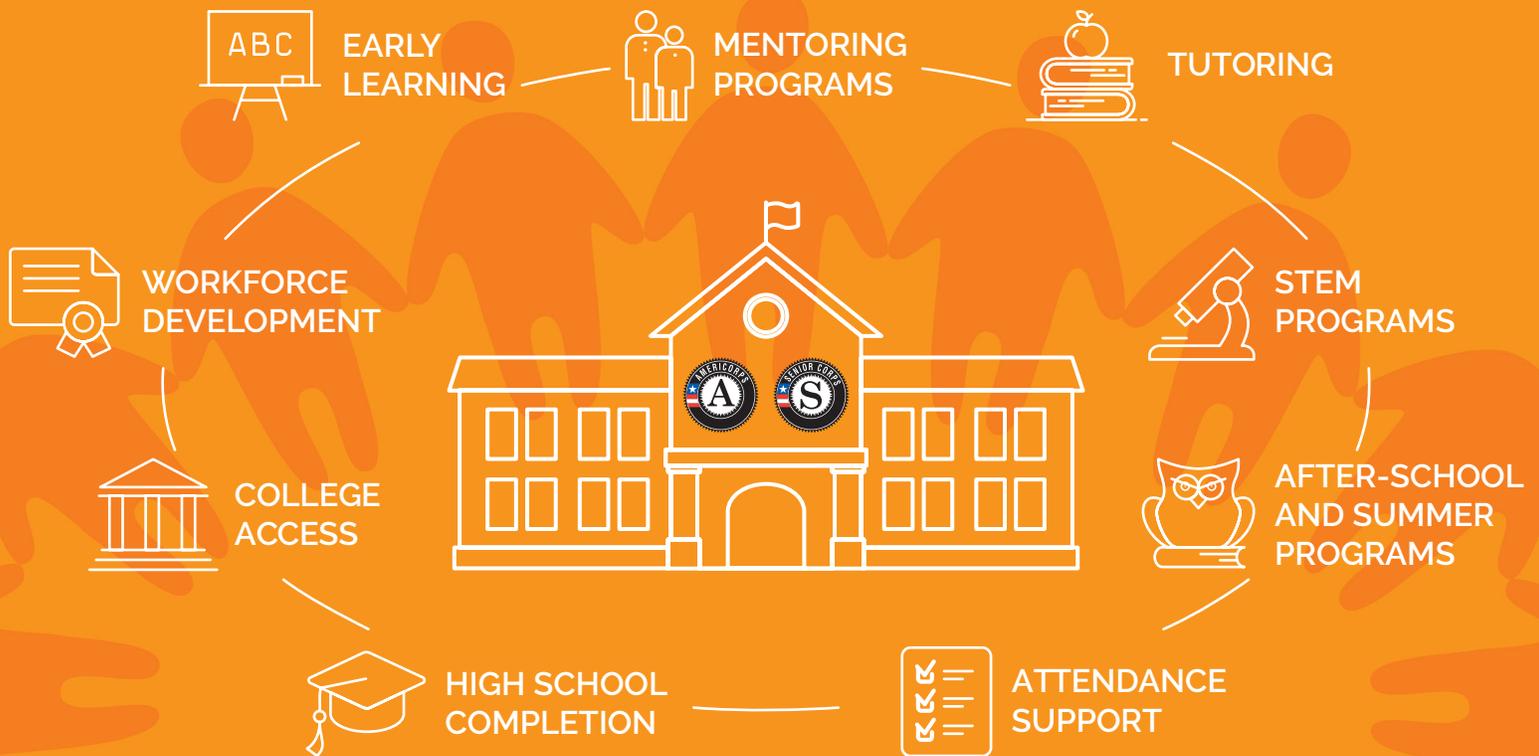


# Leveraging National Service in Your Schools

A Superintendent's/Principal's Toolkit to Utilizing National Service Resources



JANUARY 2018



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** ★★ ★



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*“AmeriCorps members play an integral part in our school support network. They serve as relatable mentors and role models for our students and much-needed assistance for our staff. They interface seamlessly with teachers, families and other community partners, helping to create a positive and responsive culture in our schools.”*

– Christopher N. Maher, Superintendent, Providence Public School District

# Overview of National Service in Education

## Do You Wish You Had Additional Resources to:

- + Provide one-on-one tutoring to students to increase academic achievement?
- + Mentor students to improve attendance and graduation rates?
- + Work with community partners to develop after-school or summer programs?
- + Advise students on applying for financial aid for college?
- + Help support your work implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act?
- + Conduct fundraising and outreach?
- + Create a pipeline of future teachers?

Almost **12,000** schools across the country are leveraging national service programs to assist them in these areas and many others. Approximately **90,000** AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers are providing cost-effective, high-impact services to address schools' most pressing needs and ensure that all students are ready for college and careers. National service programs support all types of schools, including schools in urban and rural areas, schools with large low-income populations, traditional public schools, public charter schools, and schools with large minority and multilingual populations.

- National service participants are helping **1 out of every 4** low-performing schools nationwide.
- Senior Corps and AmeriCorps participants help improve the literacy and math skills of more than **540,000** students every year in rural and urban schools across the country.
- National service programs direct over **\$350 million** in resources to education initiatives annually. In addition, more than **\$200 million** in AmeriCorps Segal Education Awards help pay for college, technical schools, or repay student loans. Over half of CNCS's budget supports education-related programs.

## What is National Service and How Does It Support Schools?

National service is a cost-effective source of human capital to improve student outcomes. More than **44,000** AmeriCorps members and nearly **45,000** Senior Corps volunteers provide in-school and after-school support to at-risk youth. Full-time and part-time volunteers and stipended members serve in schools, nonprofits, faith-based groups, local government agencies, and other community organizations to tackle pressing problems, including improving education, at a local level. Funding for national service participants is supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administers AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other volunteer programs.

## Can School Districts Access This Resource?

Yes! AmeriCorps and Senior Corps national service programs allow schools, local education agencies (LEAs), state education agencies (SEAs), nonprofits, state and local government agencies (e.g., Mayor's offices), universities/colleges, tribal nations, and other entities to request participants to address local challenges they have identified, including education needs. School districts and state education agencies can apply directly; apply in partnership with a city, state, university, or nonprofit organization; or be a service location for other applicants. School districts might also consider partnering with existing programs that have demonstrated results.

## How Can National Service Programs Support Schools?

Programs support students across the cradle-to-career continuum. With a wide range of programs and flexibility, CNCS works closely with partners to meet local needs, including:

- Early learning
- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Family engagement
- School climate
- STEM programs
- After-school and summer school
- Improving attendance
- Social emotional learning
- Wraparound services
- Classroom instruction
- School improvement
- High school completion
- College access and retention
- Workforce development

## What Are the Benefits of Leveraging National Service Programs?

- National service programs make a sustained investment in students, schools, and communities.
  - AmeriCorps grants typically last three years or more, and many AmeriCorps members serve full-time for 10-12 months, contributing up to 1,700 hours. Members can also serve for shorter terms, for example, two months doing summer programming.
  - Senior Corps Foster Grandparent volunteers serve in schools from 15 to 40 hours a week. Flexible RSVP programs can mobilize older adult volunteers to support short- and long-term projects. In both programs, volunteers typically return to the school for multiple years. The average length of service for Senior Corps volunteers is eight years.
- Programs are cost-effective and have a significant return on investment. A Columbia University study found that every dollar invested in national service provides a 2-to-1 return on investment and a nearly 4-to-1 social return.
- National service programs deliver results. Rigorous independent evaluations have demonstrated that programs can improve school readiness, increase reading and math achievement, improve school attendance and behavior, and increase access to college and careers.
- Many low-income students need additional support and assistance. National service is a cost-effective human capital strategy that provides the personalized support students need to succeed.
- Programs are responsive to local needs and allow districts to determine how to use resources most effectively.
- National service participants are mission-driven. Participants join national service programs because they are passionate about serving the community and improving education.
- National service creates a pipeline of teachers. Participants gain first-hand experience working with youth and may go on to pursue careers in teaching.

