



Team Tennessee Branding and Communications ToolKit

Your members are doing amazing things throughout Tennessee and their stories deserve to be told. We've put together this toolkit of information and resources to help sub-grantees successfully brand your program and communicate how you are getting things done for local communities.

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We hope this will be a helpful resource. If you have any questions about the toolkit, or for more help with your program's communications strategy, please reach out to Shannon Duke at (615) 253-8585 or by email at Shannon.Duke@tn.gov.



Branding

Clear and consistent branding is an important part of raising the visibility of your organization, and your organization's connection to National Service and other organizations. Raising awareness of the work your program does is beneficial for recruitment, funding, and organizational sustainability.

Here are some initial branding considerations:

- Are you sharing why your program is unique and celebrating your program's successes? How and where are you sharing your program's story?
- Are you being consistent? Be true to your brand and design templates, standards and a 'voice'— use them with everything you do.
- Logos are an important part of communicating a brand, so integrate them whenever you can.

Co-branding, displaying more than one brand (logo) side-by-side, is a great way to reinforce partnerships. Both brands benefit from this in a variety of ways.

Consider your own branding guidelines and develop co-branding principles before you create imagery or place another logo with your own. Also, make sure to be aware of other organizations branding guidelines so you are co-branding with the best interests of both in mind.

AmeriCorps Branding

As an AmeriCorps sub-grantee you are part of the nationwide National Service network. Consistently showing your organization's connection to AmeriCorps reinforces an emotional connection and the greater overall impact of national service.

Why National Service branding matters:

- Reputation/Recognition- Shows that your organization is affiliated with a nationwide movement.
- Clear, consistent messaging-Using common language strengthens the National Service story.
- Compliance-***It is required!*** The beginning of the program year is a great time to inventory your materials to make sure they appropriately reflect your affiliation. **It is recommended programs do regular branding audits to make sure you are compliant with the following requirements:**
 - Display AmeriCorps **logo** on website
 - Use standardized **language** to describe the program (press releases, documents, etc.)
 - Use AmeriCorps logo on all service **gear**. You can order a variety of AmeriCorps-branded gear at nationalservicegear.org and order free national service materials at <https://pubs.nationalservice.gov/>.
 - Display AmeriCorps **signs** at service sites

A summary of the branding and message requirements from AmeriCorps' Branding Guidance is included below, but for complete guidelines refer [AmeriCorps Branding Guidelines](#). This is especially important since new branding was launched in 2020. Volunteer Tennessee also has created the "[Program Branding Compliance Checklist and Requirements](#)" to help give an overview of the requirements.



Branding and Messaging Requirements from AmeriCorps’ Branding Guidelines:

Requirements



Where	Placement	What
Website	Homepage, footer, or suitable prominent placement	Logo
Printed and digital collateral (one pagers, brochures, recruitment resources)	Flexible based on material but logo should appear at least once. Messaging should follow requirements on page 32.	Logo and messaging
Social media	Photos, videos, posts, hashtags	Where possible, tagging an AmeriCorps account and using logo and messaging.
Uniforms and branded gear	Flexible but must appear at least once.	Logo
Media	Online coverage, press releases, TV, radio, newspapers	Messaging should follow requirements on page 32. Photos and videos should show branded uniforms and gear. Boilerplate language recommended on page 6.

Messaging Requirements



To avoid confusion when referring to AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors, and to ensure that we consistently position these brands, use the following protocols in all online and offline communications.

- Always capitalize the A and C without a space between Ameri and Corps, so it reads AmeriCorps.
- When referring to AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers, do not capitalize the m in members or the v in volunteers. It should read AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers.
- Never abbreviate AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps Seniors.
- Use AmeriCorps member when referring to an individual serving in a State and National, VISTA, or NCCC program.
- Use AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer when referring to an individual in an RSVP, Foster Grandparents, or Senior Companions program.

