



BACKGROUNDER

The Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps

Background

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency that operates like a foundation. AmeriCorps is a set of programs at CNCS that utilizes national service in order to “get things done.” In fact, “I will get things done for America” is the first line of the pledge all AmeriCorps members recite as they are sworn-in. AmeriCorps programs include Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA), National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), State and National grants, and the National Service Trust. Over one million Americans have served in AmeriCorps, and 80,000 are currently serving – including approximately 65,000 full-time.

CNCS is the nation’s largest grantmaker investing in locally driven service and volunteering efforts focused on education, disaster relief, veterans and military families, housing, and more. CNCS is adaptable to priorities that change locally – for example, CNCS has made programs fighting opioid abuse a high priority. CNCS funds more than 3,000 organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Teach For America, United Ways, Boys and Girls Clubs, City Year, and Catholic Charities, expanding their reach and impact. The result of this investment is more engaged citizens, greater economic opportunity, less dependence on government, safer neighborhoods, stronger communities, and a more unified nation.

Congress created CNCS to be a public-private partnership that invests limited federal dollars to leverage substantial private investment and

improve lives and communities. In 2015, CNCS generated \$1.26 billion in outside investment from the private sector, an amount exceeding the federal appropriation. These investments from companies like Walmart, Home Depot, Target, Cisco, CSX and Citigroup increase the return on the taxpayer dollar. Every state has a bi-partisan, government-appointed commission that manages grants in the state. Many of these commissions are nonprofit organizations.

CNCS is a government corporation modeled after private business: small, efficient, results-oriented, guided by a bi-partisan board of directors, led by a Chief Executive Officer, able to build partnerships and leverage outside funds, and using an alternative personnel system that rewards performance.

Talking Points

National service has a strong, bipartisan history.

- National service is a historically bipartisan, politically popular, and cost-effective strategy for engaging citizens, strengthening communities, creating jobs, and uniting the nation.
- Over the past eight decades, presidents from both political parties have proposed, and created with Congress, programs that have enabled Americans to serve local communities for a significant period of time.
- The Corporation for National Service has operated for nearly 25 years, providing a foundation for national service across government and in every state.

Voters overwhelmingly support national service.

- A post-election poll conducted by TargetPoint Consulting found that four out of five voters across nine presidential battleground states want Congress to maintain or increase the federal investment in national service. This includes three out of four Republicans and Trump supporters. This poll is consistent with multiple other polls conducted prior to the 2016 election.

National service helps local leaders solve community challenges.

- Through participation in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, national service members tutor and mentor struggling students in public and charter schools, provide job training and other services to returning veterans, help communities recover after natural disasters, support independent living for seniors and Americans with disabilities, and more.

National service is extremely cost-effective.

- Every federal dollar invested in AmeriCorps is matched by more than two dollars from donations and in-kind support from non-CNCS sources, including business and philanthropy.^[1]
- In 2015, CNCS generated \$1.26 billion in outside resources from private businesses, foundations, and other sources – an amount exceeding the federal appropriation.^[2]
- For every one dollar the federal government invests in national service, there is a nearly four dollar return on investment.^[3]
- Federal agencies can use national service to perform service that aligns with agency

missions at a low cost, like FEMA Corps, which is estimated to save \$60 million annually. A Booz Allen study of ways to reduce the \$25 billion backlog of maintenance on public lands found youth corps to be the most cost-effective strategy, saving 85% per project over other contractors.

National service leads to employment.

- Participation in national service programs helps unemployed Americans find jobs. Unemployed individuals who volunteer are 27 percent more likely to secure employment than those who do not volunteer. This relationship is even more significant for unemployed individuals without high school diplomas and those who live in rural communities.
- National service helps put opportunity youth – the nearly 5 million young people who are neither in school nor working – on a path toward education or a career. Some national service programs enable opportunity youth to earn their diploma or GED while serving simultaneously, and others act as workforce development tool for opportunity youth by giving them valuable on-the-job training in skills that are connected with career pathways.
- National service is a powerful workforce development tool that has the power to lead to careers by providing young people with tangible skills – especially career-specific skills for self-management and interacting with others.^[6] On average, nine out of ten AmeriCorps alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they could solve difficult problems, persist when opposed, accomplish goals, handle unexpected events and unforeseen situations, remain calm, cope with difficulties, and identify multiple solutions. Alumni rated their current skills as higher than at pre-service, with the greatest gains being in their

abilities to deal with unexpected events and unforeseen situations.^[7] A recent LinkedIn survey of hiring managers revealed that 59 percent believe that these highly valued soft skills are difficult to find.^[8]

- National service helps young people of all backgrounds advance on career pathways. Forty-three percent of AmeriCorps alumni state that their service was aligned with their career path, and 79 percent say that their service was a defining professional experience.^[4]
- National service is backed by over 450 “Employers of National Service” who highly value the skills individuals gain during their service.

National service has a positive impact on higher education and civic engagement.

- AmeriCorps helps pay for higher education by providing access to education awards that can be used to pay for college tuition or to pay down student loan debt. To date, AmeriCorps alums have earned more than \$3.3 billion to help with college costs.^[9] More than \$1 billion of scholarship funds have gone to repay students loans.^[10]
- National service helps young people develop into leaders, problem solvers, and more active citizens. Nine out of ten AmeriCorps alumni reported that their service experience improved their ability to solve problems. Additionally, eight of out ten alums that if they were confronted with a community issue, they could confidently develop a plan to address it and get others to care. In addition, 94 percent of alumni are registered to vote, well above the national average.^[5]

^[1] Data from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

^[2] https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CNCS_Solving_Problems_and_Expanding_Opportunity_0.pdf

^[3] Source: “The Economic Value of National Service,” Clive Belfield. Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education Teachers College, Columbia University, September 2013.

^[4] http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf

^[5] <https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/new-report-ameriacorps-service-leaves-lasting-impression-alumni-improves>

^[6] http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf

^[7] http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf

^[8] <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2016/most-indemand-soft-skills>

^[9] https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CNCS_Solving_Problems_and_Expanding_Opportunity_0.pdf

^[10] https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CNCS_Solving_Problems_and_Expanding_Opportunity_0.pdf

^[11] http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf