



Civic Reflection and AmeriCorps Programs

Civic reflection is a flexible and practical reading and reflection activity to help AmeriCorps programs increase effectiveness. Programs using civic reflection report **increased satisfaction** among both staff and members, leading to a **stronger commitment to service** and **higher rates of retention**.

Overview of Civic Reflection

Corps members gather for interactive and highly participatory conversations to explore fundamental questions about aspects of service, community, and leadership. Members read a short piece of literature – usually a relevant poem, essay, or short story – as a jumping off point for discussing their values, beliefs, and their relationships to other members and the communities in which they work.

Benefits of Civic Reflection

- **Higher rates of retention** and more **members signing up for a second year of service**.
- **Higher satisfaction** among members – with **70% of participants** saying it **increased their commitment to serve**.
- **A fresh, renewed perspective** for program staff and members on their day-to-day work and a newfound ability to see the “big picture.”
- **Increased understanding and better relationships** between members and staff.

Making an Impact

➤ Success Story - Ohio

The state service commission implemented civic reflection programming for all AmeriCorps members, reaching 600 members in 30 programs and training 55 program directors as civic reflection facilitators. Over the past 3 years, retention rates have improved and more members have signed on for a second year of service.

“Civic reflection has been instrumental in improving our retention rate. It’s a bonding tool that helped reunite our group.” – AmeriCorps program manager, Ohio

➤ Success Story - Rhode Island

The Rhode Island service commission offers civic reflection to all AmeriCorps members. After a year of civic reflection, **one in three participants** said they were **more likely to sign on for another year** because of their civic reflection experience.

“Civic reflection tied our programs together and encouraged cross-collaboration, which has strengthened our recruitment and retention. Now we’re recruiting with and for one other and supporting each other more.” – AmeriCorps staff member, Rhode Island



Impact and Outcomes

PCR's training and civic reflection discussions are focused on building community, deepening understanding, and deepening commitment to civic life. **Common areas of impact** and their associated outcomes are listed below.

Skill-Building

- Development of facilitation skills
- Improved critical thinking and analysis, communication and dialogue skills, and active listening
- Enhanced creativity and imagination

Civic Engagement

- Deeper understanding of purpose and vocation
- Strengthened civic values and attitudes
- Increased understanding of the complexities of community engagement
- Commitment to future service and civic engagement

Leadership Development

- Increased self-awareness and self-understanding
- Ability to articulate moral, ethical, and civic values and beliefs
- Increased desire to ask—and answer—deep, difficult questions about one's community or work
- Ability to hear multiple perspectives and bring people together across difference

Dialogue Across Differences

- Capacity to understand and communicate across different perspectives and experiences
- Ability to organize, lead and discuss divisive issues with diverse constituencies
- Increased empathy for a range of people and viewpoints

Community Development

- Strengthened sense of connection, belonging and trust (i.e. social capital) within communities
- Development of networks and opportunities for discussion within and across communities

Retention and Sustainability

- Increased rates of retention
- Improved morale
- Strengthened relationships with colleagues and community members
- Deepened commitment to communities and the work at hand