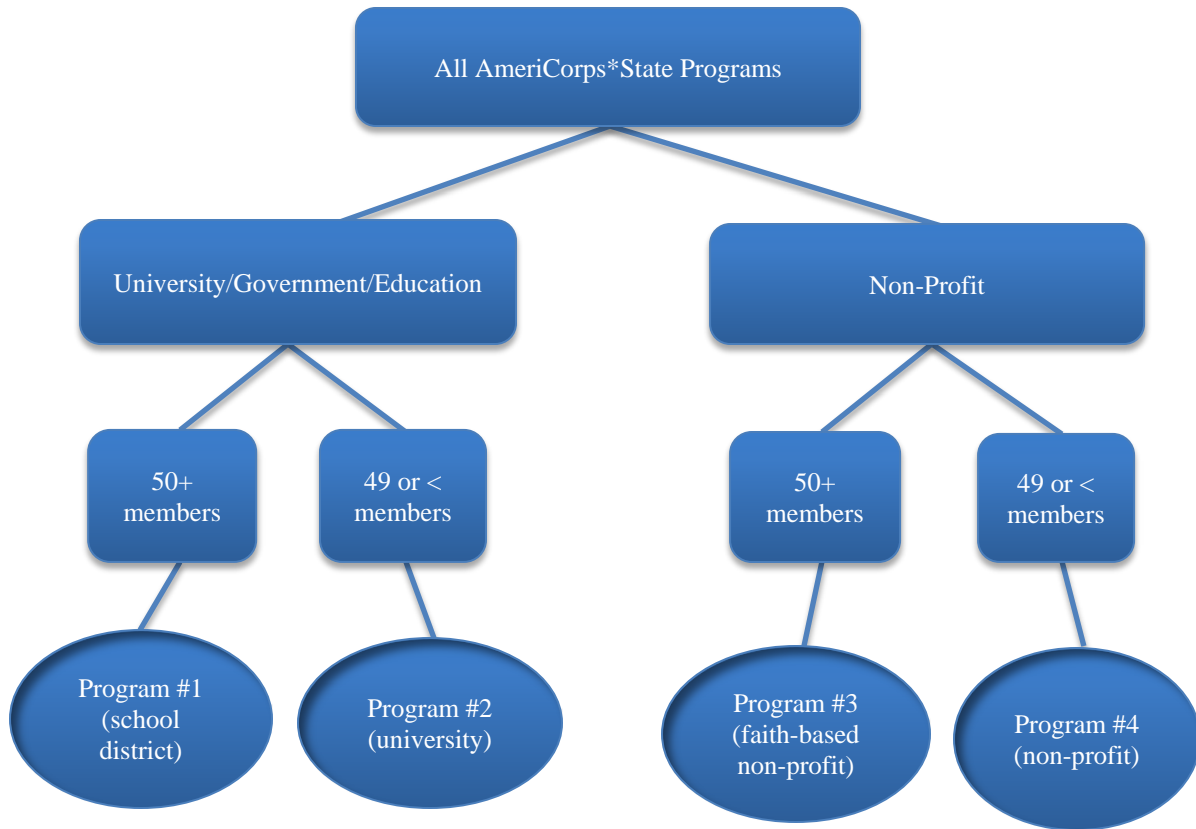
Other supporting selection criteria included program budget size; number of years receiving State funding; the primary focus of the AmeriCorps program; and variance in selected responses to program effectiveness, as reported in the Program Manager surveys. Specific programmatic details, program reputation, or outcomes were not taken into consideration when selecting the programs. The four programs selected to be featured in case studies are featured in Table 2:

Table 2: Final Site Selection

	Large # of Members (50+)	Small # of Members (49 or <)
Univ/Govt/Edu	Amarillo ISD (50)[11]	UT Brownsville (43)
Non-Profit	CitySquare (215)	SWIFT (43)

Case Studies – Site Visit Details

Program managers of the AmeriCorps programs that were selected to be featured as case studies were initially notified by OneStar via email. After that notification, evaluation staff contacted the program managers by email to schedule a site visit. One site visit took place in November 2011, while the other three occurred in January 2012. Prior to the site visit, an outline was emailed to each program detailing various topics for discussion (see Appendix E), along with a request for any printed materials that may aid in understanding the program, such as brochures or logic models. While not required to do so, two of the programs provided written responses to the outline topics prior to the site visit. Additionally, two of the programs provided printed materials prior to the site visit, while others provided them on-site.

Site visits consisted of an evaluation staff member visiting each program for one complete business day. The daily agenda at each site was determined by the hosting program manager, but was pertinent to the topics included in the site visit outline. Each site visit was slightly different, but all included unstructured interviews and conversations with the program manager and other available program staff, interviews with selected community partner personnel (if available), and a focus group with members. Focus groups ranged in size from three to 14 members, all of whom were selected by the program managers. See Appendix F for the focus group topic guide and additional questions asked of members.

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[11] Numbers in parentheses indicate the average number of members at each program from 2009-2011.

Measures and Data Analysis

We constructed several new variables to use in our data analysis, in addition to the variables taken from the surveys and organizational and financial indicators dataset.

Dependent Variables

Regionally Adjusted Value – The 'regionally adjusted value' of AmeriCorps service variable was constructed by dividing the 'program manager perception value' by the 'ACCRA Cost of Living Index' value for each city or town in which an AmeriCorps program operated, and then multiplied by 100. The ACCRA Cost of Living Index, or COLI, measures relative price levels for consumer goods and services in participating areas. The average for all participating locations is 100, and each location's index is interpreted as a percentage of the average for all locations.[12] See Appendix G for the COLI values used in the calculation.

$$\text{regionally adjusted value} = \frac{\text{program manager perception value}}{\text{ACCRA Cost of Living Index}} \ \text{X} \ 100$$

For programs that operated in more than one city or town, the 'regionally adjusted value' calculation was done for each location and then averaged among all sites for that particular program, with an end result of one 'regionally adjusted value' for each AmeriCorps program.

Net Value – The 'net value' of AmeriCorps service variable was constructed by subtracting the 'average hourly rate' at each AmeriCorps program from the 'regionally adjusted value.'

$$\text{net value} = \text{regionally adjusted value} - \text{average hourly rate}$$

For programs that operated in more than one city or town, the 'net value' calculation was done for each location and then averaged among all sites for that particular program, with an end result of one 'net value' for each AmeriCorps program.

The 'average hourly rate' rate used in this calculation was another variable that was determined for each program. Though 'average hourly rate' is not a dependent variable in our analysis, we

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[12] ACCRA COLI Data Interpretation. Retrieved on April 25, 2012 from http://www.coli.org/Interpretation.asp

provide its calculation in this section for the reader's convenience. It was constructed by dividing the total AmeriCorps living allowance amount for each member type by the total number of service hours for the respective member type. Hourly rates were then averaged across all member types at each AmeriCorps program.

$$\text{hourly rate for each member type} = \frac{\text{total AmeriCorps living allowance for member type}}{\text{total hours for member type}}$$

$$\text{average hourly rate} = \text{sum of hourly rates for all member types} / \text{number of member types}$$

Independent Variables and Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted on both the member survey data and the program manager survey data. In order to determine the effect that different types of programs have on the relevant outcome variables, it was first necessary for us to create a typology of different program characteristics. Questions 21 through 30 of the member survey were intended to capture characteristics of program operations. Factor analysis was used to analyze the variance of responses to these questions and identify potential latent variables of the programs that were captured by these questions. We ultimately scored each program along three dimensions thought to affect the AmeriCorps experience of the members: (1) clarity of service expectations, (2) quality of orientation, and (3) quality of communication.

Service Clarity – Questions 21 and 22 of the Member Survey asked each member respondent to rate how clearly the member felt his or her service/position description and service goals and expectations, respectively, were defined prior to starting the service term. If the member responded "very defined" to both of these questions, the *service clarity* was considered *excellent*. If the member responded "somewhat defined" to either or both of these questions, the service clarity was considered *adequate*. Otherwise, the service clarity was considered *inadequate* or marked as *no description*.

Of the 751 total respondents, 342 were in programs with service clarity rated as *excellent*, 251 had *adequate* service clarity, 151 had *inadequate* service clarity, and seven had *no description* (see Table 3).

Table 3: Service Clarity Distribution

	Freq.	Percent
Excellent	342	45.54
Adequate	251	33.42
Inadequate	151	20.11
No description	7	0.93
Total	751	100

Orientation Quality – Question 24 asked each member respondent to rate the usefulness of the initial AmeriCorps orientation, and question 25 asked how well the member felt that the orientation prepared him or her for the service term. If the member responded "very useful" to question 24 and "very well" to question 25, the *orientation quality* was considered *excellent*. Orientation quality was rated as *adequate* if the respondent answered "somewhat useful" to question 24 and/or answered question 25 as "somewhat well". Otherwise the orientation quality was considered to be *inadequate*.

As shown in Table 4, 290 respondents had an *excellent* orientation, 277 had an *adequate* orientation, 165 had an *inadequate* orientation, and 19 respondents indicated that they had *no orientation*.

Table 4: Orientation Quality Distribution

	Freq.	Percent
Excellent	290	38.62
Adequate	277	36.88
Inadequate	165	21.97
No orientation	19	2.53
Total	751	100

It should be noted here that question 23, which asks how long the orientation lasted, was used as a consistency check on the answers to questions 24 and 25, but was then used in the final analysis as a separate variable. In so doing, length of orientation was recoded to one day or less, over one day and up to a week, over one week but not more than two weeks, and over two weeks. The distribution of this variable is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Orientation Length

	Freq.	Percent
none	19	2.53
one day or less	172	22.9
over 1 day, up to 1 week	260	34.62
over 1 week, up to 2 weeks	128	17.04
over 2 weeks	172	22.9
Total	751	100

Communication Quality – Finally, questions 26, 28 and 30 were used to assess *communication quality*. Question 26 asked each respondent how strongly he or she agreed that the supervisor regularly asked how things were going. Questions 28 and 30 asked how satisfied each member was with the frequency and method of communication during the service year, respectively. If the member responded "strongly agree" to question 26 and "very satisfied" to questions 28 and 30, then communication quality was considered to be *excellent*. Communication quality was rated as adequate if the member responded "somewhat agree" to question 26 and/or responded "somewhat satisfied" to either or both of questions 28 and 30. Otherwise the communication quality was considered to be *inadequate*.

Table 6 shows that 364 members reported communication quality as *excellent*, 202 reported it as *adequate,* and 185 reported it as *inadequate*.
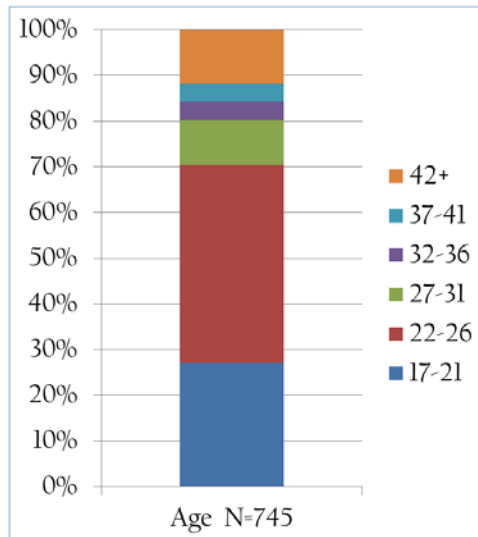
Table 6: Communication Quality Distribution

	Freq.	Percent
Excellent	364	48.47
Adequate	202	26.90
Inadequate	185	24.63
Total	751	100

Results

<u>Characteristics of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas Members</u>

In this section, we describe select characteristics of 752 AmeriCorps*Texas members who served during the 2010-2011 service year and responded to our survey. While we compare and contrast some characteristics to national member data, we also present the opportunity for individual AmeriCorps*Texas programs to view how the member profile at their institutions compares and contrasts to member characteristics state-wide.

**Figure 4:
Age Distribution of 2010-2011
AmeriCorps*Texas Members**

Age

To be eligible to participate in any AmeriCorps program throughout the country, an individual must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident at least 17 years of age. Seventy percent of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas members (N=745) were between the ages of 17 and 26 (see Figure 4). The percentage of members in that age group is consistent with national member data, and could be driven by common transition periods in young people's lives, such as graduation from high school and college.[13] Approximately 12% of AmeriCorps*Texas members were age 42 or older.

The average age of AmeriCorps*Texas members was 28, with a median age of 41. Members ranged in age from 17 to 70 years old.

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[13] Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni*, Washington, D.C., 2008.

Race and Ethnicity

We asked members' race and ethnicity as two separate questions on the AmeriCorps*Texas Member Survey. Members responded to the race question first, and then next identified their ethnicity as either Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Members were permitted to select more than one race, if desired. Approximately 64% of the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas members (N=767)[14] identified as white, 13% identified as Black or African American, 5% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Asian, and 18% identified as 'other.' Of those who identified as 'other', approximately 80% self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. These numbers are comparable to population data for the State of Texas, in which 70% of Texans identify as white, 12% identify as Black or African American, a combined 5% identify as American Indian/Alaska Native or Asian, while only 11% of Texans identify as some other race.[15]

Figure 5: Percent who Identify as Hispanic or Latino
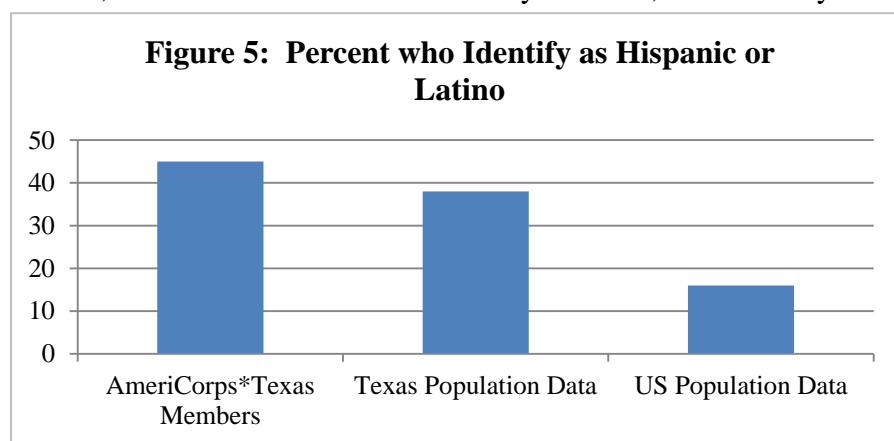
A more telling descriptive statistic, perhaps, might be the proportion of AmeriCorps*Texas members who reported in response to the ethnicity question that they were Hispanic (45%, N=743). That percentage is higher than what has been reported in both national (16%) and state (38%) population data (see Figure 5, on previous page).[16] Current demographic trends indicate that the proportion of all Americans who are of Hispanic or Latino origin is expected to increase to over 30% by 2050.[17] If those predictions prove accurate, the current Hispanic or Latino representation of AmeriCorps*Texas members is already ahead of the curve.

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[14] N is higher than the total sample size of 752 because members were allowed to select more than one race.

[15] American FactFinder, 2010 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

[16] ibid.

[17] L.B. Shrestha and E.J. Heisler, *The Changing Demographic Profile of the United States*, Congressional Research Service, 2011.

Gender

The vast majority (81%, N=738) of the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas members were women, which is consistent with national member data for gender representation. For an international comparison, approximately 61% of the over 200,000 Peace Corps volunteers in service across the globe are also women.[18]

Member Type

AmeriCorps members throughout the country can serve in either full time or part time service positions. AmeriCorps*Texas members are no exception. Available positions and the minimum number of required service hours for each position are as follows: full time (1,700 hours), half time (900 hours), reduced half time (675 hours), quarter time (450 hours), and minimum time (300 hours). Depending on the needs of the particular program and the communities in which they serve, each AmeriCorps*Texas program has the ability to decide what type or types of members are most appropriate for the service provided. Figure 6, below, depicts the overall representation of member types as reported by the members themselves.


Figure 6: **Member Types N=748**
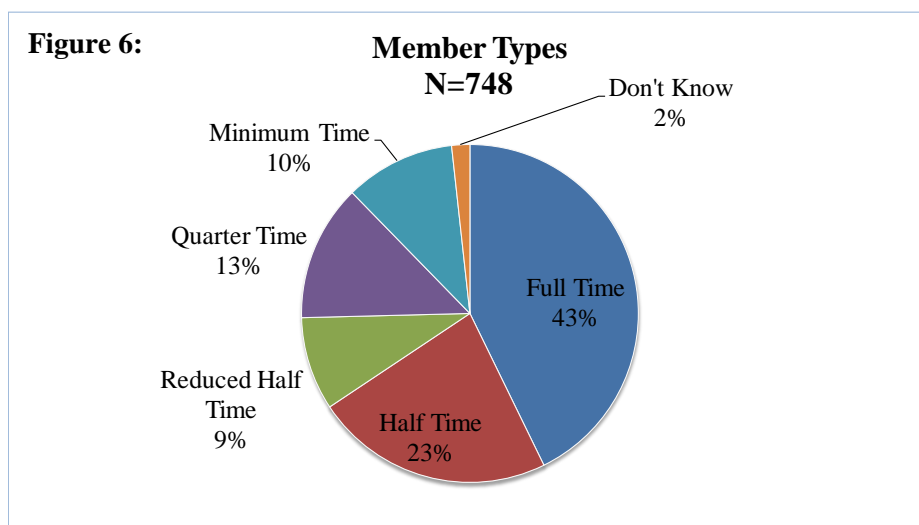
Year of Service

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[18] *Peace Corps: Fast Facts*. Retrieved on April 26, 2012 from http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=about.fastfacts

AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive Educational Awards for no more than two years of full-time service. Almost three-quarters (73%, N=742) of the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas members were serving in their first year of service. A smaller percentage of first year members (37%, N=541) had full time member status, compared to 58% (N=201) of second year members who were full time.

Data presented in Figure 7 reflect members who reported that they were serving in their first or second service term only. Though not captured in the survey, some members could have been serving in their third service term, as was noted at one of the programs featured in the case study section of this report. In that particular case, for example, members had already completed two half time service terms and had returned for a third term of service.

Figure 7:

**1st vs 2nd Year Members
N=742**
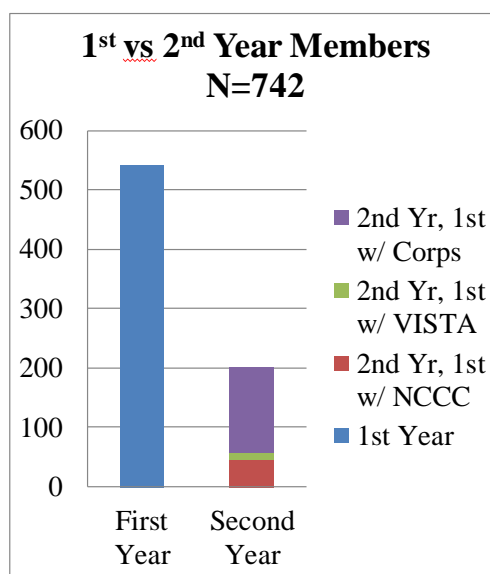
Received Stipend/Living Allowance

Most AmeriCorps*Texas members (82%, N=709) received a stipend or living allowance during their AmeriCorps service. For members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance, their responses varied when asked the reason for not receiving a stipend or living allowance. Twenty-two percent (N=138) reported that they did not need a stipend or living allowance. Another 22% reported that they were only interested in receiving the Segal Education Award. Forty-four percent said that they were not offered a stipend or living allowance, while 12% said that they did not know they could get a stipend or living allowance.

*From the Community – Or Not*

AmeriCorps programs operate at the community level, but there is no requirement for members serving in a particular community to actually be from that community. In fact, slightly more than half (55%, N=710) of the 2010-2011 reported that they were from the community in which they served, as opposed being from another community or state. Interestingly, a higher proportion of

self-identified Hispanics (72%, N=331) are from the communities in which they served, compared to non-Hispanics (37%, N=420).

Education Level

For the most part, AmeriCorps*Texas members are an educated group. As can be seen in Figure 8, the vast majority of members (84%, N=746) had received some level of higher education (percentage includes 'some college' to 'master's degree or equivalent').

Figure 8:
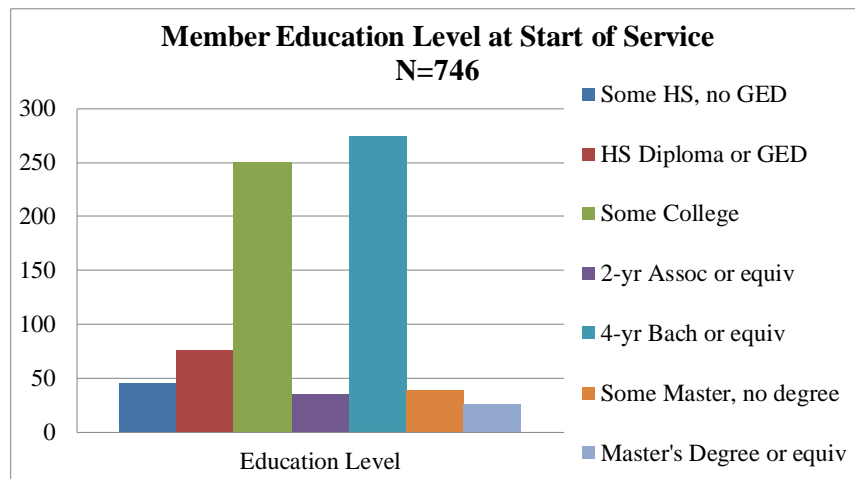

Additionally, almost 95% of AmeriCorps*Texas members had at least a high school diploma or GED at the start of their service, which is comparable to national member data (92%).[19]

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[19] Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni*, Washington, D.C., 2008.

Work experience

The number of years of work experience that the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas members reported to have had at the beginning of their service varied greatly (see Figure 9). Less than one-fifth of respondents (17%, N=747) reported having no

Member Work Experience at Start of Service N=747
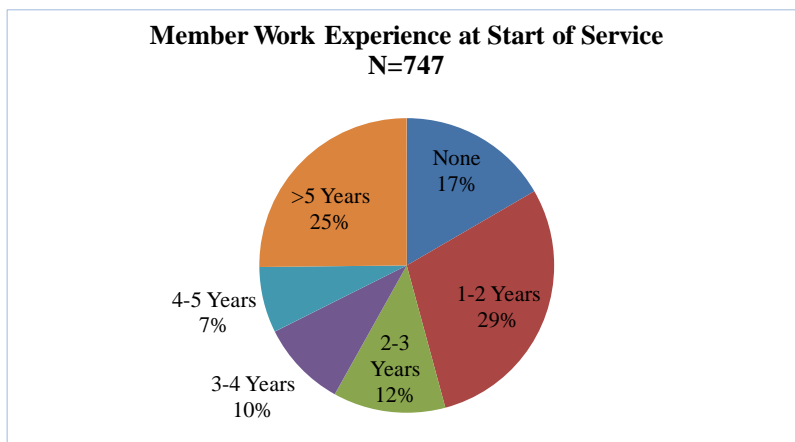
work experience at the start of their service. Interestingly, the percentage of members who reported having had one to two years of work experience (29%) was roughly equal to that of members who reported having had more than five years of work experience (25%).

Characteristics of AmeriCorps*Texas Programs

In this section, we describe select characteristics of the 25 AmeriCorps*Texas State service programs. We present here the opportunity for individual AmeriCorps*Texas programs to view how their institution and AmeriCorps program is similar or different to other AmeriCorps*Texas service programs across the state.

*Number and Location of Participating AmeriCorps*Texas Organizations*

During the 2009-2010 AmeriCorps service year, there were 24 organizations across the State of Texas funded through OneStar Foundation that operated AmeriCorps programs. During the 2010-2011 service year, 23 organizations funded by OneStar sponsored an AmeriCorps program. Table 7 lists all the AmeriCorps*Texas programs that participated in this evaluation and the respective service years in which they operated.

Table 7: AmeriCorps*Texas Programs by Service Year

Organization Name	2009-2010	2010-2011
Amarillo Independent School District	X	X
AVANCE – El Paso Chapter	X	X
Casa de Amigos of Midland Texas	X	X
CitySquare	X	X
City Year	X	X
College Forward	X	X
Communities in Schools Dallas Region	X	X
Communities in Schools of Central Texas	X	X
Communities in School in the Heart of Texas	X	X
Easter Seals – Central Texas	X	X
Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas	X	X
Harris County Department of Education	X	X
Jumpstart for Young Children	X	
National Association of Community Health Centers	X	
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District		X
Project Transformation	X	X
Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together	X	X
Teach for America	X	X
Texas A&M International University	X	X
Texas A&M University	X	X
The University of Texas at Austin – Charles A. Dana Center	X	X
The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College	X	X
Travis County Department of Human Services	X	X
United Way of El Paso County	X	X
University of North Texas	X	X

Twenty-five organizations operated their AmeriCorps programs in a variety of diverse service locations, including rural and urban areas. In many cases, organizations had several different service locations in which they placed members. Some organizations that operated in multiple locations placed members in geographically unrelated areas (Dallas and El Paso, for example). Other organizations operating in multiple locations placed members in a large city, but also in surrounding suburbs or towns (Austin and Manor, for example). Table 8, below, lists the major locations in which the AmeriCorps*Texas service programs operated. Only primary locations or major cities are included in the table. Several organizations, particularly those with members serving in the Texas-Mexico border area, operated in very small towns or rural areas and their locations are included as part of the closest surrounding larger cities.

Table 8: AmeriCorps*Texas Organizations and Service Locations

Organization Name	Service Locations	Organization Name	Service Locations
Amarillo Independent School District	Amarillo	Jumpstart for Young Children	Dallas Fort Worth Lubbock
AVANCE – El Paso Chapter	Dallas El Paso Fort Worth	National Association of Community Health Centers	Brownsville Harlingen McAllen Waco
Casa de Amigos of Midland Texas	Midland Odessa	Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District	Harlingen Laredo McAllen
CitySquare	Dallas Fort Worth San Antonio	Project Transformation	Dallas Fort Worth
City Year	San Antonio	Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together	Schulenburg Weimar
College Forward	Austin Houston	Teach for America	Brownsville Dallas Fort Worth Harlingen McAllen
Communities in Schools Dallas Region	Dallas Fort Worth	Texas A&M International University	Corpus Christi Del Rio Laredo San Antonio
Communities in Schools of Central Texas	Austin	Texas A&M University	El Paso Harlingen Laredo McAllen
Communities in School in the Heart of Texas	Waco	The University of Texas at Austin – Charles A. Dana Center	Austin
Easter Seals – Central Texas	Abilene Austin Bryan Dallas El Paso Fort Worth Houston Midland Odessa San Angelo Tyler	The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College	Brownsville
Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas	Lufkin Nacogdoches	Travis County Department of Human Services	Austin
Harris County Department of Education	Houston	United Way of El Paso County	El Paso
		University of North Texas	Abilene Dallas Fort Worth Houston

While only larger cities are listed here, many members serve in non-urban areas. Only 57% (N=21) of the 2009-2010 AmeriCorps*Texas programs reported that at least 75% of their members served in an urban setting. Only 53% (N=17) of the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas programs reported the same. This suggests that many of the AmeriCorps*Texas service programs operate in smaller communities and rural areas, as evident from the list by the number of programs with service locations near the Texas-Mexico border.

Type of Organization

The majority of organizations sponsoring an AmeriCorps*Texas service program are community-based non-profit organizations (63%, N=24; 52%, N=23). Other organizational types included state agencies (4%; 9%), local education agencies or school districts (13%; 4%), and four-year colleges or universities (13%; 17%). There are also a few organizations that are located at four-year universities, but have completely different funding streams and actually operate as non-profit organizations. The vast majority of organizations (92%; 87%) are not faith-based, and at least half (50%, N=24; 65%, N=23) of the organizations reported that they were independent organizations rather than part of a national affiliation.

Years Funded

The number of years that organizations reported having received State (as opposed to National) funding for their AmeriCorps program varied. Data from the 2010-2011 survey showed that most organizations (59%, N=22) had received State funding for more than five years. Fourteen percent of organizations had received State funding for four to five years, and 18% had received funding for two to three years. Additionally, one organization reported having received State funding for their AmeriCorps program for only one to two years, while another organization was receiving State funding for the first time during that service year.

Why AmeriCorps?

In the 2009-2010 Program Manager Survey, most organizations (54%, N=24) reported that they host an AmeriCorps program to serve more people within the community. The next most common responses were to 'improve quality of services' and 'other' at 13% each. Interestingly, responses to the same question one year later were much more diverse (see Figure 10, below).

Qualitative responses that were reported in the 'other' category for 2010-2011 included, to 'meet dire community need for early reading intervention,' 'serve disadvantaged youth,' and 'to meet an education need for at-risk elementary students.'

Figure 10: Reason for Hosting AmeriCorps Program - 2010-2011
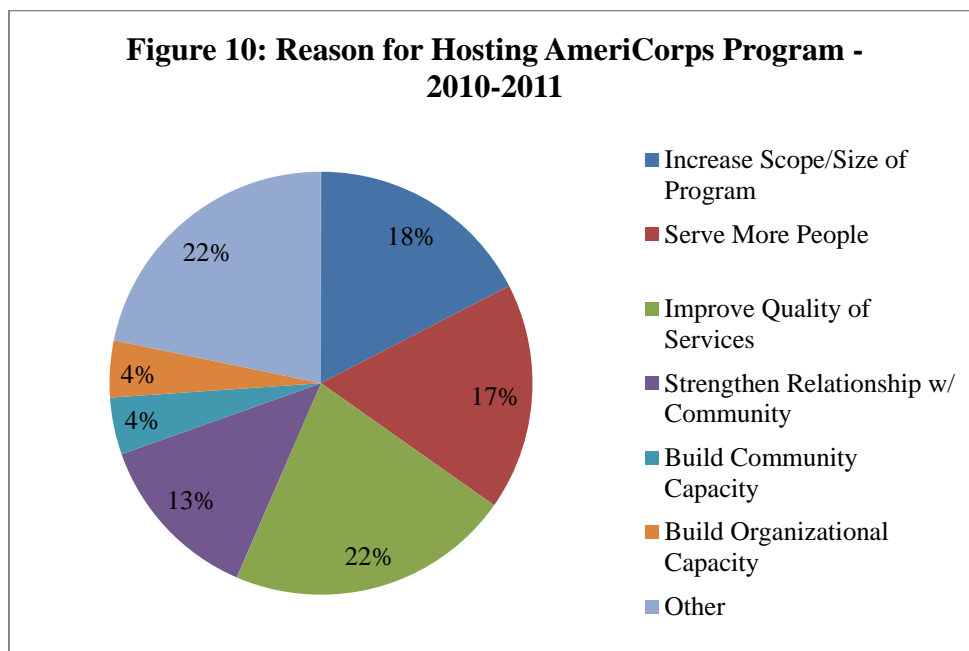
Similarly, program managers were asked to rank four goals for their AmeriCorps program, in terms of highest to lowest priority. For both service years, the vast majority (75%, N=24; 91%, N=22) rated 'providing needed services to clients' as their highest priority goal (see Table 9 for additional rankings).

Table 9: AmeriCorps Program Goals[20]

Rank	Program Goal	2009-2010	2010-2011
#1	Providing needed services to clients	75%	91%
#2	Developing members	67%	87%
#3	Strengthening community relationships	54%	73%
#4	Building organizational capacity	63%	70%

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[20] Percentages equal the highest proportion of responses for each goal.

Number of Members and Member Types

For the 2010-2011 service year, there were 1,552 AmeriCorps members enrolled in 23 AmeriCorps*Texas service programs.[21] As can be seen in Figure 11, two-thirds of all members enrolled in AmeriCorps*Texas programs were either full or half time. Across the multiple member types, these 1,552 members served a total of 1,603,900 service hours within their respective communities, benefitting countless recipients.

Figure 11: Member Type Distribution
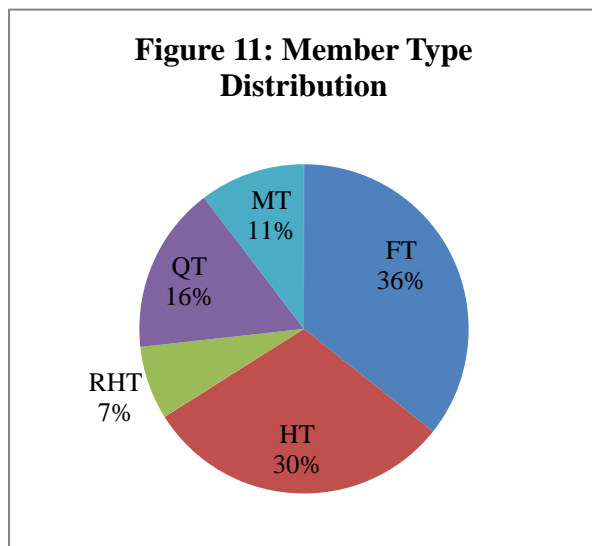
As previously stated, AmeriCorps programs can utilize a variety of member types to best fulfill the needs of their particular program and the communities in which they serve. Since the majority of members were either full or half time, it is not surprising that full time and half time member types are the most commonly utilized member types among all the AmeriCorps*Texas programs. In fact, over three-quarters of all AmeriCorps*Texas programs in both 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 utilized full time and/or half time members (either alone or in combination with other member types) to accomplish their program goals. By comparison, approximately one-quarter (range: 17-26%) of all AmeriCorps*Texas programs utilized only reduced half time, quarter time, and/or minimum time member types.

AmeriCorps*Texas programs utilize various combinations of member types in their programs as well. As can be seen in the table below, very few AmeriCorps*Texas programs used either four or five member types. Rather, one-third of the AmeriCorps*Texas programs utilized only one member type (almost always full or half time members), while the majority of programs (54% and 52%, for respective service years) used some combination of two or three different member types.

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[21] 1,552 is the total number of members enrolled at the beginning of the service year, as reported by AmeriCorps*Texas programs. This number does not include members who dropped out or were suspended.

Table 10: AmeriCorps*Texas Programs by Number of Member Types

	2009-2010	2010-2011
# of Member Types	Total # Programs per Member Type	Total # Programs per Member Type
5	2	2
4	1	1
3	4	5
2	9	7
1	8	8
Total	24	23

Where Members Are From

Because AmeriCorps*Texas programs recruit members from a wide variety of sources, as well as have member placement sites in a variety of locations, members are not necessarily from the community in which they serve, and sometimes come from another state entirely. In fact, only 46% of the 2009-2010 AmeriCorps*Texas service programs reported that at least 75% of their members came from the community in which they served, compared to 55% of the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps*Texas programs.