**Absenteeism & Math:** Denver Public Schools' Office of Family and Community Engagement runs the Family and Community Engagement Education Service Corps. Approximately 500 AmeriCorps members provide attendance support and small-group math instruction to 6,000 students throughout the district. Members also leverage hundreds of additional volunteers to support school events, after school programming, supply drives and activities that increase student and parent engagement. Over half the students served improved attendance by five to nine days and half the students increased their math scores by at least one achievement level.

**Senior Corps Tutoring:** The Interfaith Tutor Program is a partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools and Interfaith Milwaukee's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The program is volunteer driven and comes at no cost to the school. Through this collaboration, RSVP connects older adults (age 55+) with students to improve academic performance and engagement. In the 2016-2017 school year, 170 tutors worked with more than 2,780 students across 54 schools. Teachers reported 74% of students demonstrated a positive change in behavior and 83% of students demonstrated improved academic engagement.

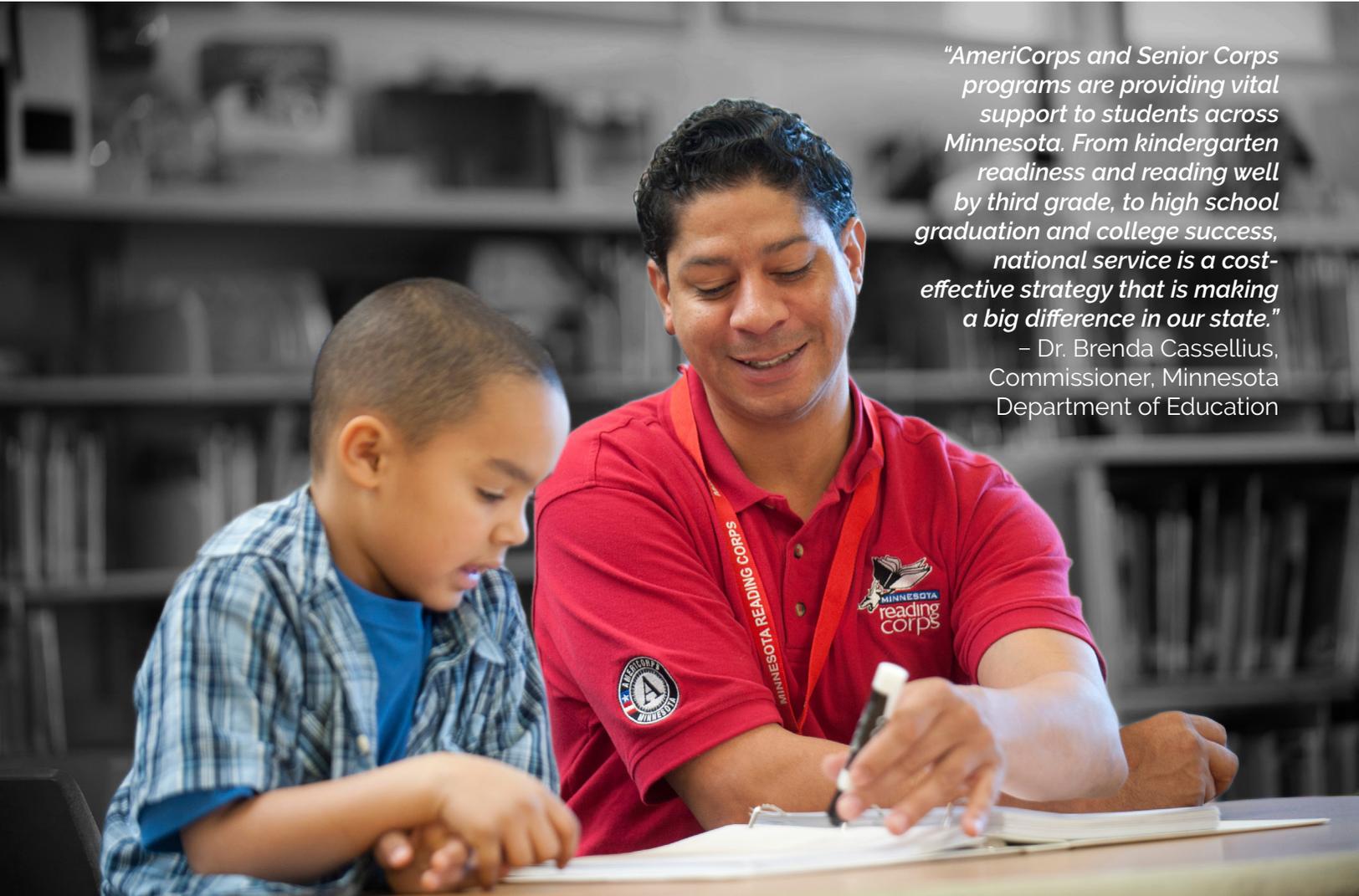
## Is This Toolkit Relevant for State and Local Officials?

Yes! While the primary user of this toolkit is principals and superintendents, most of the information is relevant to State Education Agencies, state boards of education, governors, mayors, state legislators, and others interested in improving education and ensuring young people succeed in school and life. State and local government agencies, including State Education Agencies, are eligible recipients of CNCS resources. As states work to implement their new Every Student Succeeds Act plans, they should consider national service as a cost-effective strategy to reduce chronic absenteeism, improve reading by 3rd grade, increase high school graduation rates, and support low-performing schools. For specific examples of how states have leveraged national service, please see the Minnesota and Colorado State profiles in Appendix A.

**Support for Low-Performing Rural Schools:** School districts partnered with Berea College, a college in eastern Kentucky, to utilize AmeriCorps members to provide school turnaround, tutoring, mentoring, and college access support. Through the PartnerCorps School Turnaround Program, 40 AmeriCorps members were placed in two struggling high schools. Every student had an AmeriCorps mentor to help navigate and pursue post-secondary education. After PartnerCorps School Turnaround's first year, 37% of students served improved attendance and both schools achieved historically high ACT composite scores and numbers of students applying for post-secondary education. Prior to the program's implementation, Leslie County High School was one of the ten lowest performing high schools in the state of Kentucky. It's now among the top ten high schools in the state, thanks in part to the service of AmeriCorps members.

### **Want Help Accessing These Resources?**

Most states have both a CNCS State Office and a Governor-appointed State Service Commission who can help you think about how to leverage national service in your school, district, or state. They are an excellent resource for technical assistance as well as identifying partners. In addition to this toolkit, you may want to contact your State Office or Commission to discuss what program best meets your needs. See Appendix B for contact information.



*"AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs are providing vital support to students across Minnesota. From kindergarten readiness and reading well by third grade, to high school graduation and college success, national service is a cost-effective strategy that is making a big difference in our state."*

– Dr. Brenda Cassellius,  
Commissioner, Minnesota  
Department of Education

# Utilizing National Service Resources

National service participants are provided through resources from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Over half of CNCS' budget is devoted to education-related programs, making it a larger funder of education than many education foundations.



## Steps to strategically leverage national service in your schools/district:

1. Determine Your Needs: Identify the services that your schools and students need, and the role that national service members could play in meeting those needs. National service resources must be directed to high-need schools and/or at-risk student populations.
2. Select a National Service Program: Match your needs to an AmeriCorps and/or Senior Corps program. The types of services members and volunteers provide vary slightly by program.
3. Find a Partnership or Apply Directly: In many cases, schools request national service members from an external partner (e.g. community organization, city, university) already receiving CNCS resources. These intermediaries assist in the management of participants. Districts can also apply for CNCS resources.