Acknowledging Volunteer Tennessee

Per the Tennessee AmeriCorps State NOFO, all funded programs will be required to prominently display the Volunteer Tennessee and AmeriCorps logos on printed and electronic materials related to the grant.

Programs are expected to include Volunteer Tennessee’s logo in all AmeriCorps communication, marketing and media materials, including, but not limited to, publications, press releases, newsletters, emails, websites, and brochures. The grant contract also requires programs include the language “This project is funded under a Grant Contract with the State of Tennessee, Volunteer Tennessee”. The logo can be downloaded from *Essential Logos* (page 5) or email Shannon.Duke@tn.gov for a copy.



In an effort to help programs with branding compliance requirements, Volunteer Tennessee created 4” x 5” window clings that include the Volunteer Tennessee and AmeriCorps logos. These should be on display at all AmeriCorps state program host sites and member service sites. In order to meet the branding compliance requirements, the window clings must be displayed in a prominent location at each site. [These clings](#) can be ordered from Volunteer Tennessee by [completing this order form](#) and emailing it to Shannon.Duke@tn.gov.

Website Branding Best Practices

- Make sure the AmeriCorps and Volunteer Tennessee logo are displayed prominently on the organization’s homepage and are easy to find
- Clearly describe your relationship with AmeriCorps
- Feature clear descriptions of service opportunities, benefits and how potential members can apply
- Include photos of AmeriCorps members serving

Common Language:

Make sure you and your members are using key AmeriCorps terminology such as:

- ***AmeriCorps member...***
not volunteer, worker or participant.
- ***AmeriCorps members serve...***
not work or volunteer.
- ***AmeriCorps programs enroll and place into service members...***
not hire and members do not start work.
- ***AmeriCorps programs exit members...***
not fire members.
- ***AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance...***
not a wage, salary, or paycheck.

Crafting an Elevator Speech:

You and your members are important branding resources that can share your program’s story in the communities you serve. An elevator speech is a brief summary that defines a product, service, or organization and its value. Crafting an elevator speech is a recommended activity for you as program staff and should be a requirement for your AmeriCorps members. The following activity from the Minnesota Literacy Council AmeriCorps*VISTA program can be used as a tool for grantee staff and members to describe your AmeriCorps experience:

- [Crafting an Elevator Speech-Minnesota Literacy Council AmeriCorps*VISTA](#)



Essential Logos

Official use National Service logos can be found and downloaded at [Communication resources | AmeriCorps](#).



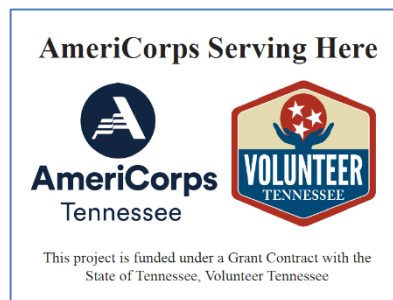
AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps- A new logo was launched in 2020. For the 2021-22 Program Year, all TN State AmeriCorps programs should be now using this new logo.



Volunteer Tennessee

[Download the Volunteer Tennessee logo here](#)



Volunteer Tennessee and AmeriCorps branded service site signage:

- [Download 4" x 5" sign](#)
- [Download an 8.5" x 11" sign](#)

Additional National Service Programs



AmeriCorps Seniors

- Foster Grandparents
- RSVP
- Senior Companions



Use of AmeriCorps Logos

You must use the AmeriCorps logo to correctly brand (or co-brand) any newsletters, signage, and collateral that you create for any program activity related to your AmeriCorps grant. In September of 2020 AmeriCorps released a new logo and made updates to the branding guidelines. The new branding includes updates to the agency name and promoted brands, and the first major update to the AmeriCorps logo in 25 years. Programs are required to use the new logo and terminology for the 2021-22 program year.

Refer to the complete guidelines for proper logo use from AmeriCorps before using the logo, but here is an overview of things to know.

