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Boomer Reporting Corps



Evaluation Report

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Prepared for:

Prepared by:



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Executive Summary

The Boomer Reporting Corps was established in partnership with the Maine Community Foundation as part of the Encore Leadership Corps Program (ENCorps). This specialized initiative sought to engage Mainers 50 and older who are already engaged in local volunteer work as community leaders and provide them with the tools necessary to engage in community reporting and information sharing. The impetus for the program grew out of the high demand among ENCorps members for programming that dealt with reporting and sharing community information such as town blogs, newsletters, and other projects. In response to this demand, program staff applied to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Community Information Challenge grant program and received funding for a one-year Boomer Reporting Corps (BRC) program.

Guided by the assumptions that there is a movement toward online and localized reporting of community news and that older adults have the time and interest to act as indigenous and strategically situated reporters of community information and news, the program model utilizes a combination of in-person workshops, technical assistance from new media and journalism experts, networking opportunities, and peer-support opportunities to build the capacity of older adults to act as citizen journalists.

Planned outcomes of the program included:

- Participants in the program will gain increased knowledge and skills in multimedia and citizen journalism techniques.
- Participants will begin to utilize skills gained through BRC in community information projects.
- Participants will begin to integrate skills learned through BRC into their volunteer work.

The fundamental impact the program sought to achieve was to increase the availability of community news and information and increase the number of older adults who have the skills necessary to report on community information.

During the project period, 35 ENCorps members participated in the BRC, six workshops and a convening were held, and support systems were developed for BRC members including a project website. Key findings based on staff feedback and surveys of participants were that participants reported gaining a variety of both technical and soft-skills that are necessary for collecting, interpreting, and reporting community news including developing interview techniques, photography skills and proficiency with editing equipment.

Six of the BRC members have published community information pieces as part of the program. End-of-program surveys with participants confirmed that many participants plan on integrating the skills learned through BRC into future community information projects, such as town blogs, community publishing spaces, and other venues. Process findings indicated that opportunities for strengthening citizen journalism work with older adults should take into account the varying levels of comfort that different individuals have with some of the technical aspects of citizen journalism and technology. Additionally, the training necessary to build the skill set required for reporting community news and information is time-intensive and it is important to experiment with different configurations of group and individual learning to best serve individuals.

Finally, for future ENCorps projects that are topic-specific such as BRC, it is important to highlight the importance of a particular topic to an individual's overall volunteer work plan so as to ensure maximum participation and effectively relate special projects to the more general goal of ENCorps as a whole.

Program Overview

The Boomer Reporting Corps (BRC) was developed in response to a growing interest among existing members of ENCorps to learn the skills necessary for sharing information and encouraging dialogue in their local communities. To that end, ENCorps members expressed a desire to learn about and access cutting edge technology, hardware, software, and online services that were not yet within their reach. The needs of the ENCorps participants led to a natural opportunity to partner with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge, which seeks to improve access to community news and information.

To assist with program design, a survey was distributed to all ENCorps members who expressed interest in citizen journalism. Respondents helped determine which technologies members had available to them across the state, what their objectives would be for participating, and their level of experience and expertise in multimedia, journalism, and photography. BRC participants evidenced a range of individual preferences, level of experience and expertise, and topics of interest. The broad range of workshops, mentorship, online forums and tutorials, and project stipends were all designed to support participants' individual needs and expectations of the program.

Taking into consideration the rural communities participants represented and the orientation of ENCorps members to be community action volunteers and leaders, the following program goals were established to guide the BRC:

- To provide specialized supports and skill building workshops that would help participants create community news outlets, such as newsletters, blogs, and websites, to cover the issues in their communities that often go unreported by professional journalists.
- To help older adults who are already leading community change and who have a deep understanding of relevant community issues to utilize new media tools such as iBooks Author, Vimeo, and Twitter.

Over the course of the program, participants of the BRC attended a series of six comprehensive skill building workshops during an eight month period. Workshops featured professional guest lecturers from local newspapers, a professional photographer, and a local Apple tech representative. Additional support was provided by members of the Maine Press Association. Guest lecturers demonstrated journalism and media techniques currently used in the field and committed their time to provide participants with mentorship.

A break of six weeks was scheduled between each workshop for participants to work on individual projects. Workshop lecturers remained engaged with participants by answering questions and sharing resources through the BRC online forum, e-mail, and a Diigo group (a web tool for online collaboration). Individual projects varied in the topics addressed, ranging from local persons of interest to economic development. Five participants showcased their work at the 2013 BRC Convening.

