

AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation: Summary of Findings

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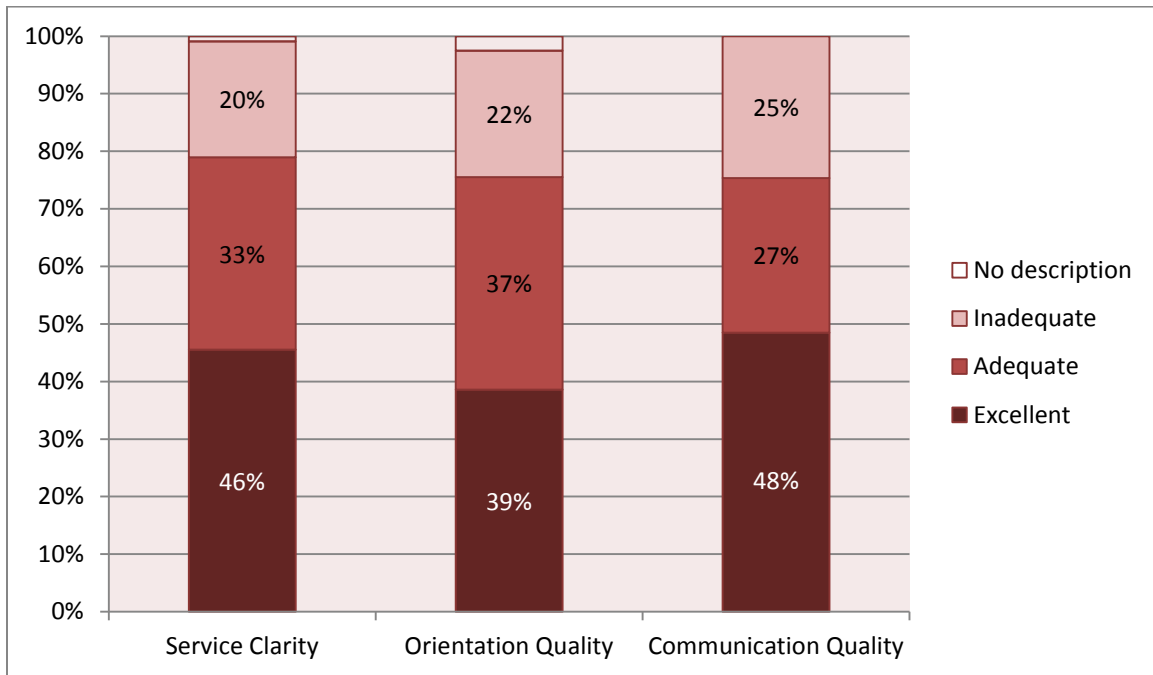
The AmeriCorps*Texas Statewide Evaluation surveyed program managers at twenty-five AmeriCorps*Texas State service programs during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 service years, as well as 1,368 members who had successfully completed the 2010-2011 service year, to assess 1) the *impact* that AmeriCorps*Texas 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 their AmeriCorps programs and their service have a positive impact on the clients they serve as well as on the communities where 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.

Excellence across three program characteristics—service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality—increase the likelihood that members will assess their service as “very effective.” For each of these variables, member experiences were rated as excellent, adequate, or inadequate based on member survey responses to multiple questions. Service clarity requires that duties and expectations for members are clearly defined before service terms begin. For 46% of members, service clarity was rated as excellent. An excellent orientation is useful to members and prepares them well for their service terms. Excellent orientations were provided to 39% of the members. Communication quality is a variable that indicates whether the frequency and method of communication between members and their supervisors met the members’ needs. Communications between members and program staff were rated as excellent for 48% of the members. Across all three of these program characteristics, 20-25% of members rated service clarity, orientation quality, or communication quality as inadequate. These statistics indicate that

