Dear Program Partners,

This tool kit is designed to help with your external communication efforts. YOU are the best storyteller, and we hope you place priority on developing and managing the best approach to publicize your program, acknowledge your funders, and strengthen your voice to those you serve.

In this tool kit, you will find:

- **Social Media** – Pages 2-4: Why social media? This includes social media content examples, information on websites, graphics, and considerations around planning and strategy execution.
- **Sample Tweets, Facebook and Instagram posts** – Pages 4-5: designed with recruitment in mind.
- **Connectivity on platforms** – Page 5: when using social media, providing ways to connect and include others so that you can amplify your message beyond your audience of followers.
- **Planning and strategy for social media**– Page 6: including a sample content calendar.
- **Branding!** – Pages 7-10
- **Telling your story and reaching out to the local media in your area** – Page 11: how to connect with them to share about the work your members are doing with your organization.
- **Public relations considerations when hosting an event & ideas** – Page 12
- **Sample Press Release** – Page 13: a guide to help you create one for your organization.
- **Sample Media Alert** – Page 14: the invitation to the media for your event.
- **Recruiting for AmeriCorps positions** – Pages 15: get your creative thoughts flowing & sample service year position postings.
- **Social media recruitment examples** – Pages 16-17

We hope that this tool kit is helpful! We realize that depending on where you are in your communication efforts, that this kit in its entirety might not be useful to you. We hope that you can take away pieces that work for you or help enhance your work.

If you have any questions about the tool kit, or would like help with communications, please reach out to the Communications & Engagement Officer with Volunteer Iowa at 800-308-5987 or by email at americorps@volunteeriowa.org.

We look forward to your continued success with recruitment and sharing the AmeriCorps message with your community.

The Volunteer Iowa Team

Social Media

Spending time to use social media to your advantage will yield high returns for your organization. All platforms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and others) can help you share information about your organization and build a stronger brand. All programs are strongly encouraged to follow/like/share Volunteer Iowa's social media platforms to stay up-to-date on the latest updates. It is incredibly helpful that you tag Volunteer Iowa when sharing information about your program on social media. (Tagging is simple – just add @VolunteerIowa to a place in the content of your social media post, and we will be notified that you mentioned us!)

We also cannot help you amplify your message without **YOU** sending **US** photos (as that also builds engagement), stories and upcoming events, so we can feature these through our social media platforms. Please keep our Communications & Engagement Officer up to date: betsy.shelton@volunteeriowa.org.

We encourage you to take time and check out the following social media platforms and tools to manage your platforms:

- ✓ **Facebook – facebook.com**
- ✓ **Twitter – twitter.com**
- ✓ **Instagram – instagram.com**
- ✓ **Snapchat – snapchat.com**
- ✓ **LinkedIn – linkedin.com**
- ✓ **TikTok – tiktok.com**
- ✓ **YouTube – youtube.com**

Social Media Management Tools:

- ✓ **Hootsuite – hootsuite.com**
- ✓ **SproutSocial – sproutsocial.com**
- ✓ **MavSocial – mavsocial.com**
- ✓ **Likeable Hub – likeablehub.com**

You can easily find free management tools (like Hootsuite for example) where you can consider what you would like share on social media, and then schedule it in advance. Once complete, you can move on to other work, not having to worry about what is going on socially at that time. Each of these tools provide different 'insights' to what is happening on your social media accounts when a message goes out. It can tell you how many people viewed, if people engaged (liked, commented, shared), or if you were mentioned in another social media platform by someone like Volunteer Iowa. Lastly, they give you an idea, based on your audience (who follows you or likes your pages), when you should concentrate on posting on social media – what time of day and what day is best. If you are going to spend your time on social media, wouldn't you want it to be spent in the best way?

You can always use social media for 'in the moment' posts and tweets, and you can see when the next scheduled message will be going out (so you can reschedule too if needed).