Public access to the multimedia products produced by BRC participants is available at www.boomerreportingcorps.org. Instructional videos and audio recordings of the skill building workshops are also available on the website.

Program Model and Anticipated Outcomes

The assumptions:

- The news context within Maine is gradually moving to more localized sources of information as larger scale newspapers scale down or go out of business and more web-based and multimedia technologies expand into rural areas in the state.
- Maine is the oldest state in the nation. Many older adults have valuable skills and knowledge gained from their professional careers and many want to contribute to their towns, cities, and nonprofit organizations.
- ENCorps, with its existing workshop supports, technical assistance, and membership of over 240 is in a unique position to recruit, train and support older adults engaged in community information projects.
- A combination of one-on-one training and technical assistance, access to workshops, peer exchange through online and in-person communities, and exposure to experts in journalism and new media can help to provide individuals with the skills needed to successfully report on community information.

The inputs:

- Maine Community Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and Atlantic Philanthropies support
- Technical assistance and support from Maine Community Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation staff
- Expertise in journalism and new media from professional journalists, citizen journalists, and the academic community
- The time, expertise, experience, and dedication of BRC members
- UMaine Center on Aging staff expertise and effort

The activities:

- Provision of skills-building workshops on community information
- Technical assistance by journalism and new media experts
- BRC convening featuring new media experts and journalists from throughout the state
- Creation of an online community for BRC members
- Provision of stipends to support community information projects

Desired long-term impact:

- **Community members have increased access to local news and information through publications by Boomer Reporting Corps members.**
- **There is an increase in older adults who have the skills and connections necessary to be reporters of community information.**

Short-Term Outcomes

- 60% of BRC trainees will publish one community information piece during the project period
- 80% of BRC workshop participants will experience an increase in at least 70% of the areas of knowledge taught in BRC workshops over 8 months
- 90% of ENCorps members attending the convening will report an increase in knowledge across 70% of identified learning areas after the event
- 100% of stipend recipients begin to initiate a community information project

Intermediate Outcomes

- 90% of BRC trainees will publish one community information piece within one year of the end of the project period
- 50 additional ENCorps members will incorporate citizen journalism techniques into their volunteer work over a two year period

Long-Term Outcomes

- Community members have increased access to local news and information through publications by BRC members
- There is an increase in older adults who have the skills and connections necessary to be reporters of community information

Program Outputs

The following are the outputs of the Boomer Reporting Corps:

Six skills-building workshops:

- What is News & How Does One Recognize it? (September 22, 2012)
- Becoming a First-Rate Photographic Reporter & Storyteller (October 27, 2012)
- Telling Stories Using Sound & Moving Images (December 1, 2012)
- Multimedia Narrative: Producing Galleries, Slideshows and Videos (January 19, 2013)
- Pulling It All Together – Designing Packages for Print and Digital Media (March 2, 2013)
- Engaging Larger Audiences and Leveraging Media Skills Via Social Media and Mentoring (April 20, 2013)

Boomer Reporting Corps Outputs At-a-Glance:

- **Six skills-building workshops**
- **BRC convening featuring keynote, panel of rural journalism experts, showcase panel of BRC member projects, and five additional skills building workshops**
- **BRC website**
- **Five project stipends for supporting community information projects**
- **A core group of 14 individuals was consistently engaged in BRC activities; 28 individuals attended at least 1 workshop; and 75 ENCorps members attended the convening.**

BRC Convening

(May 20-21, 2013, offered in conjunction with the ENCorps Summit). Sessions included:

- Keynote by Quil Lawrence, Correspondent, National Public Radio
- Rural News Panel with: Facilitator Earl Brechlin, Editor, Mount Desert Islander, and panelists: Abby Curtis, Reporter, Bangor Daily News; Tom Groening, Editor, Working Waterfront; Tessie Dubois, Publisher/Editor, St. John Valley Times
- BRC Showcase Panel, facilitated by Bill Kuykendall, Senior Lecturer, New Media, University of Maine, featuring BRC members
- Skills-building workshop sessions:
 - The Art of Oral History Interviewing: Jo Radner, Storyteller
 - Writing News People Will Actually Read: Chris Busby, Editor and Publisher, *The Bollard*
 - Don't Let Your News Fall Into the Black Hole Known as the Garbage Can: Dan Cashman, President, Cashman Communications