Community Impact of AmeriCorps*Texas

Program Manager Perspective

Overall, program managers reported that their AmeriCorps programs have a positive impact on the clients they serve, as well as on the community in which the programs operate (see Table 11).

Table 11: Program Effectiveness – Manager Perspective

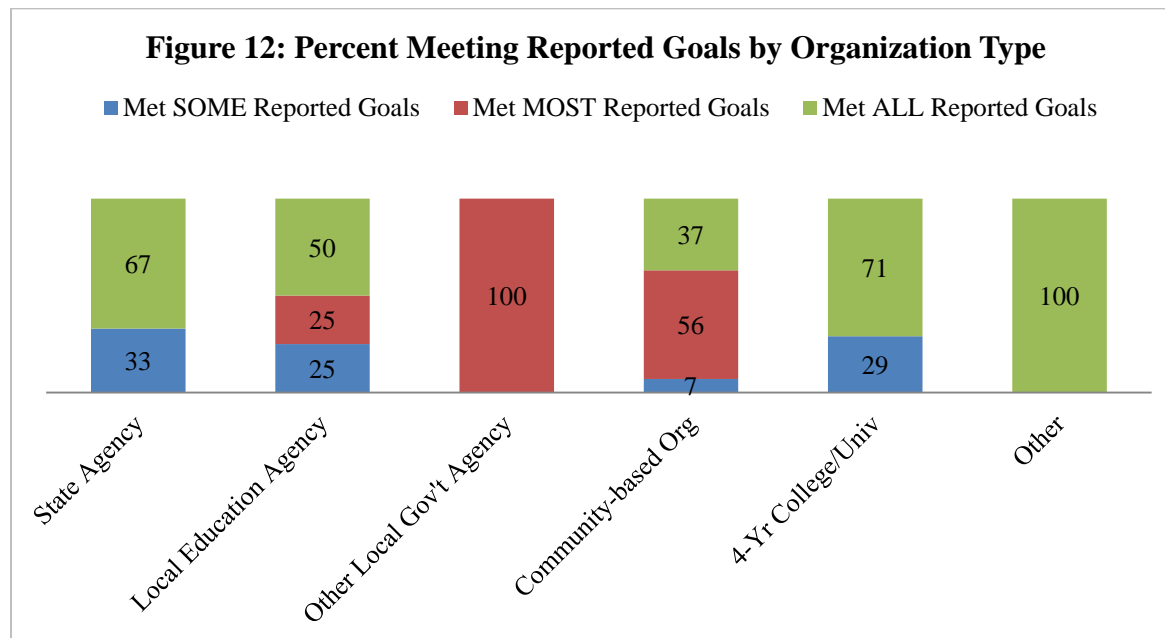| AmeriCorps programs…	2009-2010	2010-2011
…are very effective*	79%	83%
…make important contribution to community	96%	91%
…have a greater impact on clients than expected	79%	83%
…produce a lot of change in clients served	67%	70%

*note – all percentages shown represent the top response from a three or four point Likert-type item on the survey

To better identify any organizational traits of AmeriCorps*Texas programs that might impact effectiveness, we combined responses from both surveys to double the sample size. There were no statistically significant differences between the number of years receiving AmeriCorps State funding, or whether an organization was independent or part of a national affiliate, and the amount of change seen in the clients served by the program. Nearly equal percentages of independent organizations (67%, N=27) and national affiliates (70%, N=20) reported that their AmeriCorps programs produced a lot of change in the clients served.

There was a statistically significant difference between the type of organization and the amount of change seen in clients served. Sixty-seven percent (N=3, p=0.011) of state agencies reported seeing a lot of change in clients served, compared to 50% (N=4) of local education agencies, 0% (N=2) of other local government agencies, 74% (N=27) of community-based organizations, 57% (N=7) of 4-year colleges or universities, and 100% (N=4) of organizations that identified as 'other.' While the difference was statistically significant, we caution against drawing much meaning from that statistic given that over half of the sample was categorized as community-based organizations.

In addition to client and community effectiveness, most program managers (83%, N=24; 91%, N=23) reported that their AmeriCorps programs met or exceeded all or most of their goals reported to the OneStar Foundation. Figure 11 shows the percentages of organization types and whether they met or exceeded all, most, or some of their reported goals. One hundred percent (N=4) of the organizations that identified as 'other' reported meeting all of their reported goals to the funder, while only 37% (N=27) of community-based organizations reported the same. The

differences were statistically significant (p=0.045), but again should be interpreted taking into consideration the low number of organizations in each category other than community-based organizations.

Figure 12: Percent Meeting Reported Goals by Organization Type

■ Met SOME Reported Goals   ■ Met MOST Reported Goals   ■ Met ALL Reported Goals

| Organization Type	Met SOME	Met MOST	Met ALL
State Agency	33		67
Local Education Agency	25	25	50
Other Local Gov't Agency		100	
Community-based Org	7	56	37
4-Yr College/Univ	29		71
Other			100

There were no statistically significant differences between the number of years receiving AmeriCorps State funding, whether an organization was independent or a national affiliate, and the organization's ability to meet or exceed its reported goals.

Program managers were also asked to comment on their success in meeting program goals that were not reported, like objectives pertinent to organizational missions but not tracked by funders. The majority of program managers reported that they also met or exceeded all or most of their non-reported program goals (83%, N=23; 87%, N=23). Over half of independent organizations (54%, N=26) met all of their non-reported goals, compared to 45% (N=20) of national affiliates, although the difference was not statistically significant. There were no statistically significant differences between organization type, the number of years receiving AmeriCorps State funding, and the organization's ability to meet or exceed its non-reported goals.

Member Perspective

Overall Effectiveness


Figure 13: Effectiveness of Service by Member Type
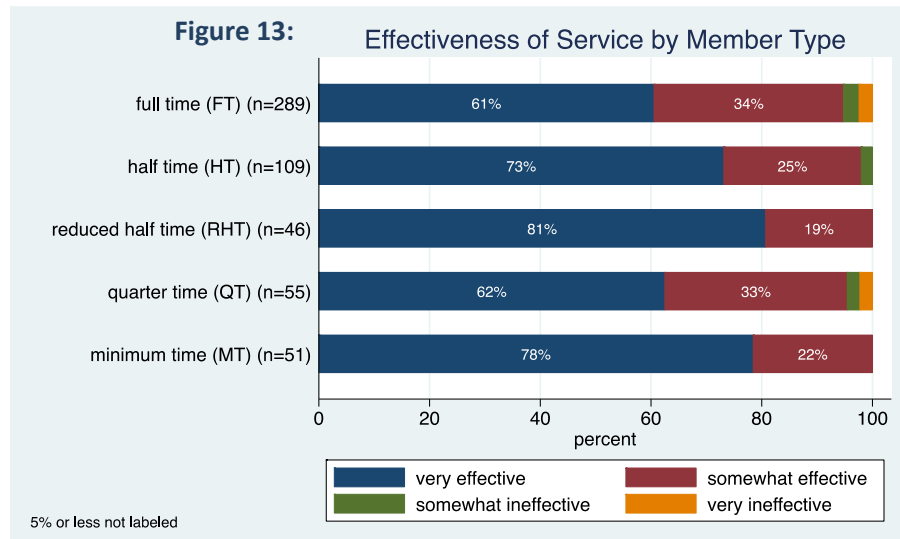
AmeriCorps*Texas members also thought that their service had a positive impact on the clients and communities in which they served, and overall, felt satisfied with the service that they provided. Approximately two-thirds of all AmeriCorps*Texas members (67%, N=660) reported that they felt that their service was very effective. When divided by member type, we found a statistically significant relationship (p=0.017) between member type and perceived effectiveness (see Figure 13). Reduced half time and minimum time members had the highest proportion of members who reported that they felt that their service was very effective, compared to full time, half time, and quarter time member types.

There was also a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between member age and perceived effectiveness (see Figure 14). AmeriCorps*Texas members who were between the ages of 22 and 26 had the lowest percentage reporting that they felt that their service was very effective when compared to members in every other age category.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a much higher percentage of members who received a stipend or living allowance during their service term (72%, N=542, p=0.000) reported that they felt that their service was very effective, compared to only 43% (N=115) of members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance.

Figure 14:   Effectiveness of Service by Age
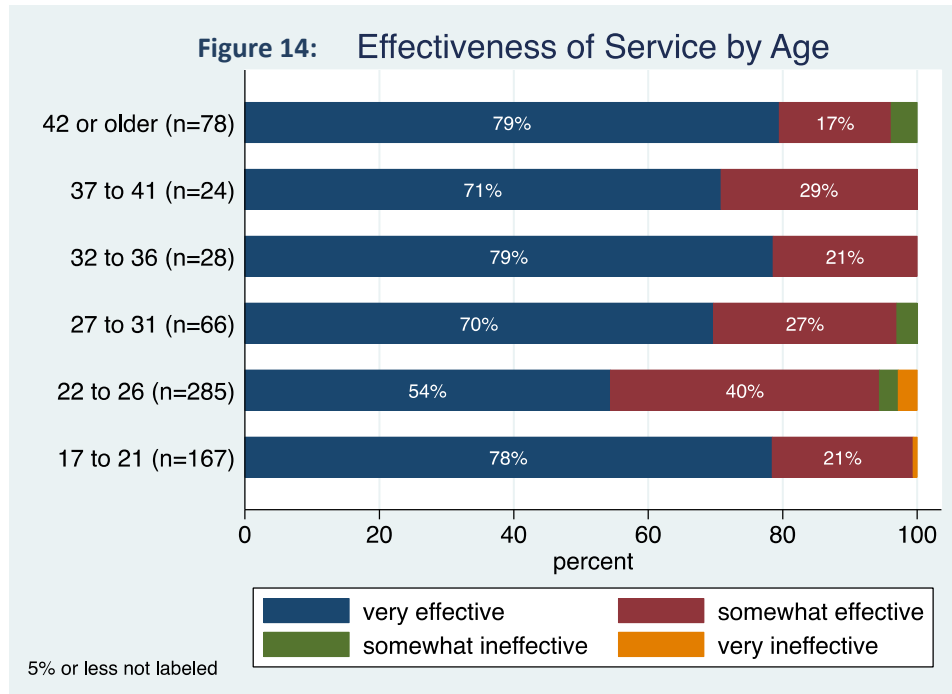
There were statistically significant differences (p=0.000) between perceived service effectiveness, reported Hispanic ethnicity, and whether or not members were from the community in which they did their service. Over eighty percent of Hispanics (81%, N=287) reported that they felt that their service was very effective, compared to only 58% (N=373) of non-Hispanics. Similarly, three-quarters of members who said that they were from the community in which they did their service (75%, N=359) reported that their service was very effective, while just over half (56%, N=301) of members who were from another community or state reported the same.

First year and second year AmeriCorps*Texas members were equally likely (67%, N=657) to report that they felt that their service was very effective. Similarly, there were no significant differences between males (63%, N=115) and females (67%, N=536) with respect to service effectiveness.

Community Impact
Overall, the majority of AmeriCorps*Texas members (92%, N=658) thought that the AmeriCorps program in which they served provided a unique service to the community, and

three-quarters of members (N=656) strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community. There was a statistically significant difference (p=0.001) between members who received a stipend or living allowance and those who did not. Nearly 80% (N=539) of those who received a stipend or living allowance strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community, compared to 61% (N=114) of members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance.

There was also a statistically significant relationship (p=0.004) between members' age and their perception that their service made an important contribution to the community. Members who were between 22 and 26 years of age (N=282) and between 27 and 31 (N=64) years old had a lower proportion of members who strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community (65% and 77%, respectively), compared to 87% of members age 42 and older (N=79), 88% of members ages 37-41 (N=24), 86% of members ages 32-36 (N=28), and 81% of the 17 to 21 year olds (N=167).
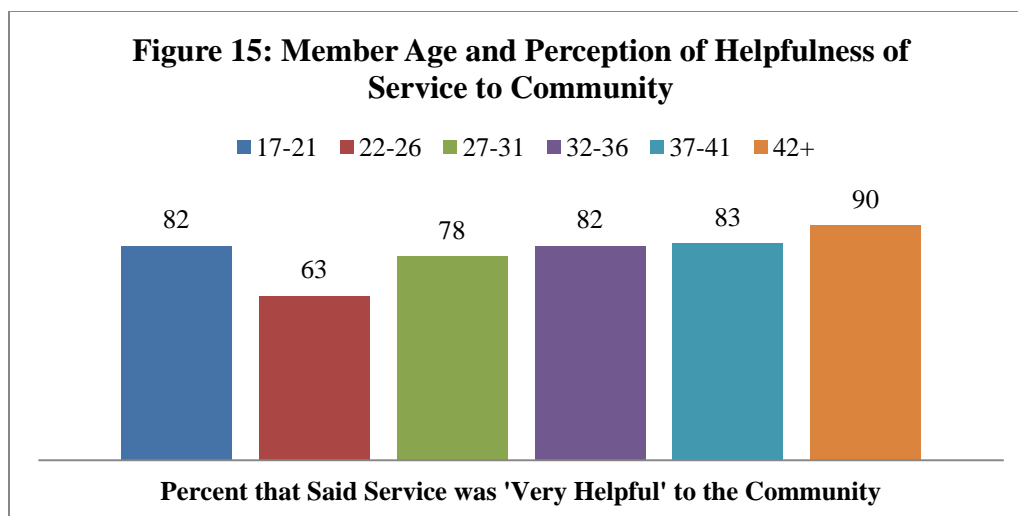
There was a higher proportion of Hispanics who reported that they strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community (84%, N=286, p=0.000) compared to non-Hispanics (68%, N=370). Additionally, members who were from the community in which they served (80%, N=358, p=0.010) reported that they strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community, compared to 69% (N=298) of members who were from another community or state that reported the same.

There were no statistically significant differences between member type, service year, or gender relative to members' strong agreement that their service made an important contribution to the community.

Helpfulness of Service to Community
Nearly three-quarters (74%, N=656) of all members reported that their service was very helpful to the community. There was a statistically significant difference (p=0.000) between receiving a stipend or living allowance and members' perception of how helpful their service was to the community. Seventy-eight percent (N=538) of members who received a stipend or living

allowance reported that their service was very helpful to the community, compared to only 57% (N=115) of members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance. There was also a statistically significant difference (p=0.000) between members' age and perception that their service was very helpful to the community (see Figure 15, below). Similarly to what we found with members' perceived service effectiveness, members in the 22-26 age group had the lowest percentage reporting that they felt that their service was very helpful to the community.

Figure 15: Member Age and Perception of Helpfulness of Service to Community

■ 17-21 ■ 22-26 ■ 27-31 ■ 32-36 ■ 37-41 ■ 42+

82   63   78   82   83   90

Percent that Said Service was 'Very Helpful' to the Community

There were statistically significant relationships between how helpful members reported their service to be to the community, Hispanic ethnicity, and whether or not members were from the community in which they served. The vast majority of Hispanics (88%, N=286, p=0.000) reported that their service was very helpful to the community, compared to 64% (N=370) of non-Hispanics. Likewise, 81% (N=356, p=0.001) of members who were from the community said that their service was very helpful to the community, compared to 67% (N=300) of members who were from another community or state.

The member type with the highest percentage of members reporting that their service was very helpful to the community was minimum time members (86%, N=65). Similarly, 82% (N=57) of reduced half time members, 79% (N=149) of half time members, 71% (N=87) of quarter time members, and 70% (N=286) of full time members reported that they felt that their service was very helpful to the community, though differences were not statistically significant. Additionally,

no statistically significant differences were found between year of service or gender and members' perception that their service was very helpful to the community.

Client Impact

The vast majority (88%, N=657) of all members strongly agreed that they made a difference in the life of at least one person, and over ninety percent (92%, N=656) of members thought that the AmeriCorps program in which they served provided a direct benefit to clients. A much lower percentage of AmeriCorps*Texas members (51%, N=656), however, reported that they actually saw a lot of change in clients as a result of their service. Just under half of all members (43%) said that they saw some change in clients.

There was a statistically significant difference (p=0.002) between service year and the change that members saw in clients as a result of their service. Sixty-one percent (N=181) of second year members, compared to only 47% (N=471) of first year members, reported that they saw a lot of change in clients as a result of their service. There was also a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between Hispanic ethnicity and the change seen in clients as a result of members' service. Almost sixty percent (59%, N=283) of Hispanics reported that they saw a lot of change in clients, compared to only 45% (N=373) of non-Hispanics.
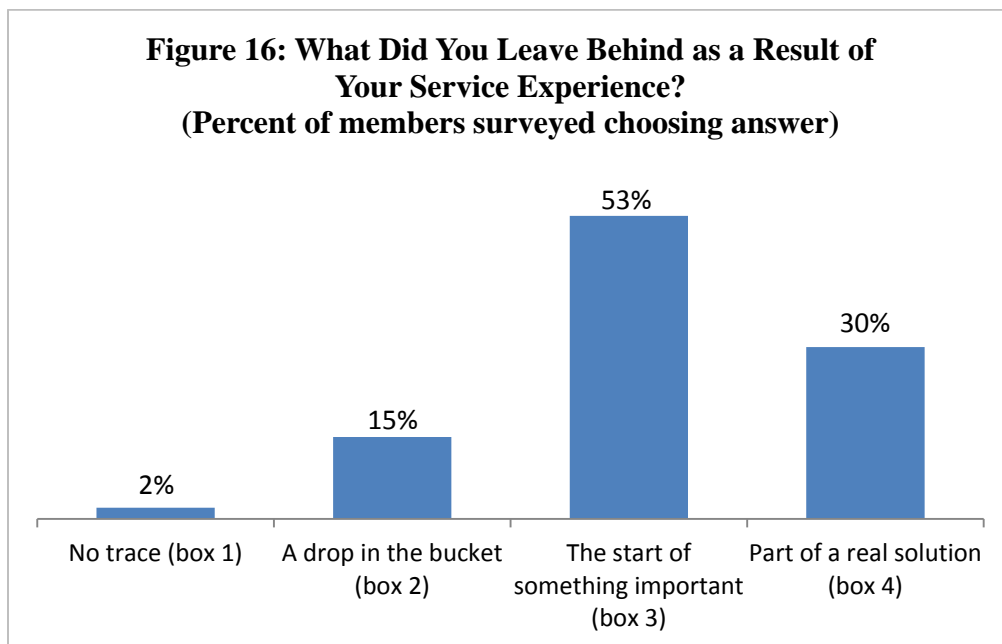
We did not find any statistically significant differences between member type, age, gender, or being from the community and the change that members saw in clients as a result of their service. A higher percentage of members who received a stipend or living allowance (53%, N=539), compared to those who did not (43%, N=114), reported that they saw a lot of change in clients as a result of their service. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Impact on Organization

The AmeriCorps*Texas member survey did not specifically focus on how the members made an impact on the organization, however, the majority of members (81%, N=659) strongly agreed that they made a contribution to the organization, and just over three-quarters (77%, N=751) thought that they had helped to strengthen operations at the organization in which they served.

Overall Impact

In general, AmeriCorps*Texas members had a positive perception of the overall impact that their service left behind. Over 80% (N=751) felt that they had either left behind the start of something important or part of a real solution (see Figure 16).

**Figure 16: What Did You Leave Behind as a Result of
Your Service Experience?
(Percent of members surveyed choosing answer)**

There was a statistically significant difference (p=0.023) between service year and the impact that members felt they left behind as a result of their service. Thirty-eight percent of second year members (N=184) thought that they left behind part of a real solution, compared to 27% (N=471) of first year members. There was also a statistically significant relationship between Hispanic ethnicity and service impact. Thirty-four percent (N=284, p=0.000) of Hispanics reported that they left behind part of a real solution, compared to 27% (N=374) of non-Hispanics. Additionally, 33% (N=358, p=0.009) of members who were from the community in which they served thought that they left behind part of a real solution, compared to 27% (N=300) of members who were from another community or state.

There were no statistically significant differences, however, between member type, gender, or age and the impact that members felt they left behind as a result of their service. Thirty-two percent of members who received a stipend or living allowance (N=540) felt that they left behind part of a real solution as a result of their service experience, while only 22% (N=115) of

members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance reported the same. The difference, though, was not statistically significant.
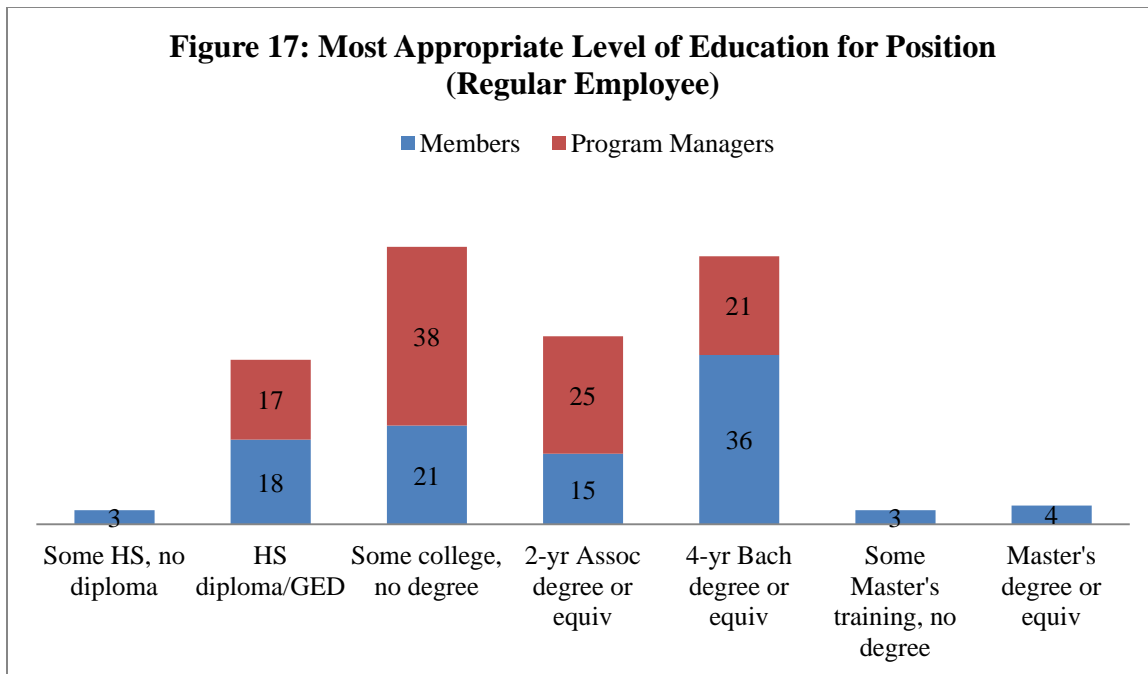
Service Satisfaction

The majority of AmeriCorps*Texas members (74%, N=657) reported that they strongly agreed that they felt like their AmeriCorps service time was well spent. Additionally, nearly three-quarters (72% N=656) of members felt very satisfied with their service experience, and 78% (N=656) of members said that they absolutely felt that they accomplished what they set out to do.

Value Added of AmeriCorps*Texas

Education and Work Experience

Both AmeriCorps*Texas members and AmeriCorps*Texas program managers were asked to identify an appropriate level of education and amount of work experience that they would expect a regular paid employee of the organization to have, if he or she were to complete the same tasks as an AmeriCorps member in their particular service program. Members and program managers differed in their opinion of the most appropriate level of necessary education, but were generally in agreement regarding the appropriate amount of work experience.

AmeriCorps*Texas members appear to believe that their service positions require a higher level of knowledge and skill than is perceived by the program managers (see Figure 17 for comparison).

**Figure 17: Most Appropriate Level of Education for Position
(Regular Employee)**

■ Members ■ Program Managers

Some HS, no diploma	HS diploma/GED	Some college, no degree	2-yr Assoc degree or equiv	4-yr Bach degree or equiv	Some Master's training, no degree	Master's degree or equiv
3	18 / 17	21 / 38	15 / 25	36 / 21	3	4

*Note: numbers are percentages; totals may be >100 due to rounding;
program manager data from 09-10 survey only*

In terms of work experience, members and program managers are in agreement. Over half of AmeriCorps*Texas members (52%, N=658) believed that the most appropriate level of work experience for an employee charged with the same tasks as they was one to two years of experience. Similarly, 63% (N=24) of AmeriCorps*Texas program managers reported the same. In both groups, the next most frequent response was two to three years of work experience (20% of members; 17% of program managers), followed by no work experience (16% of members; 13% of program managers).

*Perceived Economic Value of AmeriCorps*Texas Service*

In general, most AmeriCorps members are paid a stipend or living allowance in exchange for their service. According to CNCS regulations, there is a minimum and maximum stipend amount that is allowable to be paid to full time members. The four other part time member types only have restrictions on the maximum allowable amount. The actual amounts within the allowable ranges that are paid to particular member types are determined by the host organizations. Thus, it is very likely that a half time member, for example, at one organization might receive a different stipend amount at another organization, even though the number of service hours that the member would contribute during service term is the same.
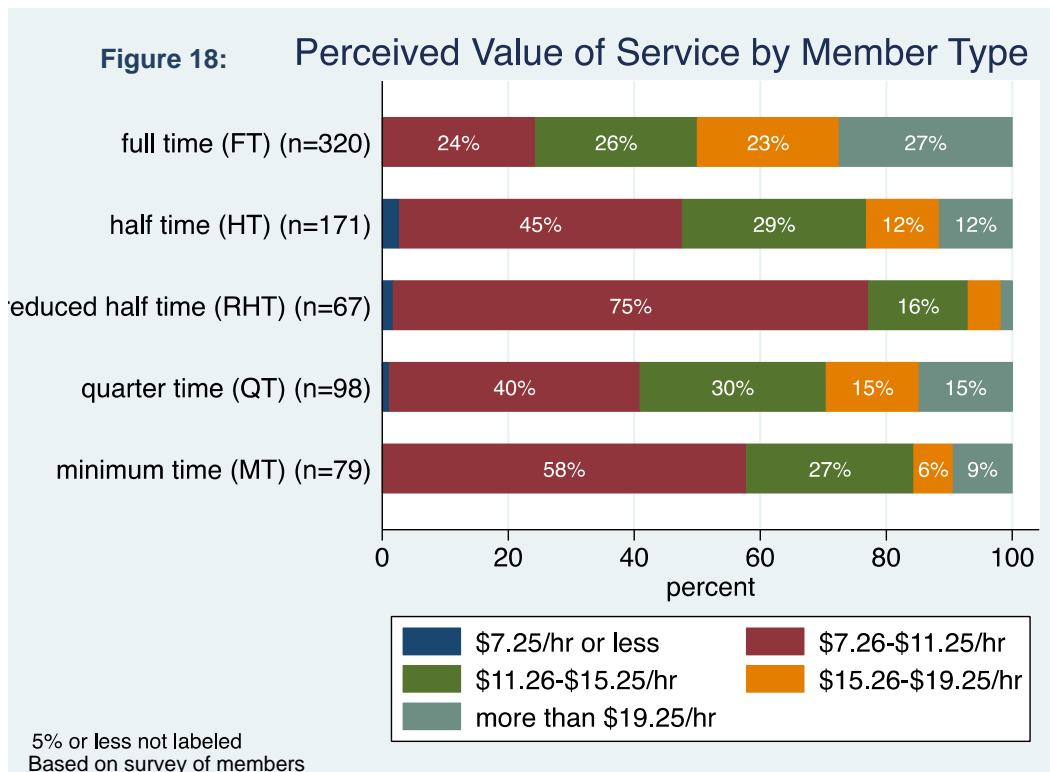
While the stipend or living allowance is not considered an actual wage, we wanted to determine the hourly pay rate for AmeriCorps*Texas members at each organization, as if it were a wage. To do so, we divided the stipend or living allowance amount by the number of hours served for each particular member type at all of the organizations. For organizations that utilized multiple member types, the hourly rate was calculated for each member type and then averaged so that each organization – regardless of variance in member types – had one average hourly pay rate. The average hourly rate across all organizations during the 2009-2010 service year was $6.28 (range: $2.62 - $8.89). The average hourly rate increased slightly for the 2010-2011 service year to $6.57 (range: $5.82 - $8.41).

Both members and program managers were asked to identify an hourly pay range that would be a fair salary to pay someone from the open market to do the same type of work as the AmeriCorps members. In order to determine an actual hourly dollar value (as opposed to a range), we took the midpoints of each range and weighted them according to the survey responses. When comparing AmeriCorps*Texas members and program managers, the members' perception of what their service is worth as an hourly rate was, on average, $1.72 per hour higher than what was reported by the AmeriCorps*Texas program managers (see Table 12).
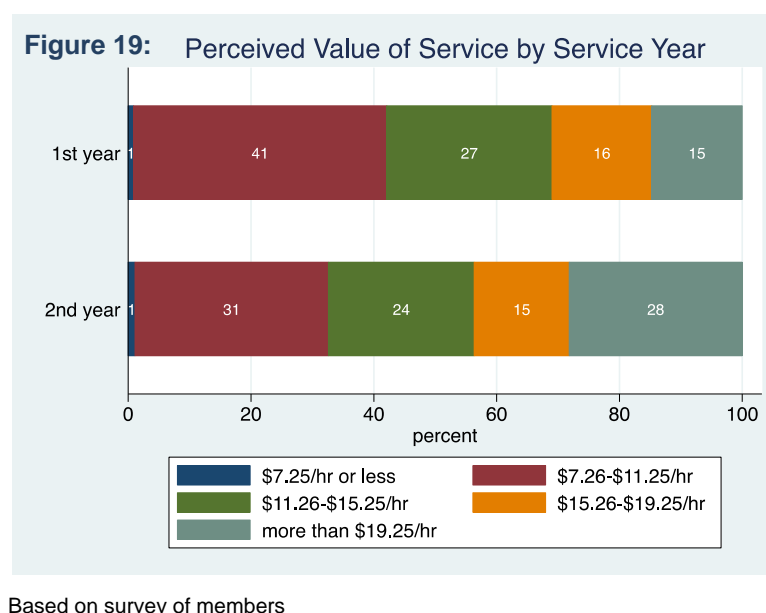
Table 12: Perceived Economic Value of AmeriCorps Service			
	Members	**09-10 Program Managers**	**10-11 Program Managers**
Economic Value of Service	$13.44/hour	$11.79/hour	$11.66/hour
	Difference	*-$1.65/hour*	*-$1.78/hour*

There were statistically significant differences between members' perceived value of service and a host of variables. The percentage of full time AmeriCorps*Texas members who valued their service at more than $19.25 an hour was nearly double that of quarter time members (27%, N=320 compared to 15%, N=98, p=0.000) and three times as high as minimum time members (9%, N=79).

Figure 18: Perceived Value of Service by Member Type

Member Type	$7.25/hr or less	$7.26-$11.25/hr	$11.26-$15.25/hr	$15.26-$19.25/hr	more than $19.25/hr
full time (FT) (n=320)		24%	26%	23%	27%
half time (HT) (n=171)		45%	29%	12%	12%
reduced half time (RHT) (n=67)		75%	16%		
quarter time (QT) (n=98)		40%	30%	15%	15%
minimum time (MT) (n=79)		58%	27%	6%	9%

5% or less not labeled
Based on survey of members

The percentage of AmeriCorps*Texas members who did not receive a stipend or living allowance and reported that the value of their service was more than $19.25 an hour (47%, N=115, p=0.000) was significantly higher than the percentage of members who did receive a stipend and reported the same perceived value (13%, N=535).

Figure 19: Perceived Value of Service by Service Year

|	$7.26-$11.25/hr	$11.26-$15.25/hr	$15.26-$19.25/hr	more than $19.25/hr
1st year	41	27	16	15
2nd year	31	24	15	28

Based on survey of members

Service year was another variable that presented a statistically significant difference in relation to members' perceived value of service (see Figure 19). The proportion of second year members reporting that the value of their service was worth over $19.25 an hour (28%, N=181, p=0.026) was almost twice the proportion of first year members with the same perceived value of service (15%, N=468).

We also found statistically significant differences between member age, level of education at beginning of service, and gender and the members' perceived value of service. A third of AmeriCorps*Texas members in the 27 to 31 age category (N=64, p=0.000) reported that their service was worth more than $19.25 an hour, compared to 6% of 17 to 21 year olds (N=166), 22% of 22 to 26 year olds (N=281), 11% of 32 to 36 year olds (N=27), 8% of 37 to 41 year olds (N=24), and 19% of members age 42 or older (N=78).

Perhaps not surprisingly, AmeriCorps*Texas members who had higher levels of education at the beginning of their service also reported in higher proportions than members with lower levels of education that they valued their service at more than $19.25 an hour. Roughly a third each of members with a Bachelor's degree (N=274, p=0.000), some Master's level training (N=39), and a Master's degree (30%, N=26) perceived the value of their service to be $19.25 an hour or more, compared to only 8% of members with some high school education (N=46), no members with a high school diploma or GED (N=76), 8% of members with some college education but no degree (N=250), and 6% of members with an Associate's degree (N=35). The differences were statistically significant. There were no statistically significant differences, however, between the amount of work experience that members had prior to the beginning of their service and the members' perceived value of how much their service was worth.

In terms of gender, males placed a higher dollar value on their service than did females, and the difference was statistically significant (Figure 20). Nearly one-third of male AmeriCorps*Texas members (30%, N=115, p=0.024) perceived the value of their service to be over $19.25 an hour, compared to only 16% (N=528) of female AmeriCorps*Texas members.

Figure 20: Perceived Value of Service by Gender

Based on survey of members
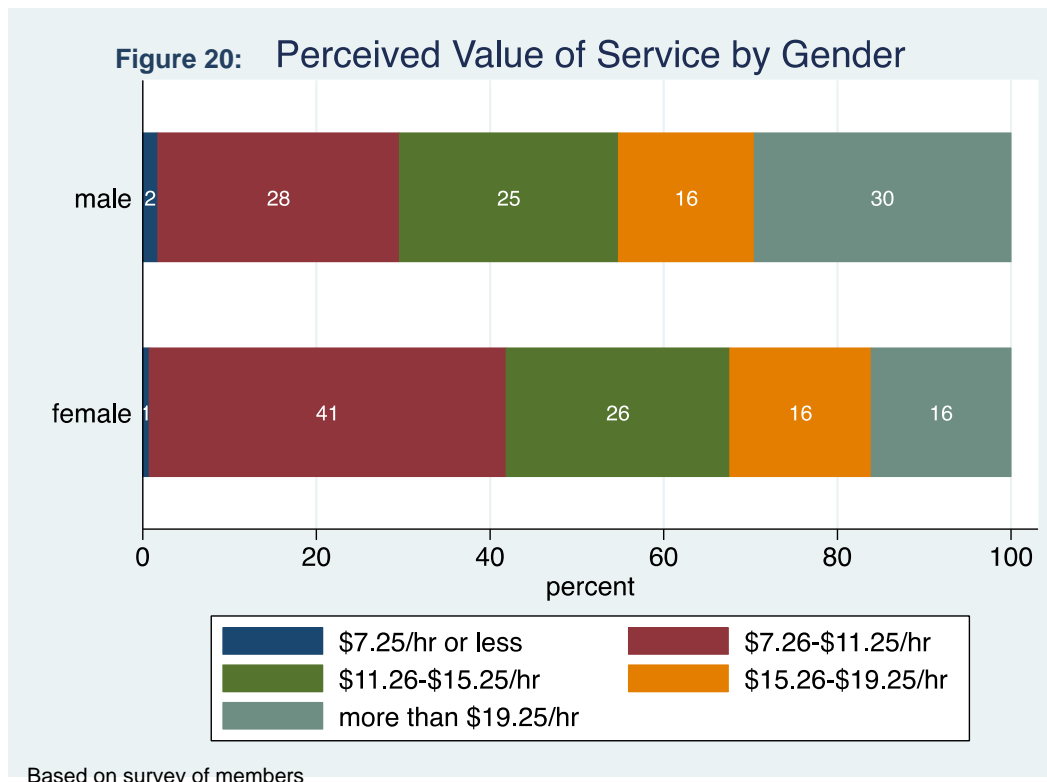
Finally, there were also statistically significant relationships between Hispanic ethnicity and whether or not members were from the same community in which they served and members' perceived value of their service. Slightly over a quarter (26%, N=371, p=0.000) of non-Hispanics reported that their service was worth more than $19.25 an hour, compared to only 9% (N=282) of Hispanics. And less than a third (29%, N=298, p=0.000) of members who were from a different community or state than that in which they served reported that their service was worth more than $19.25 an hour, compared to just 10% (N=355) of members who were from the community.

To provide a reference point for AmeriCorps*Texas members' perception of what their service was worth, they were also asked in the survey to assess their own personal worth in the labor market, taking into account their own education level, work experience, and skill set. The members' average response for their perception of their own self-worth was higher than their perception of the value of their service, at $13.92 an hour (compared to $13.44/hour).

Additionally, to put into perspective the AmeriCorps*Texas program managers perception of the economic value of their members' service, they were also asked to rate the value of both their least and most valuable members, indicating how much they would have paid to each, with all other members in their program falling somewhere in between (see Figure 21, below).

**Figure 21: Program Manager Perception of
Least and Most Valuable Members**
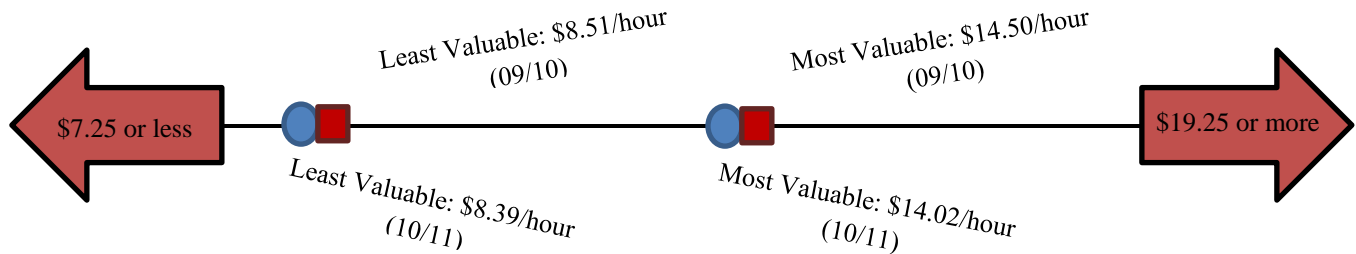
For the 2009-2010 service year, AmeriCorps*Texas program managers rated their least valuable members slightly higher than they did for members serving in the following service year ($8.51/hour compared to $8.39/hour). Likewise, program managers also rated their most valuable members slightly higher for the 2009-2010 service year than they did for members serving in the 2010-2011 service year ($14.50/hour compared to $14.02/hour). This assessment is in line with the AmeriCorps*Texas program managers' perception of the economic value of their members' service, in that the value was higher for the 2009-2010 service term ($11.79/hour) compared to the 2010-2011 service term ($11.66/hour).

*Regionally Adjusted Value of AmeriCorps*Texas Service Programs*
The regionally adjusted value of AmeriCorps*Texas service programs was a constructed measure based on the following formula:

$$\text{regionally adjusted value} = \frac{\text{program manager perception value}}{\text{ACCRA Cost of Living Index}} \times 100$$

Rather than using national data on the average wage level – which would not take regional cost differences into consideration – we chose to adjust the program manager perception of the value of service (what program managers think the service is worth) by the ACCRA Cost of Living Indices in order to account for the economic diversity throughout the state. While AmeriCorps

program managers in El Paso and Houston, for example, may assess the same dollar value for their members' service, the difference in the cost of living in each city would affect what that dollar value is actually worth. By regionally adjusting the program managers' perceived value of service, we are taking into consideration the wide range in cost of living indices among all the AmeriCorps*Texas service programs and attempting to put the programs on an even playing field.

Unlike other parts of the country, like Massachusetts, for example, Texas has an overall lower cost of living than the national average of 100.[22] The average cost of living score of all the AmeriCorps*Texas service program locations was 86.3. Schulenburg/Weimar had the lowest cost of living (79.3), while the cost of living in Tyler ranked the highest (95.1).

Table 13 lists the regionally adjusted values of the AmeriCorps*Texas service programs for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 service years. The range for 2009-2010 was $25.73 per hour to $8.18 an hour, with an average regionally adjusted value of $13.55 an hour. In 2010-2011, the range was similar ($22.51/hour - $7.66/hour), and the average regionally adjusted value was $13.24 an hour.

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[22] Overall cost of living in Texas is 88; in Massachusetts it is 132. Data retrieved on May 9, 2012 from http://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/state

Table 13: Regionally Adjusted Value of AmeriCorps*Texas Service Programs[23]

AmeriCorps Program	2009-2010 Regionally Adjusted Value	2010-2011 Regionally Adjusted Value
National Association of Community Health Centers	$25.73	NA
Harris County Department of Education	$19.85	$14.26
Teach for America	$16.85	$22.51
Easter Seals – Central Texas	$16.63	$15.50
The University of Texas at Austin – Charles A. Dana Center	$16.61	$20.31
University of North Texas	$15.47	$13.22
Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together	$14.82	$12.30
Communities in Schools Dallas Region	$14.52	$16.63
Project Transformation	$14.52	$7.66
City Year	$14.47	$11.07
College Forward	$13.86	$11.68
United Way of El Paso County	$12.92	$15.32
Communities in School in the Heart of Texas	$12.51	$14.84
Travis County Department of Human Services	$12.39	$14.50
Texas A&M University	$11.68	$12.07
Amarillo Independent School District	$11.55	$13.92
Texas A&M International University	$11.45	$10.28
AVANCE – El Paso Chapter	$11.01	$8.75
Jumpstart for Young Children	$10.88	NA
The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College	$10.86	$12.10
Casa de Amigos of Midland Texas	$10.06	$18.10
CitySquare	$9.59	$9.59
Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas	$8.81	$13.06
Communities in Schools of Central Texas	$8.18	$8.18
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District	NA	$8.67
AVERAGE	**$13.55**	**$13.24**

An average regionally adjusted value of $13.55 an hour is less than the rate of $21.79 per hour that the Independent Sector, a national network of nonprofits, foundations, and corporate donors, reported as its 2011 equivalent average hourly wage for a volunteer's time. The regionally adjusted average value, as reported here, is also lower than the Independent Sector's hourly estimate for the State of Texas, which is $21.91 an hour.[24]

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[23] AmeriCorps programs are ordered from highest to lowest value according to the 2009-2010 Regionally Adjusted Value column.

[24] Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time. Retrieved on May 17, 2012 from http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

Net Value of AmeriCorps*Texas Service Programs

The net value of AmeriCorps*Texas service programs is a constructed measure based on the following formula:

net value = regionally adjusted value - average hourly rate

The net value takes into consideration the regionally adjusted value of what program managers think the service at their AmeriCorps program is worth, and reduces that value by what members at each particular AmeriCorps*Texas program are actually paid. Thus, a higher net value indicates a greater difference between how much the service is valued by the program managers and how much the members earn. A higher net value, then, means that the AmeriCorps program is getting more, economically, from their members than what their members are costing them. As shown in Table 14, the average net value for the 2009-2010 service year was $6.85/hour (range: $1.47/hour - $19.02/hour). The average net value for the 2010-2011 service year was $6.29/hour, with a range from $0.89/hour to $13.22/hour.

Table 14: Net Value of AmeriCorps*Texas Service Programs

AmeriCorps Program	2009-2010 Net Value	2010-2011 Net Value
National Association of Community Health Centers	$19.02	NA
Harris County Department of Education	$13.22	$7.41
City Year	$10.35	$5.18
Easter Seals – Central Texas	$10.11	$8.75
The University of Texas at Austin – Charles A. Dana Center	$9.44	$13.05
Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together	$8.11	$5.73
Communities in Schools Dallas Region	$7.99	$10.02
Project Transformation	$7.68	$0.89
College Forward	$7.61	$3.85
University of North Texas	$6.58	$13.22
United Way of El Paso County	$6.21	$8.27
Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas	$6.18	$6.36
Travis County Department of Human Services	$5.73	$7.56
The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College	$5.68	$6.25
Communities in School in the Heart of Texas	$5.58	$7.74
Texas A&M University	$5.47	$5.82
AVANCE – El Paso Chapter	$4.49	$2.04
Texas A&M International University	$3.70	$2.48
Jumpstart for Young Children	$3.63	NA
CitySquare	$3.29	$3.23
Amarillo Independent School District	$3.14	$5.51
Casa de Amigos of Midland Texas	$2.85	$10.90
Communities in Schools of Central Texas	$1.47	$1.24
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District	NA	$2.85
Teach for America	NA	NA
AVERAGE	**$6.85**	**$6.29**

Two observations can be made about these results. First, the net values for a few of the organizations vary dramatically between the years. These vast differences in net value between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 service years are likely a result of drastically different responses from the Program Manager Survey regarding the program managers' perceptions of the value of service. It is possible that different AmeriCorps staff members completed the survey for each year, thus accounting for those large differences in value perception. Another possible explanation for the severe variance within a couple of sites is that the low outliers were the result of misunderstanding the question in one year. These small problems aside, the overall results for net value added across all sites remains similar from year to year ($6.85 in 2009/10 and $6.29 in 2010/11), reinforcing the overall finding that there is a substantial net value added across sites in Texas.

Second, net value is a measurement of financial impact. Yet many organizations frequently have an array of mission-related objectives other than financial considerations for hosting AmeriCorps programs. Though a useful measure of the economic impact of AmeriCorps programs, net value should thus not be considered as a single comprehensive measure of any single program.

Overall, when we combine data from the Program Manager Surveys from both service years, we found that over half (57%, N=46) of AmeriCorps*Texas program managers reported that utilizing AmeriCorps members saves money for their organizations (see Figure 22). Almost 70% (69%, N=26) of independent organizations reported that utilizing AmeriCorps members saved their organization money, compared to only 40% (N=20) of nationally affiliated organizations. However, this difference was not statistically significant. There also were no statistically significant differences between types of organization or the number of years receiving AmeriCorps State funding and the financial impact of utilizing AmeriCorps members.

Figure 22: Financial Impact on Organizations by Utilizing AmeriCorps Members

- Don't Know 26%
- Loses Money 2%
- Breaks Even 15%
- Saves Money 57%
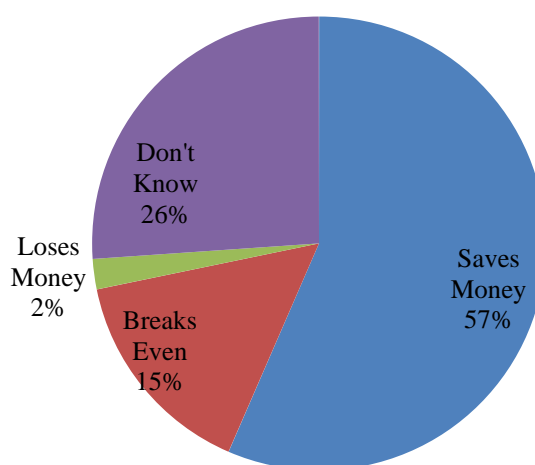
Traits of Impactful and Value Adding AmeriCorps*Texas Programs

Program Manager Perspective

Due to the small sample size and limited variance in program manager program effectiveness responses, we had difficulty determining many statistically significant relationships between specific programmatic features and program effectiveness. We attempted to run logistic models on program managers' responses about the cost savings of their AmeriCorps program and

whether or not their program met or exceeded all of the reported and non-reported goals. However, any meaningful results were hindered by the sample size and lack of variance.

Because there was slightly more variance in the value variables, we were able to compile some results relative to program managers' perception of what the service is worth, as well as the net value and regionally adjusted value. See Table 15, below, for results.

Table 15: Effects of Program Characteristics on Value of AmeriCorps Member Service (Impact in US Dollars)

	Dependent variables		
	Estimated salary on the open market	Net value	Regionally adjusted net value
5 or fewer FTEs involved in management of AmeriCorps program	**-3.369****	**-3.258****	**-3.559****
	(1.423)	(1.561)	(1.685)
Primary staff member spent over 90% of time on AmeriCorps management/administration	-1.517	-1.273	-1.815
	(0.925)	(1.184)	(1.149)
Developing members is one of two top priorities	**3.317***	2.852	**3.963***
	(1.775)	(2.029)	(2.116)
Orientation of over 2 weeks	**-4.699****	**-5.499*****	**-6.044*****
	(1.732)	(1.286)	(1.631)
Provided transition training at end of AmeriCorps service	**-3.551***	**-3.043***	**-3.649***
	(1.773)	(1.700)	(1.904)
Total AmeriCorps program budget (millions of dollars)	0.605	-0.344	-0.391
	(1.754)	(1.309)	(1.611)
Securing community support (scale 0-12)	**0.757*****	**0.618*****	**0.811*****
	(0.180)	(0.189)	(0.194)
Organizational systems & management (scale 0-9)	**0.859*****	**1.156*****	**0.869*****
	(0.282)	(0.252)	(0.295)
Collaboration (scale 0-4)	-0.995	0.486	**-1.264***
	(0.584)	(1.364)	(0.626)
Fiscal oversight & assurance (scale 0-15)	1.052	**1.643****	1.204
	(0.750)	(0.690)	(0.825)
Affiliate of national organization	1.346	1.064	1.944
	(1.332)	(1.228)	(1.442)
Faith-based organization	-1.634	-1.119	-2.218
	(1.371)	(1.484)	(1.544)
Organization has received state funding for more than 5 years	-1.564	**-1.988***	-1.454
	(1.008)	(1.059)	(1.086)
Org has been in operation 3 or fewer years	1.757	1.008	1.113
	(1.097)	(1.438)	(1.254)
Constant	-15.425	-28.349***	-9.317
	(11.146)	(9.377)	(12.176)
Observations	46	44	46
R-squared	0.6116	0.6302	0.6169

Cluster robust standard errors in parentheses; significant at confidence levels of * 90%, ** 95% & ***99%

The results show that when program managers identify *developing members as one of the top two priorities* for their AmeriCorps program, there is an increase in the estimated market salary for the position by $3.32 per hour. Additionally, there is an almost $4.00 an hour increase in the regionally adjusted value. The effects on both variables are significant at the 90% confidence level. On the other hand, when the members' *initial orientation is over two weeks*, or 80 hours in duration, there is a significant decrease in dollar value per hour across all three value variables (significant at the 95% and 99% confidence intervals).

The scaled independent variables of *organizational systems and management*, *fiscal oversight and assurance*, and *securing community support* (all derived from the Organizational Capacity Surveys) and their corresponding effects are explained below:

Organizational systems and management refers to organizational characteristics related to organizational stability and the ability to function in a professional, organized, and planned manner, particularly in response to disruptive events. *Organizational systems and management* also encompasses the organization's ability to provide current technology resources to all of its employees. This characteristic is indicative of the overall strength and soundness of the organization as a whole. An increase by one point on the *organizational systems and management* scale leads to an eighty-six cent an hour increase in estimated market salary, an increase in net value by $1.16 per hour, and an increase in the regionally adjusted value by $0.87 per hour. The effects on all three variables are significant at the 99% confidence level.

Fiscal oversight and assurance is a function of the organization's ability to have its fiscal house and human resources in order. Because of all the financial and administrative requirements that accompany any AmeriCorps program, having written policies and procedures related to fiscal management and personnel issues – that are up to date and readily available – plays a large role in an organization's ability to successfully manage the requirements for administering the program. *Fiscal oversight and assurance* also refers to the organization's past or current experience with receiving other federal grant monies. The more experience an organization has with receiving and complying with requirements for federal grants, the greater the impact on the

added value of AmeriCorps. An increase by one point on the *fiscal oversight and assurance* scale leads to a $1.64 an hour increase in net value (significant at the 95% confidence level). A one point increase on the *fiscal oversight and assurance* scale also led to an increase in estimated market salary and regionally adjusted value. However, the effect for both variables was not significant.

The variable s*ecuring community support* is a programmatic characteristic that we observed in our fieldwork as being pertinent to the program's impact in the community. It refers to the program personnel's ability to effectively and frequently meet with, share information, communicate best practices, and collaborate with community leaders and other nonprofit (or similar) organizations to ensure that program efforts are adequately meeting the needs of the community and not duplicating services. As will be illustrated in the case studies to follow, being able to effectively secure and maintain community support is a vital feature of program impact, and it also positively affects the value added of AmeriCorps as well. For each increase by a point on the *securing community support* scale, $0.76 per hour of value is added to the estimated market salary, $0.62 per hour is added to the net value, and $0.81 per hour is added to the regionally adjusted value. The effects on all three variables are significant at the 99% confidence level.

Member Perspective
In order to identify any specific program features that might influence overall program impact or value from the members' perspective, we created three independent variables. The variables were developed by combining two or more questions from the Member Survey that were related to programmatic features that influence members' sense of service preparedness and overall support. The variables that we created – service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality – were selected because their antecedent questions were corollary to the same questions on the Program Manager Survey, except asked from the members' perspective. (The methodology for the creation of these variables was described on pages 18-20.) We found that all three programmatic traits significantly influenced members' perception of the impact of their service, and to a lesser extent, the value of their service.

Impact of Service

There was a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between the three programmatic traits of service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality and what members felt they left behind as a result of their service (see Table 16).

Table 16: Members' Perception of Service Impact Relative to Select Programmatic Traits

	Service Clarity			Orientation Quality			Communication Quality		
	Excellent	*Adequate*	*Inad*	*Excellent*	*Adequate*	*Inad*	*Excellent*	*Adequate*	*Inad*
Part of a real solution	38%	26%	14%	39%	28%	16%	36%	27%	18%
Start of something important	51%	57%	53%	55%	55%	42%	54%	54%	51%
N	328	240	83	282	262	95	351	193	114

p=0.000 significance level for each relationship

In all cases, except for the relationship between service clarity and the survey response 'start of something important,' there was a higher percentage of members who were in the excellent category compared to the adequate and inadequate categories.

We also looked at the probability relationships between the above variables. The probability charts shown in Figures 23-27 were produced using logistical regression analysis. They indicate what the likely outcome for a single test case would be based on variation within our three independent variables: service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality. Because of the methodology used, the sum of the probabilities may be greater than 100%. The charts also contain error bars that indicate a 95% confidence interval. In general, what is evident from this analysis is that members are more likely to evaluate their own impact highly as service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality all improve.

Figure 23: Programmatic Trait Effects on Service Impact

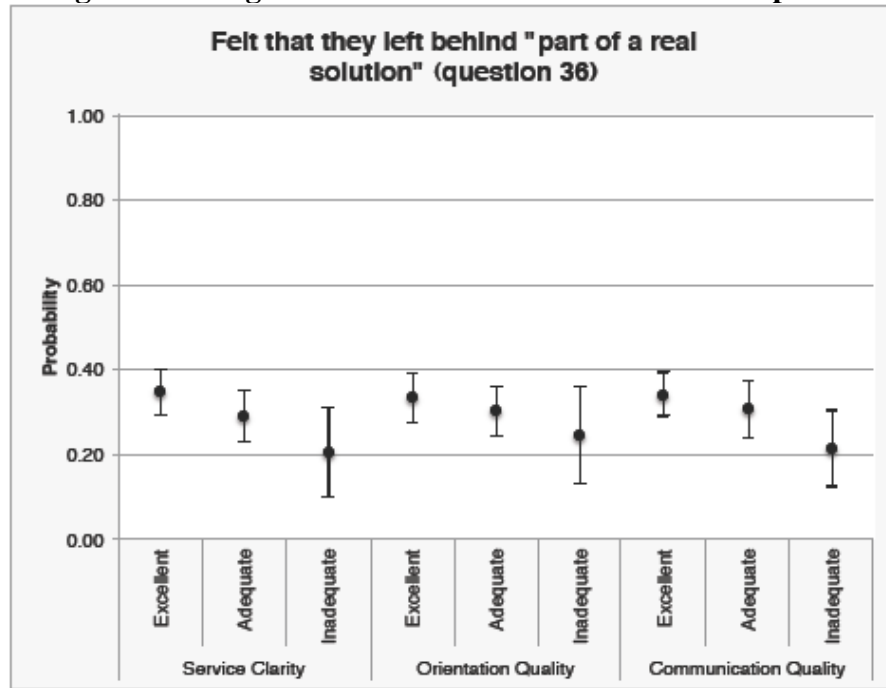Felt that they left behind "part of a real solution" (question 36)

Figure 23, above, shows the relationship between service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality and the members' sense that they had made an important contribution (left behind "part of a real solution" to a community problem). As the chart demonstrates, the probability that AmeriCorps*Texas members reported they left behind part of a real solution as a result of their service increases according to improvements in service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality. However, as indicated by the error bars, the differences across these categories were not statistically significant.

Figure 24: Programmatic Trait Effects on Service Impact
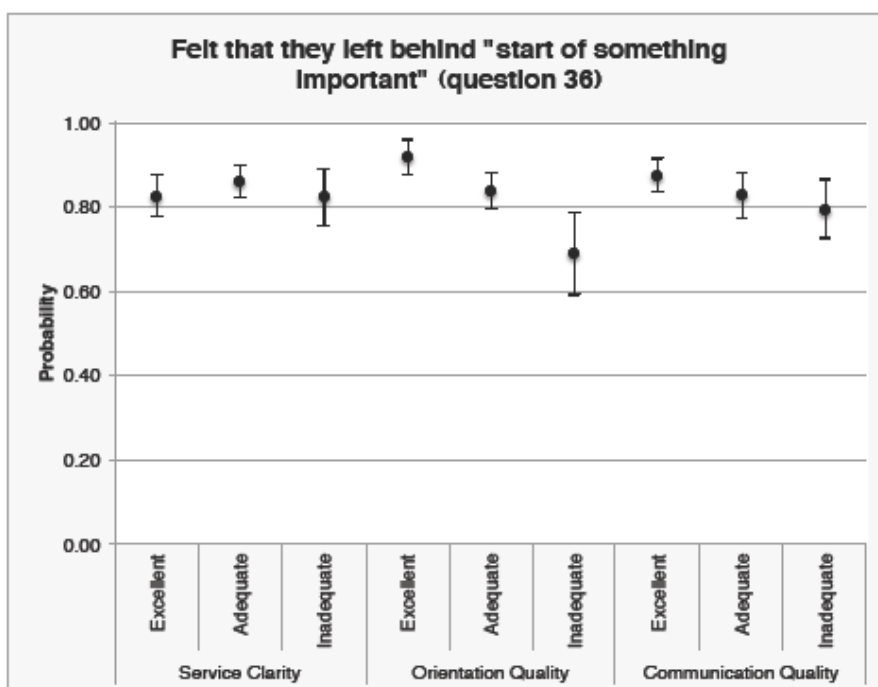
Figure 24 shows that, with regards to service clarity and communication quality, the probability that AmeriCorps*Texas members reported that they left behind the start of something important is approximately 80% or higher, although there are no significant differences across the excellent, adequate, or inadequate categories. With regards to orientation quality, however, the probability that members with excellent orientation quality responded that they left behind the start of something important is much higher than members with inadequate orientation quality. The difference there is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Effectiveness of Service

There was a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between service clarity and members' perception of service effectiveness. Over eighty percent (82%, N=329) of AmeriCorps*Texas members who had excellent service clarity reported that they felt their service was very effective, compared to only 57% (N=241) of members with adequate service clarity, and 36% (N=83) of members with inadequate service clarity.

Similar statistically significant results (p=0.000) were found between orientation quality and service effectiveness. Eighty-seven percent (N=282) of members with excellent orientation

quality reported that their service was very effective, while 57% (N=264) of members with adequate orientation quality and 38% (N=95) of members with inadequate orientation quality reported the same.

Communication quality and service effectiveness also displayed a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000). Seventy-eight percent (N=352) of members with excellent communication quality reported that their service was very effective, compared to 60% (N=194) of members with adequate communication quality, and 41% (N=114) of members with inadequate communication quality.

Figure 25, below, shows the increases in the probabilities that AmeriCorps*Texas members reported that they felt that their service was very effective, across the three programmatic traits. Results for both service clarity and orientation quality are significant at the 95% confidence level.

Figure 25: Programmatic Trait Effect on Service Effectiveness
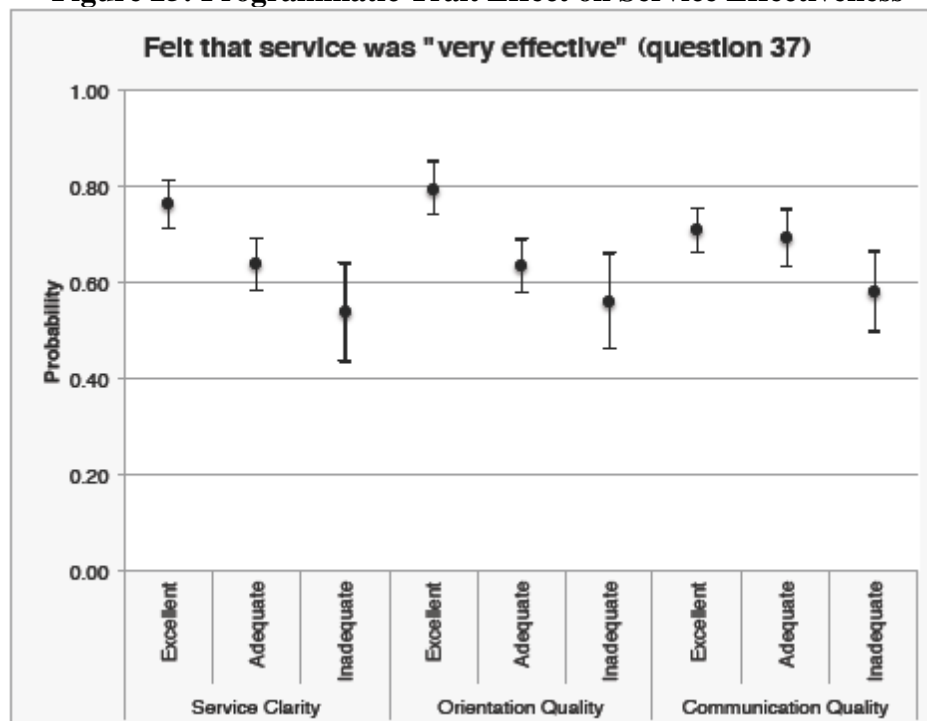
Contribution of Service to Community

Nearly ninety percent (87%, N=328) of members with excellent service clarity strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community in which they served. Sixty-

eight percent (N=238) of members with adequate service clarity and 48% (N=83) of members with inadequate service clarity reported the same. The relationship between service clarity and members' agreement that their service made an important contribution to the community was statistically significant (p=0.000).

The vast majority of members with excellent orientation quality (92%, N=282) strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community, compared to 68% (N=260) of members with adequate orientation quality and 46% (N=95) of members with inadequate orientation quality. The difference was statistically significant (p=0.000).

Likewise, there was also a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between communication quality and members' agreement that their service made an important contribution to the community. Eighty-four percent (N=350) of members with excellent communication quality strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community. Seventy-one percent (N=193) of members with adequate communication quality and 53% (N=113) of members with inadequate communication quality strongly agreed as well.

Figure 26: Programmatic Trait Effects on Contribution to Community
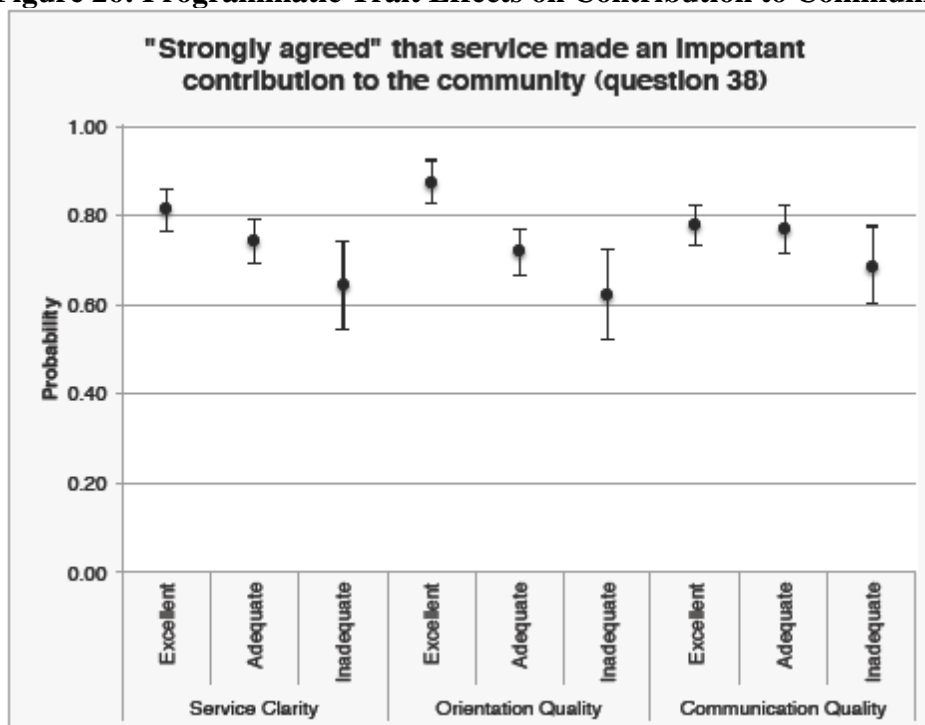
As seen in Figure 26, above, having either excellent service clarity or excellent orientation quality significantly increases the probability that members strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community. The relationship for both programmatic traits is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Helpfulness of Service to Community

There was a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between service clarity and members' perception of the helpfulness of their service to the community. Eighty-eight percent (N=329) of members with excellent service clarity reported that they thought their service was very helpful to the community. Sixty-six percent (N=238) of members with adequate service clarity and 44% (N=82) of members with inadequate service clarity reported the same.

The vast majority of members with excellent orientation quality (92%, N=282) thought that their service was very helpful to the community, compared to 67% (N=261) of members with adequate orientation quality, and only 47% (N=94) of members with inadequate orientation quality. The relationship between the two variables was statistically significant (p=0.000).

Additionally, there was also a statistically significant relationship (p=0.000) between communication quality and members' perception of the helpfulness of their service to the community. Eighty-five percent (N=350) of members with excellent communication quality thought that their service was very helpful to the community, compared to 70% (N=192) of members with adequate communication quality, and 50% (N=114) of members with inadequate communication quality.

As seen in Figure 27, below, the probability that members reported that their service was very helpful to the community was approximately 80% or more when members also had excellent service clarity, orientation quality, or communication quality. Additionally, the probability that members reported 'very helpful' increased across inadequate, adequate, and excellent categories for each programmatic trait. That relationship was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level for both service clarity and orientation quality.

Figure 27: Programmatic Trait Effects on Helpfulness of Service to Community
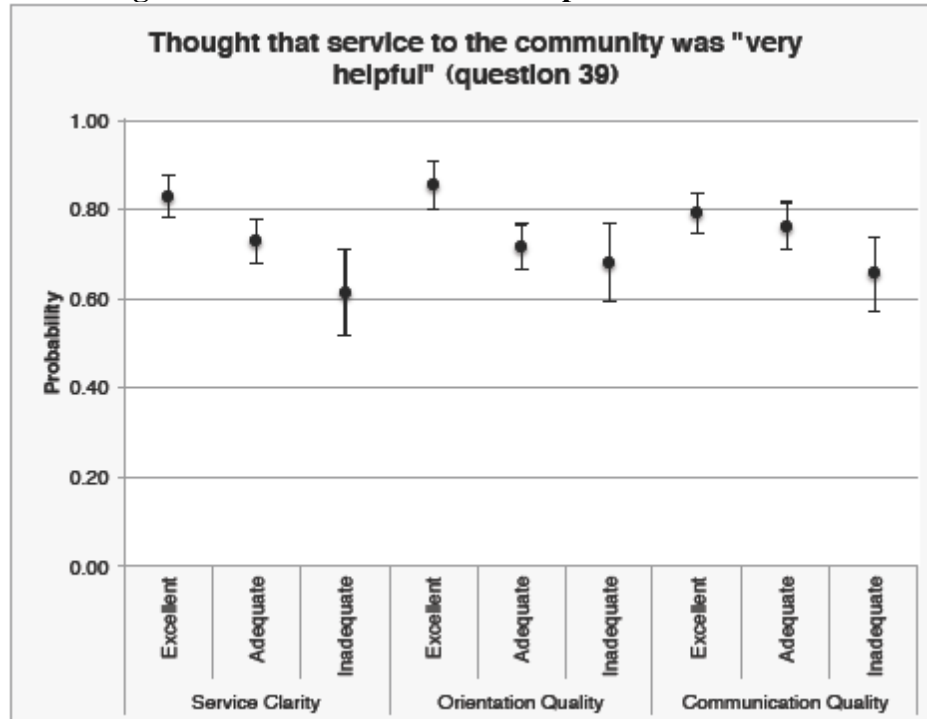
Change Observed in Clients Served

We also found statistically significant relationships (p=0.000) between service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality and the change members saw in the clients that they served (see Table 17).

