The Impact of National Service on Employment Outcomes

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Supported By
Previous research shows better odds of becoming employed if people volunteer (Spera, Ghertner, Nerino, & DiTomasso, 2015)

Young people who participate in service-related programs have improved economic, academic, and psychosocial outcomes compared to peers (Dávila & Mora, 2007; Flanagan & Levine, 2010)

Communities with higher levels of civic engagement recover from economic hardships quicker (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Lim, & Levine, 2012)

Hiring managers see volunteering as relevant experience to consider when making employment decisions (Day & Devlin, 1998; Deloitte, 2016)
The Challenge

Much of the research in this area is based on surveys of managers who may say they want to hire volunteers even though volunteering may not actually matter in reality.
Study Aim

This study employs a randomized field experiment to answer the question:

What is the effect of listing AmeriCorps on one’s resume on receiving a callback for a job?

The outcome is the likelihood of being selected for an interview by a real hiring manager.
Methodology

• Randomly assigned resumes and cover letters based on national service and other factors (e.g., education, quality, race, gender)

• Applied for 2,010 jobs in Boston and Chicago during two waves of data collection (summer 2016 and 2017)
Figure 1. Total Callbacks

- **72%**: Nonresponse
- **20%**: Total callbacks
- **8%**: Total rejections

*Of the 20%: 86% interview requested, 10% low interest, 4% high interest; 20
Figure 2. Callbacks by Service and Other Characteristics

- Callback %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>No Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>College Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For Profit Sector</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago Metro Occupation</td>
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<td>Boston Metro Occupation</td>
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<td>Admin Occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales Occupation</td>
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</table>
Figure 3. Callbacks by Education

Significant at $p < .001$ with covariates Race, Gender, City Name, Sector and Occupation.
Trends by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

- **Gender**
  - Of callbacks received, higher for females than males

- **Race/Ethnicity**
  - Of callbacks received, highest for Latino, followed by Asian, White, and Black

- **Gender and Race/Ethnicity**
  - Callbacks highest for Asian males and Latino females
  - Callbacks lowest for Black and Asian females and white males
Supplemental Study Methodology

- Hiring Manager Survey
  - Employers of National Service (ENS) list + HR list purchased from private firm
  - N=72 hiring managers across 26 states, 35=ENS and 37=non-ENS, 63% nonprofit sector and 37% for-profit sector

- In-depth interviews with hiring managers
  - N=13 (8=ENS and 5=non-ENS)
  - Interviews recorded and transcribed
  - Conducted thematic analysis using NVivo

- Employers of National Service (ENS) field experiment
  - 2 fictitious resumes and cover letters (one with service and one without service) sent to each ENS organization with open jobs
  - Total resumes sent (N=147); Total ENS organizations (N=78)
Figure 4. Hiring Manager Survey

In your opinion, why do you think people choose to pursue a year of AmeriCorps service?
(Percentage responses ranked 1 or 2)

- 68%: They genuinely want to help others, learn about causes and communities, and grow as a leader
- 53%: They are mostly young people trying to boost their resumes
- 26%: They can get money to pay for their education after they complete their service
- 22%: They are young and unemployed so it’s something to do while looking for a job
- 8%: They are young and affluent people who have the time and luxury to engage in such a program
- 7%: They have been laid off work and trying to build a network that can lead to a job
- 0%: Unspecified
In your opinion, which of the following options, do you believe best develops the competencies listed below for candidates like Jessica?

- Accountability
- Leadership
- Adaptability with work culture
- Diligence/Effort
- Skills
- Responsibility
- Commitment
- Knowledge
- Intercultural competence
- Collaboration
- Interpersonal communication
- Character

- Both
- AmeriCorps
- Volunteering
- Neither
- Not sure
In-depth Interviews

• Employers had a preference toward “somebody they don’t have to train”

• If hiring managers were familiar with AmeriCorps, it stood out to them:
  • “…VISTA- brings training; routine; cohort building; more experience and accountability than the regular position; VISTA demands more autonomy and responsibility- richer experience for the same position.”

• Most nonprofit employers sought a cover letter and resume that showed more “personality” as well an application that highlighted certain skills (e.g., collaboration, communication, adaptability, leadership)

• A college degree was very important to employers
Figure 6. Employers of National Service Total Callbacks

- Total callbacks: 72%
- Total rejections: 15%
- Nonresponse: 13%
Figure 7. Employers of National Service Callbacks by Service

- Total callbacks: 13%
- Service Resumes: 17%
- Non-Service Resumes: 8%
Implications for Policy and Research

- College degree is used as a “signal” for implicit qualities and earned skills
  - Heavily used as a heuristic for filtering out potential candidates
- Very few job opportunities are visible in an online search for non-college youth, including national service alumni
- Building familiarity with national service through Employers of National Service opens employment pathways
- Further exploration needed around why and for whom national service experience boosts employment prospects
Thank you!