- Photography and the Changing Landscape: Brian Fuelner, Visuals Editor, *Bangor Daily News*
- A Nose for News: Abby Curtis, Reporter, *Bangor Daily News*



BRC Website (www.boomerreportingcorps.org)

A BRC website was developed and launched during the project period that serves as a comprehensive resource for program participants and individuals who want to learn about citizen journalism in the future. The website features:

- A multi-media gallery for showcasing BRC member works
- A listing of BRC workshops and tutorials from workshops utilizing embedded video. Tutorials currently available include the topics:
 - Aesthetics
 - Recording Theory and Narrative
 - Photo Narrative
- Profiles of 14 BRC members
- A BRC forum for sharing questions about citizen journalism and connecting with program staff

Diigo Group

A Diigo group was created to facilitate discussion and allow for access to citizen journalism resources.

Project Stipends

Five project stipends were awarded to BRC members to assist with the development of community information pieces.

Boomer Reporting Corps Participant Impacts

A major goal of the BRC was the development of skills related to new media and citizen journalism. Six skill building workshops paired with one-on-one mentorship from the fall of 2012 through spring of 2013 were the primary vehicles for promoting skill development. As part of the workshop evaluation, workshop participants were asked to rate their pre-workshop and post-workshop understanding of topics related to new media and citizen journalism taught at the workshops on a 10-point Likert scale with “no understanding of a topic being a 1 on the scale and a 10 being a complete understanding of the topic.” The following are the areas where there were the greatest average increase in scores from the average pre-score to the average post-score. These skills include a mix of specific technical skills as well as more generalized skills useful for reporting community news and information

- Awareness of some subject areas in the home and community that may be explored using multimedia narrative techniques
- Understanding of:
 - the term “social media,” and how it is different from traditional media
 - the minimum sample rate and bit depth settings required to produce broadcast quality audio recordings
 - how to identify subjects that lend themselves to multimedia narrative
 - how photographs can be grouped and sequenced to create a visual narrative in galleries and slide shows
 - “A-roll” and “B-roll” and how the two can be combined to construct a multimedia video narrative
 - how to organize materials prior to undertaking a self-publishing project
- Publishing roles available through legacy media
- What freelancers need to outline in a story pitch to established media outlets
- The tools and principles of interacting on Facebook and Twitter as a publisher
- Ways to find and build an audience for work on the Internet
- Ways participants can share your knowledge with others

Why Members Became Involved

- **“I’m passionate about the place I live and citizen journalism is a way of telling the story of Maine.”**
- **“I want education and support to help develop a media plan to promote education and community awareness of a program I’ve been working on. It’s been a challenge to get coverage unless articles are print ready. I want to learn how to use photographs to enhance the message.”**
- **“I am a story-teller and I want to be able to use video to augment my stories.”**

A full list of the skill and knowledge areas from BRC workshops can be found in Appendix 1.

BRC Member Demographics and Participation

- The 35 BRC participants came from 29 different Maine towns and cities.
- Participants were 46% male and 54% female.
- The age range of participants was 52 to 81 and the average age was 66.
- A core group of 14 individuals was consistently engaged in BRC activities. However, all but 7 individuals out of the 35 who signed up attended at least 1 workshop.
- Workshop attendance was consistently between 10 and 14 individuals.

Qualitative Findings

Design of the BRC curriculum incorporated a number of specialized supports and individualized approaches meant to engage the participants. Workshops were five hours in length and offered a range of multimedia tools, techniques, and professional advice. Online resources including the BRC forum, the Diigo resource sharing group, and online tutorials were developed to facilitate the learning and offer support between workshops. Innovation stipends were awarded to individuals who requested funds to purchase equipment such as camera lenses, lavalier microphones, and iPads to complete interviews for multimedia narrative projects. Starting with a group of 10 participants, participation grew to about 35 individuals, with some committed to all or most workshops and others participating when the topic was most relevant to them.

After each workshop and the BRC convening, as well as at program end, participants were queried about skills they had learned from taking part in workshops and how they plan to apply that learning to their community work. Responses focused primarily on the development of technical skills related to videomaking and photography, as well as the development of interviewing skills and knowledge that comprise the field of journalism such as storytelling, recognizing topics as newsworthy, writing for a particular audience, and understanding how all elements of a multimedia presentation contribute to a final product. The following are examples of skills reported by members:

Technical skills learned:

- “HD video making with the iPad including the use of external microphone for the iPad”
- “Technical details of picture and video taking”
- “Confidence and skill in using a new (to me) new media form (working with videos)”
- “iPad use”
- “Using Apple hardware”
- Technical skills with hardware and software”
- “iMovie software”
- “Achieving quality sound and video recordings using the newest devices”
- “Programs available like Garage Band and Book Creator”
- “I had never used an iPad prior to this session, so it was a new experience gaining understanding of the capabilities of this technology. I learned how to take photos and videos on the camera, how to access iMovie and Garage Band, and some basic editing.”
- “I learned how to use iMovie to combine audio and video into a usable slide show.”
- “I learned how to create iBook projects. I will attempt to self-publish some books I wrote as a graduate library student.”
- “I have learned how to set up Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and additional social media network accounts.

All very helpful in developing interest in producing websites, blogs, and personal profile sites to showcase one's multimedia material. Eventually I hope to gather material I've created and perhaps publish online."

Interview and communication skills:

- "Interviewing so as to elicit genuine responses from interviewees"
- "Communication"
- "Interviewing techniques"
- "Interviewing tips"
- "How to set up an interview and what makes a good interview"

Understanding of the journalism process:

- "Defining a good story"
- "Defining the goal of the writing"
- "Recognizing what is news and worthy of sharing"
- "Telling a story through image, sound and graphics"
- "Creating a unified work from disparate visual materials including video and still images"
- "What a journalist needs to look for in a story and in visuals to support the story"
- "Importance of collecting good audio"
- "Focusing on use of words and illustrations"
- "Learning how to organize and convey what is to be shared"
- "Telling story steps and examples to illustrate the concepts well"
- "Listening to the intended audience to define the way to present the information"
- "Learning who to take the news to"
- "The most important skill was (is) having a better understanding of what makes a good story - what engages an audience - and a new approach to capturing / creating that story."

Boomer Reporting Corps Case Study

Mary was one of the older participants in the group who participated in every workshop. She had only experienced using a desktop PC at home for general word processing and basic use of Facebook to stay connected with family and friends. Over the course of her participation in BRC, she developed an article about her town that was published in her local historical society's newsletter. After participating in the third BRC workshop on multimedia narrative interviewing with iPads, Mary went out and bought herself an iPad. She brought her new device to each workshop thereafter and began seeking advice from the workshop lecturers as to how to expand upon the article she had written about her town. She collected old photos and revised her article, wondering about what she was going to do with it all. She eventually decided to use iBooks Author to incorporate the photos she collected into an interactive version of her article. The project is currently underway.

A print version of Mary's work and the videos BRC participants showcased at the BRC Convening can be viewed at www.boomerreportingcorps.org.

Community Information Impacts

Five participants of the BRC received innovation stipends and four showcased their videos at the BRC convening held in May of 2013. Over 100 individuals participated, including members of the Maine Press Association, professional photographers, and successful bloggers. A majority of the audience were members of ENCorps who had not participated in the BRC. BRC participants had the opportunity to share their work and experiences with their ENCorps peers.

Community Information Pieces



The multimedia pieces created by BRC members for the convening reflected the diverse interests of the individuals. The following are the pieces that were created by stipend recipients of the BRC:

- *Hope: Healing of Persons Exceptional* by Dr. Kenneth Hamilton tells the story of the H.O.P.E supportive group and three members of the group who have benefited from participating in H.O.P.E.
- *Enjoying Retirement on Swan's Island, Maine* by Donna Wiegler tells the story of Earl Lowell, the oldest resident of Swan's Island, Maine, and his reflections on life as a retiree on the island.
- *Downtown Augusta* by Phyllis von Herrlich is a project completed to highlight Augusta, Maine's downtown businesses and the Augusta Downtown Alliance by filming Augusta business owners holding up signs stating "I (heart) Downtown."
- *Finding Grace* by Sandy Olson is an oral history that tells the story of a Maine man's discovery and dedication to the practice of martial arts and the role they have played in his life.
- Frank Booker has engaged in a project to conduct interviews with prominent community figures in Bangor, Maine to document what these individuals believe makes Bangor special in terms of culture, commerce, recreation, and other qualities.

In addition to the multimedia pieces created by BRC members, additional written pieces have been created and are being showcased in the BRC multimedia gallery. These pieces include *South Brewer Childhood Memories*

by Mary Andrews, a blog titled *Traces* by Sandy Olson, and H.O.P.E.'s legacy by Dr. Ken Hamilton. *South Brewer Childhood Memories* chronicles childhood memories of the city of Brewer and a prominent family of businesspeople over the years. The blog *Traces*, through short vignettes and accompanying photos, brings to life stories that emerge from Maine's watershed areas. *H.O.P.E.'s Legacy* is a history of the development of the Healing of Persons Exceptional groups.



H.O.P.E.'s Legacy



South Brewer Childhood Memories ...



Traces

New initiatives by Boomer Reporting Corps members

In addition to pieces created by stipend recipients, the survey of program participants indicate that BRC members have begun to integrate skills learned into their volunteer work and other information projects. The following are future projects that BRC members are undertaking:

- A blog featuring residents of Bangor, Maine, highlighting why they value the city
- A volunteer reader at a summer lunch program will be using skills learned through BRC to document the program
- A blog for a land trust which will feature multimedia stories about preserves is being created
- A BRC member is engaging people in a Maine town to contribute to the town's blog with multimedia stories about local farming. This member is also creating an area to purchase local goods, as well as a space for local authors to publish written work
- Developing multimedia documentaries featuring community members
- Documenting the work of an organization through photography
- A video about the experiences of participants in a Swan's Island Diabetes group
- Using skills learned to develop a website for the Maine Herb Society

A long-term impact on community information resources resulting from this project will be the availability of training materials in the form of multimedia presentations on the BRC website on various topics related to citizen journalism.

Process Findings

Quantitative Findings - Overall Program Ratings

To learn about overall participant ratings of the BRC, members were surveyed after workshops and at the end of the program. Table 1 depicts ratings of 11 BRC members who completed the end of program survey. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with a series of statements about the BRC with the options of stating “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. The ratings indicate that the respondents overwhelmingly felt that they learned skills that would be useful to them in sharing community information and news, and that the workshops effectively covered the range of skills that are needed to successfully share community information and news. Six of the respondents stated that they “strongly agreed” that there was a good mix of theoretical and practical skills taught, while four “agreed”. When asked about whether they were able to access needed technical assistance outside of workshops, four individuals “strongly agreed”, two “agreed”, and three were “neutral”. No individuals disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the statements they were asked to respond to.

Quantitative Findings - Workshop Ratings

Table 2 displays the percentages of individuals who stated varying levels of agreement with different statements evaluating workshops. Respondents were given the choice of responding “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. The workshop area where the largest percentage of individuals stated that they “strongly agreed” was that the presenters were knowledgeable about the topics they presented on (96%). The aspect of the workshops where the fewest people “strongly agreed” was that the facilities for the workshops were conducive to learning (64%). Based on qualitative feedback gained through workshop evaluations, the reason for fewer individuals rating the facilities highly was due to difficulties hearing presenters due to the configuration of the rooms as well as room temperatures at some workshops.

Quantitative Findings - Importance of Program Elements

Table 3 displays ratings of how important survey respondents felt various aspects of the program were to the overall value of the program. Respondents were given the choices “very important”, “important”, “neither important, nor unimportant”, “unimportant”, “very unimportant”, or “N/A, did not use this aspect of the program.” Almost no respondents rated any aspect of the program as unimportant to its overall value. However, the two areas that were viewed as being the most valuable to the program were workshops and access to experts in journalism and new media. The aspect of the program that was viewed as being least important was being part of an online community.

Qualitative Findings - Access to Community Journalism Expertise

Of the 11 respondents who completed the electronic survey, approximately half stated that they received support from an expert associated with the BRC outside of the workshops. All of the respondents indicated this contact was with workshop facilitator Bill Kuykendall for the purposes of mentoring and technical assistance. The following are participant responses that reflect the value of this contact:

- “Bill Kuykendall was available on line, by phone or in his office. His mentoring was invaluable.”
- “Bill talked me through the editing of my video via email and when I was stuck he gave me explicit instructions. He and I also met in Unity for several hours to discuss my piece.”
- “Advice and feedback with several project assignments. Guidance with program formats and media

channels for effective organizational communication. Clarification of techniques and equipment to improve production quality. Mentoring and encouragement to continue to learn and use newly acquired skills. Understanding and nonjudgemental criticism of ideas and work in progress.”

- “I had a number of email “conversations” with Bill about the project I was working on and hardware/software questions. Also, I participated in the online discussion sites he created -- mostly to share information and to benefit from links others had posted.”