Table 17: Percent of Members who Saw a Lot of Change in Clients Served by Programmatic Trait

	Service Clarity			Orientation Quality			Communication Quality		
	Excellent	*Adequate*	*Inad*	*Excellent*	*Adequate*	*Inad*	*Excellent*	*Adequate*	*Inad*
Saw a lot of change	62%	43%	31%	66%	44%	31%	60%	40%	42%
N	327	239	83	279	262	96	347	194	115

p=0.000 significance level for each relationship

For each programmatic trait, a higher proportion of members who were in the excellent category reported that they saw a lot of change in the clients that they served when compared to the proportion of members in the adequate and inadequate categories that reported the same.

Service Value

With regards to members' perception of how much their service was worth, we found a statistically significant relationship (p=0.020) between service clarity and value perception. However, given the wide range of hourly wage categories, it is difficult to identify where the difference is most noted. There were no statistically significant differences between orientation quality and communication quality and members' perception of the value of their service.

Logistic Modeling for Selected Member Survey Responses and Programmatic Traits

When the selected effectiveness and service value variables are analyzed in a logistic model, some of the earlier significant effects that we saw with Chi-square and probability analyses disappear. However, some new statistically significant relationships also appear.

Table 18: Logistic Model Results for Selected Survey Responses

	Felt that they left behind "part of a real solution" (question 36)	Felt that they left behind "start of something important" (question 36)	Felt that service was "very effective" (question 37)	"Strongly agreed" that service made an important contribution to the community (question 38)	Thought that service to the community was "very helpful" (question 39)	Saw a "lot of change" in the clients served as a result of their service (question 43)	Felt that service was worth $16.26/hour or more (question 50)	Felt that service was worth $19.26/hour or more (question 50)
Service Clarity Excellent	1.408	0.897	2.461***	1.871***	2.620***	1.543**	0.749	1.896**
Orientation Quality Excellent	1.421	2.776***	3.050***	3.514***	3.135***	1.592**	1.091	1.285
Communication Quality Excellent	1.441*	1.832**	1.553**	1.464*	1.659**	1.879***	0.654**	0.769
Second year	1.510**	1.475	0.649*	0.864	1.069	1.232	1.642**	1.990***
Received a stipend	2.032**	1.269	2.937***	2.069***	2.646***	1.548	0.152***	0.296***
Not from community served	0.880	0.822	1.357	1.646**	1.774**	1.424*	1.543**	1.047
Full time	1.225	1.506	1.061	1.494	0.893	2.307***	1.485*	1.644*
Male	0.769	0.709	0.867	0.973	0.927	0.849	2.164***	2.232***
Hispanic	1.250	1.227	1.759**	1.443	3.158***	1.360	0.710	0.391***
33 years or older	0.990	1.235	1.594	2.061*	1.864	1.725*	1.095	0.631
Less than Bachelor's degree	0.615**	2.219**	2.569***	2.638***	1.696*	1.758**	0.514***	0.291***
More than 5 years work exp	1.426	0.816	0.792	1.134	1.273	0.689	1.320	2.490***
Constant	0.130***	1.417	0.156***	0.238***	0.182***	0.123***	2.275**	0.306***
N	626	626	628	624	624	623	707	707
pseudo R2	0.059	0.113	0.225	0.178	0.231	0.106	0.210	0.228

odds ratios reported; significance determined using robust standard errors at confidence levels: * 90%, ** 95%, *** 99%

When controlling for all other independent variables as reported in the above table, we can see the significant effect that all three programmatic traits have on members' perception of the

impact of their service, in a positive direction, for almost all service effectiveness variables. The odds that a member with excellent service clarity reporting that his or her service was very effective are 146% higher than for members who had only adequate or inadequate service clarity. Additionally, members with excellent service clarity have much higher odds (162%) of reporting that their service was very helpful to the community when compared to members with adequate or inadequate service clarity.

Orientation quality seems to be a large driver of higher impact. The odds of members with excellent orientation quality reporting either that their service was very effective, that they strongly agreed that their service made an important contribution to the community, or that their service was very helpful to the community are all over 200% when compared to members with only adequate or inadequate orientation quality.

And when controlling for all other independent variables in the table, having excellent communication quality – as opposed to adequate or inadequate communication quality – significantly increases the odds that members report the highest service impact category on each of the assessed impact variables.

It should be noted, as well, that many of the statistically significant service impact effects that were found in bivariate analyses, both with Hispanics and with members who were from the community, are not evident when controlling for other factors. Additionally, it is interesting to note that education level plays a role in service impact. Except for the variable 'part of a real solution', members with less than a Bachelor's degree had higher odds of reporting the highest service impact category on all of the other impact variables compared to member with a Bachelor's degree or higher, when controlling for all other factors.

In terms of service value, the categories of '$16.26/hour or more' and '$19.26 an hour or more' were selected as value cut-offs because they were the only values that showed any sort of statistically significant results. As can be seen in the aforementioned table, having excellent service clarity increases the odds that a member would report his or her value of service at $19.26 an hour or more by 89%, compared to members with adequate or inadequate service

clarity. Orientation quality has no statistically significant effect on service value, whereas communication quality actually has a negative effect on service value. On average, males have much higher odds (116%) of assessing the value of their service at over $16.26 an hour when compared to females and controlling for other factors in the table.

Discussion

The results from the present evaluation indicate that AmeriCorps*Texas service programs have a positive effect on both the clients served and the communities in which they operate, and are adding value to the communities in which they operate. The results also demonstrate that there are several organizational structures and program management characteristics that increase the value added of AmeriCorps programs throughout the State of Texas, as well as have an effect on AmeriCorps*Texas members' perceptions of program effectiveness and community impact.

It is heartening to know – perhaps, even more so for AmeriCorps*Texas program managers, who may not always be privy to the information – that AmeriCorps*Texas members feel that they are positively impacting the individuals with whom they work and the communities in which they serve as a result of their service. Across multiple impact measures, we can see that AmeriCorps*Texas members, regardless of the nature of their service activities, report high levels of seeing a difference as a result of their service. Given the diversity of service locations, service activities, and member experiences throughout Texas, a common unifier among the AmeriCorps*Texas program portfolio is that members believe that their service matters and lives are changed as a result. While member perception of service impact is not a perfect measure of actual service impact, it provides an easily comparable perspective that is applicable to all AmeriCorps*Texas programs, regardless of service activity or individual performance measures.

In terms of service value, the results from this evaluation are consistent with other cost-benefit analyses that have shown AmeriCorps programs to be cost effective. On average, AmeriCorps*Texas service programs are spending less per hour per member ($6.57/hour) than they perceive the service to be worth ($13.24/hour), resulting in an average added net value of $6.29 an hour. The average overall added value results in a benefit to the community of at least

$1,800 per minimum time member to nearly $10,700 per full time member throughout the course of a service term.[25] Not only is the service that AmeriCorps members provide cost-saving for the organizations with whom they serve, but it saves money for the communities in which they serve as well. As illustrated in several of the case studies included later in this report, in many cases the service that AmeriCorps members provide to the community would be financially unfeasible for the community partner organizations to provide on their own. In that sense, the value added of AmeriCorps members to their communities is even greater than the results here show, as the services that they provide might otherwise cease to exist without their presence.

There are two important factors that the reader should keep in mind when interpreting the added value of AmeriCorps in communities: the impact of perception, and the possible influence of gender. First, except for the actual average hourly rate that members receive as a stipend or living allowance, all other values are based on member and program manager perceptions of what they believe the service to be worth. Using individual perception to assess the economic value of AmeriCorps programs is challenging due to the fact that AmeriCorps programs, by their very existence, are based on the idea of service and giving back to a community, as opposed to focusing on dollars and cents. AmeriCorps programs are not meant to replace workers, nor are they designed to compete economically with similar types of jobs. The stipend or living allowance that is provided to members is "modest" at best. And even though the AmeriCorps website states that "most members find the living allowance to be adequate to cover their needs," [26] this does not always seem to be the case – particularly for members who serve in areas with a higher cost of living or have competing economic needs. Low stipends or living allowances notwithstanding, it is clear, however, based on the empirical data presented here and in conversations with current members, that the majority of members join AmeriCorps to help communities in need.

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[25] Figures calculated by multiplying the average added net value by the number of service hours that minimum time and full time members, respectively, complete during their service term.

[26] *AmeriCorps: Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved May 16, 2012 from
http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/faq/index.asp#getpaid

The idea of service as a primary incentive for AmeriCorps programs in general is helpful to keep in mind when considering program managers' and members' perceptions about the value of service. Assigning an economic value to an act of service is an entirely different way of assessing worth for these respondents. It is possible that the emphasis on service as the forefront and backdrop of any AmeriCorps program may lead to underestimates of the dollar value of service. During our on-site fieldwork for the case studies, members found it challenging to identify an actual hourly dollar amount that quantified the value of their service. It could be that the members with whom we spoke simply did not have a basis for comparison, or it could have been that putting an economic value on their service was a new and different concept, and their perceived value estimation should be viewed with the given context in mind.

A second factor to consider when interpreting the added value of AmeriCorps service in communities is the potential impact of gender on program managers' and members' value perceptions. The data here show that male members consistently perceive their service to have a higher dollar value than female members value their service. This outcome is consistent with findings in social psychology and gender studies literature that discuss income disparities between men and women as associated with women's lower perceptions of wage entitlement in comparison to men.[27] Given that female members overwhelmingly outnumber male members in AmeriCorps*Texas service programs, and that a higher proportion of AmeriCorps*Texas program managers are women rather than men, it would not be unrealistic to consider that the perceived value of AmeriCorps service might actually be higher than reported if the gender distribution in either group was more balanced and did not so heavily skew to female. Regardless, however, of whether or not the service value perceptions are slightly undervalued, what is clear is that AmeriCorps*Texas service programs do add value and have a positive impact on their communities.

Several organizational structure and program management characteristics influence both value and impact. A few of these characteristics are also reflected in volunteer management literature as best practices for ensuring the success of volunteer programs, such as: screening potential

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[27] See studies by Desmarais & Curtis (1997), Hogue & Yoder (2003), and Major (1994) in the References section of this report.

volunteers to ensure appropriate entry and placement in the organization (*service clarity*); orientation and training to provide volunteers with the skills and outlook needed (*orientation quality*); and management and ongoing support of volunteers by paid staff to ensure that volunteer time is not wasted (*communication quality*).[28] Additionally, Hager and Brudney analyzed nine volunteer management practices commonly associated with successful volunteer programs, and three of the practices parallel a few of the organizational and program management characteristics that we have identified here as influencing value and/or program impact: regular supervision and communication with volunteers (*communication quality*); written policies and job descriptions for volunteer involvement (*service clarity, fiscal oversight and assurance*); and training and professional development opportunities for volunteers (*orientation quality, member development*).[29] Our findings thus share common themes with the current literature on volunteer management best practices.

To summarize the characteristics that influence impact and value, we return to the model that was developed as a guide for the AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation (Figure 28).

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[28] Jean Baldwin Grossman and Kathryn Furano (2002) *Making the Most of Volunteers*. Public/Private Ventures.

[29] Mark A. Hager and Jeffrey L. Brudney (2004) *Volunteer Management Practices and Retention of Volunteers*. The Urban Institute.

Figure 28: Evaluation Model – AmeriCorps*Texas Results
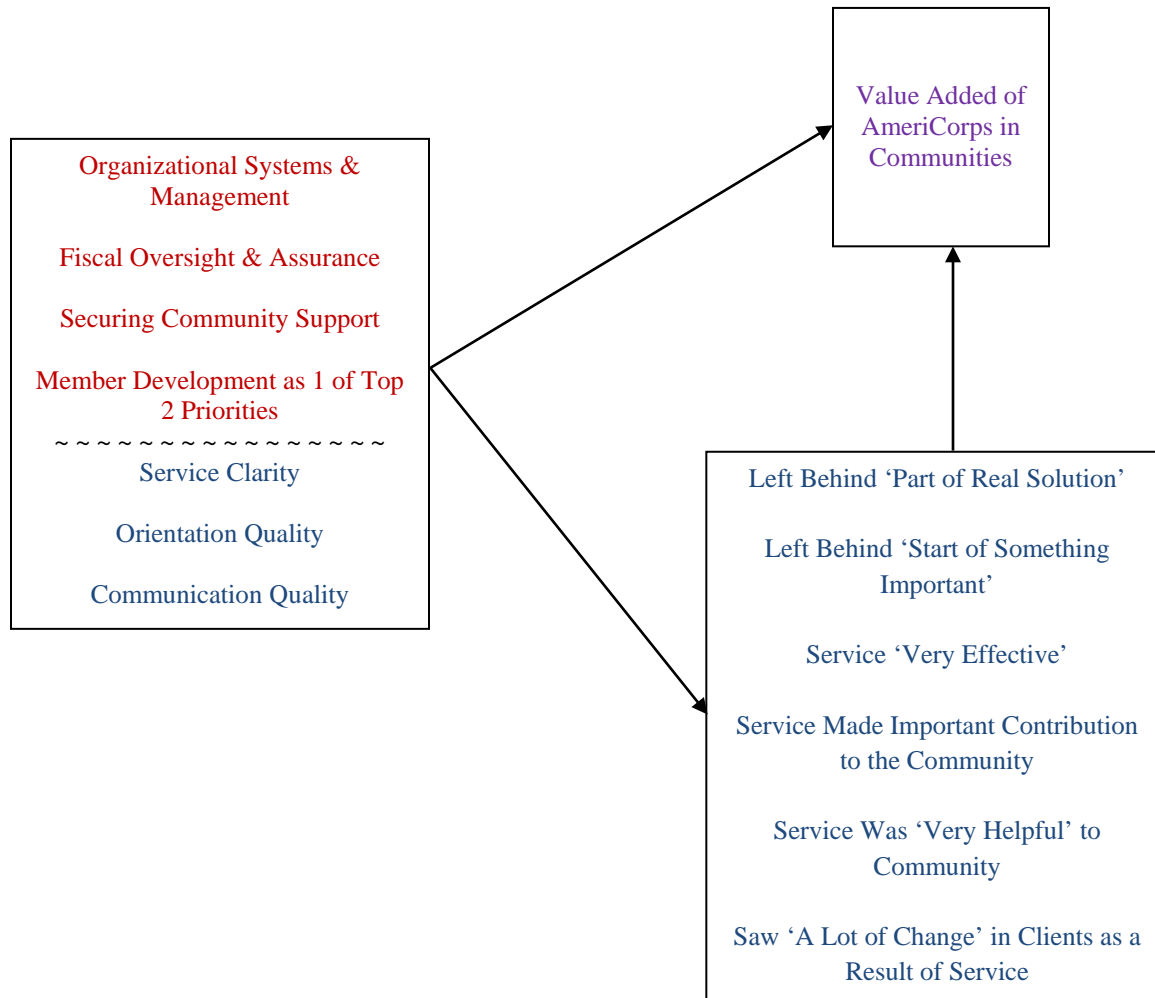
Limitations

The primary limitation in the AmeriCorps*Texas statewide evaluation was the size of sample of AmeriCorps service programs. Because the sample size was small, it lacked sufficient power to show many statistically significant effects, even when member surveys for both years were combined to double the sample. Additionally, we had limited ability to utilize much of the financial indicators that were collected because they did not all come from the same source. While we were able to identify many of the same indicators from either 990 tax forms or publicly available organizational budgets, we often still had missing data. With a sample that was already small to begin with, having additional missing data was problematic.

Another limitation to this evaluation was the lack of variance among program manager responses to a multitude of survey questions. Lack of response variance was seen, particularly, in variables related to program impact, as well as in the variables obtained from the Organizational Capacity Surveys administered by OneStar. It is possible, given that all the data were self-reported, that respondents were over-estimating the impact of their AmeriCorps program. It is also possible, however, that the majority of AmeriCorps*Texas programs are, in fact, high-performing and affecting their communities in very positive ways. With a larger sample size and less reliance on self-reported data, one might find different results than those presented here.

Finally, the lack of a direct linkage between the AmeriCorps*Texas Member Survey and the AmeriCorps*Texas Program Manager Survey was another limitation to this evaluation, though not necessarily intentional. In an effort to help increase the likelihood that members would complete the survey, it was designed to be anonymous. We wanted members to feel that they could be honest in their responses without fearing any potential (though unlikely) retribution from their host organizations, so we did not include any identifying information in the survey, such as the members' names, specific AmeriCorps programs, or service locations. This was essential given the relatively small number of programs and the likelihood that protecting member identity would have been compromised without anonymity. This aspect of the research design did, however, limit our capacity to link member and program level factors.

Still, we were able to isolate program features that are linked to program success and to demonstrate a considerable average value added across program sites. To further increase program impact and the net value added of member contributions, we offer some recommendations by way of conclusion.

Recommendations

Given the diversity of the AmeriCorps*Texas service programs, the variety of communities in which they serve, and the different types of organizations and people that administer and implement the AmeriCorps programs, the recommendations that follow should be interpreted on an individual basis and in accordance with the needs and abilities of the programs in mind. Due to the fact that sometimes a practice that is good for the organization may not be optimal for

individual members,[30] a balanced approach that is tailored to the actual program and members involved might be best, along with continual feedback and modification, as needed.

In order to increase the value added and/or program impact of AmeriCorps*Texas in the communities served, our recommendations are the following:

> ➤ *Strengthen Organizational Operations*
> To the extent possible, strengthen organizational systems and management practices to increase the overall ability of the organization to function in a professional, organized, and planned manner, particularly in the event of unforeseen events or emergencies. This includes providing access to technological resources, such as computers and email accounts, for all members; having written and available policies that inform the chain of command in the event of personnel changes on a short or long term basis; and developing a written "Continuity of Operations" plan on how to continue business in the event of a disaster or other emergency, and then training staff on its implementation.

> ➤ *Enhance Financial Management and Human Resources Practices*
> Make current funding requirements, such as grant awards, terms, and conditions, accessible to staff members placed in charge of implementing the AmeriCorps program so that all staff are aware of the requirements and/or know where to access the regulations when they are needed. Develop and make available written fiscal management and human resources policies and procedures for topics such as accounting practices, salary scales, employee and member benefits, as well as employee and member timesheets so that employees and members are aware of the policy or procedure expectations, as well as know where to find them, if needed.

> ➤ *Reaffirm Community Need and Support*
> Program management should continually meet with participating community partnering organizations to re-assess both the community partners' and program's needs and expectations. Community partnerships are not static relationships; rather they should be

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[30] ibid.

tended to on a regular basis to ensure that agreements between both parties are understood, expectations are clear, and any issues or problems that arise are addressed in a timely and respectful manner. Ongoing and continual feedback and information sharing between the program and the community partners will aid in the community partners' understanding of the impact of the program's services (by way of progress reports or member experiences, for example), as well as inform the program of any implementation issues in the field (for example, via comments from teachers, principals, parents, etc.). Additionally, adapting program design based on community partner feedback and/or taking into account other similar services available within the community are both tactics that will help the program to best meet the needs of the community in which it serves.

➢ *Invest in Member Development*

AmeriCorps members are the backbone of any AmeriCorps program. Programs should reevaluate the priority of their intended goals to ensure that member development ranks near the top. Member development activities could include not only adequate ongoing training that is designed to assist the members to better perform in their service, but also professional development opportunities (such as career exploration, resume writing workshops, or time management techniques) that will aid them in discovering more about themselves personally, as well as be more competitive in their professional endeavors after their AmeriCorps service is complete.

➢ *Set Expectations Clearly and Upfront*

Programs should provide clear descriptions, goals, and expectations for what the AmeriCorps member experience is like prior to members starting their term of service. This could include providing opportunities for current members to talk with prospective members during recruitment activities, developing videos depicting actual members performing the specified service activities, or enhancing recruitment materials to make them more outcome-specific. Programs should offer as much specific and tangible information as possible so that members know ahead of time what they will be doing and what the expected outcomes might be. In addition, members should have an accurate and clear description of their actual service position, as well as written policies and

procedures regarding member duties, policies, and expectations. This could take the form of a printed manual, be posted in a commonly utilized area within the organization, and/or be posted in a members-only accessible area on the organization's website.

> *Focus on Initial Orientation*
> Programs should reevaluate their current initial orientation offerings to confirm that the orientation topics rightly align with information that will adequately and usefully prepare incoming members for their service term. Because time can be a limiting factor for so many AmeriCorps programs, the goal should be to focus on the quality of the orientation rather than on the quantity (of hours or days, for example). One way to realign orientation goals with service usefulness might be to ask for feedback from exiting or previous members relative to their experience, and then adapting the orientation content as appropriate. Another way might be to link the program's goals and expectations with relevant training topics. And another example might be to role-play or provide a service simulation that will mirror what members will actually encounter in the field. Regardless of technique, periodically revisiting the program's initial orientation and making sure it is still relevant to the member experience is paramount.

> *Communicate Regularly and According to Members' Needs*
> Ensure that program supervisors are accessible to and regularly communicate with current members in ways that are useful and advantageous to the members. Due to the various member types, service locations, and personality differences, regular communication could mean different things to different people, depending on the context. Communication is not a one size fits all kind of topic. However, program managers and other program supervisors should develop a communication standard, and then adapt it if necessary, based on periodic requested feedback from members regarding frequency, method, and satisfaction with either one.

Conclusion

The organizational structures and program management characteristics, as described here, that influence the perceived impact and/or value added of AmeriCorps*Texas in communities should not be deemed a comprehensive list. It is likely that there are additional organizational structures or program management characteristics that equally influence program impact and value, but are not included here due to sample size limitations or methodological restrictions. However, the results and recommendations that we do present offer a new perspective and actionable steps that AmeriCorps*Texas service programs can immediately take to further strengthen their program operations and bolster their programs' impact and added value within their respective communities.

Case Studies

To add depth and richness to our evaluation, we present a selection of case studies showcasing four AmeriCorps programs in Texas. The case studies are descriptive and informative and focus on the ways in which AmeriCorps*Texas members go about contributing to communities and the many different organizational contexts within which they find themselves operating. The AmeriCorps programs featured in the following case studies include:

> ➢ Amarillo Independent School District
> ➢ CitySquare
> ➢ Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together (SWIFT)
> ➢ The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

C A S E   S T U D Y

Amarillo Independent School District (AISD):

"Integrated, Supported, and Intentional"

Program Profile – Amarillo ISD AmeriCorps	
Location	Amarillo
Organization Type	School District
Number of Members	50
Target Population	Elementary School Students
Program Type	Tutoring & After-School Program
Years Program in Operation	12

Texas Panhandle

Out in the Texas Panhandle, the northernmost part of the great State of Texas bordered by New Mexico and Oklahoma, lies the City of Amarillo – population 190,695.[1] Amarillo is flat and windy, and while the city is located on Interstate 40, a major east-west highway spanning across the country, Amarillo is pretty far from anywhere. The closest major cities of Dallas, Albuquerque, and Oklahoma City are each four to six hours away by car. In Amarillo, the southern plains meet the desert, and the topography is characterized by gently rolling hills, flat plateaus, and deeply-carved canyons.[2] Visitors go to Amarillo to experience a bit of the Old West, and the city has recently been voted one of the nation's top cities to start a business and

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[1] State & County QuickFacts 2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

[2] *Texas Parks and Wildlife*. Retrieved March 3, 2012 from
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/kids/about_texas/regions/panhandle/big_kids/

raise a family.[3] The area is known for cattle ranching, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, and, of course, Cadillac Ranch – the kitschy public art roadside attraction comprised of ten classic spray-painted Cadillacs standing on end, each half-buried in the ground.

AISD AmeriCorps – Two Programs in One

Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) is the city's public school district and encompasses over seventy square miles across two counties. AISD serves more than 32,000 students in thirty-seven elementary, ten middle, and four high schools, in addition to one alternative and one specialty high school.[4] AISD's mission is "to graduate every student prepared for success beyond high school." The AISD AmeriCorps program works to help achieve that mission through the program's primary objective of fostering the educational attainment of elementary youth who are most at risk. The program's four major goals are: to increase grade performance in literacy, math, and science; improve literacy rates among youth; earn higher standardized test scores; and improve attendance rates through success.

The AISD AmeriCorps program has two separate operational arms – the High School and College programs – each with distinct member types, service descriptions, and program management. All members serve during the school year, from August to May.

The High School Program

The High School tutoring program represents the bulk of the entire AmeriCorps program. It is comprised of forty reduced-time members, all of whom are high school seniors from each of the four AISD traditional high schools. These members spend three hours per day five days a week

Photo 1: Member tutoring

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[3] *Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council*. Retrieved March 3, 2012 from
http://www.visitamarillotx.com/aboutAmarillo.cfm?p=Climate

[4] *Amarillo Independent School District*. Retrieved March 3, 2012 from
http://www.amaisd.org/index.php?hard=pages/infoguide.htm

serving as curriculum tutors, tutoring at-risk students in grades K-5 at fourteen low socioeconomic status AISD elementary schools. Students who receive tutoring sessions are selected by their classroom teachers. These students are considered at-risk because they are economically disadvantaged compared to their peers, oftentimes Hispanic or African American, reside in single-parent households, and/or have a learning disability. All tutored students score below grade level in their core curriculum skills. Members meet with the same students for fifteen minutes every day for at least twelve weeks, for a total of one hour of tutoring assistance per student per week.

As required by the program, High School members are responsible for tracking the progress of five individual students, although they often tutor more students than required. Tutoring activities are highly engaging and implemented under the direction of a supervising classroom teacher. Teachers work with the members to get to know the students personally and understand their individual needs. As such, members plan tutoring activities in accordance with each student's skill level and needs, which ensures that no two tutoring sessions are alike.

Each elementary school in which the members tutor is unique, as are the tutoring venues, subject areas, and teaching techniques that High School members utilize in their tutoring activities. At one elementary school, for example, members sit at little tables in the hallway outside the classrooms and work on literacy tutoring with kindergarten students. At another elementary school, members tutor groups of second graders in the unused space underneath a stairwell that the school principal converted into a tutoring 'cubby.' Members tutor in a variety of other environments, such as in the hallway, a cafeteria, or the back of a classroom. Tutoring locations depend primarily on the available space within the school.

Photo 2: Hallway cubby

The College Program

The College after-school program consists of ten half-time members, all of whom are college students at either nearby Amarillo College or West Texas A&M University. These

members are placed at four low socioeconomic status AISD elementary schools, in groups of two or three, and serve as curriculum tutors in each school's Extended School Day after-school program. College members serve five to six hours per day, five days a week. While each day is unique, a typical day of service often involves classroom observation, lesson plan and curricula development, program material preparation, hands-on tutoring in reading and math skills, group homework assistance, and leading recreational activities. Members are directly supervised by Extended School Day site coordinators, who are employees of the school district.

College members develop four lesson plans per week and submit them for approval one week ahead of time. Lessons are based on TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) lesson plans, but the members more often than not incorporate their own ideas or skills that they have learned in their member training sessions. College members work individually with different groups of students, but often share ideas for lesson plans with one another. Members like that they are allowed and encouraged "to put their own twist" on the standardized lesson plans. They rarely have students simply sit at a desk with a worksheet and pencil to do activities; rather, members prefer to make the lessons fun and engaging and for the kids to be active while learning.

Group tutoring and homework help take place in areas where space allows, usually in classrooms, the library, gym, or even in an empty cafeteria. Per program requirements, College members must track the progress of five to ten students over the course of the school year. Students' progress is measured by AIMSweb, a standardized measurement tool that AISD uses to monitor the progress of basic reading and math skills.

Program Management

The AISD AmeriCorps program is well integrated into AISD's operational and organizational structure, and is supported by all district departments. Within the district, a Special Programs Accountant provides fiscal oversight of all grants and helps to ensure that the AISD AmeriCorps program adheres to all fiscal requirements. AmeriCorps member living allowances and benefits are processed by the Payroll Office, while the Personnel Office receives member applications and conducts criminal history and background checks of applicants. In

addition to those services, the district also provides space for training, office supplies and equipment, and staff office space.

Four staff members – Jill Humphrey, the Program Director; Evelyn Narrell, the Program Coordinator; Ramona Sims, the High School Instructional Coordinator; and Cindy O'Neill, the College Instructional Coordinator – all work together as a team to implement the AmeriCorps program and supervise members. Ms. Humphrey's office is in the AISD Education Support Center, which is the district's headquarters. Ms. O'Neill has an office at one of the district's elementary schools, while Ms. Sims and Ms. Narrell both have offices at Caprock High School.

Ms. Humphrey oversees all aspects of the entire AISD AmeriCorps program's implementation, including oversight of grant operations, program management, and staff development. While this is Ms. Humphrey's first year as Program Director, she brings a wealth of experience to the table. She has a background in education background and twenty years of combined experience working at AISD as a teacher and in various other capacities.

Ms. Narrell oversees all member service hours and documentation, maintains member files, creates member service schedules, and maintains and signs off on all current member timesheets. It is her responsibility to ensure that members stay on track to complete their assigned number of service hours, and she follows up with any members who have problems adhering to their schedules. Ms. Narrell is a former director of the AISD AmeriCorps program – the first one, in fact – and has high school guidance counseling experience. Both of these previous experiences help her to be able to look at potential members' applications and academic schedules and determine whether or not they will be a good fit for the AmeriCorps program.

Training and Supervision

Ms. Sims is the High School Instructional Coordinator and dedicates her time to training and supervising the High School members. High School member training consists of a daily forty-five minute academic class called "Career Exploration of Teaching," for which members receive class credit. Ms. Sims teaches the class three times a day to different groups of High School members. All High School members, regardless of which high school they attend, take their daily training class at Caprock High School. In doing so, members from all four high schools are mixed together and end up developing new friendships with each other. In fact, Ms.

Humphrey reported that one of the aspects that she really likes about the AISD AmeriCorps program is seeing members from rival high schools throughout the city get to know each other as the school year progresses and evolve from being strangers to friends.

Ms. Sims daily training class involves activities, primarily literacy or phonics topics, which members might engage in with their students during tutoring sessions. Members learn a technique first, go through examples as a group, and then create their own activity or lesson. The curriculum for the class was developed in accordance with program goals and grant required training topics. Additionally, class activities are sometimes driven by current needs seen in the elementary schools. Ms. Sims says that one of the purposes of the class is to "instill a sense of creativity" in the members. Members often use tactile objects such as play dough, balls, or string rather than the traditional paper and pencil to facilitate learning for their students.

When tutoring at the elementary schools, the members are under the direct supervision of the participating classroom teachers. Additionally, assistant principals spend one and a half hours per week in a supervisory/instructional coaching role and maintain close contact with the members. Ms. Sims also conducts daily site visits to the schools to monitor the High School members. She also facilitates member evaluations and approves member absences when they occur. Ms. Sims, Ms. Narrell, and the classroom teachers all work together to ensure timesheet accuracy.

Cindy O'Neill is the part-time College Instructional Coordinator who is responsible for training and supervising the ten College members who serve in the Extended School Day after-school program. Ms. O'Neill facilitates weekly training sessions for the College members. Training sessions last for one and a half hours and take place in donated classroom at a local public library. Training topics include math and science skills, recreational activity ideas, group tutoring techniques, hands-on tips, and field trips. Ms. O'Neill regularly invites guest speakers – often AISD staff or community leaders – to lead trainings with the members. Ms. O'Neill feels that one of the challenges she faces is ensuring that the weekly training topics are "engaging and meaningful" for the members, particularly since many of the members were previously High School members and have some familiarity with the program already. However, even for those experienced with the High School program, the College program serves as a new and different experience for members.

College members are directly supervised by the Extended School Day site coordinators at each of the four elementary schools where the after-school program takes place. Site coordinators are all AISD employees, many of whom are also college students, and some of whom are former AISD AmeriCorps members. While site coordinators are responsible for direct daily member supervision, Ms. O'Neill visits each of the four elementary school campuses, two to three times a week, to observe members and offer suggestions, if needed.

As described, member training occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the service year. While training topics vary among the High School and College members, one training focus area is the same for both groups: all members receive core curriculum training founded on research-based methods of teaching children to read and to do math and science. Ms. Humphrey and her teammates place considerable emphasis on training because they believe that if members are not adequately trained to be successful in their service, then their students will not be successful either.

In addition to ongoing member training, all members participate in an orientation prior to the start of their service year. High School members engage in eight hours of pre-service orientation, which includes the following topics: an outline of the National Service Programs; details about their local AmeriCorps program and the community need; community service expectations; the Member Service Agreement; professionalism; and dress code. The orientation spans two days, a half day each day. College members receive one week of orientation at the beginning of the year. Orientation topics include TEKS, lesson planning, and scheduling.

Member Recruitment and Selection

Because the AISD AmeriCorps staff members are so committed to the success of their program, it would come as little surprise that the member selection process is very thorough. High School members are recruited from all four public high schools through school assemblies and other events that are designed for high school juniors. During the assemblies, Ms. Humphrey talks about the program and describes member expectations. She shows a video of members actively tutoring, and also enlists the help of current members to talk about their service experiences. Additionally, the AISD website lists information about the program as well as a downloadable member application.

College members are recruited through meetings with seniors from the four public high schools who take classes geared toward students with an interest in education. Ms. Humphrey also recruits College members by visiting and advertising at the local college and university. Many College members were also High School members who want to continue their service, although in a different capacity.

