

# Corporation for National and Community Service

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## CNCS: Solving Problems and Expanding Opportunity

America's greatness comes from the extraordinary acts of ordinary citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) makes America great by **empowering citizens to solve local problems, expanding economic opportunity, encouraging personal responsibility, and strengthening civil society**. Based on principles of local control, competition, accountability, and public-private partnership, CNCS is a cost-effective investment in America's future. Through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and other programs, CNCS engages three million Americans in results-driven service each year at 50,000 locations across the country, plus 43,000 individuals and families who receive independent living support in their homes. CNCS works closely with Governor-appointed State Service Commissions, mayors, and county officials to invest in local community solutions. CNCS strengthens civil society and builds our civic infrastructure by engaging 325,000 trained, skilled members in sustained service at schools, food banks, homeless shelters, veteran's homes, and youth centers. The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) improves the lives of low-income Americans by mobilizing private resources to replicate evidence-based programs. **The result: more engaged citizens, greater economic opportunity, less dependence on government, safer neighborhoods, stronger communities, and a more unified nation. The impact and value of national service has made it very popular with the American people: a recent TargetPoint Consulting poll found that 83% of voters in swing states want to maintain or increase federal support for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.**

### Engaging Citizens in Solving Local Problems

National service invests in citizens – not bureaucracies - to solve problems. Working hand in hand with thousands of local partners, CNCS taps the ingenuity and can-do spirit of the American people to address pressing challenges.

- **Educating Students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce:** National service powers education success, reform, and choice by placing tens of thousands of teachers, tutors, and mentors into low-performing schools to improve student attendance, behavior, and academic performance. Members serve in more than 11,000 public, parochial, and charter schools, helping students stay in school, graduate on time, and be prepared for college or career. Rigorous independent evaluations have demonstrated the positive impact of AmeriCorps on early childhood education, third-grade literacy, college access, and other critical measures of educational success:
  - AmeriCorps tutors with Minnesota Reading Corps helped four and five-year-old students [meet or exceed targets](#) for kindergarten readiness in five key literacy benchmarks compared to only one for students in comparison classrooms.
  - More than 3,300 Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members teach, tutor, or support at-risk students in 720 charter schools across the country. In Massachusetts, Phoenix Charter Academy Network Schools has engaged 250 AmeriCorps members in providing intensive tutoring, attendance intervention, college coaching and other services to 1,500 students. Last year, students in the Chelsea school demonstrated a 93% advanced and proficient rate and 100% passing rates in both the Math and English Language Arts state exams - significantly outperforming the district and the state. Additionally, 81.7% of students who received attendance intervention had increased attendance or improvement in grades.

- Reading Partners AmeriCorps members recruit and manage 13,500 volunteers who provide one-on-one tutoring to 10,900 struggling readers in 208 low-income elementary schools across the country. A recent evaluation found that Reading Partners had a [positive and statistically significant impact](#) on all three measures of student reading proficiency examined. Reading Partners also demonstrated a \$980 cost-saving per student compared to schools operating similar reading programs.
- AmeriCorps members serving with College Possible provide intensive, tailored coaching to low-income students to increase their college enrollment rates. A [Harvard University](#) study found statistically significant improvement in college application and enrollment rates compared to a control group, with participation increasing the likelihood of college enrollment by 15%.
- **Expanding Economic Opportunity:** By helping seniors live independently, preparing students for the workforce, and connecting returning veterans to jobs, our programs increase opportunity and family stability.
  - Working with Congressman Hal Rogers and Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin, AmeriCorps members supporting the [Shaping Our Appalachian Region initiative](#) have connected 25,000 Eastern Kentucky residents to job training and placement services, including hundreds of unemployed coal miners.
  - A [rigorous evaluation](#) of social enterprise organizations funded by REDF, a SIF grantee, found participants in these programs increased economic self-sufficiency and life stability, with employment increasing from 18% to 51%, stable housing rising from 15% to 53%, average monthly income increasing by 91%, and income from government benefits dropping from 71% to 24%. Based on these promising results, REDF is replicating this evidence-based approach nationally.
- **Supporting Veterans and Military Families:** AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members serve more than 750,000 veterans and military family members each year, providing employment services, benefits counseling, transportation, housing support, and more. More than 23,000 veterans serve in CNCS programs, applying the skills and leadership they gained in the military to tackle problems on the homefront. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the SIF is supporting a Pay for Success project to ensure the success of veterans seeking vocational rehabilitation and employment based on their skills and abilities, particularly those living with post-traumatic stress disorder. This approach ensures payment is only made for measurable results.
- **Reducing Crime and Reviving Cities:** CNCS works with mayors and police departments to fight crime and bring economic renewal to urban areas. The [Detroit Urban Safety Corps](#), an AmeriCorps program run by Wayne State University in partnership with the Detroit Police Department, uses AmeriCorps members to engage residents to remove blight, board up vacant homes, create safe routes to schools, conduct home safety audits, and expand neighborhood watch groups in high-crime areas. In the neighborhoods where AmeriCorps members serve, crime has declined by 26%, an estimated savings of \$302 million in law enforcement costs.
- **Fighting the Opioid Epidemic:** Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members provide drug abuse education, work with law enforcement, strengthen anti-drug organizations, and help young people stay away from opioid and prescription drug abuse. CNCS has prioritized drug prevention and recovery in its 2017 grant competitions.
- **Responding to Disasters:** Over the last four years, CNCS programs have responded to more than 100 disasters including floods, fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes affecting millions of Americans. In response to the historic flooding that devastated Louisiana in August, 1,390 AmeriCorps members have mucked and gutted 600 homes and provided shelter, meals, supplies, or other services to 62,305 flood survivors.