Social Media Content

- Use a hashtag in every tweet, on Facebook and Instagram posts to allow for tracking and retweeting.
- If you sign up for a Twitter account, you can manage your tweets easily through a free product like Hootsuite. This allows for you to schedule tweets in advance, as well as tweet about something when needed.
- Facebook allows you to schedule posts in advance, which is a helpful feature. You can also cross post to Instagram or schedule Instagram only posts through the Facebook Publishing Tools or Creator Studio.
- Instagram allows for you to post immediately on additional platforms like Twitter and Facebook, so you only create content once! The only catch is that you can't schedule things in advance with Instagram.
- All three products (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) provide you with insights – details into how well your message was received. For example – how many people engaged with your tweet (liked it), or how many people saw your Facebook post? You can also find out the best time of day to reach those who follow you.
- Facebook Live & Instagram stories – consider them! It's easy to do and posts immediately. It's not about having everything neatly buttoned up. It's about the in-the-moment, raw video showcasing AmeriCorps members in action or even the pre-planning for an upcoming meeting or event. Something that others can experience in real time, that also makes things real. Have fun with it!
- Snapchat – consider it as well! Snapchat has a high percentage of 18-34 year olds using it compared to other social media platforms. If you want to get in front of that audience, spend a bit of time on Snapchat. It is super easy to create filters for events (etc.) by using the 'geofilter'.
- TikTok – The newest of social media platforms, but the best way to reach young people. 62% of US users are aged 10-29. Users spend an average of 52 minutes per day on the app. Get creative on TikTok and see if you can go viral!
- Engagement calendar – consider developing a monthly message theme calendar to help keep your posts focused and engaging.

<u>Website Links:</u>

- Consider including a website link (ideally to your website) on every tweet, Facebook and Instagram post so you can give the reader a way to act upon your request.
- Make sure you add the link as it is, or through bit.ly (created through Twitter). Bitly is a link management platform used primarily by Twitter to shorten a link to a website so that you can stay within the 280 characters limit easier per tweet.
- If you are curious as to how many people are clicking on the link you provide through social media to your website, take time to review Google Analytics (find through Google.com). This is a free tool that can track this information for you and much, much more.

Graphics:

- Consider using photos of AmeriCorps members in action, having fun, and celebrating – make sure to add the AmeriCorps logo to the photo or capture shots with members in AmeriCorps gear (so you can see the logo – keep it visual). You can use an online picture resizer like Squoosh (squoosh.app) for free.
- AmeriCorps.gov does have logos, banners, fact sheets and photos for you to download if you wish. You may want to invest in some additional high quality local photos as well.
- 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 – personalize it!). There are lots of tools out there!
- Photos should be 'action' based with members engaging volunteers, out in the community, and even with other members. They should have the AmeriCorps logo visible and clear as much as possible. Extra signage at events should be used, as it provides an enhancement to the backdrop of the photo. Photos can be staged as well as candid, to have a good variety.
- Make sure you have photo releases!
- Remember to include a graphic or video on every social media post. It grabs attention and reinforces the AmeriCorps brand. Videos plus links to your hiring post are great together!

Sample Tweets

Ever wanted to work for us? Now is your time! #JoinAmeriCorps! [Service Year video] [link to posting]

Last year, @AmeriCorps members mobilized XX volunteers in Iowa to solve local problems. #JoinAmeriCorps today! [link to your site] [photo of members in action]

We are calling on YOU to get more involved in our community by joining our team! See how @AmeriCorps can change your life! [link to posting] [photo]

Where will your new office be this year? What about here with us serving in @AmeriCorps? We are waiting for YOU! [service year video] [link to posting]

9 out of 10 @AmeriCorps alums say their experience advanced their career path. #JoinAmeriCorps – we are hiring! [link to posting] [photo]

Do you know a recent grad looking for a job? Have them #JoinAmeriCorps! 70% of alums say their service helped them achieve their goals. [link to posting] [photo]

#JoinAmeriCorps and let's work together this year! Make an impact, make a difference. Join our team! [link to posting] [photo]

National Service can bridge divides & heal our country. Our @AmeriCorps member John (any name of member here) is working to do just this. #JoinAmeriCorps! [link to posting] [photo of John]

Sample Facebook/Instagram posts

Nine out of 10 @AmeriCorps alumni reported that their experience improved their ability to solve problems – with 8 out of 10 feeling confident that they could create a plan to address a community issue and get others to care about it. Looking for the same confidence? #JoinAmeriCorps and join our team – we looking to hire YOU! #AmeriCorpsAlums [photo of AmeriCorps members in action] [link to job posting]

Need help building experiences for your resume? Look no further than gaining real-world experience through a service year. Guess what? We are looking for YOU to join our team! [link to posting] [photo of a resume, AmeriCorps member in action]

For one year, you can #JoinAmeriCorps and make your own path - develop skills, solve community challenges, and build stronger communities. Since 1994, more than 1 million men and women have served in @AmeriCorps, providing more than 1.4 billion hours of service, and earning more than $3.3 billion in scholarships to pay for college. Don't miss out on the opportunity to join our team! [link to posting] [photo]

John wasn't sure which direction to go after completing his education. His #serviceyear with XX helped him realize his potential and become the community leader he is today. #JoinAmeriCorps and join our team today – realize your potential. It all starts here. [link to posting] [photo of John]

Platforms (to consider when tagging)

Twitter/Instagram

- @AmeriCorps; @AmeriCorpsVISTA; @AmeriCorpsSr; @AmeriCorpsNCCC; @AmeriCorpsAlums
- @VolunteerIowa
- @Serviceyear

Facebook

- #NationalService
- #AmeriCorps; #AmeriCorpsVISTA; #AmeriCorpsSeniors; #AmeriCorpsNCCC; #AmeriCorpsAlums
- #VolunteerIowa
- #ServiceYear

Helpful Websites

- Volunteeringinamerica.gov
- Volunteeriowa.org
- AmeriCorps.gov (They also have a YouTube Channel - youtube.com/user/nationalservice)
- Serviceyear.org

Planning/Strategy for social media

Remember that doing all your social media and website work at the last minute will not be very helpful. To really maximize on the opportunity social media presents, you need to plan ahead. Some people create a content calendar monthly, where they record everything that is going on in the upcoming month(s), and then can spend time scheduling out posts/tweets about these things in advance. Always leave room to post/tweet about things as they come up. Remember – this is a template designed to help you, and you customize it based on what works for you. If it's taking up too much time, then consider other options. (Example below)

Facebook	Twitter	Pinterest	Instagram	YouTube
Share a link to your latest email	Share a link to your latest email	Create a "20 Gifts Under $20" board	Share a photo of your staff unpacking new holiday inventory	Share a holiday "thank you" video
Share a photo of customers shopping small	Post about your holiday hours	Create boards with gift ideas for parents or siblings	Show off your holiday decorations	Interview customers about shopping small
Share a photo of your staff unpacking new holiday items	Share a photo of customers shopping small	Create a board with last-minute gift ideas	Share a holiday photo from past holidays with the hashtag #TBT	Share a video from a holiday event
Post a reminder about an upcoming sale	Share a link to holiday shopping tips	Create a board with gifts people can purchase online	Post a photo of customers shopping small	Talk about your holiday gift ideas
Share a photo album from a recent holiday event	Share a photo of your favorite gift ideas	Create a board with fun holiday recipes	Wish customers a happy holiday in an Instagram video	Preview your plans for 2015
Recommend a nearby restaurant	Promote a local nonprofit's holiday fundraiser	Create a board with holiday party gift ideas	Share photos of gift ideas for a specific person	Let employees talk about what they are thankful for
Ask a holiday-themed question	Participate in Small Business Saturday and use the hashtag #SmallBizSat	Create a board celebrating your favorite local businesses	Show your staff celebrating the holidays	Share your expertise with a holiday themed video

BRANDING!

Hopefully you know your brand, and you know it well. It's incredibly important in today's world of marketing to have a strong brand. It's not just about getting your target market (who is your message trying to reach) to act, think or behave in a certain way, but it's about getting people to see you as the only provider as the solution to the problem or need you have.