Initial member selection criteria are as follows:

High School Member	*College Member*
At least 17 years old on September 1st	At least 17 years old on September 1st
Graduating senior at an AISD high school	Attendance at Amarillo College or West Texas A&M University
80 overall GPA	48 college hours (official transcript) *or* pass No Child Left Behind Test
95% school attendance	Able to manage groups of children ages 5-12 in instructional setting
Passed 10th grade reading TAKS test	Able to follow supervisors' directions
Legal US resident	Legal US resident
Have own transportation	Have own transportation

All of the AISD AmeriCorps staff members meet as a group to conduct member interviews, which last approximately fifteen minutes each. Member candidates receive separate scores from each staff member. For High School members, in particular, staff members look for individuals who enjoy working with children, who care about their grades and attendance, and would be someone that an elementary classroom teacher would enjoy working with. Other qualities that staff members look for include: leadership; the ability to take direction; having the initiative to think outside the box; a drive to get things done; and overall personality. Ultimately, the team is looking for members who love kids, have a desire to work with children, and will best serve the needs of the children they will tutor.

College members have similar selection criteria, with the additional expectations of the ability to understand the tutoring process, solid organizational skills, emotional strength to deal with difficult parents and teachers, and a strong character.

Many of the members selected, both High School and College, are interested in pursuing a career in education, although that is not a requirement. Oftentimes the AISD AmeriCorps service experience gives members the opportunity to validate whether or not education actually is the right career fit for them. Most members who do not want to become educators have interest in pursuing other helping careers, such as firefighting, social work, and law enforcement.

Investing in Members

Ms. Humphrey and her colleagues feel that they have as much invested in the members as they do the children who receive the tutoring assistance. Because the member selection criteria are so stringent, the caliber of members who participate in this particular AmeriCorps program is high. The program looks for the figurative cream of the crop, and it appears that is what they find. Not only do the members each want to make some sort of difference in the lives of children with whom they work, they do so with a sense of professionalism and maturity that belies their young ages. Members "like being a role model" to the students they tutor and genuinely want to show the students "that there is a future for them." Program staff members, in turn, genuinely want their members to be successful, not only in their roles as members, but also in whatever is next in their lives after graduation. Ms. Humphrey often emphasizes to members that their AmeriCorps service is earning them "valuable work and

Photo 3: One-on-one tutoring session

community service experience," which are both aspects that will help to "set them apart" from other students after graduation. Members recognize this, as well, and believe that their experience as AmeriCorps members stands out on their resumes, shows potential employers that they are well-rounded because they have been actively involved with community service, and, for some, will be beneficial when applying to college.

Approximately seventy percent of the High School members come in equal numbers from just two of the four high schools. Less than one-fifth come from the third high school, and

fewer than five members hail from the fourth high school. While individual member school schedules often are the determining factor as to where a member is ultimately placed, Ms. Humphrey says that she likes to place members in elementary schools that feed into the member's own high school. Because many of the elementary schools served by the AISD AmeriCorps program feed into the high schools with the least number of participating members, the program is making an effort to increase recruitment at those schools.

Member Recruitment Challenges

Historically, filling member slots has been easy for this particular AmeriCorps program. Each year, there are typically more member applications than available slots. Within the last few years, however, the Texas Education Association (TEA) enacted a new 4x4 requirement, which mandates that high school students must take four credits of core subjects (math, science, English, and social studies) for four years. This educational requirement would make it impossible for high school seniors to be AISD AmeriCorps members if they have not already completed some of their core requirements prior to their senior year, as they would not have room in their schedule for the AmeriCorps training class. This requirement presents a minor recruiting challenge to the program. However, because the program recruits early in the spring semester of students' junior year, Ms. Humphrey and Ms. Narrell are able to advise applicants on making schedule adjustments that would allow them to complete their required high school coursework (by taking summer classes, for example) and maintain eligibility to participate in the AISD AmeriCorps program.

Another strategy that Ms. Humphrey is contemplating to help offset this recruiting challenge is to begin promoting the AISD AmeriCorps program to eighth grade students, rather than waiting until the junior year to do so. If she did that, then students would be aware of the program requirements much earlier in their studies. Early awareness would then allow the students to plan their high school schedules in such a way that would allow them to fulfill all their core course requirements and still be eligible to become an AISD AmeriCorps member in the future. Fortunately, most students interested in participating in the AISD AmeriCorps program are already on an advanced academic track and will have taken the required courses ahead of schedule.

Another recruiting challenge that this AmeriCorps program encounters is potential members' lack of personal transportation. All members must drive from their high schools or college to one of fourteen area elementary schools to fulfill their service. Additionally, High School members have to drive to Caprock High School, if they do not attend that high school, every day for the required AmeriCorps training class. College members, also, need to drive to the local public library for their weekly training session. Without personal transportation, it is not possible to be an AmeriCorps member in this program. Ms. Humphrey encounters this recruitment challenge primarily with students at one high school in particular, which has one of the lowest socioeconomic levels of the four high schools. As a result, potential would-be members who might otherwise be a perfect fit for the program are deemed ineligible. Ms. Humphrey would like to level the playing field and boost member recruitment at that school by trying to devise creative solutions for allowing students to serve as members without having their own mode of transportation.

Recruitment challenges notwithstanding, member retention historically has been very high. The program always ends the service year with a retention rate over ninety-five percent. Almost all members who have left the program before completing all their service requirements have done so because of unforeseen circumstances. Ms. Humphrey and her colleagues work in conjunction with each other to help keep members on track to complete all their hours, and credit their teamwork as part of the reason for their consistently high member retention rate.

Program Support and Camaraderie

One of the hallmarks of the AISD AmeriCorps program is the level of support and camaraderie that exists between the members and their host elementary schools. Participating teachers train new members on the school system and how it functions, and members, essentially, feel like they are part of the school team. According to Kim Bentley, the principal at Tradewind Elementary School, the teachers "really count on the members" and have good working relationships with them. Kim Lackey, the principal at Landergin Elementary School, said that the majority of district elementary school principals whose schools participate in the AISD AmeriCorps program feel that the members "set a great example" for their students and "are great with the kids." According to Ms. Lackey, most elementary school principals make a

dedicated effort to ensure that "members feel like they are part of the school." At Ms. Lackey's school, for example, she gives the members the freedom to decorate their tutoring spaces as they wish, and has even bought school t-shirts for members so that they can wear them on 'school spirit Fridays' along with other school staff. Program longevity may be a factor in this camaraderie, as Landergin Elementary School, in particular, has had AISD AmeriCorps members tutoring students for eleven years – almost as long as the program has been in existence.

Members frequently become so bonded to their host school, supporting teachers, and students they tutor that they often will come to the school on their own time to visit, even after their service hours are complete. Members end up connecting with all kinds of students, not just those whose progress they are required to track. Teachers encourage the students to look up to the members as role models. If a member is an athlete or musician, for example, school staff will often highlight his or her activity to the students. By doing so, the teachers not only give accolades to the members, but they also help to demonstrate to the students a future that they could aspire to one day, as well.

Partnerships

The AISD AmeriCorps program does not operate in isolation, but rather in partnership with the school district, as well as with the American Red Cross and the City of Amarillo. Because the program is housed and partially funded through AISD, that partnership allows the program to access multiple resources that might otherwise be more difficult to procure, such as staff, supplies, office space, and not least of all, program support. The American Red Cross works with the AISD AmeriCorps program to train members at the beginning of the service year in disaster coordination and response skills. Because of this partnership and training, College members recently had the opportunity to play a part in a city-wide mock disaster simulation. A partnership with the City of Amarillo is in the works for the upcoming service year, funding permitting, to train members in local emergency management techniques.

One of the more currently evolving partnerships that the AISD AmeriCorps program engages in is with the High Plains Food Bank in Amarillo. Members currently and previously have volunteered at the Food Bank, but are limited in the activities that they can participate in

due to minimum age requirements and time commitments. Recently, however, Ms. Humphrey and the Food Bank's Director of Education, Justin Young, began discussions to utilize College members to help pilot the Food Bank's newly developed TEKS-based nutrition education curriculum aimed toward children in grades K-5. The Food Bank plans to train College members to utilize the curriculum, and then members will implement the curriculum in the after-school program during the upcoming school year. Members will also volunteer to work in the Food Banks's on-site organic garden under the direction of Young's wife and Garden Project Manager, Cara. The partnership between the Food Bank and the AISD AmeriCorps program will not only benefit the Food Bank, but also will expand the AmeriCorps members' teaching capacities to include outdoor learning and nutrition education.

Program Impact and Value

The impact and value of the AISD AmeriCorps program are very much intertwined and affect a wide range of recipients. First and foremost, the impact of this program can be seen in the increased test scores and academic performance of the students who receive tutoring assistance, both in school and in the after-school program. The one-on-one tutoring and mentoring relationships that the members form with their students are not only beneficial to the students' academic performance, but offer an added

Photo 4: Student doing reading activity

level of curriculum reinforcement that the school district alone would be unable to provide. Members shared stories of students drastically progressing in reading levels, teaching students who only spoke Spanish to recite the alphabet and count in English, and seeing students become excited about learning – all due to the tutoring assistance that they provided them through the AISD AmeriCorps program. One member said of the impact of her service, "It feels good to see a smile on a kid's face when they know they've succeeded."

The impact of this AmeriCorps program is also seen at the school level. Because of the presence of the AISD AmeriCorps program, schools are able to individually serve more students who otherwise may not have the opportunity to receive one-on-one attention. Additionally, members act as a support system for the teachers with whom they work. If the members were not there to provide tutoring assistance, said Ms. Lackey, "the school would be unable to fund paid part-time positions to take their place." Thus, teachers would have more of a burden on them to fill that gap. Or alternatively, the need would simply remain unfulfilled.

The members themselves also benefit from their AmeriCorps service. Multiple members shared the sentiment that "being in AmeriCorps has changed me." They discussed how they have developed patience through their service, forged new friendships with members from different high schools, and learned how to understand through a new perspective how people who are different from them live. "Being in AmeriCorps has opened my eyes to how others live – both wealthy and poor people," said one College member. "It's helped me to not be so quick to judge or stereotype. It's helped me to look into something before making a judgment about it."

Professionally speaking, members who are interested in pursuing careers in education obtain a lot of practical experience in classroom management as a result of their service. In addition, the members' service experience often helps to solidify their future career path and direction, one way or another. The personal connections that members create with teachers, administrators, and other staff at their host schools often lead to future networking and employment opportunities. In fact, one of the more interesting impacts of this AmeriCorps program is that it acts almost as a career pipeline to employment in the AISD. Since the inception of the program twelve years ago, over sixty former members have returned to work for Amarillo ISD as teachers, teaching assistants, and school nurses.

When asked to determine a dollar value for the service that they provide, members were hard pressed to identify and then agree upon a number. One member thought that the value of his service was at least that of a starting teacher's salary, which according to Ms. Humphrey, is around $42,000 a year in the Amarillo ISD. Other members suggested dollar values from $1,200 a month to a range of $12.50 to $20 an hour. Those estimates equate to a vast range of annual salaries from $24,000 to $41,600. The one thing that all members seemed to agree on, however, is that they work hard for the little financial compensation that they receive.

The discrepancy in members' ideas of what their service is worth could suggest that these members, particularly because of their youth and lack of extensive work experience, may not have an accurate idea of what market salaries actually are for this type of work. Or, it could suggest, as seems to be the case with many AmeriCorps members, that they do not necessarily value their service in terms of dollars. Rather, their perception of value is determined by their direct impact on the students with whom they work. As one High School member stated, "When the teachers tell me that the kids are improving in an area that I helped them, that means the world to me."

Program Challenges

While the impact of the AISD AmeriCorps program is impressive, the program is not without its particular set of challenges. One of the ongoing challenges is coordinating the members' schedules with the schools' needs, all the while ensuring that members complete their required number of service hours in the allotted time. Ms. Lackey, Landergin Elementary School's principal, reported that scheduling has always been and will continue to be a programmatic challenge, but that it is a small price to pay to get quality members working one-on-one with her students.

Another challenge for the program is how the aforementioned 4x4 core curriculum requirement will affect member eligibility and recruitment. While the outcome still remains to be seen, the challenge has prompted Ms. Humphrey and her colleagues to re-imagine how the program could operate – potentially incorporating after-school tutoring sessions with High School members, for example – and altered some member recruitment strategies. As was previously mentioned, the AISD AmeriCorps program staff continually reflects on what works and what does not work in the program, and they try to adjust the program accordingly. This is a good example of that practice in action.

Another ongoing challenge, which could be present in any education-focused program, is how to best assess the tutored students' progress. While the program uses AIMSweb data as their measure to monitor students' achievement, there is a host of qualitative, anecdotal stories – which, arguably, are equally important – that are not so easily measured.

Members, on the other hand, report their own set of particular challenges. In one way, the issues that members face are not unlike those that any employee might encounter in the workplace. Members discussed the challenge of working with other members when they disagree about how to proceed with lesson plans or activities. They felt that some members work harder than others, and mentioned that it is sometimes tiring to see and work with the same people every day. One member, however, suggested that even though there are certain difficulties and annoyances that members face on a daily basis, that it is actually good to experience them because it forces members to learn how to "work through their issues together" as adults.

Aside from difficulties associated with the daily grind, various members mentioned that they sometimes encounter "problem kids" – those who do not care about learning or are a bad influence on other kids – in the after-school programs, in particular. There was agreement among members that they do not tolerate "bullies," but expressed a lack of confidence in knowing what to do in those situations. Members also expressed frustration in dealing with parents who are disinterested in their children's activities or progress. And finally, more than one member confessed that the "job is time-consuming."

The Secret to Their Success

When asked what factors contribute to the AISD AmeriCorps program's success, Ms. Humphrey's assessment revolved around a confluence of multiple interconnected factors. A very important aspect is that the Amarillo Independent School District fully supports the work that the AmeriCorps program does to increase the educational attainment of elementary school students. The support of the school district is evident, from one perspective, in that the AISD AmeriCorps program is supervised by a variety of stakeholders within the district. These stakeholders include not only the AmeriCorps program staff, but also participating teachers, Extended Day site coordinators, elementary school principals, and assistant principals. Each has a distinct role and level of capacity, but all are invested in seeing the program, members, and students succeed.

Another important characteristic, according to Ms. Humphrey, is that the program is managed and implemented by a team of passionate staff members who together have significant collective experience—experience not only within the long-running AISD AmeriCorps program, but also within the field of education itself. The team's experience, combined with an emphasis

on communication and a shared responsibility for ensuring that the program achieves its goals, are all necessary components of this AmeriCorps program's success. To wit, Ms. Humphrey, Ms. Narrell, Ms. Sims, and Ms. O'Neill meet monthly to discuss program happenings, analyze aspects of the program that are going well or not, and then strategize how to remedy what is not working.

Another aspect that makes this AmeriCorps program successful is that members receive consistent, frequent, and excellent training throughout their service term to prepare and assist them in the service that they do. And while members are trained in various educational techniques, they are not limited in how they choose to work with the students and are allowed the freedom to utilize their own creativity in their service. One High School member, for example, honed in on a student's interest in soccer and incorporated kicking a soccer ball into a sight-reading activity with him. Ms. Lackey, the elementary school principal, reported that not only are members "well-trained," but that she appreciates that students are "active, learning, and having fun at the same time."

Photo 5: Member tutoring in hallway

But perhaps the most significant factor that contributes to the AISD AmeriCorps program's success and impact pertains to the members themselves. Members are carefully and thoughtfully selected. All of the members, whether they are in high school or college, are high achieving, motivated, and enter the program with the ability and desire to make a profound difference in the lives of children. Having highly qualified members – who are often from or have attended the same high school that the elementary students will eventually attend – has a great impact on both the students as well as on the members. Members have high expectations placed upon them and their service outcome, are looked up to as role models, and they deliver.

Of course, no AmeriCorps program is perfect. But this program seems to have the right mix of pieces working together in just the right way to provide a positive, lasting, and beneficial impact on the children that it serves. Perhaps Ms. Narrell said it best when describing the benefit and impact of the program: "This is the only program I've worked with in education that doesn't have a downside. This program benefits everyone."

C A S E   S T U D Y

CitySquare:

"Where Will You Serve?"

Program Profile – N^2 Texas Corps	
Location	Dallas/Fort Worth & San Antonio
Organization Type	Faith-Based Non-Profit
Number of Members	222
Target Population	Children
Program Type	After-School & Summer Youth Enrichment
Years Program in Operation	5

Evolvement of an Organization

In a nondescript, two-story, brick building located on a block adjacent to the sprawling Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas campus in East Dallas, is where one can find the headquarters of the Neighbor to Neighbor (N^2) Texas Corps AmeriCorps program at CitySquare. The N^2 Texas Corps is the largest State-funded AmeriCorps program in Texas in terms of the total number of members, with the second largest budget. Placing members since 2007, the N^2 Texas Corps is but one of the many multi-faceted programs at CitySquare which aim to help reduce the root causes of poverty through partnerships with communities in need.

CitySquare – a large, faith-based, community agency – was launched in 1988 as the Central Dallas Food Pantry. Located, then, in a strip shopping center, it was conceived as a way to help address societal problems associated with homelessness and poverty. Two years later, the organization became a 501(c) (3) non-profit and relocated to a larger building in East Dallas. Six years after the organization's inception, the current President and CEO came on board and Central Dallas Food Panty changed its name to Central Dallas Ministries. During that same time period, Central Dallas Ministries acquired another building a few blocks away – the aforementioned nondescript, two-story, brick location – that serves as the current home for the organization's food pantry and the AmeriCorps program's administrative offices. Two years ago,

in 2010, Central Dallas Ministries purchased another building, this time in downtown Dallas's Historic District. The fifteen-story high-rise operates as permanent housing for neighbors – CitySquare's name for program recipients – who were formerly homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, as well as the organization's headquarters. Later that same year, Central Dallas Ministries officially launched the organization's latest name iteration – CitySquare.[1] Over the near quarter century, through multiple physical locations and three organizational name changes, CitySquare's mission has always remained the same: "to fight the root causes of poverty while partnering with those in need."[2]

Building Capacity with Community Partners

CitySquare fulfills its mission by working together with the community to feed the hungry, heal the sick, house the homeless, and renew hope – themes that represent the four pillars of all their programmatic activity: Hunger, Health, Housing, and Hope. True to its roots, the Food Pantry is the point of entry for most neighbors who receive any kind of services through CitySquare. Of the more than two hundred AmeriCorps members placed annually by CitySquare, roughly four serve in the Food Pantry. While only a handful of members serve in CitySquare's Food Pantry, the vast majority of members (over ninety percent) serve in smaller organizations throughout low-income areas all over Dallas and Fort Worth, as well as in San Antonio, to help provide food security and/or academic enrichment activities, either during the school year or summer months.

Without CitySquare's assistance, these organizations—or community partners, as they are called—would otherwise be unable to fund or administer an AmeriCorps program on their own. By partnering with CitySquare and utilizing AmeriCorps members, these community partners have the capacity to expand and enhance their existing services within the community and reinforce the work that they are already doing. According to Jennifer Rajkumar, the Associate Director of the N^2 Texas Corps, CitySquare acts almost as a "pass-through agency" for the smaller organizations. CitySquare applies for and administers the AmeriCorps grant, and then

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[1] *CitySquare*. Retrieved February 21, 2012 from http://citysq.org/our-history

[2] *CitySquare*. Retrieved April 2, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/about-citysquare

dedicates a certain number of member service years (MSY) to particular community partners in exchange for their contribution to the grant's required local cost-share. CitySquare selects community partners through a competitive process, and partners then agree to help recruit members for their sites and provide site-specific training and supervision.

CitySquare's AmeriCorps program seeks to support and strengthen community efforts that already exist. By doing so, CitySquare helps partnering organizations to build capacity while also furthering its own mission. Community partner programs operate independently of one another, with each designed for maximum effectiveness specifically in its target neighborhood. It stands to reason, then, that no two AmeriCorps service placements or activities are alike. As would be expected, program outcomes for each partnering site are also distinct, as are the ways in which sites manage their members. While outcome measures among the various sites are currently not comparable, for the upcoming service year, the N^2 Texas Corps plans to require all sites to measure the same school attachment indicators in a pre- and post-test.

Select Your Service

Aside from placing a few members in the Food Pantry, the bulk of N^2 Texas Corps members are placed in one of two primary service areas: Education or Food on the Move. Each program has its own focus area and varying service requirements. Members serve either eight to twelve weeks during the summer or nine months throughout the school year.

Photo 1: AmeriCorps member

Members who are placed for the duration of the school year serve twenty to thirty hours per week with one of eight after-school programs in either Dallas or San Antonio. They serve as leaders working with at-risk youth ages seven through fourteen years old to assist them with their homework, develop curricula, plan and lead arts and crafts activities, in addition to other

educational and academic enrichment activities. Some of the after-school programs are held at community centers, which, in Rajkumar's opinion, is the best model. But other partnering sites that host after-school programs include schools, churches, and apartment complexes. The diversity of program locations makes for a completely different service experience, even when members technically share the same service description.

Members who are placed during the summer serve between eight and twelve weeks – thirty to forty hours per week – with one of twelve community partners who offer summer enrichment programs. These partners feature a similar mix of diverse locations as the year-round after-school programs. The summer academic enrichment programs vary in their daily activities, but all share the common goal of reducing the summer learning gap by focusing on educational enrichment activities.[3]

Jubilee – A Jewel in the Rough

Jubilee Park and Community Center is a thriving example of a community partner that offers both after-school and summer academic enrichment activities in partnership with the N^2 Texas Corps program. Jubilee is located in the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood, about a five minute drive from CitySquare's Food Pantry and N^2 Texas Corps headquarters. A fixture of the neighborhood since 1997, Jubilee has recently evolved from two small buildings to a brand new state of the art community center. Recently constructed and modern in design and amenities, Jubilee reopened its doors in 2010 to a neighborhood ensconced in poverty, yet full of hope. According to Ben Leal, Jubilee's Executive Director, the median annual household income in the community is only $8,000. Yet because of Jubilee's presence and commitment to the neighborhood, residents are privy to a wealth of opportunities that take place at the community center, not least of which includes after-school programs, computer classes, exercise groups, and community fairs.[4]

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[3] *CitySquare*. Retrieved February 21, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/becomeamember

[4] *Jubilee Park and Community Center*. Retrieved April 3, 2012 from http://www.jubileecenter.org/where-we-are/communitycenter

Jubilee's after-school program at the center serves about 145 students. The program is not mandatory, nor is it inclusive of only local community residents. Approximately eighty percent of the students in the program are Hispanic, while the remainder is primarily African American. About sixty percent of the students are male, and nearly all qualify for free or reduced school lunch. Jubilee hosts thirteen AmeriCorps members in its after-school program, and ten members serve during the summer, when the member selection is more competitive. Members tutor elementary school students in math, reading, and writing in dedicated classrooms throughout the center, as well as assist with homework completion. They facilitate team building exercises, conflict resolution, and social skills activities. While they tutor following a set curriculum, members are also permitted to use their own creativity and develop additional ideas and activities to add to the lessons, a feature that Leal described as unique to this after-school and summer program. Members describe their service at Jubilee as that of a facilitator, teacher, tutor, and mentor. Leal reports that the partnership between Jubilee and CitySquare is "really good" and that the community center "couldn't do what we do without them (members)."

Food on the Move

The most recent component to the summer service placement is the Food on the Move program. Food on the Move is a mobile feeding program that aims to combat childhood hunger by providing meals during the summer months to children at low-income apartment sites, churches, non-profit organizations, and summer camps.[5] AmeriCorps members who serve in this program spend twelve weeks during the summer passing out daily meals to children at five to seven different distribution sites. In addition to assisting with meal distribution, members also lead the children in games and other physical activities to help boost their activity and fitness levels.[6] Children who participate in the program and complete six weeks of regular physical activity are eligible to receive the President's Active Lifestyle Award. In 2011, Food on the Move delivered over 250,000 summer meals to children in the Dallas area, and funding

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[5] *CitySquare*. Retrieved February 22, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/foodonthemove

[6] "Food on the Move." Dallas, TX: CitySquare, 2012.

permitting, has plans to expand the service delivery area and begin to offer the program in Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, as well.[7]

Members

CitySquare recruits members on a rolling basis year-round for all available placements, both for the school year and for the summer. Winter is the busiest time for recruitment as that is when summer member slots are being finalized. CitySquare typically places the majority of its members during the summer, for a service term start date of June first. CitySquare recruits the majority of the members, but community partners also assist with recruitment and often recommend people from their local communities. CitySquare uses a variety of recruitment methods, including word of mouth, particularly from alumni and current members; the CitySquare website; on-line postings at colleges and universities, both locally and throughout the state; and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) national database. Just in the past year alone,

Photo 2: N^2 Texas Corps

Rajkumar reported receiving approximately seven hundred applications for two hundred thirty available member slots. Of all the member applications, about fifteen percent came from the CNCS national database. The minimum qualifications for becoming a member are rather standard and include: being a high school graduate; age seventeen or older; a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident; having reliable transportation; and being committed to making a difference.

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[7] *CitySquare*. Retrieved February 22, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/foodonthemove

Approximately ten percent of over two hundred members come from the local community. Because CitySquare is located in a low-income area, many local residents lack high education levels and advanced labor skills. For the members who serve in the Food Pantry, for example, a lack of education or less sophisticated labor skills are not necessarily problematic. However, there is a slightly higher standard for members who serve in the after-school and summer academic enrichment programs. As such, finding local members who have an appropriate education and skill set to adequately do the job is a bit more challenging.

Members in the N^2 Texas Corps range in age from seventeen to eighty-five years old, though the majority of members are ages seventeen to twenty-four. The proportion of this younger group of members is higher than it has been in years past, and Rajkumar has noted that the younger members (particularly those with higher levels of education) seem to view their service in AmeriCorps primarily as an internship experience and as something that they can afford to do. Rajkumar's assessment was validated in a conversation with two current members. Both members were college students and self-described "community service oriented individuals." When asked why they chose to join AmeriCorps, they both stated that they "like what AmeriCorps stood for," were "looking for an opportunity to do an internship," and that "people really like (to see) AmeriCorps on a resume."

Receiving the Segal Education Award was mentioned by a few members as part of their rationale for joining AmeriCorps, but not as a primary factor. These members, in particular, saw the Education Award as a "nice benefit," but less of a primary incentive for being part of the N^2 Texas Corps. One member stated that the "Education Award will help with student loans at the end of the day, but it's not a big thing." Other motivators for joining the N^2 Texas Corps included having a history of volunteering, wanting a new opportunity, and hoping to have a rewarding experience.

Member Selection – the Process

Due to the large volume of applicants for the N^2 Texas Corps program, member selection is an ongoing and multi-layered process consisting of application submission, phone screening, a group interview, and an individual interview. Applicants can download the member application from the CitySquare website and are requested to submit it before the priority deadline for each

service term. Those who submit their applications in a timely manner receive preference over other applicants; however, CitySquare will consider additional applicants on a rolling basis until all member slots are filled. Member applicants must meet the minimum age and citizenship or immigration status requirements in order to be contacted by CitySquare by phone or email. In addition, Rajkumar stated that when reviewing member applications, she also looks for previous experience working with children, experience working in a community center or similar type of organization, demonstrated leadership ability, group or teamwork skills, and bilingual skills.

After an application is submitted and it meets the required criteria, either Kathy Stewart, N^2 Texas Corps' Administrative Assistant, or Rajkumar contacts the applicant to conduct a phone screening. The purpose of the phone screening is to address basic logistic and eligibility questions, such as whether or not the applicant can attend a scheduled group interview session, if the individual has reliable transportation, and his or her availability. If the applicant is from outside of the state or does not live in one of the service areas – as is often the case given the large quantity of applicants– Rajkumar or Stewart will ask how and when the individual is going to move and where he or she will live to better ascertain the applicant's true motivation and ability to serve.

Once applicants complete the phone screening and are deemed as legitimate member candidates, they are invited to attend a group interview session. Each group session is comprised of approximately ten potential members. During the group session, they are given an overview of the N^2 Texas Corps program and a detailed description of the various service opportunities. Then they participate in a team-oriented ice-breaker activity and complete an individual interview with program staff. Rajkumar and Theresa Cissell, the Program Manager for Food on the Move, both look for communication skills, initiative, confidence, and ability to take direction when assessing applicants in person.

After applicants successfully complete the member application, phone screening, and group and individual interview processes, Rajkumar takes into consideration the applicant's site placement requests, his or her demeanor, and the needs of the community partners to identify where to place a particular candidate. Once that has been determined, she then directs the approved applicants to the community partner sites so that their staff can interview and make the final decision to finally select the members for their program. For applicants who wish to serve

in the Food on the Move program, their placement depends largely on the applicant's teamwork abilities and fit with other potential members. While it's possible that Rajkumar or Cissell could move a member to another community partner site if, for example, personality conflicts with staff arise, both prefer to mitigate any potential placements issues up front.

Member Retention

After such a thorough and time-intensive member selection process, it is heartening to know that the overall member retention rate is slightly higher than ninety percent. When broken down by service term, the retention rate for members serving in the year-round after-school program is slightly lower, hovering around eighty-five to ninety percent, while the rate for members serving during the summer is, and has been, consistently near one hundred percent. According to Rajkumar, members who have left the program early historically have left for financial reasons, most likely to obtain a job that pays more money. Members who serve in the year-round after-school program serve nearly thirty hours per week over the course of a school year and only earn about $5 an hour. For that amount of time and such a low compensation, it is often difficult to find, let alone retain, quality applicants for whom the time and money trade-off is worthwhile or even possible. In contrast, members who can dedicate thirty to forty hours per week in the summertime, when they may or may not have a summer job as an alternative, view their AmeriCorps service as an 'experience' and are more likely to see it through.

Over the past year, however, Rajkumar has noted that member retention has been affected less by financial reasons and more by conflicting college class schedules and transportation issues – living too far away from the service site because of a change in home address, for example. Because the service area is so widely dispersed, it is critical for members to have reliable transportation. While Rajkumar and Cissell both try to place members as close as possible to where they live, it is not always feasible. In those cases then, transportation, or lack thereof, can become an issue. Rajkumar also speculated that the reason some members have left the program earlier than scheduled might be related to the increase in the numbers of younger members.

Orientation and Training

All members, regardless of service start date or type of service, receive a three-day orientation. The first day of orientation is dedicated to information regarding AmeriCorps – history, leadership, and the completion of any necessary administrative paperwork. The second day of orientation is led by the Dallas After School Network, during which members receive eight hours of training on classroom management and effective youth engagement. The third, and final, day of orientation includes a service project, a Civic Reflection, and concludes with lunch for all the members. Once members are placed at their service sites, they also receive site- and program-specific training, as determined by each community partner. At Jubilee, for example, Leal reports that members get a week of staff development training with topics that include CPR, conflict mediation, classroom management, curriculum development, and teaching methods – all prior to beginning their service.

Members who serve in the summer Food on the Move program receive an additional two days of orientation prior to the standard three-day orientation. One of the orientation days is led by Playworks, a non-profit organization that supports learning by providing safe, healthy, and inclusive play and physical activity in low-income schools and communities.[8] Training topics include: engaging children in inclusive play, teamwork, conflict resolution, safety, and game/activity ideas. The second orientation day includes training on program logistics, Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) regulations, a simulation of what a day in service will look like, teambuilding activities, and conflict management.

At the end of each service term, Rajkumar and Cissell conduct the Life After AmeriCorps training and the N^2 Texas Corps program holds an end of the year celebration, during which they give awards to certain members for outstanding service. In an effort to create more cohesion with the other AmeriCorps programs in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, the programs have decided to join forces and are currently in the planning stages of developing a Life After AmeriCorps training in which all local AmeriCorps programs could participate concurrently. In that same spirit, the N^2 Texas Corps has previously collaborated with the other local AmeriCorps programs to plan for and participate in a combined Martin Luther King, Jr. Day service activity.

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[8] *Playworks*. Retrieved February 22, 2012 from http://www.playworks.org/about

Program Management and Supervision

Perhaps because of the program's size or the nature of the relationships that CitySquare has with its community partners, the N^2 Texas Corps program operates in a hands-off, or perhaps, higher level approach to member management and supervision. Rather than being involved in all the daily member interactions and program operations of each of the sites, CitySquare, instead, places the majority of that responsibility on the community partners themselves. CitySquare, thus, provides overall technical and financial support to the community partners, conducts centralized training and service activities, and ensures that the sites partnering with the N^2 Texas Corps meet a minimum level of service quality. CitySquare also processes all member paperwork and payroll, conducts site visits and sends monthly emails to all current members. But the community partner sites themselves are responsible for site-specific trainings, member timesheets, evaluations, and member supervision.

Each service year, Rajkumar and her colleagues conduct a half-day Supervisor Training for all community partner site supervisors to lay out CitySquare's expectations for partners' day-to-day supervision of members and program administration. At the training, site supervisors obtain guidance on current AmeriCorps grant updates (such as changes to member background checks or increases in the Education Award, for example), expected service calendar for the year, member requirements, how and when to submit member time sheets, information regarding required data collection, and all relevant program policies and procedures. Each site supervisor also receives an AmeriCorps Supervisor Handbook, which contains all these programmatic details, to use as a reference throughout the service year.

Each community partner site creates its own member schedule, with guidance from CitySquare on the approximate number of hours per week that a member should serve in order to complete their service term in the allotted time. If a member needs to take any time off during their service, for example, he or she would communicate such a request to his or her site supervisor, rather than to CitySquare. Member time sheets are collected by each partnering site, in accordance to the time sheet reporting schedule provided to them by CitySquare. The schedule stipulates when member time sheets should be submitted to CitySquare in order for them to release member stipends, which CitySquare distributes, on a biweekly basis. Program

performance data are collected from each partnering site at the middle and end of each service term, and site supervisors also conduct member performance reviews in accordance to that same schedule. Community partners are expected to "provide regular coaching and development opportunities to assess member performance" throughout the service term. Site supervisors are also encouraged to meet with members once or twice a month for service reflections. The exception to this structure, however, is the Food on the Move program. Cissell, a CitySquare employee, directly manages the program and supervises all members serving with Food on the Move. She is also responsible for recruiting new partnering sites and managing program logistics.