- The “A” and name “AmeriCorps” must always be displayed together.
- The logos cannot be modified under any circumstances without permission. Don’t remove, add, or change any elements of the logo. **Do not add your organization name to logos**
- To make sure the logo is legible, it must be surrounded with a minimum amount of clear space.
- **Color Palette:** The primary colors of the brand are navy, crimson, blue, and red. When secondary colors are needed olive, violet, aqua, gray, and cream can be used. A range of tints and shades of the color palette are available for when grantees need a bit more flexibility.
 - Tints are available at 20% and 40% lighter than the original color.
 - Shades are available at 20% and 40% darker than the original color.

The primary logo available for download from AmeriCorps is Navy. Grantees are welcome to change the logo color to other colors in the AmeriCorps color palette for stylistic reasons if it is advantageous.

If you need to confirm that your logo meets the proper usage guidelines, email logos@cns.gov.



Social Media

With more than 3 billion people around the world using social media each month, social media is a great way to share information on your organization and build a stronger brand. We encourage programs to take time and to use one or more of the following social media platforms:



Infographics from the-pixel.com

Wondering how often you should be sharing content? Here are the recommended frequencies for posting on popular social media platforms:

- Facebook: 1 post per day
- Twitter: 15 Tweets per day
- Instagram: 1-2 posts per day
- LinkedIn: 1 post per day

Planning out posts ahead of time is recommended. Some people create a monthly content calendar and then can spend time scheduling out posts in advance. Later in this toolkit there are ideas to help programs make a social media plan or calendar. (See “Branding and Engagement Opportunities”).

Managing multiple social media sites can be challenging, so consider using a social media management tool such as Hootsuite or SproutSocial. Through social media management tools you can schedule social media content in advance. Each of these tools provide different ‘insights’ on your social media posts, such as how many people viewed, if people engaged (liked, commented, shared), or if you were mentioned in another social media platform. They also give you an idea, based on your audience, what days and times are best for posting.

If you don’t manage or have access to your organization’s social media accounts, make sure to communicate with your marketing/social media person and let them know about upcoming National Service events or occasionally send highlights and photos of your members serving so they can share or incorporate into their content calendar.

*******Additionally, we encourage you to send Volunteer Tennessee pictures, great stories, and upcoming events that we can feature on our social media platforms or in our monthly newsletter. Please send this information on a regular basis to Shannon Duke at Shannon.Duke@tn.gov*******



Telling the Story through Photos

The best way to tell your program's story is through photos or visuals. Keep in mind the following:

- Use photos of AmeriCorps members in action—make sure to add the AmeriCorps logo to the photo or capture shots with members in AmeriCorps gear (with the logo visible).
- Photos should be 'action-based' with members engaging volunteers and out in the community. They should have the AmeriCorps logo visible and clear as much as possible. Photos can be staged as well as candid, to have a good variety.
- Make sure you have photo releases!
- You can create graphics through sites like Canva.com (free) or Snappa.com (free). Creating your own graphics allows for you to share specific information about your programs (data, photo collage, infographics and more)
- Remember to include a graphic or video on every social media post. It grabs attention and reinforces the AmeriCorps brand.

Which picture tells the story better?

What story are we telling?



Photos are available to access and use through the AmeriCorps Flickr account:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalservicephotos/albums>



Hashtags

A hashtag is simply a keyword phrase, spelled out without spaces, with a pound sign (#) in front of it. The hashtag is a popular means of categorizing content on social media. Hashtags are used on all the most popular social networks and allow for your posts to be easily discovered in searches and widens your reach.

Hashtags to include in your posts:

- #AmeriCorpsWorks
- #AmeriCorps
- #NationalServiceWorks
- #MadeInAmeriCorps
- #VolTN

Tips for using hashtags:

- Be Specific-the more specific you are the more targeted your audience will be.
- Sync with official campaign tags- Make sure to use the specific hashtag created for events or campaigns. (Examples #MLKDAY, #AmeriCorpsWorks, etc)
- Don't over hashtag- use hashtags sparingly and only when they add value. Use them too much they can be confusing, and annoying.