## Section 1: Determine Your Needs

National service is a versatile resource that can help support your schools in a variety of ways. Given the breadth of services provided by national service programs, in order to find the right program for your schools, it's helpful to understand what your needs are and how national service programs can address those needs.

### 1. Review or conduct a data-driven needs assessment

The first step in the process is to identify your school or district needs. Most schools and districts will already have multiple sources of information they can draw from. Gather and review existing sources of information to fully understand and prioritize your needs. Student achievement data, attendance data, school climate and safety data, educator equity data, and teacher and community survey data can be used to determine where to implement national service as a solution. Early warning indicator systems can be a great source of information. Teachers and school staff, district staff, partner organizations, parents, students, and other community members can also provide important perspectives on areas of need.

Districts that have recently conducted a needs assessment or strategic plan can reference them during this process. Common school district plans include Title I Schoolwide Plan/Needs Assessment, School Improvement Plan, SEA and/or LEA Strategic Plan, and State ESSA Plans.

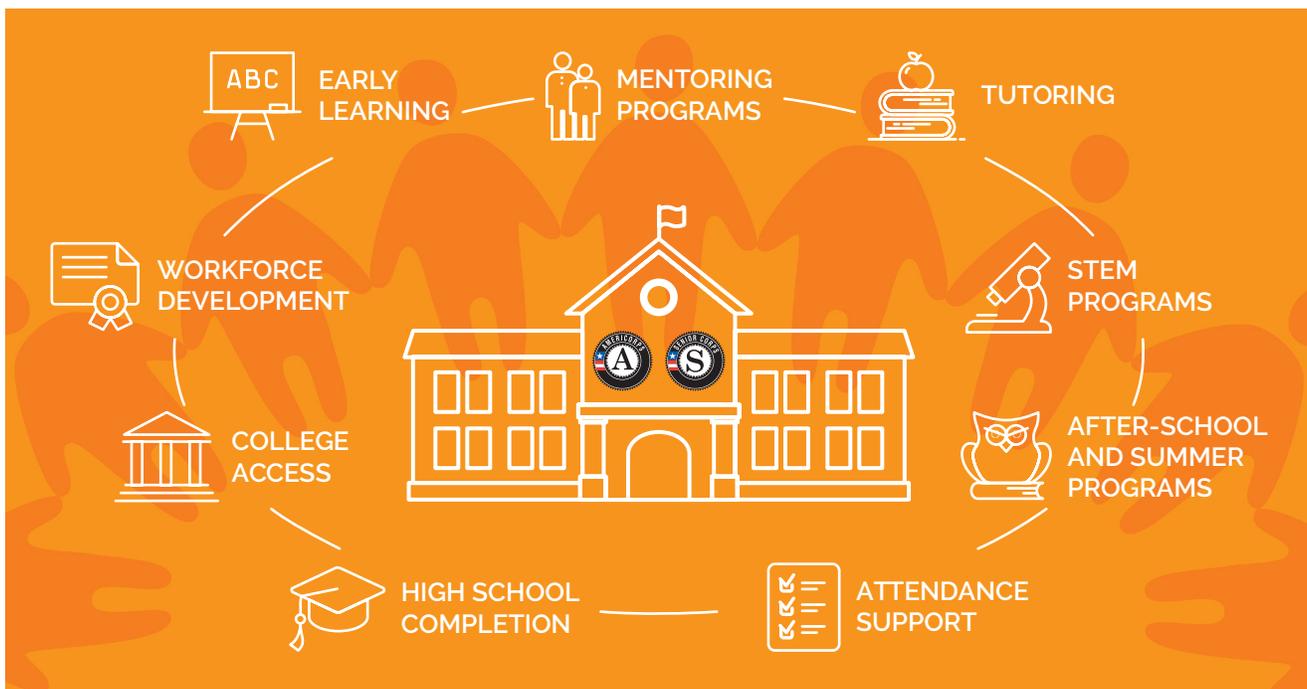
As part of the needs assessment, it will often be important to identify the schools and students that need the most support. National service programs can help promote equity across the district by directing resources to the schools and students who need them the most. Economically disadvantaged and at-risk students face a variety of challenges and often need additional supports. National service can help provide the human capital to give these students the resources they need to succeed.

## 2. Prioritize needs that can be met through the people power of national service

Review the results generated by the needs assessment and consider what your priorities are for current and upcoming years. Offer stakeholders an opportunity to define priorities. Through conversations with multiple stakeholder groups, schools can more effectively prioritize needs that can be met through additional resources and partnerships.

What are your goals for the year? What are you hoping to accomplish that you just don't have the people or resources to do? How will you reach the goals established in your State ESSA plans? The following questions can help determine if national service can help:

What are the needs of your schools and students that can be met by national service? See the list below for examples of the services provided by national service participants. *(This list is not exhaustive – participants can and do provide a variety of services.)*



- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early learning</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Family engagement</li> <li>• School climate</li> <li>• Service learning</li> <li>• STEM programs</li> <li>• After-school programs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving attendance</li> <li>• Social emotional learning</li> <li>• Wraparound services</li> <li>• Reading by 3rd grade</li> <li>• Classroom instruction</li> <li>• School turnaround</li> <li>• High school graduation</li> <li>• College access</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce development</li> <li>• Summer school</li> <li>• Community partnerships</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Volunteer recruitment</li> <li>• Drug use prevention</li> <li>• Healthy habits (food and fitness)</li> <li>• Teacher training</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

Are you facing human capital challenges? Do your needs require one or more of the following?

- A sustained investment of time and resources that staff are not able to provide.
- Tasks that are outside the scope of staff's responsibilities or would pull them away from other activities.