Jubilee Park and Community Center provides an example of how the N^2 Texas Corps program's management and supervision structure works in real life: Every Monday the AmeriCorps members at Jubilee have a weekly meeting, during which the site supervisor updates them on the number of service hours that each has completed. As a group, they troubleshoot any problems that someone may have experienced with their students, such as behavioral issues, for example. One of the members is designated the 'lead member' and acts as liaison between the Jubilee program staff and Rajkumar at CitySquare. Jubilee's site supervisor, however, handles all member supervision, the collection of timesheets, and assists members with curriculum implementation.

Even though the partner sites handle the majority of the daily program management and supervision, CitySquare is definitely not sitting idly by. Rajkumar interacts with twelve different partner sites, the result of which is managing multiple people and dealing with a variety of different personality types. Fortunately, she says, many of the sites have partnered with CitySquare for many years, so they "know the drill" and what to expect. Rajkumar also has to manage expectations between members and the immediate supervising staff at their service site. Because members are not paid employees, Rajkumar states that she has to do a lot of work that one might not do with a paid employee, such as help to track their hours and provide extra supervision when needed.

In addition to all the people management skills that Rajkumar employs on a regular basis, there are several administrative tasks that require quite a bit of attention, particularly during the summer, when the majority of members complete their service and the program is at its busiest. The program offers two service terms – an eight week and a twelve week

Photo 3: AmeriCorps pride

term – and these require multiple pay schedules. Factor in the number of different service sites, and ensuring that all members receive their stipends in a timely manner can be very time consuming. Also, because the N^2 Texas Corps utilizes all five member types, from full time to minimum time, in various capacities, there are five different service descriptions that have to be crafted and aligned to meet the various service needs.

"It's not a Job, It's an Adventure"

Rajkumar stated that utilizing AmeriCorps members, rather than regular paid employees, helps to save its partnering sites quite a bit of money. She said that a part-time employee at one of the partnering sites might make anywhere in the range of $8-10 an hour, a far cry from the average $6.36 an hour that N^2 Texas Corps members earn. And that value is excluding any fringe benefit costs that the partnering sites would also incur.

Members mentioned that they work hard and felt that a full time employee hired to perform the same duties would earn $35,000 to $45,000 a year. But they also said that they do not let the small size of their stipends become an issue relative to their service. One member noted that "the personal reward" that one gains from AmeriCorps service "is far greater than the monetary gain," while another said that, for her, being in AmeriCorps is "not a job, it's an adventure."

Another measure of value, and a feature of the N^2 Texas Corps that Rajkumar feels makes it unique among AmeriCorps programs, is the ethic of service and civic responsibility that the program successfully instills in its members. Rajkumar and her colleagues relate everything in their program back to AmeriCorps and national service. As such, members identify themselves as AmeriCorps members much more so than they identify themselves with the N^2 Texas Corps, CitySquare, or the particular site where they do their service. The N^2 Texas Corps staff members, as well, identify themselves as being part of AmeriCorps because that is all that they do. Prior to joining AmeriCorps, one member was quoted as saying, "I live in this community, but I didn't know I could help." Now she does, and she very well could continue.

Challenges

One of the characteristics that sets CitySquare's N^2 Texas Corps program apart from many other AmeriCorps programs in the State is that the organization does not have an explicit educational focus. An organization that is focused on fighting the root causes of poverty as its mission is much different on the surface than one that is focused on graduating students from high school or increasing annual tests scores, for example. While that observation in and of itself is not problematic, for a program to adjust to new or different funding requirements, particularly those that emphasize primarily educational program objectives, can be challenging. Such was the case in 2009 when OneStar, the source of CNCS funds for CitySquare's AmeriCorps program, shifted its funding focus to include only programs that had educational outcomes. Because of that shift, CitySquare was left without funding for members serving in the Food Pantry. Fortunately, at that time, CitySquare procured funding through the one-time Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and was able to continue to support those members. The following year, however, OneStar slightly adjusted its requirements and allowed CitySquare to place members in the Food Pantry, as well as add additional members in the Food on the Move program, as long as CitySquare continued to meet their original education output and outcome measures. The challenge for CitySquare, which it is successfully meeting, is to creatively modify or adjust program objectives to match the needs and requirements of the funder, while still staying true to its own mission and organizational objectives.

Members in the N^2 Texas Corps experience a different set of challenges. One member who serves in the Food Pantry described his challenges from a personal perspective. His service experience is very practical in nature – he helps people with food insecurity get food. Part of his service includes logistical aspects of working in a Food Bank, such as assisting with the shipping and receiving of food. But another part includes the personal aspect of interacting with the neighbors who come to the Food Pantry in need of food themselves. The member then walks the neighbors around the Food Pantry to explain what kinds and how much food they are eligible to receive, and then he also assists neighbors to their cars or to public transportation with their food. One of the challenges that he finds difficult is to enforce the Food Pantry's limitations on how much food a neighbor can obtain at a particular time when the neighbor is coming to the Food Pantry simply because he or she does not have enough food at home to begin with. Despite this challenge, this member feels that he makes a difference in many people's lives because he's "had people come back to thank me because they didn't have food before," and now they do.

A few other members, those who served in after-school programs, mentioned a lack of adequate training and uncertainty about their role and service expectations as challenging aspects in their service experience. These members stated that they are not always sure what is expected of them as members, or what it is that they really are supposed to be doing, and they perceived that their service expectations often changed. They also mentioned feeling that policies and procedures of their particular programs are often vague or undefined, and that many times they feel unsure of their actual role within the partnering organization. These members also mentioned uncertainty with regards to how often they should teach a particular skill or lesson, and even what skills or lessons they should focus on in general. When asked what could help to alleviate some of the challenges, the answer was simple: more training. They suggested training on how to teach or tutor the children at their own level, how to more effectively implement the curriculum, and how to deal with students' behavioral issues. Training, in addition to more clarity in members' roles and service expectations, could both be helpful in this case.

And finally, from a community partner perspective, competition with jobs paying higher wages is a real challenge. Leal, Jubilee's Executive Director, stated that his community center lost four members during the last service year because they took higher paying jobs elsewhere. Though "really proud" of the current members "because of their commitment," Leal fears it

could be harder to retain members if finances are a member's primary concern. In a perfect world, Leal wishes that members received a higher stipend because he thinks that would help to increase member retention, not just at his center, but across the board. Another challenge that Leal mentioned was combating service fatigue. He said that members at Jubilee often "start out strong," but then their enthusiasm gradually decreases over time. He suggested giving members more ongoing recognition for the service that they provide as a way to help counteract that particular challenge.

Service Impact

To understand the impact that the N^2 Texas Corps program has on the communities that it serves, just look at the numbers. People are being fed: CitySquare's Food Pantry annually "provides nearly two million pounds of food to approximately 13,500 households, consisting of nearly 6,000 youth" and serves as a point of entry for neighbors to access other needed services, such as case management and referrals.[9] During the last year, the Food on the Move program delivered over 250,000 meals – and offered some fun physical activity as well – to low-income children who otherwise would suffer from food insecurity. People's minds are being fed, as well: CitySquare reports that children participating in the after-school programs "increased their attachment to school by 6.5 percentage points," over ninety percent "improved their grades in at least one core subject area," and over three-quarters of summer program participants "reported an increase in their academic self-confidence."[10] The numbers are impressive,

Photo 4: Service impact

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[9] *CitySquare*. Retrieved April 5, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/content/food-pantry

[10] *CitySquare*. Retrieved April 5, 2012 from http://www.citysquare.org/N2TXCorps

and given the vast size and reach of CitySquare's AmeriCorps program, a void would definitely be felt without their service in the community.

The numbers do not tell the whole story, however. Members' insight as to the difference that their service has made in the lives of children and families with whom they serve, as well as in their own lives, is telling. Members build meaningful relationships with kids: "As a first year new member, the kids that I worked with were very reluctant at first. But now, they are really transparent and share personal information with me." Members often "advocate for the kids," and "that can really help make a big difference in a kid's life." They get hugs, see happy faces, and get told by the children that they are "going to miss you. Those things are priceless." Members see the kids' improvement in their grades on their report cards, are told by teachers that the kids have done better in school and have better behavior, and sometimes have the opportunity to increase parents' involvement in their children's academic life.

Members' service also has a large impact on their own lives. Members talked about developing teamwork, leadership, and organization skills as a result of their service. They mentioned that "the skills that I've taken from AmeriCorps have opened my eyes to collaboration and the importance of partnerships" in a way that was not quite apparent before. And one member was recommended for and hired into a permanent employment position at his service site as a direct result of his AmeriCorps service.

At CitySquare, it is not necessarily where one serves as an AmeriCorps member that matters, rather it is the fact that one serves in AmeriCorps at all. Whether it is at a community center tutoring children in math and reading, at the Food Pantry helping neighbors obtain food for themselves and their families, or at any of the summer placement sites providing academic enrichment activities, food, and physical activity to children who otherwise would be in need, giving back to a community is paramount. CitySquare does not ask if you are willing to serve; they just ask where it will be.

C A S E   S T U D Y

Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together, Inc. (SWIFT): "In It for the Long Haul"

Program Profile – SWIFT AmeriCorps	
Location	Schulenburg & Weimar
Organization Type	Non-profit Organization
Number of Members	43
Target Population	K-6th grade
Program Type	Tutoring & Academic Enrichment
Years Program in Operation	6

Framework for Community Life

At an intersection near the town center of Schulenburg, located in an old one-story renovated medical building is a non-profit organization called Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together, known in the surrounding community as SWIFT. Schulenburg and neighboring Weimar are two small, rural towns situated just off of Interstate Highway 10, about halfway between the cities of Houston and San Antonio. The area was long ago settled by German and Czech immigrants, whose lasting heritage can still be seen in historical buildings and Victorian style houses found throughout the towns.[1] This farm and ranching community is also the official home, as designated by the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas, to the Painted Churches of Texas, four historical churches that represent monuments to the strength and perseverance of the State's early settlers and provide a rich aesthetic history of Texas.[2]

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[1] *City of Schulenburg.* Retrieved March 13, 2012 from http://www.ci.schulenburg.tx.us/About/about.html

[2] *The Greater Schulenburg Chamber of Commerce.* Retrieved March 13, 2012 from http://schulenburgchamber.org/house-concurrent-resolution/

The German and Czech heritage of these rural communities, however, is apparent in more than just historic buildings and churches – it serves as a framework for community life. A commonly-held community belief is that it often takes a community disaster for people to respond to a problem with an act of service. People in this area share the general sentiment that individuals should be able to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" to prosper in life, just as the hard-working 'old-timers' once did. SWIFT was developed, in part, to turn that framework on its head, as it were. Rather than viewing community service as something that occurs primarily in times of dire need, SWIFT aims to act as a model for the community and demonstrate that targeted community service, directed at resolving systemic community-wide problems, can actually produce lasting solutions and results.

Community-Driven Process

SWIFT was created in 2005 as a result of the collaboration among community educators, parents, law enforcement professionals, and other related non-profit and civic organizations that saw a need to improve the education system. This coalition of concerned citizens and local organizations did not believe that a quick fix was possible, and so SWIFT was created with the intent of changing community-held belief systems – pertaining to education and service – and behaviors over time. SWIFT's vision is "to preserve and enhance the quality of life where every individual thrives – physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually" and its approach is long-term. Along with changing community-held mental models and behaviors, SWIFT also aims to restore 'old-fashioned' values in the community, so that individuals take pride in themselves and care enough about their community to continue to build it through their own service ethic. SWIFTS's mission "to empower access to our communities' assets" recognizes that the local area encompasses numerous assets, not least of all, young people. SWIFT holds the view that youth are assets to the local community, rather than problems.

With an education system in need of fixing and a newly formed organization ready to engage the community and tackle the problem head-on, SWIFT was then asked by the local community to provide tutoring services to area elementary school students at no charge. Given that between the two communities of Schulenburg and Weimar, an average of sixty-nine percent of the adult population have at least a high school education, while only an average of thirteen

percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to national rates of eighty-five and twenty-eight percent, respectively),[3] many parents of school-aged children are ill-equipped to assist their children to successfully complete their homework. Additionally, with more than sixty-five percent of area students "economically disadvantaged,"[4] parents have few resources available to pay for private tutoring for their children.

In 2006, in response to the community-driven process, SWIFT chose AmeriCorps as the cornerstone of their community-wide intervention to provide tutoring services to local struggling K-6th grade students. AmeriCorps' national reputation in community service and the availability of Education Awards were both powerful incentives for introducing AmeriCorps to their community. SWIFT's goal was to encourage enthusiastic college-age students from the area, along with retired professionals and empty-nest parents, to provide the tutoring services at local elementary and middle schools. Prior to the inception of this AmeriCorps program, there were insufficient volunteers and a lack of local available funding to sustain any kind of tutoring program within the community.

The Program

SWIFT works to achieve its mission and vision by utilizing the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets" – characteristics of healthy development that assist youth to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible –as a program foundation and common language to build upon for their AmeriCorps members. The "40 Developmental Assets" are grouped into several themes which include support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competence, and positive identity.[5] SWIFT recognizes young people as community assets and actively makes a conscious effort to utilize those assets to create a community in which all young people are valued and have potential to thrive. With the "40 Developmental Assets" as the primary building blocks of its AmeriCorps program, SWIFT then works to maintain students' educational parity with their peers through

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[3] American Community Survey 2006-2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

[4] *Local School Directory*. Retrieved March 14, 2012 from http://www.localschooldirectory.com/

[5] "40 Developmental Assets." Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2004.

on-campus tutoring both during and after school, as well as to educate parents about the importance of engagement in their children's education.

In addition to tutoring and parent education, the SWIFT AmeriCorps program originated with two other focus areas: mentoring and health promotion. The four programming arms were envisioned to interrelate with one another in an effort to: 1) educate and empower youth and their families; 2) make young people more conscious of the choices they make; 3) emphasize and raise awareness of the effects that personal choices have on their own lives as well as on those around them; and 4) promote critical thinking about one's life in the future. As time went on, however, and other local organizations developed more capacity to serve the community, particularly in the areas of parent education and health promotion, SWIFT's primary focus shifted to tutoring. The tutoring component now accounts for the vast majority of SWIFT's total AmeriCorps program. In fact, any member who participates in parent education or health promotion activities serves first and foremost as a tutor. Mentoring is intrinsically built-in to the program in the relationships that members build with the students.

The primary goal of the tutoring program is to improve literacy through reading and math skills. Members tutor students in grades K-6 throughout the school year at two public elementary schools, two public middle schools, and at two private Catholic schools. Students who receive tutoring assistance are identified by their classroom teachers. Members are assigned to various classrooms throughout the day, and work with students of different grade levels and multiple teachers. They tutor students in reading and math activities, either one-on-one or as a group, during thirty minute sessions. Because members tutor students of various grade levels and skill capacities, including English as a Second Language (ESL), they tailor their tutoring sessions to students' individual needs.

Photo 1: Member tutoring students

In addition to tutoring sessions during the school day, the AmeriCorps program also places members in the local Boys & Girls Clubs to provide after-school tutoring and homework assistance to students participating in the daily academic reinforcement programs held at those locations. Not all members serve in both capacities, but there are some who may spend the entire school day tutoring in the schools and then spend another hour and fifteen minutes at the Boys and Girls Club assisting students with homework activities.

Summer is a busy time of year for the SWIFT AmeriCorps program. Members serve in various capacities in summer academic enrichment activities, including Kids College, the Junior Master Gardner program, and summer school activities within the Schulenburg and Weimar Independent School Districts (ISD). Kids College is a summer enrichment program that focuses on math, science, technology, and leadership skills and "disguises learning as fun." The program consists of two week-long sessions and is held at Blinn College, the local community college. The goal of Kids College is to introduce elementary and middle school students to the idea of being on a college campus, invoke the message that college can be a possibility for them, and to help prevent academic achievement loss from not being engaged in school during the summer months.

In the Junior Master Gardeners and Community Garden program, members tutor students one-on-one in individually-tailored applied math and science lessons, often through hands-on projects at the Schulenburg Community Garden on the Blinn College campus. The communal raised bed gardens are cared for by members and other community members and serve as an outdoor classroom for applied learning. Members utilize the Junior Master Gardener curriculum from Texas AgriLife to teach students elements of applied math, science, and leadership, as well as the development of an appreciation for healthy eating.

Photo 2: Schulenburg Community Garden

Members also collaborate with teachers at both Schulenburg and Weimar ISDs during the summer to provide academic enrichment support for struggling students attending summer

school. Members work under the direction of teachers and help develop lessons for the students. Many of the members who serve in the summer academy are college students originally from the Schulenburg and Weimar area who attend school away during the academic year. For them, AmeriCorps is their summer job, and many return each summer for another service term.

Photo 3: "If I Had a Hammer"

In addition to tutoring during the school year and in the summer academic enrichment programs, SWIFT AmeriCorps members also participate in special one-time events, including the "If I Had a Hammer" program and "College Goal Sunday." In the "If I Had a Hammer" program, members lead teams of students to build a model kit-house by utilizing applied reading and math concepts. "College Goal Sunday" is a one-day college financial aid workshop held at Blinn College. Members talk with seventh through twelfth grade students about various higher education financial aid opportunities and assist twelfth graders with financial aid forms.

Parent Education is another, albeit small, part of the SWIFT AmeriCorps program. During the summer, approximately six members spend about four hours per week providing ESL classes to parents or caregivers of a limited number of students who receive summer tutoring assistance. The goal of this part of SWIFT's program activity is to more effectively engage parents in their children's education.

The final piece of the SWIFT AmeriCorps program is in the area of Health Promotion. During the school year, one half time member coordinates approximately nine "Healthy High/Healthy Choices" health-related events that are held annually at each partnering school. At these events, area medical professionals conduct various age-appropriate health-related presentations, as well as promote the value of exercise, healthy eating, and perform BMI calculations for participating students to better relate physical health to mental acuity.

Members

Due to the variety of activities in which the forty-three SWIFT members engage, and the variance in members' availability, the program is comprised of a wide variety of member types, including full time, half time, reduced half time, and minimum time members. Utilizing multiple member types helps the program ensure adequate member availability throughout various times of day, as well as throughout the year. About half of the members serve during the school year, while the other half serve only in the summer. Service terms begin either in September, January, or June of each year, depending on the member type and kind of service.

The majority of SWIFT's AmeriCorps members are college students – those who currently attend Blinn College during the academic year, as well as students from other colleges and universities who are originally from the area and return home for the summer. Aside from college students, members typically include retirees and other professionals age fifty-five and older, many of whom find themselves as empty-nesters, have extra time on their hands, and want to give back to their community. The program typically has more applicants than available member slots, and summer service terms, in particular, are highly competitive.

Photo 4: Member tutoring a student

SWIFT makes a conscious effort to attract members who reflect the population of the students they serve, with its increasing numbers of Hispanics and blacks. Approximately forty-five percent of the current members are white, fifteen percent are black, and forty percent are Hispanic. There is a growing need for bilingual members. And while the AmeriCorps program does not have any education requirements for its members, program staff prefer for members to have some college education or at least the ambition to go to college. Additionally, they have noted that members' general level of education has, in fact, increased over the years.

Heather Eilers is the SWIFT AmeriCorps Program Coordinator and has been a SWIFT employee for three years. Eilers, the mother of two adult children, is also a former SWIFT

AmeriCorps member. Her previous experience as a member plays a large role in helping her determine the type of person who would succeed as a member. During member recruitment and the interview process, Eilers is very frank with potential candidates about the realities of the member experience and the expectations that the program has for members.

When assessing whether or not someone would make a good member in SWIFT's program, program staff look for the individual's passion for service, interest in education, and a desire to help children. Staff makes it very clear to candidates at the beginning of the selection process how important the time and dedication commitment is to the program, and essentially, to the member's success. SWIFT is not interested in selecting members who are simply looking for a job. Being committed to service is crucial, not only because members become role models for the students they tutor, but also for the prominent role they serve in the community. As anyone who is from or lives in a small town would know, everyone in the community seems to know each other. Members live in the proverbial 'fish bowl' and are not only well-known among their students and partnering teachers and administrators within the schools, but are recognizable outside of the school setting, as well. Members represent everything that AmeriCorps embodies, and community members recognize them as trustworthy and invested in someone else's success.

Additionally, because members spend so much time with students, in a school setting, and as role models, another crucial member requirement is that members follow the school dress code, which happens to be very conservative. While this may seem like a trivial detail to some, the traditional, often conservative, values that go along with life in a small town play a large role in this particular program and the expectations that program staff and the community have of the members.

Eilers is responsible for recruiting and interviewing potential members, but Sylvan Rossi, SWIFT's Executive Director, and Jo Colon, the finance professional, each try to meet all the candidates to give an assessment of their potential quality as a member. SWIFT staff and school administrators also work together to screen applicants and assemble teams of members who would work well with partnering teachers and staff at each of the schools. Due, in part, to the clear expectations and careful selection of members for this AmeriCorps program, member drop-out is minimal and usually results from illness or family hardship.

The Segal Education Award, or scholarship, as SWIFT calls it, is a huge member recruitment tool for this program. As many of the members are current or recently graduated college students, the Education Award allows them to help fund their education or reduce student loans. The Education Award is also attractive to retirees and other professionals age fifty-five and older as they can pass the award on to their children or grandchildren. In addition to the Education Award, being affiliated with AmeriCorps allows members, the majority of whom come from rural areas with limited resources, access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable, including nationwide networking, job boards, and other national service opportunities.

The SWIFT AmeriCorps program recruits members heavily from Blinn College. Other recruitment venues include Facebook, SWIFT's website, Chamber of Commerce events, and

Photo 5: SWIFT recruitment materials

local Lions' or Rotary Club meetings. Another recruitment tool that SWIFT frequently uses is to submit a 'member spotlight' article to the local weekly newspaper. The article features a picture of a highlighted member, as well as a description of what the member does and how he or she will choose to use the Education Award after completing his or her service. Despite the various member recruitment venues and techniques, SWIFT concedes that the best recruiters the program has are current and former members. While the organization's community reputation brings interested potential members to the door, according to Eilers, "the program results and current member satisfaction are the strongest recruiting tools that SWIFT has."

Program Management: A Team Approach

The SWIFT AmeriCorps program is managed by three full-time staff members. Sylvan Rossi, a former manager in the banking and technology sectors and resident saxophonist, is SWIFT's Executive Director. Prior to his involvement in SWIFT, Rossi led outdoor wilderness expeditions in West Texas with inner-city teenagers who were at risk of dropping out of school.

Rossi recruited Eilers, a former SWIFT AmeriCorps member, after her initial AmeriCorps service year to serve as the Program Coordinator. The last member of the team, Jo Colon, holds the joint responsibilities of being the Office Manager, Fiscal Agent, and Assistant Program Coordinator. SWIFT has ten members on its Board of Directors, two of whom are the Curriculum Directors at both Schulenburg and Weimar ISD. Their presence helps to better integrate the program and its goals into the school setting. And, since SWIFT serves youth, two high school students (one from each school district) also serve on the Board of Directors.

Eilers stated that she felt that having three staff members manage the day-to-day affairs of the AmeriCorps program worked well. Each staff person's regular daily duties are distinct, but everyone is also cross-trained in the others' roles to ensure that they can cover for each other or respond to questions, as needed. In addition to being cross-trained, the three staff members usually meet daily for lunch to keep each other abreast of program activity and current issues. All program staff, regardless of job titles, encourage members to accept challenging assignments, push past their limits, and work collaboratively with other members and community partners in order to help ensure the best level of service possible.

Eilers monitors all member timesheets and ensures that members stay on track to complete their service in the allotted time period. While members are directly supervised by the teachers with whom they work at the elementary or middle schools during the school year, Eilers makes frequent visits to the schools to observe members and help with any issues that arise. School principals also provide some member supervision. During the summer months, however, Eilers directly supervises all members who serve in the summer academic enrichment activities.

Orientation and Training

All members receive fifteen to twenty hours of orientation and training, prior to the start of their service. To help introduce and reinforce the idea and spirit of community service to members, AmeriCorps banners and posters hang in the SWIFT office and training facility, as well as in service locations. Pre-service training topics are diverse and include the following: host site orientation; AmeriCorps and history of national service; volunteer engagement; tutoring techniques; school dress code; information regarding the Education Award; and the "40 Developmental Assets."

During their service, members are trained twice a month for an equivalent of fourteen training hours per month. Training topics include tutoring methods and strategies, which are provided by the Texas Education Association (TEA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Resource Centers, reading comprehension, homework help, and financial literacy. Other training topics have included child development, yoga for stress-management, workplace wellness, working in a multi-generational environment, and the internationally recognized True Colors personality tests, to foster better understanding of self and build respectful relations with other. Program staff tries to offer a mix of training opportunities, both to support and reinforce members' tutoring ability with students, but also to expand their horizons as individuals. During some training sessions, members use Civic Reflection readings and discussions to reflect on their service. Program staff tries to instill an ethic of lifelong service into their members, and Civic Reflection readings are chosen based on that theme. Regardless of the topic at hand, trainings always begin with the Pledge of Allegiance and the AmeriCorps Pledge. The bimonthly training sessions provide an opportunity for the program staff to formally check in with all of the members. Additionally, SWIFT uses social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to share special or updated program information with their members. And once members end their service, they are encouraged to join the AmeriCorps Alums group to enable them to both share and receive information from and with other alumni.

Members also receive training from the American Red Cross in disaster preparedness. Because of SWIFT's location at the intersection of two major hurricane evacuation routes, SWIFT was able to partner with the Red Cross to coordinate a community-wide disaster training that included city officials, law enforcement, community leaders, and AmeriCorps members. Members have also assisted with local and state disasters by serving in Red Cross Shelters and helping to staff phone banks.

Program Challenges

One of the challenges that the SWIFT AmeriCorps program deals with is member scheduling. Since many of the members are college students, the program must consider their academic schedules in relation to the needs of the partner sites when deciding when and where to place them. This is when utilizing multiple member types certainly can come in handy and add

some scheduling flexibility. While certainly not a challenge isolated to this particular program, assigning members to sites based on their academic schedules does play a substantial role.

Another program challenge, although one that has significantly improved over time and is currently less of an issue, is finding and retaining quality members. According to Ms. Meysembourg, the principal of Schulenburg Elementary School, when the program first started, there was quite a bit of member turnover. Now in its sixth year, Ms. Meysembourg reported that the current group of members is "just fabulous," and credits the improvement in member quality to a variety of factors. One important factor is that the AmeriCorps program has been present in the community for six years, and more area residents now know the program and what it does for students. Another factor is that service expectations are clearly and bluntly stated up front so that members know exactly what they are getting into. And finally, member training has increased and improved over time. Now, instead of high rates of member turnover, the program boasts a solid applicant pool, a careful and thoughtful screening process, and well-trained members.

Another challenge for the SWIFT AmeriCorps program is that members are only permitted to serve up to the equivalent of two full-time service terms. While this is standard CNCS practice, SWIFT finds the regulation challenging because many community members have indicated a desire to continue serving in their tutoring capacity even beyond their allowable terms of service. There is no other similar program available in the community for former members to join and continue to provide the same service. The result is that there is a large pool of former members who would be willing to continue tutoring, but could only do so on their own and without the support and training that the AmeriCorps program provides.

Finally, a current, ongoing, and very real challenge is maintaining program funding. SWIFT's AmeriCorps program constitutes the bulk of SWIFT's organizational budget. As a small organization in a rural area, SWIFT does not have access to, nor receives funds from, large corporations or foundations. Without funding from CNCS and SWIFT's current match funds, the organization's service capacity to tutor would be severely limited. Rossi, as Executive Director, spends quite a bit of his time fund-raising, targeting wealthy retirees and 'weekenders' – people who live in nearby larger cities but own a home in the area for weekend recreational use – for support and donations. The fear of potentially losing funding is so great that Rossi, Eilers, and

Colon have all developed a contingency plan for continuing to provide tutoring services, while drawing either a very reduced or non-existent salary.

Impact

Challenges notwithstanding, SWIFT's tutoring program boasts strong results. According to SWIFT's own data, approximately eighty-six percent of tutored students have shown significant improvement, as measured by pre- and post-STAAR Reading tests, since the organization's inception six years ago, and ninety-two percent have passed to the next grade level. Weimar ISD student test scores on the third grade TAKS reading component have also increased, from seventy-nine to ninety-nine percent. Additionally, the student attrition rate has dropped over the years from nearly twenty-two percent to eighteen percent.

The program's impact is not solely measured in test scores, however. SWIFT's AmeriCorps program helps to fill a gap in the community that would otherwise go unfulfilled. Due, in part, to recent budget cuts in education funding across the state, it would be economically unfeasible for Schulenburg and Weimar ISDs to provide summer school or tutoring assistance to struggling students were it not for the

Photo 6: Member tutoring

service that SWIFT's AmeriCorps program provides. Each summer, an average of two hundred additional students pass to the next grade as a direct result of SWIFT tutoring summer school in each school district. Those students remain with their peer group, increase their self-esteem, and have their lives positively changed forever. The demand is so great for this gap to be filled, that local parents have even requested that SWIFT extend the length of their summer programs in subsequent years.

Not only does SWIFT's AmeriCorps program fulfill an unmet need in the local education system but it also helps to bridge the gap between area residents and the idea of service. In an

area in which locals are used to reaching out to others only in times of dire need, this program offers residents the ability to be involved in their community in a focused and targeted way. In fact, local volunteers who have offered to assist SWIFT have gone from only a handful in the early years to more than two hundred twenty-five (approximately five percent of the local population). Whether it's tutoring in the schools or working with children in the community garden, SWIFT offers a viable mechanism for community members who want to reach out and help each other to do so. "In a small community," Eilers said, even though resources may be scarcer than they would be in a larger community, "you can do a lot because resources are more connected."

But perhaps the impact of SWIFT's AmeriCorps program is best understood through the eyes of its members. Members have seen scores of students with whom they have worked "learn what they need to learn to pass to the next grade," and recognize that their students "try to please

Photo 7: Homework help

you by getting one hundreds" on their tests and quizzes. They see the students' academic progression over time and know they have made a difference after they have taught a student "how to do something and the next time they do it on their own." But they also realize that the impact of their service goes far beyond tutoring. The students with whom the members work look for them to be there during the day, they know that members care about them, and the students "have

someone they can trust and go to," a luxury that they may not find so easily in other relationships in their lives. Members develop special bonds with their students and are excited to work with them, excited to give them extra encouragement and support, and excited to see them try. As one member put it, "I hope I make an impact on at least one student to stay in school. I want kids to get that good feeling of being able to do something. I remember the person who had an impact on me."

C A S E S T U D Y

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC):

"Giving Them Hope"

Program Profile – UTB/TSC AmeriCorps Program	
Location	Brownsville
Organization Type	University
Number of Members	40
Target Population	High School Seniors
Program Type	Higher Education Mentoring
Years Program in Operation	3

The Valley

The AmeriCorps program at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) is helping high school seniors enroll in college and apply for financial aid. In an area in which only fifteen percent of the population has a college degree, the median annual family income is only $27,000, and the general workforce is low-skilled[1], this is no small feat. Located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, or 'The Valley,' as it is colloquially known – a region that extends from the city of McAllen sixty miles to the north all the way to the southernmost tip of Texas – Brownsville is a border city that lies on the northern bank of the Rio Grande, separating the United States from Matamoros, Mexico.[2] While most of the approximately 13,000 undergraduate students at UTB/TSC hail from The Valley, a sizeable number of students come across the border from Mexico. Those students, along with thousands of other workers, families,

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[1] American Community Survey 2008-2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

[2] *Rio Grande Valley Partnership Chamber of Commerce*. Retrieved January 19, 2012 from http://www.valleychamber.com/aboutrgv.php

and tourists, cross the border at one of the three designated international border crossings, either by car or on foot, as a normal part of their everyday life. Gateway International Bridge, or as locals say, 'Puente Nuevo,' is located only one block from the UTB/TSC University campus and is the main pedestrian thoroughfare across the border. Over ninety percent of the area population is Hispanic, and at least half is considered bilingual.[3]

University Sponsored, High School Operated

UTB/TSC is a four-year university and community college partnership whose mission is "to provide accessible, affordable, post-secondary education of high quality, to conduct research that expands knowledge and to present programs of workforce training and continuing education, public service and cultural value."[4] As part of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, which is housed within the university's Enrollment Management Office, the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is a university effort to help increase the number of area students who graduate high school and go on to college. Fitting, then, is the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program's mission statement, which is "to improve high school completion and college going rates by facilitating a seamless transition from high school to college to students who are enrolled in twelfth grade during the current academic year."[5] The program was established in 2009 and is currently in its third service year.

In order to achieve the program's mission, UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members are placed in seven area public high schools to provide high school seniors with assistance in the higher education enrollment process, which includes helping students complete college admissions applications, guiding them in applying for financial aid, providing information about admissions testing and academic advising requirements, and assisting students enrolled at UTB/TSC with first-year orientation. Of the seven high schools where members serve, five are in the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), one is located in the neighboring community

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[3] American Community Survey 2008-2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

[4] "UTB/TSC AmeriCorps Program Handbook 2011-12." Brownsville, TX: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2011.

[5] ibid.

of Los Fresnos, and one high school is in nearby Port Isabel. Brownsville area high schools are anywhere from one and a half to twelve miles by car from the UTB/TSC campus. Los Fresnos High School is fifteen miles from the university, while the high school in Port Isabel is the furthest away at approximately twenty-six miles from campus. The student population in the seven high schools varies from approximately one hundred twenty in the senior class at one school, to anywhere from four hundred to eight hundred seniors at each of the other six schools. The UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program targets 2,500 high school seniors annually.

Program Operations

Members are placed at each high school in teams of six to eight, and meet individually with students in each school's program-sponsored Go Center, which typically is a dedicated room or computer lab. The Go Centers are open every Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4pm. All members serve twenty hours a week in the Go Centers, each with a different service schedule that accommodates his or her personal academic class schedule. Staffing is such that there is always at least one UTB/TSC AmeriCorps member serving in each Go Center at any given time during hours of operation.

The guidance counselor at each high school is the point of contact for the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, although he or she does not have any kind of supervisory or program management responsibility. The guidance counselors supply the members with alphabetical lists of all eligible students at the school, at the beginning of each school semester, in September and in January. The only eligibility criteria for students to receive UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program assistance is being a high school senior. From the eligibility list at each school, each member is then randomly assigned to sixty students.