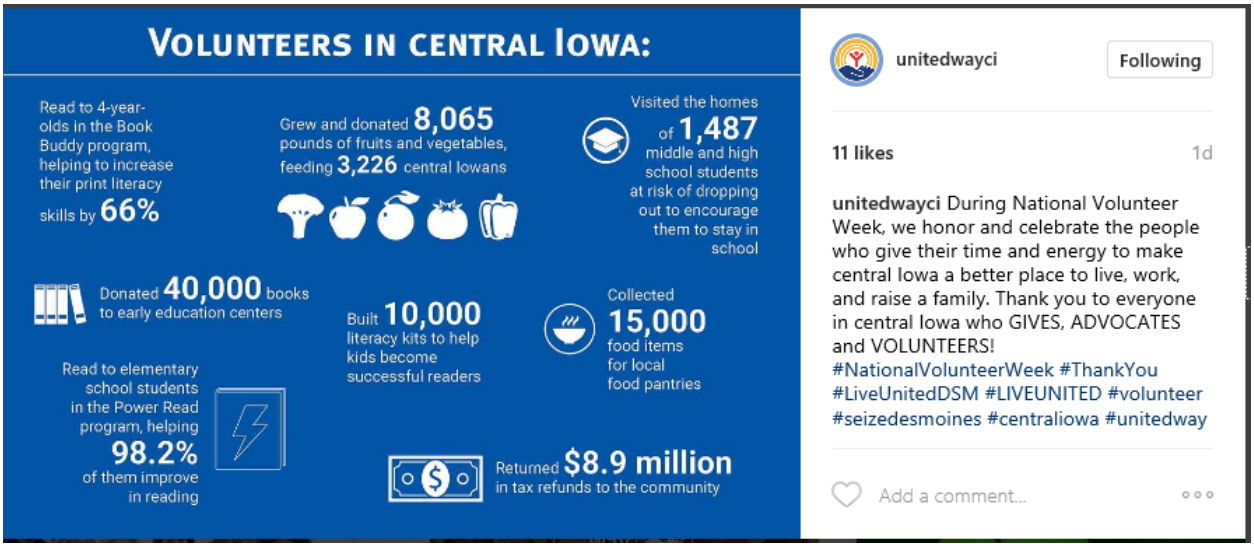
Wikipedia – A 'brand' is defined as a toolbox of marketing and communication methods that help to distinguish a company from competitors and create a lasting impression in the minds of customers.

So, when they hear of your organization, what do they think of? To be successful in your branding efforts, you need to understand what your audience is after, and consider strategies on how you will deliver on that message. Your brand is the foundational piece to your marketing and communication efforts and you do not want to be without.

When you consider recruitment or storytelling, think of these questions:

- How does your brand relate to your target audience? Will they understand your message right away without too much 'thought'?
- Are you communicating who you are, what you do?
- Are you sharing why your story/event/employment opportunity is unique?
- Is your brand living up to what you've promised your 'customer' (what to expect when they serve with you; what the media should expect when coming to your events; etc.)?
- Are you being consistent? Be true to your brand and design templates, brand standards, taglines and a 'voice' for your brand – use with everything you do (even email signatures!). Integrate!

Examples of great social media branding:



Again – integrate your brand EVERYWHERE. This doesn't always mean screaming your logo from the rooftops, but it does mean thinking creatively.

The foundation of your brand is your logo, and your logo helps communicate your brand. It's critical that you have your own branding guidelines and are considerate of the guidelines of others as well. When creating your marketing toolkit, make sure you know when you should use other logos to enhance your brand and satisfy requirements from partners. If you don't know, just ask!