Table 1 - Program Process Ratings

N = 11	Strongly agrees	Agree	Neutral	Disagre	Strongly Disagree
The skills I learned will be helpful to me in sharing community information and news	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Overall, there was a good mix of theoretical knowledge and practical skills taught	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
I felt that the workshop offerings covered the range of skills I needed to be effective in sharing community information and news	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
Outside of the workshops, I was able to access the technical assistance to support my activities in sharing community information and news if I needed it.	40%	20%	30%	0%	0%

Table 2 - Workshop Process Ratings

N = 77	Strongly agrees	Agree	Neutral	Disagre	Strongly Disagree
I believe the topic covered at this workshop will help me as a citizen journalist	71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
The content of the workshop was appropriate and informative	78%	22%	0%	0%	0%
I feel like the presenter was knowledgable about the topic	96%	4%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3 - Program Element Ratings						
N = 11	Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Not Applicable
Access to experts on journalism and new media	60%	40%	0	0	0	0
Boomer Reporting Corps sessions at the ENCorps Summit	50%	30%	10%	0	0	10%
Being a part of an online community (Boomer Reporting Corps forum)	50%	10%	20%	10%	0	10%
Networking with other Boomer Reporting Corps members	50%	20%	30%	0	0	0
Workshops	80%	20%	0	0	0	0
Having access to a project stipend.	40%	20%	30%	0	0	10%

Qualitative process findings and participant suggestions for strengthening the Boomer Reporting Corps

BRC members who responded to the end-of-program survey provided a variety of suggestions as to how the program could be strengthened in the future. One theme that was repeatedly mentioned was the fact that due to the technical nature of some of the topics covered and the time commitment necessary for projects, there can potentially be a value in having a higher level of engagement in the program:

- “Larger projects that may take longer to produce would benefit from more in-depth project assistance.”
- “I would like us to have more time to work on projects with support. I like the idea of an intensive week and then short meetings after for support. I hope more people will get involved. I would like to have more discussion time either on line or in person.”
- “Maybe a little less theory and more hands on time at the individual sessions. I also felt as though the workshops was ending while there was still a need for more hands on time with the new skills we were learning.”
- “There is not enough time in the workshops to adequately learn how to do a lot of the technical details and some of the Mac people were really not skilled in using iMovie and GarageBand.....need more time for hands on instruction and practice in the workshops.....all day at least for one type of skill development.”

Other suggestions focused on increasing collaborative work and sharing among BRC members:

- “Collaborative projects with fellow BRC members could be attempted.”
- “An annual or regular viewing of participant work and/or works-in-progress.”
- “Viewing the work others did at the Summit was very inspirational. So getting together and having work to show is useful.”

Other suggestions included:

- “Repeat for those who were not able to attend or have open workshops”
- “More help in getting the citizen journalism projects published in a variety of online and print media would be valuable.”
- “Continued access to the latest news and developments regarding new media and programs similar in kind to Boomer Reporting Corps”
- “Continue it, please!! Maybe an “upper level” series of workshops....but certainly do the basic series again. Recognize the work that has been done. Keep encouraging us to do this work.”
- “[teach] public speaking”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Participant and staff feedback has revealed that one-on-one mentoring by an expert in citizen journalism and multimedia production, combined with in-depth workshops, were important in providing the skills that were needed by participants to develop multimedia community information pieces. Findings also suggest that many of the individuals who participated in the BRC and developed citizen journalism skills have, or are going to, bring these skills to their volunteer work.

Progress toward anticipated outcomes:

Short-term (project period)

60% of BRC trainees will publish one community information piece during the project period.

During the project period, it was identified that there were seven BRC members who published a community information piece that was known by program staff. This is approximately 20% of all participants of the BRC and half of the 14 members who had the most intensive training.

80% of BRC workshop participants will experience an increase in at least 70% of the areas of knowledge taught in BRC workshops over 8 months.

Feedback from program participants showed increased skills related to both the technical and theoretical aspects of citizen journalism. Table 4 summarizes the success in achieving this short-term outcome. Of the five workshops where knowledge ratings were collected, four surpassed the outcome of having 80% of individuals show an increase in 70% of knowledge areas taught in the workshops. Data from the first workshop is not available because the system of measuring knowledge increases was not implemented until the second workshop.

90% of ENCorps members attending the convening will report an increase in knowledge across 70% of identified learning areas after the event.

