

## Section 3: Resources

### In This Section:

- **Marketing and Promotion Guide**
- **Media Contacts Worksheet**
- **Social Media Guide**
- **Additional Project Ideas**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Other Resources**



# Marketing and Promotion Guide

One key goal of any service project is promotion, which includes promotion of the event itself and of every organization and group involved. The immediate effects of events are often short-lived, but marketing and promotion efforts can reap benefits for months or years to come.

Marketing typically occurs prior to the event, during the event, and after the event. A great marketing plan consists of following components:

- Press releases
- Flyers
- Social media
- Emails to interested parties, volunteers, community partners, etc.

While the details of these components will vary from project to project, they are generally the same for each. With all materials, make sure to include both your service site logo and the VISTA logo, and to be sure to mention your service site and VISTA when you speak to people about your upcoming project.

Before you start on any of the marketing steps below, take the time to complete the Media Contacts Worksheet. Every press release and flyer you create should be sent to those contacts.

## Flyers

As soon as you have all of the key information for your event, create a flyer. Your flyer should include the following information:

- Date, time, and location of event
- Who is invited to participate
- Who the event supports
- Which organizations are partnering to support the event
- VISTA and service site logos
- Any actions you want the public to take (RSVP to attend, supplies to donate for a drive, show up to volunteer, etc.)
- Contact information for project organizer (probably yourself)

Note: if you use pictures on flyers, make sure you have permission to use them. If using pictures from the internet, make sure you choose an unlicensed picture that's free to share. For sample flyers, visit pages 19-20, 33-34, 52-53, 64-65, and 72.

Where to distribute flyers:

- Community partners
- All event sponsors
- Everyone on the Media Contacts Worksheet (pg. 77).
- Any e-mail distribution list you subscribe to
- Local colleges
- Local community centers
- Community-engaged businesses (coffee shops, restaurants, book stores, convenience stores, etc.)
- Any public posting board

Note: while you may be able to email flyers to some of these places, you will get higher recognition by physically going to these places to distribute flyers. If you email a flyer, there's a good chance your email will end up in the Trash folder, not printed off and passed out around town. Also, be sure to go through the proper channels when passing out flyers (for example, ask the manager of a local business if you can post your flyer in their store window).

### **Press Releases**

Press Releases are a great opportunity to connect with the media in a formal, more traditional way than social media. Press releases should be concise and include the most vital information.

For each project, two press releases are encouraged:

- Before the event
  - This press release is informational. It discusses what the event will be, supporting partners, and project goals.
  - See samples on pages 17, 31, 50, and 62.
- After the event
  - This press release is celebratory. It should discuss results of the event and why these results matter within your community.
  - See samples on pages 18, 32, 51, and 63.

Information to include in all press releases:

- Date, time, and location of the event
- Supporters and beneficiaries of the event
- VISTA and service site logo
- An "About" section providing info about VISTA
- An "About" section providing info about service site
- Contact information for the event organizer
- Relevant and impactful quotes from stakeholders

How to distribute a press release:

- Send it to everyone on your media contacts worksheet
- Upload it to your service site's website
- Link to it on social media

Note: if a reporter chooses to write a piece on your service project, they will probably contact you. Make sure the contact information listed in the press release is accurate! Many reporters will choose to write an article either prior to or after the event, but some will write articles for both. That being said, it's still very important to write two press releases for each event since you can put them on your site's website and on social media. Also, sometimes you have to send a press release to a media outlet multiple times before they write an article about it – be persistent and plan enough time for this to happen.

### **Before the Event**

Here are some steps you should take prior to your project date:

- Gather all of the information you need to market your project.
- Create and pass out flyers.
- Create “before the event” press release and send it to everyone on your Media Contacts Worksheet (pg. 77).
- Write “after the event” press release; feel free to leave blanks in for numbers of volunteer engaged, number of recipients helped, etc. You can complete this press release after the event.
- Write sample emails to send to your community partners, volunteers, and other stakeholders.
- Develop a social media plan, tailored to the social media most used in your community.
  - See the Social Media Marketing guide (pg. 79).
- Take preparation pictures as you gear up for the event and gather supplies.

### **During the event**

Take lots of pictures! This is a task that's great for either you or a volunteer. Also, even if a reporter comes to your event with a camera, you should take pictures yourself! This way, you own the pictures and can use them for future marketing purposes and “Thank You” notes.