Once members know who the eligible students are, they start at the beginning of the list and select a name. The members then obtain the student's school schedule and request to meet with the student in the Go Center during an elective class – such as music, art, or physical education – to ascertain whether or not the student is interested in getting help with the college enrollment and financial aid application process. During the initial meeting with a student, the member describes the program and what services they can provide, such as assistance with completing the college admissions application, information about various testing requirements,

and financial aid eligibility. A member will reach out to an eligible student up to a maximum of three times. If the student does not respond or is not interested in participating in the program, then the member will cease contact efforts with that student and pick a new name from the list.

On average, members meet individually with each student about six times during the school year, depending on the student's needs. About one student out of every ten who are identified by the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program does not want the assistance. Those who are not interested usually have other options in mind for post-graduation, such as a job, the military, or service with the Border Patrol. Members also can meet in the Go Centers with non-targeted students, regardless of class year or eligibility, who have questions about enrolling in college or applying for financial aid. The Go Centers serve partly as drop-in centers for all students who have questions or need help. Members are not required to assist these students as part of their daily service, but all do because they feel they are there to serve anyone who needs help.

In addition to the service that the members provide at the schools in the Go Centers, UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members also participate in a variety of special events with other similar programs. For example, the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program has partnered with the United Way and the Beehive to offer community financial aid nights. At these events, the United Way and the Beehive help families do their taxes for free, while the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members then help students and their families fill out financial aid forms. The UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is also in the beginning stages of partnership discussions with the Hispanic Scholarship Fund to collaborate on providing workshops about financial literacy, financial aid, and scholarships.

Member Profile

UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members are all current UTB/TSC students, the majority of whom are upperclassmen. A few member slots are filled by first-year students who have already earned their Associates degree from UTB/TSC while in high school and are familiar with the university and enrollment process. Approximately sixty to sixty-five students apply for the forty half-time member slots that are available each year. Students must be enrolled in both fall and spring semesters at the university to be eligible. Most members are Hispanic and bilingual in English and Spanish. The majority of the members are US citizens, while a few are permanent residents. In addition, there are some members who reside in Matamoros and cross the border

every day to attend classes at the university and complete their service. All members serve twenty hours per week and are considered part-time employees by the university. As part-time employees, members are expected to follow university protocols and guidelines. The members' half-time stipend amount is distributed semi-monthly over the course of ten months, which accommodates the university's payroll and business structure.

Daniel Yarritu, a UTB/TSC finance graduate, is the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps Program Coordinator. He says that a typical member in this AmeriCorps program is usually someone who is a good student, is familiar with the UTB/TSC campus and university policies, and knows the ins and outs of the college enrollment process. Other important criteria that he looks for in a member are the ability to work for twenty hours a week for ten months (the service term aligns with the academic calendar), access to personal transportation for travel to service site, and willingness to serve at extra events, such as college fairs and occasionally on evenings or weekends. Many of the service criteria are practical in nature, but necessary because of the nature of the service. Members serve in accordance with the local school districts' academic schedules, meaning that while the university's school schedule ends in early December and resumes in mid-January, members are still expected to serve up until the Christmas holiday and start again right after the New Year. Members do not have much time off and are expected to do a lot of work. Yarritu discusses all these expectations during the applicants' interviews, and students frequently decide against pursuing the opportunity further because they cannot or do not want to meet the member requirements.

Competing Economic Needs

Yarritu spends the summer months recruiting new members for the following service term and finds the most challenging aspect of member recruitment – and retention, in fact – is competing with the financial necessities of the applicant, and often times, his or her family. The half-time stipend of $5,262 is comparable to, if not less than, the salary that a student might earn at a regular part-time job on campus or in the community. The time commitment, however, is much greater. Potential members often end up choosing higher paying part-time jobs over AmeriCorps service simply because they need to support themselves financially or help with family finances. Additionally, because members serve off-campus at area high schools, all of

which are between one and a half and twenty-six miles away, the cost of gasoline can be a real economic hardship. While members do get partially reimbursed for gas and travel expenses, sometimes the costs are just too much to bear in relation to their personal financial circumstances. Approximately fifteen to twenty percent of UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members do not complete their service year, and for about half of them, economic reasons are the deciding factor.

Benefit of the Education Award

The Segal Education Award is a motivator, however, for students to become UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members. Because the Education Award is not given until the end of the service term, members use the award to help finance additional college semesters. The most recent Education Award for a half-time member was $2,775, which, before taxes, would pay for at least thirteen credit hours of tuition and fees a semester. Most members take around twelve credit hours of classes each semester as full-time students, which means the Education Award could be applied to pay tuition and fees for approximately one semester of study. Per AmeriCorps guidelines, members are permitted to serve for up to the value of two full Education Awards. As all UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members have half-time status, this guideline allows them to serve up to four service terms. In fact, approximately eight of the forty-three members are currently serving in their third year of service.

Members who want to return for a second, third, or next year, a fourth service term are still required to reapply, just like prospective members. They are not automatically selected, but having already served a prior term puts them at the top of the candidate list and gives them a slight advantage. Yarritu says that having returning members is actually advantageous for the program as they are already familiar with the program, the high school teachers and principals, and the intricacies of the college enrollment and financial aid process. Returning members are then split up among the seven high schools and act as a knowledge resource for the newer members.

Giving Back

When members were asked why they joined the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, many mentioned the fact that they "felt useful" and were glad to be able to help out not only the high school students with whom they work, but their own peer groups as well. UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members are well-versed in the college admissions and financial aid process, so much so that their own friends often come to them with questions about applying. Several members said that they were once "helped in high school by the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program and wanted to do the same for others." Some members mentioned the Education Award as an initial incentive for joining the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, but realized after they began their service that the "job is rewarding in itself" and that, for them, service is like "fruit for the spirit." Most members enjoy and feel validated by being part of students' success and seeing them go from being "lost" to actually enrolling in college.

Program Management and Supervision

Yarritu, quiet and unassuming, is the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program's sole employee. As such, he is responsible for all aspects of program management, member training, and member supervision. He visits each of the seven Go Centers at least once a week to check in with the members and troubleshoot any problematic issues. Yarritu say that he deals mostly with technical questions from members related to financial aid eligibility. Understanding and wading through the financial aid application process with students is, according to Yarritu, one of the biggest challenges for the members in his program, and understandably so. In this border region, the variety of different types of family and citizenship situations that the high school students present is vast. For example, there are many students whose parents reside in Mexico, students who are permanent residents, students with divorced parents, and students living with extended family members. Each family and citizenship situation can be unique, and because of that, members have to be very knowledgeable about eligibility requirements and the application process itself in order to adequately help their students.

Due to the complexity that the financial aid and enrollment processes can entail, Yarritu dedicates the first month of service to member training. Members are training in a multitude of topics, including: financial aid eligibility, the university enrollment and admission process,

university orientation on student life, human resource issues, and basic AmeriCorps orientation topics. All training topics are facilitated by university staff from their respective departments. Additionally, Yarritu meets with all members as a group on Friday afternoons, every three weeks. During those meetings, members have the opportunity to discuss any problems or difficult situations that they may have experienced, and often get trained on updates and/or changes to any forms that they utilize or policies that they are likely to encounter. Yarritu also leads members in Civic Reflections sessions at least once a year.

With a staff to member ratio of one to forty-three, Yarritu readily admits that the first year of service was a bit difficult. He was hired to manage the new UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, and the first year learning curve was steep. Not only did Yarritu have to learn the particulars of his AmeriCorps program and what it meant to be part of a national service organization, but he also had to figure out and follow the policies and protocols of the funding agency, as well as those of the university. On top of that, he also had to manage and supervise over forty members, all of whom were also new to the program. But Yarritu is not one to back down from a challenge. Now he says that managing the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program has gotten easier (despite his being the only staff member) and the program runs relatively smoothly. Now in his and the program's third year, Yarritu is very familiar with various policies, protocols, and high school administrators and staff. Members who return for a second or third service year also know how to better navigate within the schools and that, in turn, helps to facilitate the service that they provide to the students.

Program Impact

The UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program measures its success as the number of students who actually register for college classes – post-high school graduation – out of those who were selected to receive assistance. During the summer, before the fall semester starts, members guide their students in the class registration and university orientation process at UTB/TSC. Yarritu then double checks in September to verify that those students are actually enrolled in the university. For students who register and enroll at another university, the program has no way to actually verify their presence at those campuses, so it is just assumed that they have registered and enrolled. Prior year program data show that seventy percent of the students targeted by the

UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program enrolled in college after high school graduation, compared to approximately thirty-eight percent of all high school students in the area.

Members feel very proud of the work that they do to help students enroll in college. Many of the students that they assist are first-generation immigrants – in many cases, just like the members – who want to go to college but have limited information about how to navigate the process and make it happen. By working one-on-one with the students and guiding them through the process, the members "give students hope" and make them feel that "it is possible to go to college and get financial aid." One member quoted a student that he worked with as saying "without you, I don't think I would have enrolled" in college.

Members also feel that they set a good example for the students and that the students look up to them as role models. They enjoy the one-on-one relationships that they build with the students, their role in guiding them through the enrollment process, and they do their best to make themselves available to help when students have questions. One member said of her experience, "it's great when you help them and they feel comfortable talking to you. They see you on campus and say thank you." In fact, hearing 'thank you' from students is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a member in this program because it "feels good knowing you are helping (someone) out." Helping students learn how to enroll in college and apply for financial aid, as well as give students the hope that college can be a tangible reality for them, makes members feel useful, and, as one member said, "it's good to feel useful."

Program Challenge – Lack of Support

While the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program has shown success, and members feel that they are doing a useful and necessary service, the program is not without its particular set of challenges. The primary challenge, as mentioned by multiple members as well as by Yarritu, is the program's relationship with the principals and teachers within some of the schools. The UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program has the permission and full support of each district's School Board to work with the students at school. However, few principals and teachers at some of the schools are fully receptive of the program and its purpose. In fact, within the last year, four of the five high schools within the BISD have hired new principals, so it may come as little surprise, then, to hear members complain that some of the "principals do not even know what the

UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is," who the members are, or what they do. Additionally, according to Yarritu, while some principals are very supportive of the program and its goals, other principals' primary concern is simply "getting their students to graduate," irrespective of what plans students may have post-graduation.

Teacher complaints are also a common issue, as reported by Yarritu and various members. According to school policies, students are only permitted to be pulled from elective classes rather than from core subject classes. Due to that requirement, some teachers who teach elective classes are bothered by or do not allow their students to leave the class to work with the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members. According to Yarritu, the teachers feel that their classes are "just as important" as non-elective classes and question why students are allowed to miss their classes and not others. This sentiment has caused considerable resentment among many of the members because they have to interact with the uncooperative teachers. When that happens, either they, or more frequently, Yarritu, go to the school's principal for assistance. More often than not, however, if members have repeatedly encountered opposition from particular teachers, they will simply avoid asking those teachers for permission to meet with a student altogether.

According to Yarritu, however, the only way for the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program to operate is to work with students during the school day during one of their elective classes. Most high school students would be unable to stay after school to participate in this kind of optional assistance because they may be involved in extracurricular activities, have an after-school job, or take the bus and then would have no one available to pick them up from school. Given that members meet with an individual student an average of six times over the course of the school year, the problem does not appear to be that any one student is missing too much class time. Rather, it is the continual absence of multiple students – from certain teachers' classes and not from others – that creates the sense of inequality and conflict.

Disinterest in the program and lack of cooperation on the part of school staff and administrators largely affects members' morale. One member described feeling like "the schools want you there, but they don't want you there," and another felt like members "do so much" for the students, yet the teachers and principals do not appreciate their efforts. This sentiment was echoed by Yarritu when asked if he had any final thoughts to add to describe his AmeriCorps

program. He said that the services that members provide the students are "invaluable and probably not appreciated by teachers and the schools."

Program Challenge – Competition & Lack of Awareness

Another challenge for the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is an overall lack of awareness of the program and what it is that members do for students. The program has Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the School Boards at all three school districts which detail the agreement of expectations from both parties, in terms of what each will provide and expect to receive from the other. Unfortunately, however, not all of the schools "comply with the MOU agreements." At some schools, members do not have the dedicated space or access to computers as originally outlined in the MOU. While one school may designate a dedicated room or computer lab for that school's Go Center, in another school, the only space allotted for members to meet with students is the back row of the library. Considering that many of the discussions that members have with students often include personal information – such as a student's immigration status, residency, or financial circumstances – the fact that there is no privacy is less than ideal. Members also mentioned that having a designated space to put paperwork, posters, or other information for students would be helpful and would create more awareness within the school of who they are and what they can do for students.

Tied in with the lack of awareness of the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is the perception among many members that they are "not taken seriously" or that their work with students is not "recognized as valid." A recent source of frustration among members is a sense of competition with a recently started program called Advise TX, which is sponsored by Texas A&M University. Advise TX places recent college graduates on high school campuses to act as near-peer college advisors to help lead low-income and first-generation students to college. The program's mission and activities are similar to those of the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, with the main difference being that the Advise TX program operates on a drop-in basis only, while the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is primarily a one-on-one mentoring program. Both programs share space, and students, in six out of the seven high schools where the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program operates. Members stated that students will often drop by the Go Center for help, but specifically request the services of the Advise TX student adviser instead of the UTB/TSC

AmeriCorps member. Additionally, there is the perception that the Advise TX advisers are school staff members or assistants to the guidance counselors. Thus, members feel that the new program "is more respected" than the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program and members "even though we've been doing this longer." UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program members did not have to deal with this frustration during the first two years of operation because the Advise TX program was not in place at that time.

Organizational Challenge – The End of an Era

Another challenge that confronts the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program, although at a more indirect level, is the change in the institution's organizational structure. The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College have been partners in higher education, sharing land, buildings, students, and faculty for twenty years. However, the two institutions are currently in the process of ending their partnership and have begun the transition to operate as two separate entities. In fact, the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program's reapplication bid for the next funding cycle is under the UTB name only. As the program currently stands, members can be either UTB or TSC students. If funded for the upcoming service year and forward, members will only be permitted to be UTB students. The new change in organizational structure may not directly affect the number of eligible members, as most current members are UTB students anyway. However, the disruption is evident at a higher level in which university names and logos have to be changed, university staff members face relocation, and all the administrative details that have to be ironed out are felt by the university employees, and to a lesser extent, the members. Due to the change, all UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program promotional materials, t-shirts, and other goods that display the university name and logo have been redesigned to reflect the current status. The name and logo will be redesigned again once the partnership is officially dissolved and both institutions determine their next branding steps.

Program Value

So what is the value of the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program? Everyone agrees, from Yarritu to the members, that the members put in a lot of time and do a lot of work, much of it outside the realm of their twenty hours a week service commitment. One member commented

that his service was worth "at least minimum wage" and some members suggested an hourly wage of ten to fifteen dollars an hour, which is at least twice the rate of what the members' current living allowance amounts to. For the amount of work that members do and for how small their stipend is in comparison, the program is cost-saving for both the university as well as the school districts, as neither entity could replicate the service at the given cost.

The UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program's value is not defined solely by dollars saved, but also by time saved as well. The guidance counselors at each high school are there, in part, to advise students on career paths and college choices. With the number of students that they must serve and the myriad other duties their jobs entail, there is no doubt that the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps members' one-on-one mentoring relationships with students and the help that they provide them with the college enrollment process not only saves the guidance counselors time, but also allows them the opportunity to focus their efforts on other topic areas.

Additionally, as evidenced by the aforementioned partnerships and special events, the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is highly sought after for collaboration. The members' skills and time spent at those events provides a valuable service to the students and families who attend. The members' service at these special events also saves time. According to Yarritu, financial aid workshops in which students received help to fill out financial aid forms used to take hours. With eight or nine members serving together at one workshop, they have been able to assist the same number of students in a fraction of the time.

The value of the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program is also evident simply from talking to the members who serve in the program. Members beamed when they described their service and the impact they felt they had on the students. Many of the members personally identified with some of the students that they have helped, and the pride they showed when talking about giving back to students like themselves, was very inspiring. They described their immense satisfaction to know that because of their service they were "part of someone else's (path to) success" and helped to "put kids on solid ground."

And finally, it would be remiss to ignore the value that the UTB/TSC AmeriCorps program has for the students that it serves. Without a dedicated mentor to individually walk them through the unfamiliar and, oftentimes, complicated process of applying to college and for financial aid, many of the students may not have even tried to make higher education a reality in

their lives and would not have realized their full potential. Despite the difficulties, frustrations, and challenges that members often encounter while fulfilling their service, they are giving students hope and changing lives in the process.

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Photo Credits

Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) Case Study
> Photos 1-5, Amarillo, TX. 25 January 2012. Personal photographs by Rebecca Sorensen. JPEG files.

CitySquare Case Study
> Photo 1: AmeriCorps member, Dallas, TX. 6 June 2009. Photograph submitted by Jennifer Rajkumar. JPEG file.

> Photo 2: CitySquare members, Dallas, TX. 4 June 2011. Photograph submitted by Jennifer Rajkumar. JPEG file.

> Photo 3: AmeriCorps pride, Dallas, TX. 16 January 2012. Photograph submitted by Jennifer Rajkumar. JPEG file.

> Photo 4: Service impact, Dallas, TX. 19 August 2011. Photograph submitted by Jennifer Rajkumar. JPEG file.

Schulenburg Weimar in Focus Together (SWIFT) Case Study
> Photo1: Member tutoring students, Schulenburg, TX. Date unknown. Photograph submitted by Heather Eilers. JPEG file.

> Photo 2: Schulenburg Community Garden, Schulenburg, TX. 30 November 2011. Personal photograph by Rebecca Sorensen. JPEG file.

> Photo 3: "If I Had a Hammer," Schulenburg, TX. 30 November 2011. Personal photograph by Rebecca Sorensen. JPEG file.

> Photo 4: Member tutoring a student, Schulenburg, TX. Date unknown. Photograph submitted by Heather Eilers. JPEG file.

> Photo 5: SWIFT recruitment materials, Schulenburg, TX. 30 November 2011. Personal photograph by Rebecca Sorensen. JPEG file.

> Photo 6: Member tutoring, Schulenburg, TX. Date unknown. Photograph submitted by Heather Eilers. JPEG file.

> Photo 7: Homework help, Schulenburg, TX. Date unknown. Photograph submitted by Heather Eilers. JPEG file.

Appendix A:
Program Manager Survey 2010-2011

ID Number: _____

AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation:
Program Manager Survey
2010-2011

Instructions

This survey is part of the AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation. The evaluation is funded by the OneStar Foundation and conducted by the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas at Austin. The purpose of the evaluation is to learn specific characteristics that comprise high-performing AmeriCorps programs in the State of Texas. The information that you provide will help us to understand the design, delivery, and operations of AmeriCorps*Texas programs that may impact the programs' outcomes and overall performance.

We appreciate your time in completing this Program Manager Survey. ALL RESPONSES SHOULD BE IN REGARDS TO YOUR *2010-2011* PROGRAM YEAR. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Sorensen at 512-232-4240 or rsorensen@austin.utexas.edu if you have any questions. Thank you again for your time and cooperation in this important evaluation.

Please complete the questionnaire via SurveyMonkey by SEPTEMBER 12, 2011 to:

Rebecca Sorensen, MPH
RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service
The University of Texas at Austin
P.O. Box Y, Code 2700
Austin, TX
78713

NATIONAL
Date Sent: _____
Date Received: _____
Date Entered: _____

For RGK Center use only

Program Structure

1. How would you best characterize your organization?

 ☐ State agency
 ☐ Local education agency/school district
 ☐ Other local government agency
 ☐ Community-based organization (non-profit)
 ☐ Community college
 ☐ 4-year college or university
 ☐ Private foundation
 ☐ Other *(please specify)* _____

2. Is your organization an independent entity or an affiliate of a larger national organization?

 ☐ Independent entity
 ☐ Affiliate of larger national organization
 ☐ Don't know

3. Does your organization identify as a faith-based organization?

 ☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ Don't know

4. Approximately how many years has your ORGANIZATION (not your AmeriCorps program) been in operation?

 ☐ Less than one year
 ☐ One to two years
 ☐ Two to three years
 ☐ Three to four years
 ☐ Four to five years
 ☐ More than five years
 ☐ Don't know

5. For approximately how many years has your organization received AmeriCorps State and/or National-direct funding (do not include VISTA funding)?

	State funding	National-direct funding
Less than one year..............................	☐	☐
One to two years.................................	☐	☐
Two to three years..............................	☐	☐
Three to four years.............................	☐	☐
Four to five years................................	☐	☐
More than five years...........................	☐	☐
Don't know..	☐	☐
Not applicable (NA)............................	☐	☐

6. Please check the programmatic area(s) in which your ORGANIZATION spends the majority of its time. *(Check all that apply)*.

☐ Education
☐ Parenting skill development
☐ Child care
☐ Public health
☐ Housing (e.g., renovation, construction)
☐ Environment/Conservation
☐ Job training/placement
☐ Mental health
☐ Economic/Community development
☐ Disaster recovery/preparedness
☐ Other *(please specify)*_____

7. Please check the programmatic area(s) in which your 2010-2011 AMERICORPS PROGRAM spent the majority of its time. *(Check all that apply.)*

    ☐ Education
    ☐ Parenting skill development
    ☐ Child care
    ☐ Public health
    ☐ Housing (e.g., renovation, construction)
    ☐ Environment/Conservation
    ☐ Job training/placement
    ☐ Mental health
    ☐ Economic/Community development
    ☐ Disaster recovery/preparedness
    ☐ Other *(please specify)*_____

8. Please rank the following four goals in order of their priority to your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program. Rank "1" as the highest priority and "4" as the lowest priority:

    _____ Providing needed services to clients
    _____ Developing members
    _____ Building your organizational capacity
    _____ Strengthening relationships within the community

9. What is your organization's PRIMARY reason for hosting AmeriCorps members?

    ☐ Increase the scope/size of our program
    ☐ Serve more people
    ☐ Improve quality of services
    ☐ Strengthen relationship with the community
    ☐ Build community capacity
    ☐ Build organizational capacity
    ☐ Don't know
    ☐ Other *(please specify)* _____

10. Please indicate all the ways in which your organization recruits AmeriCorps members.

	Yes	No
Local newspaper...	☐	☐
Craigslist..	☐	☐
Campus/internal flier...	☐	☐
Organization's website...	☐	☐
AmeriCorps website..	☐	☐
Other website..	☐	☐
Word of mouth..	☐	☐
Other (please specify)...	☐	☐

_____

Member Type/Enrollment

11. Please list the total number of AmeriCorps members that were enrolled in the 2010-2011 program year.

Total enrolled members, PY2010-2011..._____

12. Of the total number of 2010-2011 enrolled AmeriCorps members, please list...

Total enrolled **full time** (FT), minimum 1700 hours................................_____
Total enrolled **half time** (HT), minimum 900 hours................................_____
Total enrolled **reduced half time** (RHT), minimum 675 hours..........._____
Total enrolled **quarter time** (QT), minimum 450 hours........................_____
Total enrolled **minimum time** (MT), minimum 300 hours..................._____

13. Please list the number of AmeriCorps members that exited the program after enrolling in the 2010-2009 program year and did not earn an education award.

Total number of exited members, PY2010-2011.._____

14. Of the total number of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members that exited the program after enrolling and did not earn an education award, please list...

Total **full time** (FT) exited members.._____
Total **half time** (HT) exited members.._____
Total **reduced half time** (RHT) exited members........................_____
Total **quarter time** (QT) exited members......................................._____
Total **minimum time** (MT) exited members.................................._____

15. When AmeriCorps members are enrolled less than full-time, how frequently do they serve? *(Please check all member types that are applicable to your program.)*

	Mostly year-round	Mostly during length of school semester	Mostly during summer months	Other
HT members......................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members....................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members......................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members.....................................	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', please describe.): _____

16. Did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program utilize different member types in different ways? For example, if your program utilized HT and QT members, did each member type have unique position descriptions and/or activities?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Sometimes
☐ Don't know

17. How would you rate the level of dedication of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members?

	Very dedicated	Somewhat dedicated	A little dedicated	Not dedicated at all
Full time members.............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Half time members..............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduced half time members...............	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quarter time members.........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minimum time members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Were there any second-year members enrolled in your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

19. What percentage of your 2010-2011 members came from the community in which they served?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Came from the community in which they served	☐	☐	☐	☐
Came from another community or state	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unknown	☐	☐	☐	☐

Stipend

20. Please indicate the funding source(s) that were utilized to provide stipends to AmeriCorps members during the 2010-2011 program year. *(Check all that apply.)*

	AmeriCorps federal grant/ match funds	Federal work-study	No stipend given	Other
Full time members..............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Half time members..............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduced half time members.............	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quarter time members........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minimum time members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', pleased describe.) _____

21. Please indicate the average annual stipend amount (when given) paid to the following AmeriCorps members during the 2010-2011 program year.

Full time member...................................$_____
Half time member...................................$_____
Reduced half time member.................$_____
Quarter time member...........................$_____
Minimum time member.......................$_____

22. In addition to AmeriCorps members, does your organization have other volunteers?

☐ Yes
☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 24)**
☐ Don't know **(SKIP TO QUESTION 24)**

23. IF YES, do the non-AmeriCorps volunteers receive a stipend?

☐ Yes, they all receive a stipend
☐ Some receive a stipend, some do not
☐ No, none receive a stipend
☐ Don't know

Staff Involvement

24. How many staff members at your organization, including yourself, took part in managing/administering your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program?

       Total number of staff members: _____

25. What was the total number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) that took part in managing/administering your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program?

       Total number of FTEs: _____

26. Please identify the top 5 staff members, including yourself, that had the most involvement in managing/administering the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program at your organization. List each staff member's job title and identify what type of staff each was.

(Job title)	*(Type of staff)*			
	Fiscal	Clerical	Program	Executive
Staff#1 _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff#2 _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff#3 _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff#4 _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff#5 _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. Were any new staff members hired specifically to manage the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program at your organization?

       ☐ Yes
       ☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 29)**
       ☐ Don't know

28. Was YOUR position hired specifically to manage the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program at your organization?

       ☐ Yes **(SKIP TO QUESTION 30)**
       ☐ No
       ☐ Don't know

29. Was the responsibility of managing the AmeriCorps program assigned to existing staff member(s)?

     ☐ Yes
     ☐ No
     ☐ Don't know

30. For each staff member charged with managing/administering the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program at your organization, what percentage of their time was spent on AmeriCorps management/administration job duties?

	‹10%	10-19%	20-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80-89%	›90%
Staff #1.........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff #2........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff #3.........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff #4........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff #5.........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

31. For how many years have you been the Program Manager (or equivalent title) of the current AmeriCorps program at your institution?

     ☐ less than 1 year
     ☐ 1-2 years
     ☐ 2-3 years
     ☐ 3-4 years
     ☐ 4-5 years
     ☐ more than 5 years

Team/Crew Leaders

32. Did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program utilize team/crew leaders?

     ☐ Yes
     ☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 34)**
     ☐ Don't know **(SKIP TO QUESTION 34)**

33. How many team/crew leaders did your program have?

    Number of team/crew leaders: _____

Host Sites

34. Did any of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members serve at host sites?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 40)**
    ☐ Don't know **(SKIP TO QUESTION 40)**

35. At how many host sites did your members work on a regular basis?

    Number of host sites: _____

36. What percentage of members worked more than half of their time at a host site?

    ☐ 0 – 25%
    ☐ 26 – 50%
    ☐ 51 – 75%
    ☐ 76 – 100%

37. Please indicate the ways in which host sites were selected.

	Yes	No
Competitive formal application process..........................	☐	☐
Existing relations with other organizations...................	☐	☐
Identified by program staff...	☐	☐
Identified by members..	☐	☐
Other (*please specify*)..	☐	☐

_____

38. Were there site supervisors at each of the host sites?

☐ Yes, there were site supervisors at ALL host sites
☐ Yes, there were site supervisors at SOME of the host sites
☐ No, there were no site supervisors at any of the host sites
☐ Don't know

39. Were host site staff members' actively involved in the following activities?

	Yes	No
Planning/arranging service activities/projects for members..................	☐	☐
Participating in service activities/projects with members.....................	☐	☐
Providing/arranging periodic member development/training..............	☐	☐
Evaluating members job performance..	☐	☐

Program Operations

40. In general, what percentage of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members served in urban, suburban, and/or rural settings?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Served in urban setting................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Served in suburban setting.........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Served in rural setting................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Served in combined setting.........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unknown...	☐	☐	☐	☐

41. On average, what percentage of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members served in the following settings during their regularly scheduled weekly service activities?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Served as the only AmeriCorps members at the service site...	☐	☐	☐	☐
Served with other AmeriCorps members on **different** activities at service site...................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Served with other AmeriCorps members on the **same** activities at service site...................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (*please specify*)..	☐	☐	☐	☐

_____

42. On average, how often did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members see other AmeriCorps members in your program?

☐ Daily, members placed together/in teams
☐ Daily, as members came together for debriefings, daily meetings, etc.
☐ Weekly at regularly scheduled meetings and/or training activities
☐ Monthly at regularly scheduled meetings and/or training activities
☐ Three to four times a year
☐ Once or twice a year
☐ Not at all
☐ Other (*please specify*) _____

Communication

43. During the AmeriCorps members' 2010-2011 service year, would you agree or disagree that you regularly asked members how things were going?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

44. During their service, how often did you regularly communicate with the members?

	More than once a day	Every day	At least 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
FT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members.................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

45. In which way(s) did you regularly communicate with your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members during their service? *(Check all that apply.)*

	Face-to-face chats	Phone	Email	1-on-1 scheduled meetings	Group meetings w/ other AmeriCorps members	All-staff meetings	Conference calls	Other
FT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', please describe.) _____

46. In which way did you MOST regularly communicate with your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members?

	Face-to-face chats	Phone	Email	1-on-1 scheduled meetings	Group meetings w/ other AmeriCorps members	All-staff meetings	Conference calls	Other
FT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', please describe.) _____

Member Evaluation

47. Did you evaluate your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members' performance?

☐ Yes
☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 50)**

48. How often did you evaluate members' performance? *(Check all that apply.)*

	Weekly	Monthly	After 1st 3 months of service	After 6 months of service	At end of service	Other
FT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members.................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members....................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members...................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', please describe.) _____

49. Please indicate whether or not you used the following methods to evaluate members' performance.

	Yes	No
Direct observation..	☐	☐
Client survey on community benefits....................................	☐	☐
Member interview...	☐	☐
Communication with host site..	☐	☐
Other (*please specify*)...	☐	☐

_____

Member Development

50. How long in duration did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program initial member orientation last?

Total number of hours _____

51. On average, how often did your organization provide ongoing formal member development/training for 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members?

	Weekly	Every 2 weeks	Monthly	Every 2 months	Every 3-4 months	Once/twice a year	Other
FT members............	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HT members...........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RHT members........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
QT members............	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MT members...........	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

(If checked 'Other', please describe.) _____

52. Approximately how many hours of ongoing member development training did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program offer to members over the course of the year? (Do not include initial orientation training hours in your response.)

Total number of hours: _____

53. While enrolled in your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program, how important was it that members...

	Very important	Somewhat important	A little important	Not important at all
Develop commitment to civic engagement, social responsibility, and volunteerism..................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learn skills that they can use on the job, or for future employment..................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have an opportunity to serve with members from diverse backgrounds..................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop teamwork/leadership skills..................................	☐	☐	☐	☐

54. Did your program provide *Life After AmeriCorps* or another type of development/transition training for members leaving the AmeriCorps program at the end of their 2010-2011 term of service?

☐ Yes
☐ No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 56)**
☐ Don't know **(SKIP TO QUESTION 56)**

55. Did you provide:

	Yes	No
Approximately ½ day of group activities or workshops focusing on transition..	☐	☐
Full-day of group activities or workshops focusing on transition..	☐	☐
More than one day of group activities or workshops focusing on transition..	☐	☐
Individual counseling, meetings with staff/supervisor/team leader to discuss transition/future goals..	☐	☐

Member Value Characteristics

56. What percentage of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members had the following levels of educational attainment upon their enrollment?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Some high school, but no diploma or GED......	☐	☐	☐	☐
High school diploma or GED................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Some college, but no degree................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
2-yr Associate's degree or equivalent..................	☐	☐	☐	☐
4-yr Bachelor's degree or equivalent...................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Some Master's-level training, but no degree...	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master's degree or equivalent................................	☐	☐	☐	☐

57. What percentage of 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members had the following levels of work experience upon their enrollment?

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
No work experience..	☐	☐	☐	☐
1-2 years work experience...................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
2-3 years work experience...................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
3-4 years work experience...................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
4-5 years work experience...................................	☐	☐	☐	☐
More than 5 years work experience..................	☐	☐	☐	☐

58. Think about the work that your average 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members were expected to do in or for your organization. If you hired someone from the open market to do the same work that AmeriCorps members did, what level of education would be most appropriate for that position?

☐ Some high school, but no diploma or GED
☐ High school diploma or GED
☐ Some college, but no degree
☐ 2-yr Associate's degree or equivalent
☐ 4-yr Bachelor's degree or equivalent
☐ Some Master's-level training, but no degree
☐ Master's degree or equivalent

59. If you hired someone from the open market to do the same work that your average 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members did, what level of work experience would be most appropriate for that position?

☐ No work experience
☐ 1-2 years work experience
☐ 2-3 years work experience
☐ 3-4 years work experience
☐ 4-5 years work experience
☐ More than 5 years work experience

60. If you had to hire someone from the open market to do the same work that your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members did, how much would you pay someone in that position?

☐ $7.25/hr or less
☐ $7.26 - $8.25/hr
☐ $8.26 - $9.25/hr
☐ $9.26 - $10.25/hr
☐ $10.26 - $11.25/hr
☐ $11.26 - $12.25/hr
☐ $12.26 - $13.25/hr
☐ $13.26 - $14.25/hr
☐ $14.26 - $15.25/hr
☐ $15.26 - $16.25/hr
☐ $16.26 - $17.25/hr
☐ $17.26 - $18.25/hr
☐ $18.26 - $19.25/hr
☐ more than $19.25/hr

61. By utilizing AmeriCorps members, would you say that your organization...

☐ Saves money
☐ Breaks even
☐ Loses money
☐ Don't know

62. How important are the following characteristics in determining how valuable some AmeriCorps members are to your organization compared to others in their cohort?