Social Media Links: Who to Follow and Tag



AmeriCorps

<https://americorps.gov/>



/americorps



/nationalservice

When using social media channels to amplify any story related to your AmeriCorps grant, be sure to tag @AmeriCorps.

Blog:

<https://americorps.gov/newsroom/blog>



Volunteer Tennessee

www.volunteertennessee.net



/volunteertennessee



/volunteertn



/volunteertnservice

Programs are strongly encouraged to follow/like/share Volunteer Tennessee's social media platforms for the latest updates. It is incredibly helpful that you tag Vol TN when sharing information about your program on social media.



AmeriCorps Alums

www.americorpsalums.org/



/americorpsalums

Service Year

<https://serviceyear.org/>



/ServiceYear



America's Service Commissions

www.statecommissions.org



/statecommission



/statecommissions



Your organization's partners and service sites



Branding and Engagement Opportunities

Special National Service Events

Volunteer Tennessee strongly encourages programs to identify and invite the Volunteer Tennessee Commissioners and staff, local elected officials, local media, business partners and community partners to ensure an active event that shows the strength of the statewide partnership.

The following are national events that many AmeriCorps programs participate in. They are great opportunities to promote your program and engage with the national service community!

Event	When?
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Third Monday of January each year
AmeriCorps Week	Second week of March
National Volunteer Week	April
National Service Recognition Day	First Tuesday in April
September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance	September 11
National Swearing-in Day for AmeriCorps	October
Make A Difference Day	October

AmeriCorps Member Identity

Another important part of branding is your program's members who are getting things done in local communities. It is important that members also have a clear understanding of their connection to national service.

A reminder, on the grant application regarding AmeriCorps member identity, programs have agreed to the following:

- AmeriCorps members will wear the logo every day
- AmeriCorps members will create and deliver elevator speeches
- Prominently display the logo on their websites



Member Impact Stories

A great branding opportunity is to regularly feature impact stories from current members and alums on your organization's social media, newsletter, or website. These could be tied to special events, such as AmeriCorps week or just semi-regular updates on what your members are doing in the community. Member spotlights can also be tied into recruitment efforts.

Ask your AmeriCorps members to write up a reflection on their service. Utilize the *Crafting an Elevator Speech* activity on page 3, but here are some key questions to ask for an impact story:

- What led you to serve?
- What is a concrete example of the impact of your service?
- What skills have you developed?
- What challenges have you overcome?
- What will you do after this service year? (Current members)
How did your service shape your future? (Alums)

How Are Your Members Telling the AmeriCorps Story?

Think about the following:

- Are they promoting a consistent message on social media?
- Are they portraying your program, AmeriCorps, CNCS, Volunteer Tennessee in a positive and impactful way?
- Are they maintaining a professional presence on social media?
- Are they using the key AmeriCorps terminology ("I am an AmeriCorps member serving with....")



More than 75,000 Americans across the country participate in AmeriCorps each year. Last year, more than 1,300 AmeriCorps members met pressing local needs across Tennessee. Support your members by sharing their impact and helping them understand their role in the greater National Service network.



Additional Resources

AmeriCorps Communications and Branding Resources:

Visit <https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/communication-resources> to download logos, image assets, videos, brand guidelines, and more to help promote service.

- [Branding Guidelines from AmeriCorps](#)

Additional Branding Resources:

- [Program Branding Compliance](#)-Volunteer Tennessee has a checklist and quick guide to all the AmeriCorps Branding Requirements

Social Media Resources and Tips:

- How to Use Hashtags on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram:
<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/hashtags-twitter-facebook-instagram#sm.0000gy9a2xfwdeu9xuy21ikt0fddn>
- How Often To Post On Social Media? [Proven Research From 14 Studies]:
<https://coschedule.com/blog/how-often-to-post-on-social-media/>
- A Strategic Guide to Social Media for Nonprofits:
<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/nonprofit-social-media-guide/>