- **Helping Seniors Live Independently:** 11,500 Senior Companion volunteers provide independent living services to 43,000 adults - primarily frail seniors – helping them to live with dignity in their own homes instead of moving to costly institutional care. Volunteers also provide respite care to 26,000 families and caregivers.

## Expanding Economic Opportunity

- Since 1994, more than one million individuals have served 1.4 billion hours in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps alumni have earned \$3.3 billion in scholarships to reduce student debt or pay for college or technical school. More than \$1 billion of scholarship funds have gone to repay student loans at a time of skyrocketing college costs.
- The recent [AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study](#) by Abt Associates surveyed 3,772 former AmeriCorps members and found positive benefits on members' civic engagement, educational aspirations, and preparation for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers. Eight out of 10 alumni say AmeriCorps benefited their career path, and 42 percent of alumni employed within six months of service found a job through a connection made in AmeriCorps. Preliminary findings from an Arizona State University study found that 82.7% of AmeriCorps host organizations surveyed hired at least one AmeriCorps member since 2012; and 57.8% of these organizations hired members from their own sites. **The positions are typically full-time, and more than half are newly created.** Supervisors noted teamwork, professional conduct, and leadership as the top attributes that informed their decision to hire. Researchers conducted more than 400 interviews and surveys, and held focus groups with 29 alumni and 52 host organizations. This study is still ongoing.
- Through Senior Corps, 35,500 low-income seniors serve as Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers, mentoring at-risk youth and helping frail seniors live independently in their homes. These volunteers receive small but important stipends that pay for essentials like food, clothing, and medicine.
- Through rigorous evaluations supported by the SIF, nonprofits and local governments are learning how to provide more effective job training and financial literacy education. Evaluations show that [LISC's Financial Opportunity Centers](#) are uniquely successful in getting clients on the path to stability; and [WorkAdvance](#), a sectoral training and advancement initiative, is able to increase earnings among the long-term unemployed.

## A Model of Local Control

- CNCS believes the best solutions come from outside Washington, where citizens and social entrepreneurs are finding innovative ways to meet needs in their communities. CNCS invests in those solutions.
- Governors play a key role in deciding where AmeriCorps funding goes. Three-quarters of AmeriCorps funding is managed by Governor-appointed State Service Commissions that identify local needs, monitor grantees, carry out Governor priorities, and lead citizen service efforts in their states. The remaining 25% is invested through a national competition in organizations operating in multiple states. Funding then goes to local schools, nonprofits, and community groups, which in turn recruit, select, and supervise AmeriCorps members.
- CNCS works closely with bipartisan city and county officials to identify local needs and deploy resources to meet them. Last year, **3,539 mayors and county leaders** representing 178 million Americans joined in a [national day of recognition](#) to support AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.

## Private Sector Support

- Congress created CNCS to be a public-private partnership that invests limited federal dollars to leverage substantial private investment to improve lives and communities. In 2015, CNCS **generated \$1.26 billion in outside resources** from private businesses, foundations, and other sources, an amount exceeding the federal appropriation. These investments from companies like Walmart, Home Depot, Target, Cisco, CSX, Comcast NBC Universal, and Citigroup increase the return on the taxpayer dollar and demonstrate great confidence in CNCS's ability to deliver results on America's pressing problems.
- More than 450 companies with 2.3 million jobs including Accenture, Sodexo, CSX, Disney, and Delta Air Lines have signed up to be Employers of National Service, committing to hire more AmeriCorps alumni because they value the leadership, skills and work ethic AmeriCorps members acquire during their service.
- The SIF addresses critical challenges like chronic unemployment, systemic homelessness, workforce readiness, and untreated and preventable chronic illnesses by investing in 469 evidence-based programs that improve lives and build economic independence. Over the past seven years, it has attracted private-sector matching commitments totaling \$697 million - more than double the federal investment.

## Strengthening Civil Society and Voluntary Organizations

- CNCS bolsters the nonprofit, faith-based and neighborhood organizations so essential to our nation's economic and social well-being. CNCS funds more than 3,000 organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Teach For America, United Ways, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Catholic Charities, expanding their reach and impact. CNCS provides grants, volunteers, and training to help organizations better achieve their mission. Last year, Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members mobilized more than three million volunteers for the organizations they serve.
- The Social Innovation Fund supports evidence-based programs operating at 1,849 locations in 44 states and the District of Columbia, helping hundreds of thousands of Americans find jobs, gain skills, and improve their health. It also funds Pay for Success – an innovative model that produces better outcomes and saves tax dollars by only paying providers after they have produced clear results.
- Through the Volunteer Generation Fund, CNCS provides grants to State Service Commissions to help nonprofit and voluntary organizations broaden their volunteer base, more effectively recruit and retain volunteers, and increase their impact on community challenges. Strengthening volunteer management practices is a key step to increasing the stability of nonprofit operations and helping organizations increase their impact.

## Business-Like Focus on Competition, Evidence, and Results

- Congress created CNCS as a government corporation modeled after private business: small, efficient, results-oriented, guided by a board of directors, able to build partnerships and leverage outside funds, and using an alternative personnel system that rewards performance.
- CNCS maximizes the return on public investment by using competition to drive funds to the highest-quality, highest-value programs. Organizations compete for funding and have to demonstrate results through performance measures. CNCS uses data and evidence in budget, management, and grantmaking decisions. For

example, the SIF has supported 99 evaluations on programs that address the critical social challenges. Of these, 86% are of an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

- The same TargetPoint Consulting poll that found 83% of voters in swing states want to maintain or increase federal support for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps also found that:
  - 78% of voters said national service helps restore important values of patriotism and civic duty
  - 80% said it helps prepare young people for the workforce
  - 75% said it empowers people to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on the government.