Because learning objectives were not received from all presenters, it was not possible to generate a quantitative measure of knowledge increases. However, qualitative information is available regarding skills and knowledge participants received as a result of the convening. As with the monthly workshops, these skills

Workshop	Met Target?	Percentage of workshop participants reporting an increase in knowledge areas		
			of individuals had an increase in this percentage of knowledge areas	
Becoming a First-Rate Photographic Reporter & Storyteller	No	66%		70%
		0%		90%
Telling Stories Using Sound & Moving Images	Yes	93%		70%
		79%		90%
Multimedia Narrative: Producing Galleries, Slideshows and Videos	Yes	100%		70%
		63%		90%
Pulling It All Together – Designing Packages for Print and Digital Media	Yes	93%		70%
		86%		90%
Engaging larger Audiences and Leveraging Media Skills Via Social Media and Mentoring	Yes	100%		70%
		100%		90%

reflected both the technical and soft-skills necessary for citizen journalism such as development of skills relatd to photography and storytelling, working with media, and other skills. The following are quotes provided by participants about what they learned and how they planned to use knowledge gained from the convening:

“Such opportunities to assist volunteer organizations with writing and reporting.”

“I’ve learned helpful tips on working with radio stations”

“Interviewing”

“I plan to be more proactive in reporting for my organizations”

“Plan to use photography to tell stories better”

“Get myself out there and get it published.”

“Will implement oral history improvements to an ongoing project”

“I plan to do more video work to promote my downtown”

100% of stipend recipients begin to initiate a community information project

During the reporting period, all stipend recipients began work on a community information project, with four individuals presenting on their project during the ENCorps Summit.

Medium-term (one year after project period)

90% of BRC trainees will publish one community information piece within one year of the end of the project period

Fifty additional ENCorps members will incorporate citizen journalism techniques into their volunteer work over a two year period

Based on information from end-of-program surveys, BRC members have begun to plan and implement community information projects in their regular volunteer work and have begun to integrate the skills they developed into their volunteer activities. Additional time and tracking is needed to measure this outcome over the next year.

Long-term (impact)

Community members have increased access to local news and information through publications by Boomer Reporting Corps members.

Participants have already developed community information pieces which are available to the public on the BRC website. In addition, several members have published their works in collaboration with local media sources. Perhaps more importantly, BRC members have begun to integrate their skills into community information projects in their communities through avenues such as blogs and websites that will allow the voices of multiple community members to be heard.

There is an increase in older adults who have the skills and connections necessary to be reporters of community information.

In addition to the individuals who have participated in the in-person workshops and reported increased skills from their participation, tutorials have been posted online which will serve as a continuing resource beyond the project period for older adults and people of all ages who want to develop the technical and soft skills related to reporting on community news and information.

Other outcomes

Feedback from program staff indicated that there was a sense of camaraderie among the core participants and staff, identifying themselves as part of the Corps and increasing comfort/familiarity with one another. Participants were proud to be learning new skills and took pride in the videos and articles they produced. Many participants continue to talk about what they plan to create next. The high degree of personalization incorporated into the program allowed participants to apply skills to their personal interests and goals.

Strengthening citizen journalism efforts with older adults

Approximately a quarter of those ENCorps members who initially showed interest in the program subsequently participated in the program. Program staff have identified that a potential reason for this was that many of the ENCorps members had difficulty identifying a direct tie between the development of community information reporting skills and the volunteer work that they were engaged in. Evaluation comments from the two-day summit showed a theme that ENCorps members had difficulty understanding the tie-in to ENCorps. Efforts in the future to help illustrate the connection between reporting community information and volunteer projects could involve highlighting how BRC members have been able to integrate their skills into volunteer projects done outside of BRC.

Another interesting finding based on staff feedback, is that for the most part, community journalism efforts by BRC members during the project period focused to a great extent on producing pieces on community-building topics of relevance to local communities. Staff had anticipated at the beginning of the project that there would be a greater focus on investigative journalism projects. It was suggested that the work of these participants can be viewed as complementary and not competitive to the efforts of mainstream journalism.