Volunteer Iowa Branding Guidelines & Use of Logo

VolunteerIowaColors.pdf

ICVS_Offset_2colorInst.pdf

*Ask your program officer for a copy of these documents if needed

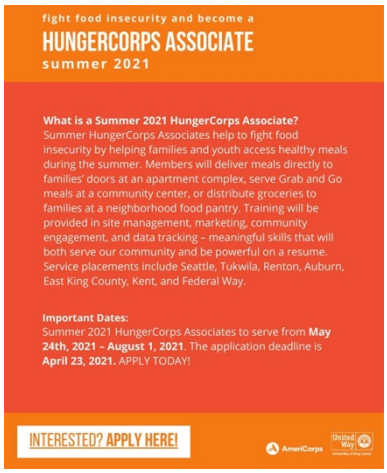
Acknowledging Volunteer Iowa

Programs must acknowledge "Volunteer Iowa" in all AmeriCorps communication, marketing and media materials, including, but not limited to, publications, press releases, newsletters, emails, websites, and brochures. Continue to use "AmeriCorps" when referencing AmeriCorps the national agency. Websites must post both the program logo (AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, etc.) AND Volunteer Iowa logos.

Co-Branding

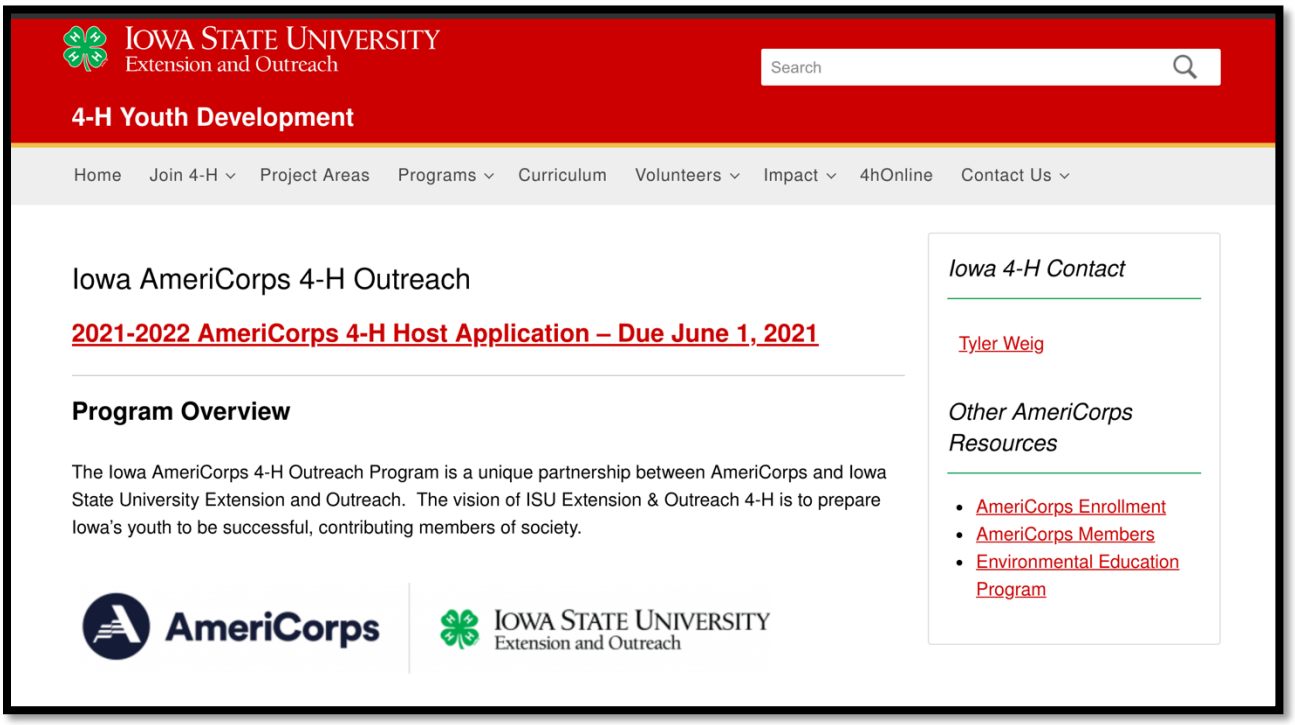
Co-branding is a really powerful way to introduce your organization's services to someone who is loyal and familiar with another. Both brands benefit from this in a variety of ways. Consider why having the AmeriCorps logo or the Volunteer Iowa logo can help build your brand.