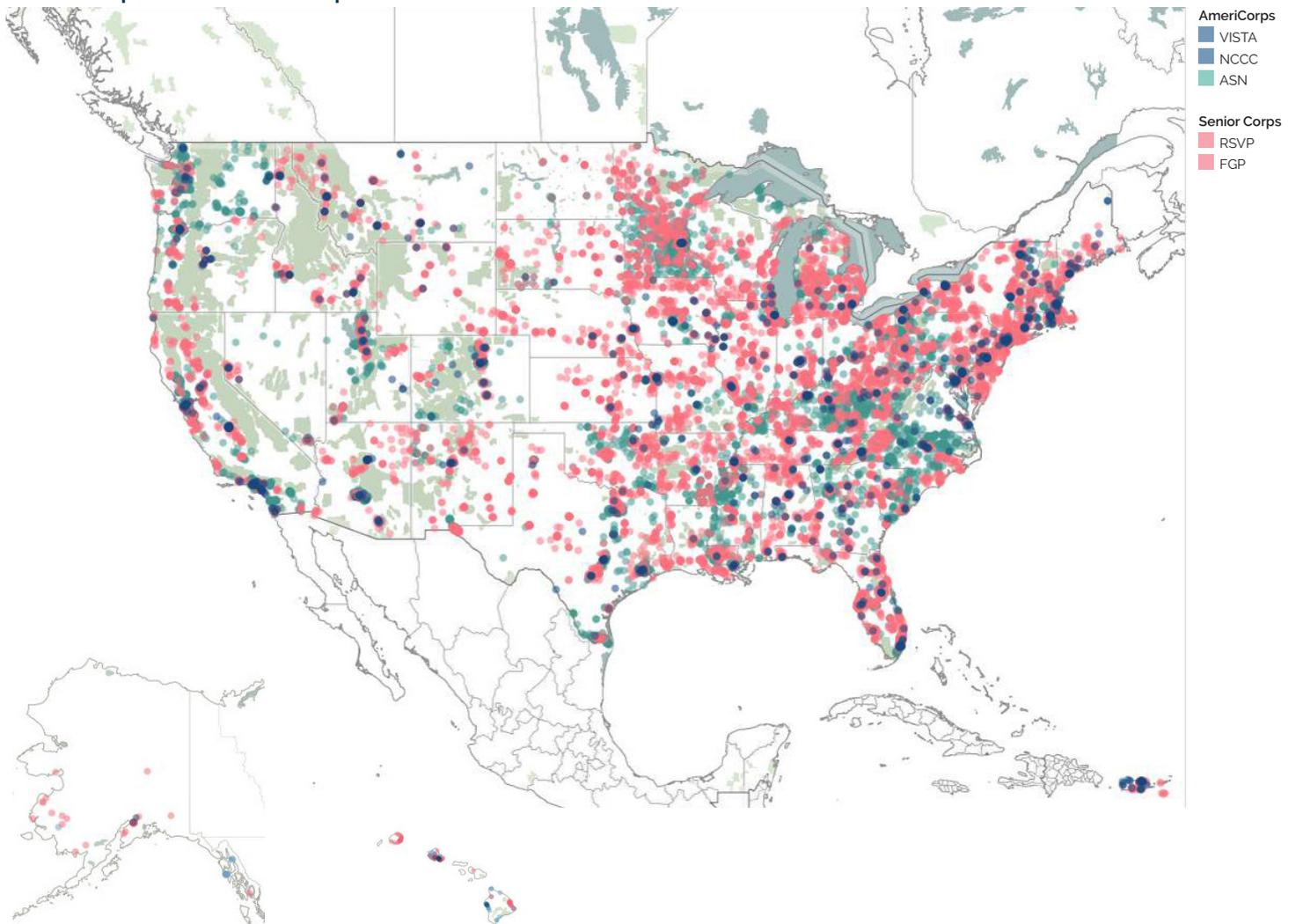
- Additional in-classroom support for teachers and students.
- Individualized support for students to meet the goals established by ESSA.
- Development of partnerships, fundraising, or outreach.
- Expansion of student services in a particular area (e.g., STEM, college access).

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, your schools may benefit from national service. Please see Appendix A for examples of national service programs. These examples will give you an idea of how national service resources have been used to support these activities. Additionally, you may want to do Internet research to find other examples (e.g. search “AmeriCorps” and “STEM”). Remember, there is a lot of flexibility and programs should be designed to meet your specific needs. Please keep in mind that, by law, national service members cannot be used to duplicate or displace staff.

### 3. Determine where national service participants are already serving in your area

To see where participants are serving in your state, refer to CNCS’s [state-specific national service resources](#), which include a list of service locations. For each state, the Service Locations show a comprehensive list of places where national service participants serve, including specific schools and grantees. This will help you to identify what services are already available in your community and allow you to reach out to organizations hosting national service participants for guidance or potential partnerships. Each state has a [CNCS State Office](#) and a [State Service Commission](#) that can also be helpful in identifying existing programs and resources. See Appendix B for contact information.

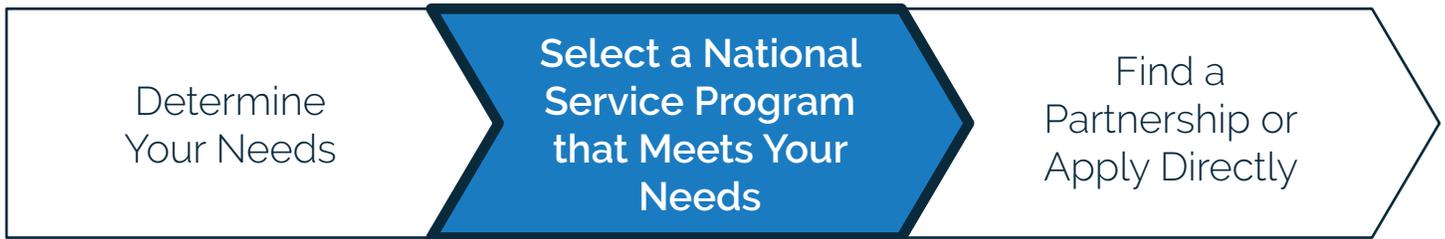
### AmeriCorps and Senior Corps Education-Related Sites Across the United States



## Key questions to ask at each stage of the process

Stage of Determining Your Needs	Questions to Ask/Items to Consider
1. Review or conduct a comprehensive assessment of school and district-wide needs and assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are your goals/priorities for this year and beyond?</li><li>• What goals are you having trouble meeting?</li><li>• What goals are you seeing improvement in but would like to continue identifying innovative ways to accomplish?</li><li>• What services does your school need?</li><li>• Which are your highest need populations?</li><li>• What partners do you currently have, and what services do they provide?</li></ul>
2. Prioritize needs that can be met through national service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which of your needs align with the people power provided by national service?</li><li>• Do any of your needs require one or more of the following?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A sustained investment of time and resources that staff or volunteers may not be able to provide?</li><li>• Tasks that are outside the scope of staff's responsibilities or would pull them away from other activities?</li><li>• Additional in-classroom support for teachers and/or individualized support for students?</li><li>• Development of partnerships, fundraising, and/or outreach?</li><li>• Expansion of student services in a particular area?</li></ul></li><li>• How can national service programs help you meet your needs?</li></ul>
3. Determine the presence of national service participants in your area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there national service participants in my school district?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ What services are they providing? Where?</li><li>◦ Can we expand the partnership to other schools?</li></ul></li><li>• Are there national service participants in a nearby district?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Can we bring those programs into our district?</li><li>◦ Can we gather feedback/advice from that district on how to implement national service programs?</li></ul></li><li>• Are there national service participants in my state?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Is there an opportunity to leverage statewide or multi-district national service projects?</li><li>◦ Does the State Education Agency have any opportunities for multi-district national service projects?</li></ul></li></ul>





## Section 2: Select a National Service Program that Meets Your Needs

All of the national service programs mentioned in this toolkit have a footprint in education, but the services that participants typically provide vary by program. It's possible to apply for, and receive services from, more than one program. Use the resources in this section to help choose the right program(s) based on your needs. Review brief descriptions of the programs, examples of the education services they provide, and the project requirements and eligibility criteria.

### What CNCS Programs Can Help Support Students and Schools?

There are three types of AmeriCorps programs and two main types of Senior Corps programs that support youth and education.

**AmeriCorps State and National:** Members, who can be of all ages (17+), are engaged in direct service and capacity building. Members typically provide services such as:

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Classroom instruction
- Improving attendance
- Providing college access support
- Increasing graduation rates

Grantees range from local organizations to large nonprofits like City Year. [Learn more about AmeriCorps State and National programs.](#)

**Sample Project:** Through a collaborative partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's SPARK Early Literacy Program utilizes 32 AmeriCorps members to boost the literacy skills of more than 300 K4-3rd grade students who have been identified by their classroom teachers as struggling readers. Members provide one-on-one tutoring or small group reading activities during and after-school at 8 locations and also develop strong relationships with families.

**AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America):** Members provide indirect, capacity-building services such as:

- Recruiting and training mentors and tutors
- Creating STEM projects for underserved youth
- Establishing college access centers
- Mobilizing partnerships to support wraparound services
- Supporting expanded learning time initiatives, including summer programs
- Developing drug use prevention programs to educate youth about their dangers
- Leveraging cash and in-kind resources and developing new programs.

[Learn more about AmeriCorps VISTA.](#)

**Sample Project:** As part of The Education Alliance STEM Hub Schools project, AmeriCorps VISTAs at eight West Virginia schools developed partnerships with STEM-related businesses, wrote a STEM curriculum, provided training for teachers in STEM education, and created opportunities for STEM businesses and students to learn more about opportunities for future employment.

**AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps):** Engages teams of 18-24 year olds in service projects that often last from six to eight weeks. Members typically provide services such as:

- Education on recycling, sustainability, and energy conservation practices
- Disaster-preparedness workshops/education
- Tutoring
- Running summer school/camp programs

[Learn more about AmeriCorps NCCC.](#)

**Sample Project:** AmeriCorps NCCC members supported Washington Elementary School, a high-poverty school located in a Promise Zone in Sacramento, CA. AmeriCorps NCCC members helped provide much needed in-classroom support and individual tutoring and mentoring for students. NCCC members also helped develop a school garden, painted murals and implemented school-wide events.

**Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program (FGP):** FGP provides caring and experienced tutors and mentors to children and youth with special needs, serving on average 15 to 40 hours per week. Foster Grandparents work one-on-one with children and youth for a year or longer. Volunteers typically provide services such as:

- Helping children to read and providing one-on-one tutoring
- Mentoring at-risk teenagers and youth
- Reviewing school work to help children improve their academic performance

[Learn more about Foster Grandparent Program.](#)

**Sample Project:** During the 2015-2016 school year, 366 Foster Grandparent volunteers mentored special needs students in 100 centers across Orange County, FL, serving 1,247 students. Foster Grandparents provided one-on-one mentoring to encourage attendance and improve academic performance. 99% of students gained in school readiness skills, and 97% of the elementary students improved their reading proficiency.

**Senior Corps RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program):** One of the largest senior volunteer organizations in the nation, RSVP engages more than 208,000 people age 55 and older in a diverse range of volunteer activities. RSVP volunteers typically provide services such as:

- Tutoring and mentoring disadvantaged or disabled youth
- Assisting low-income students to prepare for college
- Engaging underprivileged youth in STEM projects and exposing them to STEM professionals

[Learn more about RSVP.](#)

**Sample Project:** The RSVP program serves public and charter schools in Philadelphia, Chester and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania. RSVP volunteer tutors support two STEM initiatives: STEM Career Exposure Presentations in which professional engineers, scientists, and others hold interactive demonstrations on the kind of careers that result from a science and math education; and My Free Tutor, an online, interactive math tutoring program. In the program, more than 100 RSVP volunteers exclusively serve students who are from low-income families. During the 2016 school year, RSVP volunteers served 1,100 students at 20 different schools through the STEM initiative.

To better understand the difference between the programs, it can be helpful to use an example of a hypothetical tutoring program:

#### AmeriCorps

- If you want a large number of people to actually do the tutoring (direct service) either full- or part-time over an extended time period – AmeriCorps State and National could be a good fit.
- If you want a few people to serve full-time to recruit, train, and manage other volunteers to be tutors (indirect, capacity building) – AmeriCorps VISTA could be a good fit.
- If you'd like a team of tutors for a six week summer program (short-term service projects) – AmeriCorps NCCC could be a good fit.

#### Senior Corps

- If you want experienced volunteers age 55+ to tutor students one-on-one four or five times a week – The Foster Grandparent Program could be a good fit.
- If you want experienced volunteers age 55+ to help tutor students a few times a week – the RSVP Program could be a good fit.

*"The group of students that have worked with the (RSVP) tutors have all had their test scores and grades go up. The students are always so excited to see the tutors walk through the door. I sometimes feel sad for my students who do not get a chance to go with them. Perhaps next year we will work something out where more students will get to have the tutoring experience."*

– Milwaukee Public School  
Teacher Aleina Hodnett



Here is detailed information on each program, including eligibility and other criteria:

Program	Project Criteria	Length of Project	Eligibility	Other Criteria
<p>AmeriCorps State and National</p> 	<p>Single-state applicants must meet the grant selection criteria specified by State Service Commissions (which vary by state). Some states may require applicants to include a minimum number of members per grant. Applicants must have the capacity to manage a grant, manage funds, and supervise members. Programs must address compelling needs, have demonstrable, measurable goals, and have a plan for program oversight and monitoring.</p>	<p>Grants provide funding and AmeriCorps member positions for periods of 1-3 years, with the option to apply for renewal. Members serve in terms of up to 12 months at the grantee organization or at host sites selected by the grantee.</p>	<p>Grant applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state, local, and tribal governments.</p>	<p>Programs follow state and federal regulations, terms and conditions for financial and grants management of the program, and State Commission grant requirements. Programs must report on project accomplishments and may need to participate in statewide training and service projects. Grantees must provide matching funds (cash or in-kind) from 24 to 50% to help support the program.</p>
<p>AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)</p> 	<p>To be considered for a VISTA Program, the applicant must reflect the VISTA poverty mission, address one or more CNCS focus areas (including education), clearly articulate defined goals with measurable impact, show sustainability, and demonstrate organizational capacity to support VISTA members.</p>	<p>VISTA members serve with a sponsoring organization for a full year. VISTA resources are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for up to three years.</p>	<p>Project sponsors may be state or local agencies; nonprofit organizations (i.e., faith-based agencies, educational institutions, etc.), or tribal nations.</p>	<p>VISTA program sponsoring organizations absorb most of the costs related to project supervision and logistical support. Investment by the sponsoring organization and community is fundamental to the VISTA program.</p>
<p>AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)</p>	<p>NCCC projects must meet the following criteria: address a compelling community need, have clearly stated and well planned</p>	<p>Projects are normally six to eight weeks in duration but will vary depending on the requirements of the project. Projects must be capable of using</p>	<p>NCCC teams are available to help community and faith-based organizations, national nonprofits,</p>	<p>Project sponsors are required to provide materials, specialized tools, orientation, training, and technical supervision. When</p>



tasks and objectives, have demonstrable measurable goals, engage members in meaningful service, provide opportunity for member development, involve community, and have a plan for sustainability.

at least one full team of 8 to 12 members effectively.

schools, local municipalities, national and state parks, and Indian tribes.

teams are based off campus, project sponsors work with NCCC to help arrange housing, kitchen facilities, and other logistical needs.

Senior Corps: Foster Grandparent Program



To be considered for the Foster Grandparent Program, applicants must demonstrate that their projects will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children, and for children with special and/or exceptional needs.

Awards are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for three years. Successful applicants may apply for a renewal after each three year award. Foster Grandparent volunteers are required to commit to at least 15 hours a week.

Applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state and local governments. (Note: While school districts occasionally apply for grants to run programs directly, more typically, schools partner with existing grantees and participate as service locations.)

The applicant must have sufficient local presence to directly manage the proposed grant. The operation of a grant cannot be delegated to another organization, even if the other organization is an affiliate of the applicant.

Senior Corps: RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program)



RSVP grants are awarded to eligible organizations that engage individuals, age 55 and over, to volunteer in service activities. RSVP volunteers engage in a diverse range of volunteer activities that serve community needs.

Awards are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for three years. The RSVP volunteers may serve a few hours or as many as 40 hours per week.