	Very important	Somewhat important	A little important	Not important at all
Higher level of education........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
More work experience............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personality...	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work ethic...	☐	☐	☐	☐
Willingness to learn..............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Familiarity with the community being served...............................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Familiarity with the job subject matter..........................	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (*please specify*)..................................	☐	☐	☐	☐

_____

63. Think about the LEAST valuable 2010-2011 AmeriCorps member and the MOST valuable 2010-2011 AmeriCorps member to your organization. On the following scale, please circle the approximate salary that you would have paid each per HOUR, knowing that the rest of the members would fall somewhere in between.

	$8.25		$10.25		$12.25		$14.25		$16.25		$18.25		$19.25 or more
$7.25 or less		$9.25		$11.25		$13.25		$15.25		$17.25		$19.25	

Program Effectiveness

64. Please indicate all the ways in which your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program measured its effectiveness.

	Yes	No
Required AmeriCorps performance measures...........................	☐	☐
Additional performance measures (not required).......................	☐	☐
Client/community survey...	☐	☐
Client/community interviews...	☐	☐
Member survey..	☐	☐
Member interviews...	☐	☐
Other (please specify)..	☐	☐

_____

65. Overall, how effective would you say your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program was?

☐ Very effective
☐ Somewhat effective
☐ Somewhat ineffective
☐ Very ineffective

66. Would you agree or disagree that your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program made an important contribution to the community?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

67. How would you rate the impact of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program on the clients it served?

☐ More than expected
☐ The same as expected
☐ Less than expected

68. As a result of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program, what kind of change have you seen in the clients that were served?

☐ A lot of change
☐ Some change
☐ A little bit of change
☐ No change at all

69. Did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program meet or exceed its annual reported goals?

☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded ALL of our annual reported goals
☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded MOST of our annual reported goals
☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded SOME of our annual reported goals
☐ No, our AmeriCorps program DID NOT meet or exceed any of our annual reported goals

70. Did your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps program meet or exceed its annual non-reported goals?

☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded ALL of our annual non-reported goals
☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded MOST of our annual non-reported goals
☐ Yes, our AmeriCorps program met or exceeded SOME of our annual non-reported goals
☐ No, our AmeriCorps program DID NOT meet or exceed any of our annual non-reported goals

Thank you for filling out and returning this survey!

Appendix B:
Member Survey

ID Number: _____

AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation:
Member Survey
2010 - 2011

Instructions

This survey is part of an AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation. The evaluation is funded by the OneStar Foundation and conducted by the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas at Austin. The purpose of the evaluation is to learn specific characteristics that comprise high-performing AmeriCorps programs in the State of Texas. The information that you provide will help us to understand your experience as an AmeriCorps member, as well as your thoughts on the program's effectiveness.

Your individual responses will be ANONYMOUS and will not be shared with any AmeriCorps programmatic staff or other AmeriCorps members.

We appreciate your time in completing this AmeriCorps Member Survey. ALL RESPONSES SHOULD BE IN REGARDS TO YOUR *2010-2011* YEAR OF SERVICE. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Sorensen at 512-232-4240 or rsorensen@austin.utexas.edu if you have any questions. Thank you again for your time and cooperation in this important evaluation.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided by APRIL 26, 2011 to:

Rebecca Sorensen, MPH
RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service
The University of Texas at Austin
P.O. Box Y, Code 2700
Austin, TX
78713

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. During your 2010-2011 service year with AmeriCorps, what type of member were you categorized as?

☐ Full time (FT), served minimum 1700 hours
☐ Half time (HT), served minimum 900 hours
☐ Reduced half time (RHT), served minimum 675 hours
☐ Quarter time (QT), served minimum 450 hours
☐ Minimum time (MT), served minimum 300 hours
☐ Don't know

2. Was the 2010-2011 service year your first or second year doing national service (e.g., CCC, VISTA, AmeriCorps State/National)?

☐ 2010-2011 was my FIRST year doing national service
☐ 2010-2011 was my SECOND year doing national service; I previously performed national service with AmeriCorps NCCC
☐ 2010-2011 was my SECOND year doing national service; I previously performed national service with AmeriCorps VISTA
☐ 2010-2011 was my SECOND year doing national service; I previously performed national service with AmeriCorps State/National

3. If you were a second year AmeriCorps State/National member, did you serve with the same organization as you did in your first AmeriCorps State/National service year?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I was not a second year AmeriCorps State/National member

4. Please select the response that most accurately describes the length of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year:

☐ I served for an entire year's time
☐ I served mostly during one school semester
☐ I served mostly during two school semesters
☐ I served mostly during the summer months
☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

5. When you started the AmeriCorps 2010-2011 service year, what was your level of education?

☐ Some high school, but no diploma or GED
☐ High school diploma or GED
☐ Some college, but no degree
☐ 2-yr Associate's degree or equivalent
☐ 4-yr Bachelor's degree or equivalent
☐ Some Master's-level training, but no degree
☐ Master's degree or equivalent

6. When you started the AmeriCorps 2010-2011 service year, how many years of work experience did you have?

☐ I had no work experience
☐ I had 1-2 years work experience
☐ I had 2-3 years work experience
☐ I had 3-4 years work experience
☐ I had 4-5 years work experience
☐ I had more than 5 years work experience

7. What race do you identify as? *(Please check all that apply.)*

☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Other *(please specify):* _____

8. Are you Hispanic or Latino?

☐ Yes
☐ No

9. What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female

10. In what year were you born?

| 1 | 9 | | |

SERVICE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

11. Please select the PRIMARY way in which you found out about the AmeriCorps program with which you served.

☐ Local newspaper
☐ Craigslist
☐ Campus/internal flier
☐ Organization's website
☐ AmeriCorps website
☐ Other website
☐ Word of mouth
☐ Job/career fair
☐ Social media (ie., Facebook, Twitter, text messages)
☐ Campus work-study office
☐ Other *(please specify)* _____

12. Are you from the community in which you served, or are you from another community or state?

☐ I am from the community in which I served
☐ I am from another community or state

13. Please select the response that BEST describes why you chose to join AmeriCorps.

☐ I wanted to build my professional skills
☐ I wanted to help a community in need
☐ I wanted to meet new people
☐ I wanted to gain work experience
☐ I thought it would look good on my resume
☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

14. Please describe in one sentence what your primary service activity was during the 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year:

_____

_____

15. By the time you end your AmeriCorps service, will you have completed all your service hours in the time allotted for your 2010-2011 service?

     ☐ Yes
     ☐ No

16. Please select the response that best describes the setting in which you completed your regularly scheduled weekly AmeriCorps service activities:

     ☐ I served as the only AmeriCorps member at the service site
     ☐ I served with other AmeriCorps members at the service site, though we each performed **different** service activities
     ☐ I served with other AmeriCorps members at the service site, and we each performed the **same** service activities
     ☐ Other *(please specify):* _____

17. On average, how often did you see other AmeriCorps members in your program?

     ☐ Daily, we were placed together/in teams
     ☐ Daily, as we came together for debriefings, daily meetings, etc.
     ☐ Weekly at regularly scheduled meetings and/or training activities
     ☐ Monthly at regularly scheduled meetings and/or training activities
     ☐ Three to four times a year
     ☐ Once or twice a year
     ☐ Not at all
     ☐ Other *(please specify)* _____

18. Did you receive a stipend or living allowance during your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year?

     ☐ Yes
     ☐ No

19. If you DID NOT receive a stipend or living allowance for your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service, why not? *(Please select the BEST response.)*

☐ I did not need a stipend/living allowance
☐ I was only interested in receiving the education award
☐ I was not offered a stipend/living allowance
☐ I did not know that I could get a stipend/living allowance
☐ The stipend/living allowance amount was not worth it to me
☐ I DID receive a stipend/living allowance

20. Please indicate the total stipend/living allowance amount (pre-taxed) that was paid to you for your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service.

$ ☐☐☐☐☐

☐ I did not receive a stipend/living allowance

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

21. Prior to starting your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service, how clearly defined was your service description?

☐ Very defined
☐ Somewhat defined
☐ Somewhat undefined
☐ Very undefined
☐ I did not receive a service description

22. Prior to starting your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year, how clearly defined were the goals and/or expectations of your service?

☐ Very defined
☐ Somewhat defined
☐ Somewhat undefined
☐ Very undefined
☐ I was not informed of any service goals and/or expectations

23. Approximately, how many hours did your initial AmeriCorps orientation training last?

# of hours: _____
☐ Don't know

24. Please rate the overall usefulness of your initial AmeriCorps orientation.

☐ Very useful
☐ Somewhat useful
☐ Somewhat not useful
☐ Not useful at all

25. How well did your initial AmeriCorps orientation training prepare you for your term of service?

☐ Very well
☐ Somewhat well
☐ Not well at all
☐ Don't know

26. During your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year, would you agree or disagree that your supervisor regularly asked you how things were going?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

27. During your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service, how often did your supervisor regularly communicate with you?

☐ More than once a day
☐ Every day
☐ At least 3 times a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Every other week
☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month
☐ My supervisor did not regularly communicate with me

28. How satisfied were you with the frequency that your AmeriCorps supervisor communicated with you during your 2010-2011 service year?

☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

29. In which way did your supervisor MOST regularly communicate with you during your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service?

☐ Face-to-face chats
☐ Phone
☐ Email
☐ One-on-one scheduled meetings
☐ Group meetings with other AmeriCorps members
☐ All-staff meetings
☐ Conference calls
☐ Other (*please describe*): _____
☐ My supervisor did not regularly communicate with me

30. How satisfied were with the way in which your AmeriCorps supervisor most regularly communicated with you during your 2010-2011 service year?

☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

SERVICE VALUE

31. Think about the work that you did during your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year. If you did the exact same work but were a permanent employee of the organization and NOT an AmeriCorps member, what level of education do you think would be most appropriate for that position?

☐ Some high school, but no diploma or GED
☐ High school diploma or GED
☐ Some college, but no degree
☐ 2-yr Associate's degree or equivalent
☐ 4-yr Bachelor's degree or equivalent
☐ Some Master's-level training, but no degree
☐ Master's degree or equivalent

32. If you did the same exact work but were a permanent employee of the organization and NOT an AmeriCorps member, what level of work experience do you think would be would be most appropriate for that position?

☐ No work experience
☐ 1-2 years work experience
☐ 2-3 years work experience
☐ 3-4 years work experience
☐ 4-5 years work experience
☐ More than 5 years work experience

33. Taking into account your education level, work experience, and skill set, how much do you think you are worth as an employee in the broader labor market?

☐ $7.25/hr or less
☐ $7.26 - $8.25/hr
☐ $8.26 - $9.25/hr
☐ $9.26 - $10.25/hr
☐ $10.26 - $11.25/hr
☐ $11.26 - $12.25/hr
☐ $12.26 - $13.25/hr

☐ $13.26 - $14.25/hr
☐ $14.26 - $15.25/hr
☐ $15.26 - $16.25/hr
☐ $16.26 - $17.25/hr
☐ $17.26 - $18.25/hr
☐ $18.26 - $19.25/hr
☐ more than $19.25/hr

SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS

<u>General</u>

34. Thinking about your 2010-2011 service experience with AmeriCorps, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
a. I felt like I made a contribution to the community..	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. I felt like part of a community................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. I felt like I made a difference in the life of at least one person...................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. I felt like I made a contribution to the organization...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. I re-examined my beliefs and attitudes about myself...............................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I was exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world............................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. I did things I never thought I could do...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. I felt like my time was well spent.................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

35. How true or untrue are the following achievements with regards to your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service experience?

	Very true	Somewhat true	Neither true nor untrue	Somewhat untrue	Very untrue
a. I did work to correct social and economic inequalities............	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. I worked with other people as part of a team............................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. I provided a direct service to people...................................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. I made a difference in the community.......................................	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

36. Overall, what do you think you left behind as a result of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service experience?

☐ No trace
☐ A drop in the bucket
☐ The start of something important
☐ Part of a real solution

37. Overall, how effective or ineffective would you say your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps term of service was?

☐ Very effective
☐ Somewhat effective
☐ Somewhat ineffective
☐ Very ineffective

<u>Community</u>

38. Would you agree or disagree that your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service made an important contribution to the community?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

39. How helpful or unhelpful do you think your AmeriCorps service was to the community?

☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Somewhat unhelpful
☐ Very unhelpful

40. Do you think the AmeriCorps program in which you served provided a unique service to the community?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

41. How did you document the impact of your service on the community?

☐ Client/community testimonials
☐ Personal observations/Great Stories
☐ Performance tracking sheets
☐ I did not document the impact of my service

<u>Client</u>

42. Do you think that the AmeriCorps program with which you served provides a direct benefit to its clients?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Somewhat
☐ Don't know/Not sure

43. As a result of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service, what kind of change did you see in the clients that you served?

☐ A lot of change
☐ Some change
☐ A little bit of change
☐ No change at all

44. How effective do you think you were at asking your clients for on-going feedback about the program?

☐ Very effective
☐ Somewhat effective
☐ Somewhat ineffective
☐ Very ineffective
☐ I did not ask my clients for on-going feedback about the program

45. How effective do you think you were at improving the program by using feedback from your clients?

☐ Very effective
☐ Somewhat effective
☐ Somewhat ineffective
☐ Very ineffective
☐ I did not incorporate feedback from my clients to improve the program

46. How do you know whether or not your service was effective?

☐ We clearly achieved our goals in helping clients
☐ I could see some change in the clients with whom I worked
☐ I have a feeling, but no real evidence of client impact
☐ I do not know whether or not my service was effective in helping clients

Organization

47. Do you think that your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service helped strengthen operations of the organization in which you served?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

48. Did you get feedback from the organization in which you served on your performance?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Member

49. How satisfied are you with your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service experience?

☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

50. Based on the work that you did in your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year, how much do you think that work is worth?

☐ $7.25/hr or less
☐ $7.26 - $8.25/hr
☐ $8.26 - $9.25/hr
☐ $9.26 - $10.25/hr
☐ $10.26 - $11.25/hr
☐ $11.26 - $12.25/hr
☐ $12.26 - $13.25/hr

☐ $13.26 - $14.25/hr
☐ $14.26 - $15.25/hr
☐ $15.26 - $16.25/hr
☐ $16.26 - $17.25/hr
☐ $17.26 - $18.25/hr
☐ $18.26 - $19.25/hr
☐ more than $19.25/hr

51. Now that you are at the end of your 2010-2011 AmeriCorps service year, do you feel that you accomplished what you set out to do?

☐ Yes, absolutely
☐ Sort of
☐ No, not really
☐ I'm not sure

Thank you for completing the survey!

Appendix C:
Organizational Capacity Survey

![OneStar Foundation logo — Building Better Nonprofits for a Better Texas]

Organizational Capacity Survey

OBJECTIVE AND INSTRUCTIONS

Objective: The objective of the *Organizational Capacity Survey* is to attain an understanding of your organization's systems, policies, processes, and practices. The information collected by this survey will be used by OneStar Foundation as a tool to review the capacity of your organization to successfully execute the terms of this grant. **NOTE:** OneStar reserves the right to request a copy of any materials attested to in this Organizational Capacity Survey.

Instructions: To complete this survey, please:
- Respond to each applicable question; some questions may not be applicable to your entity;
- Enter your response in the grey cells "_____" or check the appropriate box "☐"; and
- Submit a copy of requested documents.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Organization

Legal Applicant Name: _____

Total Operating Budget for the **current** fiscal year: $ _____

Fiscal Year (i.e., July 1 to June 30): _____

Information of Person Completing this Survey

Respondent Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

A. SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS & MANAGEMENT

1. **Technology Resources. Does your organization:**
   - Provide a computer for all employees/persons?   ☐ YES ☐ NO
   - Have a dedicated e-mail account for all employees/persons?   ☐ YES ☐ NO
   - Have high-speed internet access?   ☐ YES ☐ NO

2. **What was your average annual employee turnover rate for the past two years?**
   Use the following formula to determine your turnover rate: # of employees exiting the organization for the past 24 months / average actual # of employees over the past 24 months.

   ☐ 0-25%   ☐ 26-50%   ☐ 51-75%   ☐ 76-100%

3. **Does your organization have the ability to effectively respond to sudden personnel changes on a:**
   a. Short-term basis (i.e. other staff are able to fill in when an employee is out for an illness) ☐ YES ☐ NO
   b. Intermediate-term basis (i.e. unexpected resignation prompts active recruiting to refill) ☐ YES ☐ NO
   c. Long-term basis (i.e. budgetary cutbacks that necessitate staff reduction) ☐ YES ☐ NO

4. **Does your organization have a Continuity of Operations plan, or other similar plan to continue business in the event of a disaster or other emergency?**
   ☐ YES ☐ NO, *skip to Section B*
   a. Is this plan written? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   b. Have staff been trained on this plan? ☐ YES ☐ NO

B. SOUND RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT & MANAGEMENT

1. Does your organization have someone who is responsible for all aspects of the volunteer program?

☐ YES ☐ NO

- Is this person an employee or volunteer? ☐ Employee ☐ Volunteer
- If your organization has someone who is responsible for all aspects of the volunteer program, what percentage of time do they spend in this function? _____ %

C. SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

1. **The Executive Director (or delegated employee):**

   a. Meets with <u>community leaders</u> at least: ☐ Annually ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Not Done

   b. Shares information and priorities with <u>community leaders</u>[1]: ☐ YES ☐ NO
   Please provide a clear example of how this is accomplished. Include how and how often information is shared. _____

   c. Meets with <u>nonprofit organizations</u> at least: ☐ Annually ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Not Done

   d. Shares information and priorities with <u>nonprofit organizations</u>: ☐ YES ☐ NO
   Please provide a clear example of how this is accomplished. Include how and how often information is shared. _____

2. **Collaboration** *(select all that apply)*

   ☐ Employees communicate with like organizations to explore best practices.

   ☐ Employees combine efforts with other organizations to expend the range of services offered.

   ☐ Management collaborates with other organizations to ensure all aspects of a community need are being met.

   ☐ Your program design takes into account what is already being done by other organizations.

   Please provide clear examples of how you accomplish each item that you have selected. _____

D. FISCAL MANAGEMENT

D.1 OVERSIGHT AND ASSURANCE

1. Are employees who handle funds bonded against loss by reasons of fraud or dishonesty? ☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Has your organization been audited by a Certified Public Accounting firm for the past fiscal year? ☐ YES ☐ NO

   a. If "NO", is one currently underway or scheduled?

   ☐ YES ☐ NO

   b. If "YES", please provide the scheduled date of completion. _____

3. Did your organization take appropriate corrective actions where indicated by the A-133 and/or auditor's report?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Has your organization ever received funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service?

   a. <u>Directly</u> from the Corporation? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If "YES", please specify the grant number(s). _____

   b. <u>Indirectly</u> through another entity receiving direct support? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If "YES", please specify the funding source(s) and grant number(s). _____

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[1] This is an updated version of the Organizational Capacity Survey that was used for evaluation data collection. All applicable questions and response formats are identical to the original version, save for questions C1a and C1d. The original response options should mirror those for questions C1b and C1c.

5. Has your organization received a federal or state grant award in the last two (2) years?
☐ YES ☐ NO

If "Yes", please attach a schedule of Federal and State Funds received in the last two years. Indicate the funding source, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number (where applicable), grant period, and amount.

6. Does your organization keep on hand or know how to readily access a current version of requirements applicable to all funding sources? (including regulations, OMB Circulars, grant terms and conditions, grant awards, etc.)
☐ YES ☐ NO

7. Does your organization have written fiscal management policies and procedures that have been in use for at least one year relating to the following areas?

a.	Accounting Practices	☐ YES ☐ NO
b.	Management Controls	☐ YES ☐ NO
c.	Personnel Policies	☐ YES ☐ NO
d.	Salary Scales	☐ YES ☐ NO
e.	Employee Benefits	☐ YES ☐ NO
f.	Travel Reimbursement	☐ YES ☐ NO
g.	Procurement	☐ YES ☐ NO
h.	Documentation of Employee Time and Effort	☐ YES ☐ NO

D.2 FUNDS MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL ACCOUNTING

1. Are the organization's accounting practices in agreement with those stipulated by its accounting and finance manuals and requirements of its funding sources?
☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Has a general policy with respect to insurance coverage been defined and procedures instituted to ensure adequate coverage for all significant business risks?
☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Does your organization use an automated accounting system?
☐ YES ☐ NO

   If "YES", what is the name of the system? _____

4. Does your accounting system track the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or funding source?
☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Check which of the following books of account are maintained by your organization.

☐ General Ledger	☐ Income (Sales) Journal
☐ Cash Receipts Journal	☐ Purchase Journal
☐ Cash Disbursements Journal	☐ General Journal
☐ Payroll Journal	☐ Other _____

6. Does your organization have a written cost allocation plan?
☐ YES ☐ NO

7. Are common or shared costs that are readily attributable to direct cost activities accumulated into cost pools for allocation to projects, contracts and grants?
☐ YES ☐ NO

8. Are indirect costs segregated from direct costs?
☐ YES ☐ NO

9. Does your accounting system provide for the recording of actual grant/contract costs according to categories of your approved budget(s)?
☐ YES ☐ NO

10. Does your accounting system provide for current and complete disclosure of grant costs?
☐ YES ☐ NO

D.3 TRANSACTION CONTROLS

General Ledger

1. Is the general ledger posted on the double-entry method? ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Does the general ledger design accommodate cost center and fund accounting? ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Is a trial balance of the general ledger prepared monthly? ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Are out of balance conditions identified and corrected on a monthly basis? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Accounts Receivable and Cash Receipts

5. Is there someone dedicated to ensuring that reimbursement requests and expenditure reports to funds are prepared timely, correctly and accurately? ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Is there a process to retain all supporting documentation for items listed on reimbursement requests and expenditure reports to funders? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Accounts Payable and Cash Disbursements

7. Are invoices, purchase orders and receiving documents compared and accounted for by the accounts payable department? ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. Is receipt of goods or services verified before invoices are paid? ☐ YES ☐ NO
9. Does your accounting system enable you to track and document disbursement of funds from original invoice through final payment? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Consultant and Contract Services

10. Are procedures in effect to provide for formal approval by Officers, Board Members, or other high level authority individuals, of consultant and contract service agreements over prescribed limits? ☐ YES ☐ NO
11. Does your organization have controls to determine whether contracts are properly executed? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Travel

12. Does your organization have formal written travel policies? ☐ YES ☐ NO
13. Are there controls in place to ensure that all costs are allowable? ☐ YES ☐ NO

D.4 PROCUREMENT AND PROPERTY

1. Do procedures exist and provide for the solicitation of bids or prices for the purchase, rent, and/or lease of fixed assets?
☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Are purchase approval methods documented and communicated?
☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Are appropriate approval methods obtained prior to the purchase, rent, or lease of equipment and supplies?
☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Are solicitations and price quotations filed and maintained?
☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Is there receipt of donated property supported by documentation which reflects the:
   a. Name of the donor ☐ YES ☐ NO
   b. Donor restrictions (if any) ☐ YES ☐ NO

    c.   Receipt date   ☐ YES ☐ NO

    d.   Fair market value of each item ☐ YES ☐ NO

D.5 BANK ACCOUNTS

1. Is each bank account authorized by the Board of Directors or by the person delegated by the board?
☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Are bank statements reconciled monthly to the general ledger?
☐ YES ☐ NO

D.6 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL

1. Are the duties and responsibilities of employees defined in written policies or job descriptions and communicated to employees?
☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Are records of vacation, sick leave, and compensatory time (if applicable) maintained for employees?
☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Does your organization file federal, state, and local income and payroll tax quarterly withholding reports to the appropriate authorities on a timely basis, if required by local, state, and federal law?
☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Are procedures designed to provide that employees are paid in accordance with approved budget, wage, and salary plans?
☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Are timesheets or periodic certifications required from each employee, as required by the OMB Cost Principles document appropriate to your organization (A-21, A-87, A-122)?
☐ YES ☐ NO

D.7 MATCH

1. Does your organization record both in-kind and cash match received from other individuals and entities on its accounting records?

2. ☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Does your organization have a written policy on valuing and recording in-kind matching funds, and are matching funds supported by appropriate documentation?

4. ☐ YES ☐ NO

5. How does your organization determine and substantiate the value of in-kind contributions?
☐ YES ☐ NO
Please explain: _____

If available, please attach any sample in-kind donation forms or documentation your organization uses.

D.8 INTERNAL CONTROLS

1. Does your accounting system have controls that prevent expenditures in excess of approved and budgeted amounts?
☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Does your organization have a corrective action plan in place to address audit findings, when applicable?
☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Does your accounting system have procedures that govern the maintenance of accounts?
☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Are your accounting system and records secured?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Is your back-up documentation secured in limited access areas?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

6. Do you maintain source documentation to show the nature of each receipt and expenditure?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

7. Are all reports reconcilable with accounting records and systems?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

8. Are transactions in the accounting records properly authorized, as evidenced by supporting documentation containing the signatures of appropriate approving officials?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

9. Has a general policy with respect to insurance coverage been defined and procedures instituted to ensure that all significant business risks have been covered?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO

10. Is insurance coverage periodically reviewed with a competent insurance agent?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

11. Is match revenue recorded in the general ledger, only after it is proven to be acceptable?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

12. Is match recorded in the general ledger as an expense, only after it is utilized for the work of a specific activity of your organization?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

13. Where applicable, is a copy of the approved indirect cost allocation rate and plan on file?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

14. Are written accounting and grants management policies and procedures established to describe the accounting system, stipulate the duties of employees with these functions, and ensure that similar transactions are processed consistently?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

15. Have written accounting and grants management policies and procedures established to describe the accounting system and ensure that similar transactions are processed consistently been used for at least one year?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

16. Are the duties and responsibilities as outlined in written accounting and grants management policies and procedures communicated to employees?
    ☐ YES ☐ NO

Appendix D:
Organizational and Financial Data Sources

Appendix D:
AmeriCorps Organizations and Financial Data Sources 2008-2010

Organization Name	Data Sources		
	2008	2009	2010
Amarillo Independent School District (1)	Budget Summary	Budget Summary	Budget Summary
AVANCE	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Casa de Amigos of Midland Texas	990 Form	990 Form	Unavailable
CitySquare	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
City Year	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
College Forward	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Communities in Schools Dallas Region	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Communities in Schools of Central Texas	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Communities in Schools of the Heart of Texas	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Easter Seals – Central Texas	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas	990 Form	unavailable	990 Form
Harris County Department of Education (2)	Budget Summary	Budget Summary	Budget Summary
Jumpstart for Young Children	unavailable	990 Form	990 Form
National Association of Community Health Centers	unavailable	990 Form	990 Form
Pharr – San Juan – Alamo Independent School District (3)	unavailable	Combined Official Budget	Combined Official Budget
Project Transformation	Email correspondence w/ program manager (PM)	Email correspondence w/ PM	Email correspondence w/ PM
Schulenburg and Weimar in Focus Together	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
Teach for America	990 Form	990 Form	Unavailable
Texas A&M International University (4)	Operating Budget	Operating Budget	Operating Budget
Texas A&M University (5)	Board Approved Budget	Board Approved Budget	Board Approved Budget
The University of Texas at Austin – Charles A. Dana Center (6)	unavailable	Annual Report	Organizational Budget

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (7)	Annual Financial Report	Annual Financial Report	Annual Financial Report
Travis County Department of Human Services (8)	unavailable	Annual Financial Report	Annual Financial Report
United Way of El Paso County	990 Form	990 Form	990 Form
University of North Texas (9)	Financial Report	Financial Report	Financial Report

(1) Amarillo Independent School District Budget Summary. Retrieved August 10, 2011 from http://www.amaisd.org/pdf/finance/0809ProposedBudget.pdf

(2) Harris County Department of Education Budget Summary. Retrieved August 10, 2011 from http://hcde-texas.org/docs/221-FY08-09BudgetBook.pdf

(3) Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD Combined Official Budget. Retrieved August 11, 2011 from http://budget-deparment-business-services.psja.schoolfusion.us

(4) Texas A&M International University Operating Budget. Retrieved August 10, 2011 from http://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/payroll/budget.shtml

(5) Texas A&M University Board Approved Budget. Retrieved August 11, 2011 from http://finance.tamu.edu/budget/prior-budgets.asp

(6) ACE: A Community for Education 2009-2010 Annual Report. Retrieved October October 10, 2011 from www.utdanacenter.org

(7) The University of Texas at Brownsville Annual Financial Report. Retrieved August 11, 2011 from http://www.utb.edu/ba/Document/Reports/business-AFR08.pdf

(8) Travis County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Retrieved October 14, 2011 from http://www.co.travis.tx.us/county_auditor/pdfs/cafr10traviscounty.pdf

(9) University of North Texas Financial Report. Retrieved October 5, 2011 from http://untsystem.edu/pdfs/policies-reports/untafr2008.pdf

Appendix E:
Site Visit Outline

Appendix E:
Site Visit Outline

- General
  - Geographic description

- Organization
  - Background/history
  - Mission
  - How AmeriCorps program fits in with org goals/mission

- Program
  - Background/history (when, how, why started)
  - Mission & objectives
  - Major program priorities
  - Target population
  - Community need & how program fills that need
  - Duplication of services – other community programs that do similar work?
  - Program design & description
  - Logic model
  - Program growth rate over the years (how has program evolved?)
  - Size of program in relation to organization/other programs
  - Program operations
  - Number & name of site locations (where the members work)
  - Orientation details (duration, content)
  - Training (quantity & topics)
  - Supervision
  - Output stats; ie – program results & how documented
  - Program benefits (to members, to organization, to community/clients, to sites, etc)
  - What makes your program unique?
  - What makes your program successful?
  - Successes/highlights
  - Challenges/struggles
  - Value of AmeriCorps program – social, economic, etc

- Members
  - Number of members
  - Type of members – why?
  - Recruitment methods & from where
  - Selection criteria – what do you look for in a member?
  - Ease/difficulty in filling member slots
  - Education levels
  - Work experience
  - Demographics
  - What makes your members unique?
  - Drop-out rate – why do they leave program?
  - What do members do? (day-to-day vs special events)
  - Member perspectives (focus group)

- Why AmeriCorps?

Appendix F:
Focus Group Topic Guide

Appendix F:
AmeriCorps Member Focus Group Topic Guide

Research question: What is the AmeriCorps members' perceived impact of their service work?

Site: **Date:**
Number of members in group: **Gender Breakdown:**

Opening: Please tell us your first name, what type of member you are, and where you are from.

Introduction: What do you do as a member? Describe day-to-day vs special event activities.

Transition: An AmeriCorps member's service experience can vary depending on a variety of factors, such as service location, the member's own education and experience, the type of work that he or she does, and his or her personal goals and expectations. Describe your experience as an AmeriCorps member at this organization.

Transition: People often join AmeriCorps because they want to make a difference. What does making a difference mean to you? How do you know if you have made a difference?

Key: Give an example of a time when you felt you really made a difference as an AmeriCorps member.

Key: What would you say is the overall impact of your service work on…
          the community as a whole?
          the clients/students with whom you work?
          the organization?
          yourselves as AmeriCorps members?

Ending: We've talked about what you do as AmeriCorps members, how you are making a difference and what that means, as well as the overall impact that your service work has on multiple levels. What else can you tell me that would help me understand the impact of your service?

Additional Member Questions

What is the best thing about being an AmeriCorps member?
What is the worst thing about being an AmeriCorps member?
How did you find out about this AmeriCorps program?
Why did you select and apply to be a member at this AmeriCorps program?
If you did the same exact work but were a permanent employee of the organization and NOT an AmeriCorps member, what level of education do you think would be most appropriate for that position?
If you did the same exact work but were a permanent employee of the organization and NOT an AmeriCorps member, what type of work experience do you think would be most appropriate for that position?
Based on the work that you are doing as an AmeriCorps member at this organization, how much do you think that work is worth? Why?

Appendix G:
Cost of Living Indices

Appendix G:
Cost of Living Indices

City	ACCRA Cost of Living Index	Avg	Time Period	Source
Abilene	83.3		2011, January	city-data.com
Amarillo	84.4		2011, January	city-data.com
Austin	94.8		2011, January	city-data.com
Brownsville	80.6		2011, January	city-data.com
Bryan	88.5		2011, January	city-data.com
Corpus Christi	87.7		2011, January	city-data.com
Dallas/Fort Worth	96.4 (D)	94.7	2011, 2nd Qtr.	dallaschamber.org
	93.0 (FW)		2011, 3rd Qtr.	http://www.fortworthchamber.com/eco/life_cost.html
Del Rio	80.5		2011, January	city-data.com
Denton	93.8		2011, January	city-data.com
El Paso	83.2		2011, January	city-data.com
Houston	89.4		2011, 3rd Qtr.	http://www.houston.org/living-here/cost-of-living/index.aspx
Laredo	84.7		2011, January	city-data.com

Lubbock	85.1		2011, January	city-data.com
Lufkin/Nacogdoches	80.7 (L)	82.3	2011, January	city-data.com
	83.8 (N)		2011, January	city-data.com
McAllen/Harlingen	83.5 (M)	82.6	2011, January	city-data.com
	81.7 (H)		2011, 3rd Qtr.	http://www.harlingenedc.com/QualityOfLife/CostOfLiving
Midland/Odessa	91.1 (M)	87.0	2011, 2nd Qtr.	http://www.midlandtxchamber.com/relocate/midland_at-a-glance.aspx
	82.9 (O)		2011, January	city-data.com
Pharr	82.7		2011, January	city-data.com
San Angelo	84.5		2011, January	city-data.com
San Antonio	88.1		2011, January	city-data.com
Schulenburg/Weimar	78.4 (S)	79.3	2011, January	city-data.com
	80.1 (W)		2011, January	city-data.com
Tyler	95.1		2011, 4th Qtr.	http://www.tedc.org/profile/pro_costofliving.php
Waco	85.9		2011, January	city-data.com

notes – ACCRA Cost of Living Indices (COLI) were last updated on 3/22/12. The indices were reported from each city's Chamber of Commerce website. If the COLI was not listed on the Chamber of Commerce website or was derived from data available prior to 2011, the website www.city-data.com was used to report the index. All COLI were derived from a specific month or quarter in 2011 – whichever was most recent and available – as opposed to using the indices from the entire year (as those were reported less frequently). In the case where two cities are combined and each has a different COLI, the two numbers are averaged.