One significant finding was that participants varied in skill and experience with journalism, technology, and

multimedia. Based on feedback from program staff, it was found that many participants were able to keep pace with the workshop content, but some participants stopped participating, feeling as though they couldn't keep up. Staff feedback also revealed that there were ENCorps members who were interested in participating, but were too intimidated by the topics to begin participation. There were individuals like Mary (the subject of the case study on page 12) who achieved a great deal out of the workshops, despite beginning with very little to no experience. However, the comprehensive agenda for each workshop did intimidate many. This suggests that future programming with older adults in the areas of skill development related to citizen journalism needs to continue to take into account the varying skill and comfort levels of potential participants. Survey work with BRC members identified that one-on-one mentoring from experts was helpful in supporting the individual needs of members.

Although the five hour segments dedicated to BRC workshops were longer than time allotted to traditional ENCorps workshops, the period of time may still have been too short to adequately teach a variety of often highly technical topics. Topics were touched upon, but might well have been addressed in greater detail. Participants commented frequently that they would have liked to cover less content for longer periods of time, perhaps with more in-class practice time to work one-on-one with instructors. The valuable input provided by participants can help refine future configurations of one-on-one and class instruction models of learning used by ENCorps.

Appendix 1: BRC Participant Knowledge Changes

For workshops 2-6 of the BRC, workshop participants were asked to rate their pre-workshop and post-workshop understanding of topics related to new media and citizen journalism taught at the workshop on a 10 point Likert scale with no understanding of a topic being a 1 on the scale and a 10 reflecting a complete understanding of the topic. The following are the knowledge areas ranked from the greatest average increases in understanding to the least when comparing the average pre-scores to the average post-scores. WS stands for Workshop and represents the workshop in which that topic was raised. Please note: All knowledge areas showed at least some increase in understanding as a result of workshop participation.

WS	Knowledge Area	Point Increase
4	Awareness of some subject areas in your home community that may be explored using multimedia narrative techniques	6
6	Understanding of the term “social media,” and how it is different from traditional media.	6
3	Understanding of the minimum sample rate and bit depth settings required to produce broadcast quality audio recordings	5
4	Understanding of how to identify subjects that lend themselves to multimedia narrative	5
4	Understanding of how photographs can be grouped and sequenced to create a visual narrative in galleries and slide shows	5
4	Understanding of “A-roll” and “B-roll” and how the two can be combined to construct a multimedia video narrative	5
5	Understanding of how to organize materials prior to undertaking a self-publishing project.	5
6	Publishing roles available through legacy media.	5
6	What freelancers need to outline in a story pitch to established media outlets.	5
6	The tools and principles of interacting on Facebook and Twitter as a publisher.	5
6	Ways to find and build audience for your work on the Internet.	5

6	Ways you can share your knowledge with others.	5
2	Understanding the value of subject selection, research, and planning in order to anticipate active photo opportunities.	4
2	Understanding how to use natural and artificial light to provide emphasis, clarity, and mood to a photograph.	4
3	Understanding of how types of questions effect content of audio narrative	4
3	Understanding how unwanted noises effect quality of audio recording	4
3	Understanding of how microphone placement effects quality of audio recording	4
3	Understanding of the range of tools that are available for recording audio and video interviews	4
4	Awareness of some of the simple, affordable software applications that can be used to create multimedia narratives	4
5	Awareness of some options for self-publishing words, pictures and videos in print, online and tablet publications.	4
5	Understanding of the basic functions of iBooks Author iPad publishing application.	4
2	Understanding the difference between topics that lend themselves to photo reporting and those that are better reported with words, graphs, or charts.	3
2	Understanding the role of aesthetics in adding clarity, drama, and impact to a photograph.	3
3	Understanding of how choice of subject effects content of audio narrative	3
3	Understanding how setting effects quality of audio recording	3
3	Understanding of how setting effects content of video interview	3
3	Understanding how quality of light effects content of video interview	3
3	Understanding of how interviewing technique effects quality of audio recordings	3

3	Understanding of how to edit interviews to minimize distracting vocal patterns without misrepresenting character of speaker	3
3	Understanding of how to acquire royalty-free music to add to audio narratives	3
5	Understanding of the basic functions of SoundSlides web publishing application.	3
5	Familiarity with the steps involved in organizing, designing and publishing an iBook and proofing it on an iPad.	3
2	Understanding how to write captions that add value and provide context needed to accurately “read” a photograph.	2
2	Understanding how the primary technical considerations – aperture, shutter speed, ISO – influence the effectiveness of a photograph.	2
2	Understanding the difference between enhancement and manipulation when creating and editing photographs.	2
3	Understanding of how to add music to an audio interview	2
2	Understanding the importance of showing respect for those whom you seek to photograph.	1