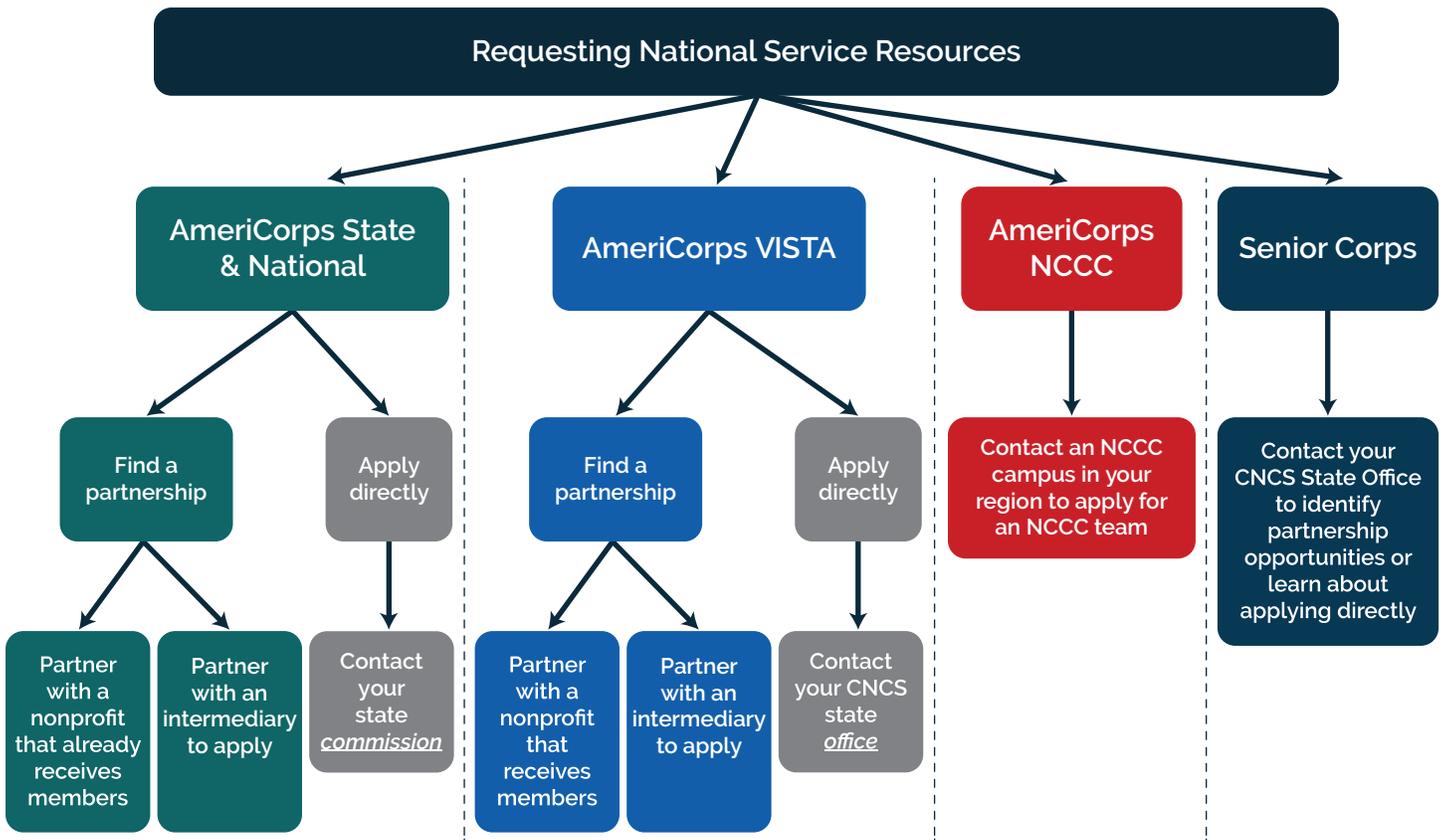
Applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state and local governments. (Note: While school districts occasionally apply to run programs directly, more typically, schools are service locations.)

The applicant must have sufficient local presence to directly manage the proposed grant. The operation of a grant cannot be delegated to another organization, even if the other organization is an affiliate of the applicant.



**Section 3: Find a Partnership or Apply Directly**

The process for requesting AmeriCorps and Senior Corps resources varies by program. In some cases it involves an application process, while in other cases it may involve determining if your school district can be a site for an existing grantee. The best approach to take can also vary based on your relationships with community partners, your ability to manage grant funding, and your capacity to recruit, train, and support national service participants.



**Finding a Partnership**

Partnering with nonprofit and community organizations is a common approach taken by schools looking to leverage national service. This approach removes some of the burden from your district, and should be considered if your district may not have the infrastructure to manage funds, grants and/or participants. Partners can help apply for resources, manage grants and funds, define participants' responsibilities, recruit and support participants, and collect data for performance measures, which, depending on the program, may be required. A partner that has already utilized national service resources may be particularly helpful.

Nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and cities/mayor's offices are common partners for school districts. When looking for a partnership, start by checking to see if any of these entities in your area already have national service resources. You can do this by referencing CNCS's [state-specific national service resources](#) to find programs in your area. If potential partners already utilize national service, have

a discussion regarding the opportunity to expand their existing programming or collaborate on a new program. It can also be helpful to identify and work with a partner that has an evidence-based approach that can be implemented in your district, which may be simpler and more effective than creating a program from scratch. Many of the evidence-based programs align with the evidence framework in ESSA. (For more information see [CNCS Evidence Exchange](#) and [State of the Evidence](#).)

**Partnering with a Nonprofit Organization:** Math and Reading Inc., utilizes close to 1,000 AmeriCorps members as trained literacy coaches to provide Reading Corps' evidence-based literacy interventions to struggling readers. The program partners with elementary schools in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. AmeriCorps members help more than 19,000 students to become proficient readers by 3rd grade. A randomized control trial of K-3 students in Minnesota found that Minnesota Reading Corps students in Kindergarten, 1st, and 3rd grades achieved significantly higher literacy assessment scores than their peers who did not receive the intervention. The average kindergarten student with an AmeriCorps tutor performed twice as well as students without one. Students with higher risk factors who received tutoring significantly outperformed students who did not. The program is being replicated in many other schools across the country. For evaluation results, see: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange/Minnesota-Reading-Corps-K3>.

**Partnering with an Institution of Higher Education:** The University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center for Community Partnerships houses the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development, which places 21 full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers into 16 high-poverty Philadelphia schools and the school district of Philadelphia's main office. AmeriCorps members serve as Community Partnership Coordinators and work to assess student's needs and coordinate and facilitate community partnerships that meet those needs. During the 2015-16 school year the VISTAs engaged 1,000 volunteers, more than 420 partner organizations, and generated \$460,000 in cash and in-kind donations. George Washington's Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service runs a similar programs in DC Public Schools.

**Partnering with the City:** In 2016-17, the City of Flint supported 33 AmeriCorps State and National members and 23 AmeriCorps VISTA members to help increase attendance, improve third grade literacy, increase graduation rates, and make schools a resource in the community at 11 schools in Flint, Michigan. AmeriCorps members provide new and expanded educational and recreational programs during the school year and summer, and engage parents, volunteers, and community partner organizations. An AmeriCorps NCCC team served during the summer to provide additional out-of-school programming to students and improve the physical infrastructure of the school buildings and surrounding neighborhoods.

**Partnering with Governor, Mayor, and Local Organizations:** The Boston Promise Corps was developed as a community collaboration between Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, BPE (formerly known as Boston Plan for Excellence), and Boston Public Schools. The Boston Promise Corps, which is comprised of both the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) and Dudley Promise Corps (DPC), ensures that all students in Boston's Dudley neighborhood are on track to graduate from high school and attend college. In 2016-17, 90 AmeriCorps members provided classroom interventions and extended day programming to support student achievement, all while preparing to be teachers and leaders in the highest need areas of the city.