### **After the event**

- Post your pictures online and say “Thank You”!
- Send your “after the event” press release
  - Fill in the blanks for impact numbers and any special notes of interest. Send it to all of your partners, as well as to your media contacts.
- Send “Thank You” notes to all of your community partners, donors, and any volunteers who helped out in a substantial way. You can include pictures to make these even more personal!

# Media Contacts Worksheet

**Local Newspaper:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Local News Channel:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Radio Station:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **VISTA State Office Representative**

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **AmeriCorps Alums – Local Chapter**

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Community/Nonprofit E-mail Distribution List**

Not every community has one; ask your supervisor or someone else working in nonprofit in the area.

---

## Social Media Suggestions

Facebook: use to promote events from start to finish, either through an event-specific page, a local VISTA page, a page for the organizations involved in the project, AmeriCorps Alumni page, etc.) – note that not every message that is posted will be passed on to people who like the page, so the more updates, the better.

Twitter: best for quick updates and important announcements. Every post will be sent to every person following you.

Instagram: use to promote events by taking pictures before, during and after the day of service. Take pictures of event supplies, locations, and service members (with their permission), and use your set of hashtags liberally.

**Hashtags for event(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Note: using consistent hashtags when promoting and describing the service project will make it easier to seek out in each of the social media platforms. A quick search of the hashtags that are trending or used frequently to promote similar projects may help tie your event into what's happening nationally (if applicable).*

## Social Media Guide

The use of social media has become increasingly important over the years as these tools continue to evolve in function and popularity. The main benefits that social media offers are how it makes everyone accessible and can create a dialogue about your project and service. You can, and should use sites like Facebook and Twitter to show your State Office what kinds of projects you are working on, to increase VISTAs brand recognition with pictures wearing your gear, and to engage other VISTA and AmeriCorps programs so that all of our work can be seen across the country. The best way to increase the visibility of National Service is for members and leaders to take an active role in promoting our projects—and one of the easiest ways to do that is by sharing pictures and updates through social media.

### What form of social media should you use?

#### Twitter

Can you make your point in under 140 characters? If yes, then you should be using Twitter. This is a great medium for connecting with other organizations because you can tag any other account in a post—that includes AmeriCorps, CNCS, and many more.

Some tips for tweeting:

- Don't be afraid of overwhelming your audience with tweets. Since Twitter has a constantly updated 'newsfeed' there will be other posts that break yours up.
- Don't be shy with tagging! Other people and organizations created Twitter accounts knowing that they were going to be tweeted at. Opening up a conversation is the basis of social media.
- Twitter can be a great tool to send out a quick thank you to a sponsor. This shows that you truly appreciate their support, and also gives them some publicity.
- Try to leave some room in your tweets. Yes, you have 140 characters to use, but try to leave some extra space at the end of posts so that others can retweet with their own comment (*see example below*).

#### Facebook

Much like Twitter, Facebook is designed to create connections and start conversations. One of the main differences is that here there is no limit on characters. That can allow you to give a more thorough explanation of photos, and also allows for more organizations to be tagged in your posts. While there is no character limit, it is still best to keep your posts concise and catchy so people actually read all of your information.



Some tips for posting:

- Unlike Twitter, the Facebook newsfeed is both arranged based on when something is posted, but also on how many 'likes' it receives. That means that if you posted a picture yesterday and someone liked or commented on it today, it would shoot back onto your friends' newsfeed.
- Eventually, some stories get hidden on your timeline. So, if you have an even coming up and are posting updates or save-the-dates, you should post multiple reminders. Otherwise you risk people not seeing your posts.
- While posting multiple updates will keep your audience informed, it could also backfire if your posts do not receive enough action. If you are constantly posting but not receiving any likes or comments, then your posts' will not appear as prominently on the newsfeed. The best way to avoid this is to track when your posts get the most likes and try to post around those times. This will ensure that your updates are being seen, and that they will continue to appear on everyone's newsfeeds.

For the third year in a row, New Hampshire AmeriCorps programs came together to host an #MLKDay food drive to benefit the New Hampshire Food Bank. Well, the results are in, and through our canvassing and collecting efforts we got 1,257 lbs of food!  
I am so proud to be an AmeriCorps VISTA - Volunteers In Service To America. Especially here in NH, where we #GetThingsDone together.

Live Free and Serve - ME, NH, VT State Office AmeriCorps Alums: New Hampshire Chapter



### Other Sites

While Facebook and Twitter are the most well-known social networking sites, there are many others that can help spread the word about your Service Days and programs. One of the best ways to *show* your accomplishments is to create a video after your event that highlights all of your hard work. This video can then be posted on YouTube and the link can be shared via both Facebook and Twitter.