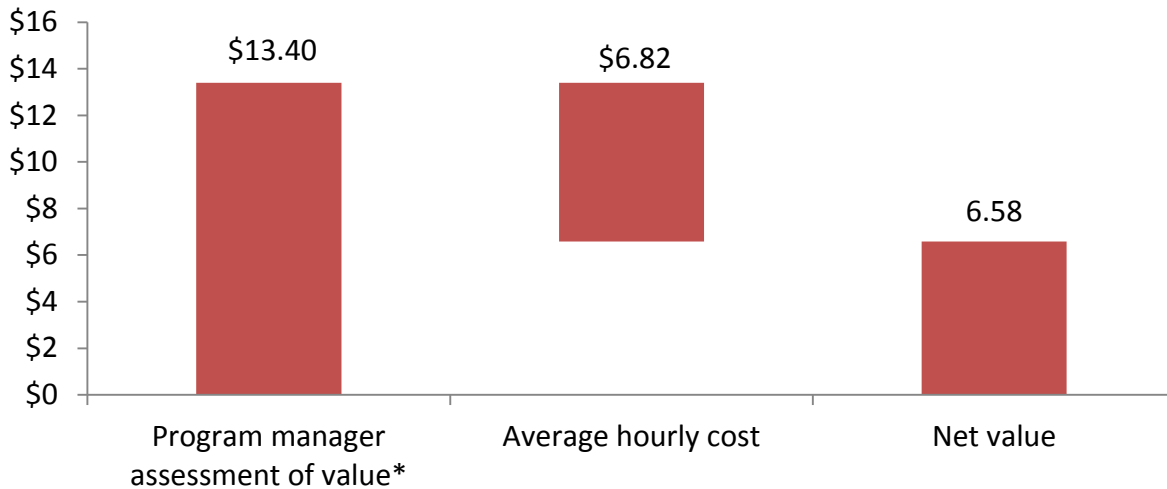
although over 70% of the members are serving in positions where service clarity, orientation quality, and communication quality are adequate or excellent, some room for improvement exists. Since these three program characteristics are tied to member assessment of service impact and effectiveness, improvements have the potential to also enhance AmeriCorps program effectiveness.

Figure 1: Program Characteristics
(% of members surveyed)



AmeriCorps*Texas service programs are cost effective and provide value to the community. The average regionally adjusted value of AmeriCorps*Texas service programs is \$13.40 an hour, with an added net value of \$6.58 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. On an annual basis, members' service represents over \$10 million in net value added to organizations and communities.

Figure 2: Net Value per Service Hour
(US Dollars)



* Program manager assessment of value has been regionally adjusted. Numbers in chart represent averages for 2009-10 and 2010-11 terms

Three organizational characteristics are associated with higher regionally adjusted net values of service: organizational emphasis on developing members, higher ratings for organizational systems and management, and ability to secure community support. Organizations that emphasized member development had a regionally adjusted net value per hour of service that was \$3.96 higher than organizations that did identify member development as one of top two priorities.

Organizational systems and management scale measures stability and capacity to function in a professional, organized, and planned manner, particularly in response to disruptive events. Organizational systems and management also encompasses the ability to provide current technology resources to all employees. This characteristic is indicative of the overall strength and soundness of the organization as a whole. A one point improvement on the organizational systems and management scale leads to a \$0.87 increase in the regionally adjusted value of service hour.

Ability to secure community support refers to the program personnel's ability to effectively and frequently share information and best practices with community leaders to ensure that program efforts are adequately meeting needs and avoiding duplication of services. For each one point

improvement on the community support scale, \$0.81 per hour is added to the regionally adjusted value of an hour of service.

Thus, in order to enhance program impact and value added of AmeriCorps programs across Texas, we recommend the following:

Organization Management

- Strengthen organizations' systems and management practices to increase their overall ability to function in a professional, organized, and planned manner, particularly during crises.
- Enhance financial management and HR practices
- Work with communities to reaffirm need and support for programs

Member Management

- Set clear expectations for members at start of service
- Focus on the quality, not duration of initial orientation
- Invest in member development
- Communicate regularly and according to member needs

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.