School districts often have multiple partnerships that draw on different streams of service to support students along the cradle-to-career continuum. One example is Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) in Florida, which works with:

- *The City:* OCPS works with the City of Orlando to deploy 30 AmeriCorps members to eight middle schools to improve the academic achievement of low-income students through tutoring and student support, as part of the Orlando Partnership for School Success program.
- *National Partners:* City Year utilizes 68 full-time AmeriCorps members to improve math and literacy skills, reduce absenteeism, and get students on track for high school graduation. City Year Orlando serves in seven Orange County schools, and members reach more than 9,000 students.
- *Local Partners:* The Heart of Florida United Way's Pathways to Success program places 20 AmeriCorps members in Title I schools to provide academic support and college and career mentoring to more than 600 high school students each year.

For a full profile of Orlando, see Appendix A.

### Applying as a School or School District

Depending on the program, applying directly as a school district or school requires you to take full ownership of managing funds, defining participants' responsibilities, training and supervising participants, and handling compliance and reporting requirements. While this approach allows you to bypass the process of finding and working with a partner, it also means additional responsibilities for your district or school. As a grantee, you will be solely responsible for meeting all grantee requirements and expectations pertaining to the program you choose to apply for.

If you choose to apply directly as a school district/school, ensure that you've addressed these questions prior to beginning your application:

- Do you have the organizational and staff capacity to manage and supervise participants?
- Do you have the adequate policies and procedures in place to manage federal funds and grant requirements?
- Do you have sufficient cash or in-kind resources to meet match requirements, if applicable?
- Do you have the necessary systems/processes to capture and report on performance measure data?
- Do you have sufficient support from community partners to implement the program effectively?

Here are a few examples of how school districts utilize national service directly:

**Jefferson County Public Schools School Turnaround AmeriCorps:** Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky utilizes 24 AmeriCorps members to mentor disadvantaged students at priority and focus schools to improve the academic engagement and attendance of participating students. Members also leverage more than 400 volunteers for tutoring, parent and community engagement activities, and school-based service projects. AmeriCorps members help schools to achieve their school improvement goals. An implementation evaluation of the AmeriCorps School Turnaround initiative found that programs are perceived as contributing positively to achieving key outcomes, including improving students' academic achievement and socio-emotional health. For the full national evaluation, see <https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange/school-turnaround-final-report>.

**Birmingham School District:** The Birmingham City School District in Alabama runs the Birmingham Engaging in STEM (BETA) program, which places AmeriCorps members in ten elementary and middle schools across the city. Members work one-on-one or in small groups providing proven, data-driven interventions to students struggling with math and also providing fun science enrichment activities after-school. Members follow a curriculum and conduct progress monitoring to ensure their students are proficient in algebra by the end of eighth grade and also work on family engagement. Approximately 97% of students who completed the program improved their academic performance.

**Waynesville School District:** The Waynesville School District in Missouri utilizes 80 AmeriCorps State and National members, 21 full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members, and 70 VISTA summer associates who provided almost 68,000 hours of support to students in the district. Members provided academic tutoring to students, led clubs and activities after school, developed community initiatives to support disadvantaged students, foster partnerships between community agencies, and promoted economic development and growth. District staff report that members contributed to increased student growth, improvement in math and reading proficiency, gains in college and career readiness, and have made great strides to help the community with food insecurity. AmeriCorps members recruited and managed over 1,800 volunteers who served almost 15,000 hours within the school district. Members provided tutoring and afterschool services to over 5,729 K-12 grade students (79% military-connected students) and 93 percent of students tutored demonstrated academic gains in reading/math.

### Applying for AmeriCorps or Senior Corps grants

- Applying for AmeriCorps State and National – Contact your [State Service Commission](#)
- Applying for AmeriCorps VISTA or Senior Corps – Contact your [CNCS State Office](#)

### What's the difference between a CNCS State Office and a State Service Commission?

CNCS State Offices are federal offices staffed by federal employees in the states and U.S. territories. They conduct public outreach and program support. They are directly responsible for developing grants and projects, and for overseeing all Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA projects within their jurisdiction. Each CNCS State Office works closely with the governor-appointed State Service Commission in their state.

State Service Commissions are governor-supported entities that provide CNCS funding to AmeriCorps programs in their states through annual grant competitions. In addition, the commissions oversee, monitor and support these AmeriCorps programs. Grants are made either directly to an organization or through an intermediary that handles the distribution of grant funding and the grant management functions to a consortium of smaller organizations. State Service Commissions are also charged with encouraging volunteerism in their states, and often administer special volunteer initiatives.

### For additional information on how to secure national service resources, please use the following links:

- [AmeriCorps State and National](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
- [AmeriCorps NCCC](#)
- [Senior Corps](#)

### For additional information on leveraging national service to support student success see:

- CNCS overview on education "National Service Strengthens Education" <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EducationSupport.pdf>
- The America's Promise report "The Role of National Service in Closing the Graduation Gap" <http://www.americaspromise.org/resource/role-national-service-closing-graduation-gap>
- The Service Year Alliance report on "How National Service Can Support Students in Low-Income Schools" [http://about.serviceyear.org/national\\_service\\_support\\_education](http://about.serviceyear.org/national_service_support_education)
- The Service Year Alliance "Program Expansion Guide" which highlights education programs and ways to partner with them in your communities. <https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/serviceyear/pages/258/attachments/original/1478910452/SY-ProgramExpansion-FINAL.pdf?1478910452>
- The Everyone Graduates Center report "Overcoming the Poverty Challenge to Enable College and Career Readiness for All: The Crucial Role of Student Supports" <http://new.every1graduates.org/overcoming-poverty-challenge/>

*Please note that examples provided throughout the document are included as illustrations of national service programs. Information may be from prior years, may not include impact or results, and is not intended to provide full details of programs.*

# National Service as a Pathway to Education and Employment for Students

Although this toolkit is focused on helping schools and school districts access national service resources, in this section we highlight some of the ways that your *students can benefit from actually serving in AmeriCorps*, regardless of whether your district utilizes the programs.

AmeriCorps programs do more than improve schools and communities; they serve their members by providing pathways to opportunity for people entering the workforce. Annually, AmeriCorps places more than 75,000 people into intensive service positions where they learn and apply valuable professional skills, learn about career fields, earn money for higher education, develop an appreciation for citizenship, and in some cases secure industry or professional certificates.

While a large portion of AmeriCorps assignments are focused on education, there are a variety of projects for people who may be interested in addressing other issues such as nonprofit management, disaster preparedness, connecting veterans to affordable housing or stable employment, conservation of the great outdoors, and much more.

**Career coaches, guidance counselors, families of students, and classroom teachers should consider sharing the following link with information about AmeriCorps programs with high school students who may be looking for ways to help their communities, pay for college, and gain work experience:** <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/join-americorps>.

## Benefits of Being an AmeriCorps Member

- The ability to make an impact on an issue that they are passionate about.
  - Members can apply to serve with organizations in specific geographic locations and subject areas.
  - AmeriCorps assignments support a variety of causes, including education, healthy futures, economic opportunity, veterans services, environmental stewardship, and disaster services.
- A basic living allowance and financial assistance to help pay for college. AmeriCorps helps address rising college costs by providing financial assistance through the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to members who complete their service.
  - A full-time AmeriCorps member who successfully completes one full term of service will receive an education award equivalent to the Pell Grant. For 2018, this amount is approximately \$5,980 after one full-time service term. Individuals can earn up to two full-time education awards.
  - Since 1994, AmeriCorps members have earned more than \$3.3 billion to help pay for college, technical school, or to repay qualified student loans.
- Valuable service experience, job skills, and increased employability.
  - Members receive specialized training and engage in substantive assignments at their host organizations where they gain valuable work-related skills.
  - For many members, AmeriCorps service is their first professional experience. For others, it can be an important pathway to re-enter the workforce.
  - A Tufts University study found that for people with a college degree, having AmeriCorps experience on a resume has a positive and significant impact on the prospects of getting a job, offering a competitive advantage in the workforce.
  - Members can take advantage of initiatives like Employers of National Service, under which employers (including Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits, government agencies) make a commitment to hiring national service alumni.