Check out how New Hampshire AmeriCorps VISTA - Volunteers In Service To America and AmeriCorps programs celebrated MLK Day!

AmeriCorps Alums: New Hampshire Chapter

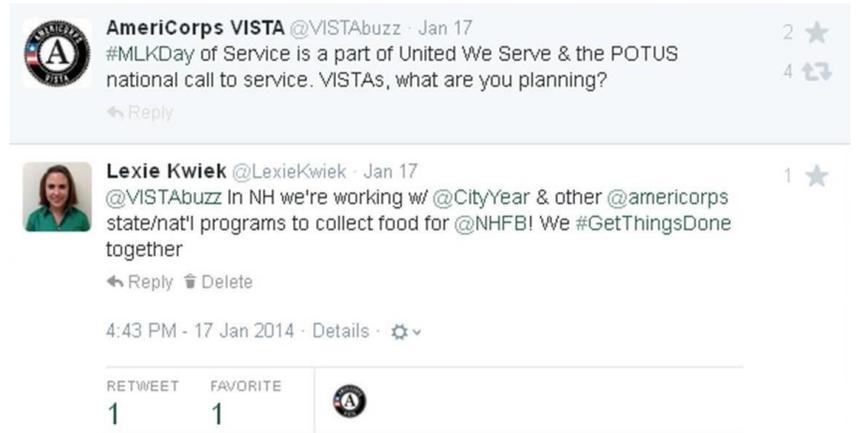


Another way to reach your audience is through Instagram. While there aren't many national accounts on Instagram yet, it is still a great way to show all of your hard work. Here you have no limit on hashtags, so feel free to label your images in any way that will get them noticed.

### When should you use social media?

#### *Before*

Start building interest about your project in advance by posting on Facebook and Twitter about your plans. Follow the national AmeriCorps accounts and respond to anything they post about National Service Days. You can also tag organizations as they offer support to show that you are thankful for their partnership, and it also gives them some free publicity.



#### *Day of Event*

Take lots of pictures! It is known that photos generate more interest on social media than just text posts, so take as many as possible. Posting real-time updates is a great way to keep people interested in your project, and using a consistent hashtag will group all of your posts into a conversation that people can browse during or after the event.



### After

Post about your final project outcomes and take the chance to thank sponsors again. Using some pictures from the day will help to engage people in your project and really show the impact that your program had.

### Who should you tag?

Don't be shy with tagging organizations or individuals! Social media is designed to open conversation between people who otherwise might never meet. Some of the best accounts to tag on Facebook and Twitter are:



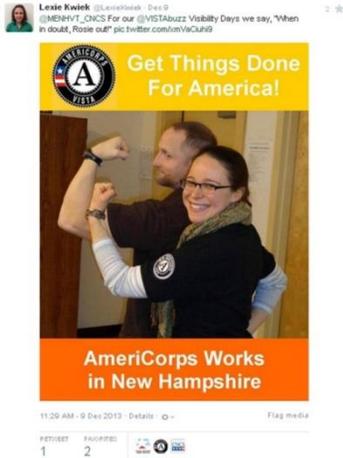
Account	Facebook	Twitter
Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)	@Corporation for National and Community Service	@nationalservice
AmeriCorps VISTA	@AmeriCorps VISTA- Volunteers In Service To America	@VISTAbuzz
AmeriCorps (general)	@AmeriCorps	@americorps
AmeriCorps Alums	@AmeriCorps Alums	@AmeriCorpsAlums
Your own State Office (ex. New Hampshire)	@Live Free and Serve- ME, NH, VT State Office	@MENVHT_CNCS
Project Specific accounts (ex. MLK Day of Service)	Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service	@MLKDay

You can also keep the conversation going by retweeting and sharing posts from these organizations and others. The best way to increase the visibility of the Service Day is to share what everyone is saying.

### #Hashtags

Hashtags are now a common feature on all social media. Their main function is to group posts together into a conversation. Using a consistent hashtag throughout your Service Day posts will allow someone to access all of your posts and see how your project has progressed.

Check to see if there are already hashtags in place for your day of service, like #MLKDay for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Using hashtags that other programs are also posting will help make the conversation more visible, and will show the connection between National Service participants across the country.



We are aware of all the great work our programs are getting done, but sharing updates on social media can give our programs a wider reach.

### Other Tips

One key aspect to keep in mind and promote to your members is wearing your AmeriCorps gear on National Service Days. Having our logo prominent in all of the pictures will increase our brand recognition and will *show* that we are part of something bigger. (It also never hurts to strike a Rosie pose!)

Social media can seem overwhelming when you are first getting into it, but don't be discouraged. Following national accounts and sharing, retweeting, or replying/commenting on their posts is a great way to get more comfortable with posting updates. Just remember, that these accounts *want* to see everything your program is doing. Getting the work done is the most important, but without increasing your program's visibility no one will know everything you are doing. Social media lets you showcase your project and Service Days to show how you are benefiting your community.

Don't forget to have fun with it! The pictures and posts that get noticed are the ones that stand out. If you have a moment of inspiration, grab your camera and take a picture. AmeriCorps VISTA needs to get noticed, and the only way that will happen is by members stepping up, wearing their gear, and spreading the word.

## **Additional Project Ideas**

### **Back to School Supply Drive**

This project has an anti-poverty and education focus, and can be done with limited resources. One option is to set up collection sites at various partner organizations. Depending on your volunteer and time resources, you can take on most of the work yourself (similar to the Food Drive Project on page 21) or partner with other agencies to have them do the drive (similar to the Military Care Packages Project on page 38).

### **Clothing Drive**

Works similarly to the book drive - create one or more collection sites for community members to drop off gently used clothing, then collect, sort and distribute the clothes to a homeless shelter or other social service site. This project has wide appeal as the clothing can be donated for many purposes: warm clothes for winter, work clothes for Dress for Success, kids' clothes for back to school.

### **College Application/FAFSA Day**

Help clients at partner organizations complete college and FAFSA applications. This may require some volunteer training before the day of the event, and you will need to market effectively to ensure that there are enough clients to utilize the number of volunteers you expect.

### **Community Dinner**

Host a dinner for local veterans/police/firefighters. This is a great opportunity to strengthen your community partnerships. Collect donations from local businesses, partner with a local agency for a venue, and recruit volunteers to help set up the event, to make the food, and to clean everything afterwards.

### **Community Garden Day/Food Bank Garden Day**

More and more food banks have their own community gardens (or get fresh produce from gardens in their community). Often they can use an extra hand, especially around harvest time. This is a great service project as it often requires very little prep work - the food banks should provide all the tools necessary for the day.

### **Emergency Kits for the Homeless**

Local Red Cross chapters may already have a team that does this so be sure to contact them first. You may bring a group of volunteers for the day to collect supplies and assemble them as a team. This project can be run similarly to the Military Care Packages Project (pg. 38). By having community partners collect the supplies, you can focus on the kit assembly.

### **Free Dental/Medical Day**

Work with local dentists/clinics to have a day where they offer basic services (checkups, cleaning, fillings etc.) for free or reduced cost. Because transportation can be a barrier for those in poverty, you might look into providing transportation to the service sites.

### **Free Legal Aid Day**

Partner up with a legal aid office, public defender, or even a large local law firm to offer free legal one-on-one sessions. You may choose to set topics such as wills, child custody, landlord/tenant issues, etc. in advance. This way the lawyers know what to expect (and it makes it easier to recruit them for the Service Day.)

### **Host a Small Benefit**

Host a site related event, such as brown bag lunch sessions where community members can come learn about different topics related to your organization. The sessions can be free, but you may ask for donations or ask that attendees bring a canned food item.

### **Multi-Site Service Day**

Connect with multiple nonprofits in your area to host projects for 10-20 members. This is a great opportunity to mix all of our AmeriCorps programs at different sites and provide new networking opportunities for your VISTAs. You may want to reach out to sites like the Salvation Army, local parks or cemeteries for clean-up, housing that may need painting, etc.

### **Paint a Mural**

The possibilities for this project are truly endless. You could team up with a local after school program to paint a small mural with the kids, or you could recruit volunteers to paint a mural on the side of your organizations building, etc.

### **Toiletries/Cleaning Products Drive**

Food drives happen all of the time, but other essentials (especially things like toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes) are just as vital and can't be purchased with food stamps. This project would be similar to the Food Drive Project (pg. 21) Instead of partnering with food banks or pantries, try partnering with homeless shelters, teen centers (such as Boys and Girls Clubs), public schools, etc.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What are “National Days of Service”?**

National Days of Service are days that focus special attention on giving back to your community. Please see the “National Days of Service” section starting on page 4 for a more complete definition. You can also access a comprehensive list of potential National Service Days here:

<http://www.energizeinc.com/prof/events/eventsNA.html>.