It is important to consider your own branding guidelines and develop co-branding principles before you start creating imagery or randomly placing another logo with your own. You also need to know the branding guidelines of the other you are wanting to co-brand with, as you need to be approaching this relationship with the best interests of both parties in mind.



Website co-branding:

- Use logo to send people to AmeriCorps pages
- Embody AmeriCorps at your organization. Make them feel a part of something bigger
- Include more information about AmeriCorps at your organization
- Describe AmeriCorps and what being an AmeriCorps member looks like for your program



Telling your story – Media and Events

Considerations when 'pitching' a story to the local media:

- Who are the local media outlets (television, radio, print)? Do you know anyone that works there? Can someone you know connect you (a board member, staff member, volunteer, alum)?
- Consider how people find out about events happening – think about the audience you are trying to reach. Just as important – think about who the media outlets believe are their target audience(s).
- If you have a local television, paper or radio station – don't forget about them! Consider writing up PSAs (public service announcements) and ask if they can run those in-kind for you for a short period of time. Sometimes a local station can do this. Additionally, if they are local, they often want local people to interview! Ask for an opportunity to do a live interview or write up an opinion piece for the paper. You can always 'google' how to write an opinion piece or letter to the editor.
- Remember it's about timing. Ask to meet with them in advance of needing anything, and ask them questions about their audience, how they receive press releases, how they want to be communicated with, etc. They will respect you greatly for asking, and it helps you know how and when to reach out. If you continue to send them things that they will not publish because you don't take the time to find out more, you are hurting your own chances for coverage.
- Remember when writing press releases and other newsworthy items – you must include the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of the news item. Make it obvious. Keep it simple.
- Lastly, if they do run a story for you – a hand-written thank you goes a long way!

Information is sometimes easy to find – this was accessible on this publication's website:

I have a story idea. What next?

Want to get the Business Record's attention?

You could tweet us, call us or post on our Facebook page, but in truth, the best way to get your news to us is to send it to to our new email address: newsroom@bpcdm.com. Please help us to help you by taking a second to add this new email address to your press release list. We have three news beasts to feed every day, and your news tips, releases and story ideas help us do that. First, our morning and afternoon Business Record daily e-newsletters, which are sent around 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily and contain short summaries of the business news of the day and local items of interest to Greater Des Moines business readers.

Second is our website, www.BusinessRecord.com. We post timely business news on the site at any time of the day. So, even if your news has missed our daily e-newsletter deadlines, don't hesitate to send it to us.

Lastly, we're always looking for ideas for our weekly newsmagazine, the Business Record, which is published every Friday and contains in-depth analysis and trend stories, new initiatives and projects and coverage of the people driving the business community.

If you're interested in pitching a story idea for an article in the newsmagazine, we need a bit more lead time, and it's always best to to hear from you at least two weeks in advance for stories of a time sensitive nature. Emailing or calling me at 515-661-6081 can be a good starting point for print stories, or you can directly contact the reporter who covers your industry.

Thanks in advance for the help, helping us better cover the Des Moines business community. - *Chris Conetzkey, Business Record Editor*

Hosting a Public Event

Volunteer Iowa strongly encourages programs to identify and invite the Volunteer Iowa 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. Programs should consider designating 1 or 2 spokespersons at each event that are familiar with core messaging, communication, and the elevator speech for consistent messaging.

These items should be included at or take place at public events:

- AmeriCorps Logos, Signage, and Clothing *(required)*
- Introduction of stakeholders and any elected officials in attendance
- Testimonials
- Presentation
- Information Packet with Statistics & Business Cards
- Photo Opportunities
- Sponsor logos on printed materials

Event ideas

There are several opportunities in a calendar year where you could hold an event, reach out to the local media, and find ways to tell the story of National Service. Below are a few ideas for events:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- AmeriCorps Week
- National Volunteer Week
- Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Day of Service
- Global Youth Service Day
- Swearing-in Day for your AmeriCorps members

Sample Press Releases

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month Day, Year

Contact: Name
Name of Organization
email@iowaeda.com
phone / toll free line

Headline (short, and in Title Case, ideally 170 characters or less)

Summary (synopsis of the press release. Tells the story in a different way, doesn't repeat headline)

CITY, Iowa – The first paragraph is the "lead" and contains the most important information. Grab the reader's attention here – don't assume that they have read the headline or the summary line. The lead should stand on its own.

The body of the release has short sentences and paragraphs (about three or four lines per paragraph). The first paragraph should cover the 5 W's.

The rest of the press release expands on the information provided in the lead paragraph. This includes why the story is significant. Here you answer the questions "so what" and "how."

"Include a quote to personalize the content" said First Name Last Name, title and organization. Quotes can come from key staff, partners, or subject matter experts.

The last paragraph should restate and summarize the key points. It can also be used to share details on an event, where to get more information, or a call to action.

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About Volunteer Iowa
Volunteer Iowa and its partner agencies work with organizations and individuals on three main fronts. The first is to help agencies develop quality programs that use service as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa's greatest areas of need. The second is to help engage Iowans in their communities by promoting service and expanding the volunteer base. Finally, the third area of work is to connect individuals with appropriate service opportunities by building the volunteer infrastructure. More information is available at volunteeriowa.org.

About partner organization/agency
Use boilerplate information about partner organization/agency that was prominently featured in your press release. Include website.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month Day, Year

Contact: Name
Name of Organization
email@iowaeda.com
phone / toll free line

Media Advisory for (insert day and time)

Attention Grabbing Headline

Newsworthy subheading

Include a sentence or two making the case for a reporter to attend the event. Convey why this is news and why they should turn up (the WHY of the event).

WHAT:	Event name and a brief description of what the event entails.
WHO:	Mention the key players here. Highlight if you're expecting a local policy maker/influencer/etc. Provide titles of the people involved.
WHERE:	Location of event, with directions if necessary.
WHEN:	Date and time.

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About Volunteer Iowa

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Recruiting for AmeriCorps Positions

Sometimes recruitment for open National Service positions can be tricky. Your posting might go up and many applicants apply. Other times you can struggle to find enough candidates or the right person for the role. Since recruitment comes with much uncertainty, this section is to help you possibly think of ways to approach recruitment that perhaps you aren't already thinking of, and/or enhance your recruitment plan.

Disclaimer – you may have other methods to recruitment not listed below that work well for you, and that is wonderful. This is not meant to steer you away from what works well for you or not be sensitive to the uniqueness within your community. This is merely to spark thought and be a resource.

Questions to consider when looking to fill an open position:

- Where do you post locally for jobs? Where should you post online for jobs?
- How do you reach college students? Is there a campus near you?
- Do people in your community still look for jobs through any printed media? Flyers?
- Who can help you spread the word about your open position?
- Can you afford $20 or less to post your open position on social media through an ad? You can target specific demographics that way.
- Are you using social media to tell others that you have an open position? Can you tag those that could help by sharing your post/tweet?
- If your posting isn't bringing in candidates, have someone else outside the organization look at it. Maybe it isn't as compelling or speaking to the intended audience.
- Can you include testimonials in your posting? Can alums help you spread the word?

Be creative with your posting!

We know there are basic requirements and grant compliance you need to include in your position description, but that shouldn't limit you to just posting what is required for the job. Think creatively and outside the box to make the position interesting. Consider who your target audience would be for the position and write in a way that would/could appeal to them. If you've posted a position before and struggled finding applicants, maybe it's because it didn't sound interesting! If in doubt, have a current member review it (or an alum) before you post it. Maybe they can help you with the content that could get someone excited to apply for your open position. If you post your position and don't get the response you are after, try writing it differently.

Example on Instagram:

Example on Twitter:

Example on Facebook:

We hope this guide is a valuable tool for you! Thank you for taking the time to review it. If you have feedback on how we can make this even better, please connect with the Communications & Engagement Officer by calling 800.308.5987 or emailing americorps@volunteeriowa.org.