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CIRCLE website: www.civicyouth.org
References


Step 1: Identified metro areas and industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resume Types</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro Area</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: Defined resume and cover letter criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Service</th>
<th>Resume Templates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>High Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Service</td>
<td>Low Quality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resume Quality</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>High Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Quality</td>
<td>Low Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Also varied by race, gender, and zip code.*
Step 3: Created resumes and cover letters

- Cover letter and resume templates designed in Word
- Qualtrics software survey features used to create 'fields' for each resume type
- Qualtrics output downloaded in Excel and cleaned
- Excel data merged into Word docs
Step 4: Created job search and application process

- Developed protocols with job search steps
  - Indeed.com, CareerBuilder.com, SimplyHired.com, LinkedIn.com, Idealist.org

- Designed Access database to enter data and track callbacks

- Applied for 1,120 jobs between May-September 2016, and 890 jobs between May-September 2017
The AmeriCorps Experience: Transformation Through Service

David Schlinkert, Policy Analyst
AmeriCorps Programs

24 years of AmeriCorps programming:
Personal development
Professional development
Commitment to public service
2016 Arizona Study

82.7% of host sites hired at least one AmeriCorps member

More than half of positions were full-time (64.3%)

AmeriCorps employment pipeline through:
- AmeriCorps host sites
- Affiliated non-AmeriCorps organizations
- AmeriCorps Alum

AmeriCorps members made service improvements, created programs, provided fresh perspective, and served as trailblazers within organizations
This year, we wanted to explore the AmeriCorps program and identify:

Benefits
Challenges
Impact on employment
Recommendations
What we did

Phone Surveys
367 host site supervisors

15 Focus Groups
44 alumni
70 supervisors

Interviews
8 key informants
Key benefits for members

Transformative and rewarding
Personal and professional growth
New network of employment opportunities
Career exploration
Catalyst for continuing education
Giving back to community
HIRED
41.4% of sampled host sites hired their AmeriCorps members after their service term. Most hired two to three members.
Over half of the organizations that hired an AmeriCorps member after their service term created new positions specifically for those new hires.
Rewarding

“I wish that everyone had to do an AmeriCorps service term, because I think it's so good for people to get out of your comfort zone, meet people you never would otherwise meet, be a little bit poor for a year and just get out there and experience it ... There's plenty of jobs out there that you could just make more money and you could be comfortable, but you wouldn't become a better person for it.”

– AmeriCorps member from Minnesota
Personal and professional development

Critical-thinking skills
Increased employment options
Professional comportment
Planning and organizing
Change of perspective
"AmeriCorps really solidified my career goal. Working with college students, specifically in first-generation, low-income college students, I realized how many issues they're having once they got there."

“I'm a first-generation college student myself, and so, seeing kind of where the loopholes were, they were falling throughout the different public state and private state schools here in Washington, I decided to get my master's degree in higher education in student affairs.”

“I ended up, honestly, because of my AmeriCorps experience, at my employment that I have now."

- AmeriCorps member from Washington
Supervisors play a vital role in their AmeriCorps members’ post-service employment
Additional Supervisor Support:

• Networking for their member and helping them make professional connections
• Forwarding specific jobs and connecting them to employment opportunities
• Help with editing resumes
• References and/or help with graduate school applications
• Interview preparation help
Key benefits for host sites

- Capacity building
- Job creation
- Committed workers
- Program support
Organizational capacity building

Host sites would not be able to deliver services to communities without their AmeriCorps members.

“As far as thinking about how integral Corps members are to our work, I mean, they are completely – they are 100 percent the people who carry out the work that our organization is trying to do.”

- AmeriCorps supervisor from Washington
Admiration of AmeriCorps members

Supervisors admire member’s commitment to public service and hardworking demeanor.

“I think the caliber of AmeriCorps members has been terrific for us over the years. And a lot of them are extremely committed and go onto jobs of service-related positions.”

– AmeriCorps supervisor from Massachusetts
They want to see AmeriCorps members succeed...

“One of the big advantages that we have promoted for our AmeriCorps is the fact that, ‘Hey, if you do a good job here, we may not be able to hire you, but you can bet we’re going to help you find employment outside.’ So that’s one of the really big (appeals) because we all know it’s who you know.”

– AmeriCorps supervisor from Nevada
Supervisors prefer to hire AmeriCorps members

“AmeriCorps members are totally and completely dedicated to the AmeriCorps philosophy. For me, if I could find a prior AmeriCorps then that would be a perfect situation for us because they know what they’re getting themselves into before we even have a conversation with them.”

– AmeriCorps supervisor from Nevada
Areas for Improvement: Alumni Feedback

Feedback and evaluation

Blurry job duties

Inconsistent communication

Stipend and housing

Challenges

Alumni
How can we make it better?

Encourage peer-to-peer collaboration networks

Increase stipends according to cost-of-living

Facilitate direct communication between communities and State Commissioners
• Do these findings reflect your experiences?

• Are there other benefits or challenges that we did not address?
For more information...

For the full report and more information, please subscribe to our newsletter: MorrisonInstitute.asu.edu

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