### **What if none of the outlined service projects fit my needs?**

See our Resources section (pg. 73) for some great websites that provide additional ideas for national days of service or the Additional Project Ideas section (pg. 84) for brief synopses of other Service Day projects that might be better suited to your area or organization.

### **What’s the best way to get connected to other AmeriCorps branches in my area?**

Try contacting your state office first for a comprehensive list of other AmeriCorps branches in your area. You may also want to reach out to any AmeriCorps Alums Associations in your area. They can be a great resource as many Alums have wealth of experience with event planning and volunteer management. Additionally, you might be able to recruit alums as volunteers for your event, or they might offer to help in recruiting volunteers.

### **The project I want to do has a three month timeline, but I only have a month until my National Service Day project. Can I still do that project?**

You can! With a little extra dedication and time, you can make an event work on short notice. Choose a project that fits your tight deadline. For example, holding a park clean up may be a better option than creating military care packages, as that event requires more time and planning.

### **What should I do if more volunteers come to the event than I have space or jobs for?**

The best way to avoid this situation is to make sure that volunteers R.S.V.P. to your event. This way you can ensure that you have enough jobs for all volunteers that come to your event. In the case that you do not track volunteers, you can always create additional jobs. However, keep in mind that volunteers like to feel needed and that they are dedicating their free time to something that is meaningful.

### **Where can I direct people for on-going opportunities if not at my site/agency?**

- **Volunteer Match** - [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)
- **United We Serve** - [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)
- **Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service** - [www.mlkday.gov](http://www.mlkday.gov)
- **Idealist** - [www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org)

## Other Resources

### Toolkits

The Corporation for National and Community Service has put together a great website that includes toolkits and action guides to help you plan your own National Day of Service. Check it out here:

<http://mlkday.gov/index.php>

For help planning September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance projects, the website listed below provides tips and information for engaging elected officials and maximizing press coverage:

<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/sept11-resources>

All service-related resources made available by the Corporation for National and Community Service can be found on this website. Take a moment to look through each of the “knowledge networks.” There is so much information! <https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/>

Oregon Volunteers! has put together a great resource page for each National Service Day or Day of Recognition. Check out this site if you’d like to plan your project to correspond with an official National Service Day: <http://www.oregonvolunteers.org/volunteer/daysofservice/>

### Videos

Videos are the best way to get an inside glimpse of an epic Service Day. Remember that as each project is different, each Day of Service will also be different. Watch these videos for some great inspiration and celebrate the success of past Service Days!

AmeriCorps 20th Anniversary Celebratory Service Day:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQvVf5pfHOI>

New Hampshire AmeriCorps Day of Service 2014: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQfuSwgiEdM>

AmeriCorps VISTA Visibility Days:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVCMF161R24>

### Books

*101 Social Media Tactics for Nonprofits: A Field Guide* by Melanie Mathos, Chad Norman, Beth Kanter

This handy, accessible guide features 101 actionable tactics that nonprofits can start using immediately, and most of the featured resources are free. Broken down into five key areas, it also explains the steps and tools needed to implement each tactic.

## Social Media

If you're looking for Social Media tips, take a look at this short blog post: *5 Ways to Find Volunteers in 140 Characters or Fewer*: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/blogs/2013-11-19/5-ways-find-volunteers-140-characters-or-fewer>

Check out the following AmeriCorps social media sites. Each site will provide the most up-to-date information related to major VISTA events and service projects.

*AmeriCorps VISTA Twitter:*

<https://twitter.com/VISTAbuzz>

*AmeriCorps Twitter:*

<https://twitter.com/ameriCorps>

*AmeriCorps VISTA Facebook:*

<https://www.facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA>

*AmeriCorps VISTA Leader Facebook (official):*

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/VISTALeader/691003227633954/?notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/VISTALeader/691003227633954/?notif_t=group_activity)

*Corporation for National and Community Service Facebook:*

<https://www.facebook.com/nationalservice>

*Corporation for National and Community Service Tumblr:*

<http://nationalservice.tumblr.com/>

## Request for Verizon Employee Volunteers

Verizon encourages its employees to volunteer with community organizations, and this link will guide you to an online form where you can submit a volunteer request. Their funding priorities are education, healthcare, and energy management, though organizations might not necessarily have to fall into these categories to request volunteers.

[https://www.cybergrants.com/cybergrants/plsql/ao\\_login.login?x\\_gm\\_id=1240&x\\_proposal\\_type\\_id=250](https://www.cybergrants.com/cybergrants/plsql/ao_login.login?x_gm_id=1240&x_proposal_type_id=250)