There are a number of eligibility requirements to serve in an AmeriCorps program, including citizenship and a minimum age, which varies slightly based on the program, but is generally at least 17+ years of age. For more information, check <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/join-americorps> or contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

# Appendix A: Examples of How School Districts and States are Leveraging National Service

## Denver Public Schools



### Overview of Denver Public Schools

- Serves more than 90,000 students across roughly 200 schools.
- The majority of students are Latino (23% of students are White and 13% are Black).
- 69% of students are low-income.
- High school graduation rate is 65%.

### National Service Supporting Denver Public Schools

National service programs support thousands of elementary, middle, and high school students in Denver Public Schools (DPS). AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs provide tutoring, mentoring, school turnaround, school climate, attendance support, and other services in schools.

The role of national service in DPS is somewhat unusual because the district sponsors its own national service programs, meaning that it has applied for and received funding for national service members from CNCS.

AmeriCorps programs, including the Family and Community Education Service Corps (FACE), are managed by the district's Family and Community Engagement office. The FACE Corps is a critical component of the DPS strategy to increase multi-generation interventions and wraparound services that support student academic achievement. DPS has leveraged their own AmeriCorps program in addition partners and programs that increase opportunities for both students and families.

Some program highlights include:

#### Attendance and Wraparound Services

The FACE AmeriCorps program provides attendance support and small-group math instruction to targeted students throughout the district. Approximately 500 AmeriCorps members work to increase student attendance and retention, increase math attainment, and foster multi-generation engagement through service projects and wraparound supports. FACE AmeriCorps members receive training and support in best practices to engage parents and guardians as part of a multi-generation approach to increase academic achievement and family stability.

AmeriCorps members support roughly 6,000 students annually throughout DPS with small- group math instruction and daily attendance support. Over 50% of students receiving attendance support increase their attendance by 3-5% (which translates to five to nine additional days of instruction for students). Over half of the students receiving math interventions increase their math scores by at least one achievement level. The Corps also leverages hundreds of additional volunteers throughout the district to support school events, after-school programming, supply drives, and other activities that increase student and parent engagement.

### Infrastructure Improvement, Tutoring, and Food Security

The Denver Green School (DGS), in southeast Denver, is the first school in the city with a focus on sustainability. AmeriCorps NCCC teams at DGS have worked in classrooms as math and literacy coaches and helped launch DGSs' farm to cafeteria program. More than 100 AmeriCorps members on 11 teams have served at DGS since 2012. Members have provided more than 9,500 hours of tutoring, sorted 2,050 books, painted/renovated over 1,400 square feet, inventoried/distributed 13,650 pounds of food, and repaired/constructed two playgrounds.

### One-on-One Mentoring and Tutoring

The Senior Corps Foster Grandparents Program (FGP) places 17 volunteers at four Denver public schools. FGP volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring and mentoring to students with special needs. Last year, 83% of students paired with a volunteer achieved moderate to high improvement in their teacher determined academic goals. Denver's FGP program has also developed a partnership with Reading Partners Colorado, an evidenced-based literacy program. Last year, through Reading Partners, eight Foster Grandparents contributed 1,283 hours of literacy tutoring.

### Capacity Building for Charter Schools

Rocky Mountain Prep is a charter school of the Denver Public School system, serving Pre-K to 5th grade. The school sponsored two AmeriCorps VISTA members to provide support with fundraising to build capacity and successfully transition students out of Rocky Mountain Prep into middle school.

### School Turnaround

City Year has been a DPS partner since 2011. Using its Whole School, Whole Child model, City Year AmeriCorps members recently helped support nine Denver schools. Last year, 74 City Year AmeriCorps members supported more than 4,000 students with tutoring and mentoring services. Some of the program's accomplishments during the past few years include:

- 68% of students showed overall growth in literacy.
- 85% of teachers agreed that City Year improved students' math performance.
- 88% of City Year Denver partner schools improved their performance ratings on the Denver School Performance Framework, from 2014-2016.

### What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***"At North High School, City Year allows us to connect with students in ways that would otherwise not be possible as it relates to attendance, behavior, and course completion and is a main reason for the sustained growth scores we have seen on 9th grade state testing."*** – Scott Wolf, Principal, North High School in Denver, CO

### Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from DPS' approach:

- A school district can have substantial impact by sponsoring its own national service programs. DPS has implemented its AmeriCorps programs at a relatively large scale across multiple schools delivering key academic instruction to thousands of students.
- Sponsoring your own program allows your district to have full ownership of managing funds, defining members' responsibilities, managing members, and supervising members on a day-to-day basis.
- Before applying for funding as a district, make sure your district has the capacity to manage funds and members. School districts that are sponsors typically have staff dedicated to running the programs.
- Regardless of whether your district is interested in sponsoring a program, take advantage of partnerships. In addition to its own AmeriCorps programs, DPS receives support from other AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs through partnerships with local organizations.

# Milwaukee Public Schools



## Overview of Milwaukee Public Schools

- Serves more than 75,000 students across 159 schools.
- Nearly 90% of students are minorities, including 55% Black and 25% Hispanic.
- 80% of students are low-income.
- 59% high school graduation rate.

## National Service Supporting Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) uses AmeriCorps and Senior Corps national service programs to provide tutoring, mentoring, classroom instruction, and college access services to its students. MPS has been particularly effective in utilizing national service and community partners to support students by promoting collaboration among multiple stakeholders.

By partnering with nonprofits to implement national service programs, MPS has relaunched tutoring programs that were discontinued due to budget cuts, provided the support students need to graduate from high school, ensured that students continue to be mentored and encouraged as they transition from high school to college, and created a pipeline of teachers in high need schools.

### Some program highlights include:

#### Collective Impact Utilizing National Service Programs

A partnership involving Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), City Year Milwaukee (an AmeriCorps program), Teach For America-Milwaukee (an AmeriCorps program), Northwestern Mutual Foundation, and other organizations has helped support students at Dr. George Washington Carver Academy of Mathematics and Science, a K-8 school defined by MPS as under-performing. The 5-in-1 Collaborative includes a focus on instruction, climate, family engagement, and school leadership. This model of collective impact encourages partners to align goals for student success. A 2016 study found increased attendance, improved math and reading scores, and a decrease in school suspensions. Based on the success of the collaborative approach, MPS is expanding the collective impact model to other schools in the district.

#### College Access

College Possible, a nonprofit focused on college readiness, helps low-income Milwaukee students get to and graduate from college through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support. The program serves 3,500 students per year, including 2,000 college students. On average, students who participate in the program achieve a 15% increase in ACT score. Last year, 86% of College Possible students earned admission to college. The program supports students on 80 college campuses and has developed deep partnerships with local institutions that have made a strong commitment to serving students. College Possible works in close partnership with 15 local high schools, including 8 Milwaukee public high schools, 2 public charter high schools and 5 private schools.

#### Tutoring and Mentoring

The Interfaith-MPS Tutor Program is a partnership between MPS and Interfaith Milwaukee's RSVP Program. The program is volunteer-driven and comes at no cost to the school. Through this collaboration, RSVP connects older adults (age 55+) with students and helps to improve the academic performance and engagement of kindergarten through fifth grade students. In the 2016-2017 school year, the program made the following impacts:

- 170 tutors served 9,668 hours

- 2,787 K4-5th grade students served across 54 schools
- Teachers reported that:
  - 83% of students demonstrated improved academic engagement.
  - 82% of students demonstrated a positive change in attitude.
  - 74% of students demonstrated a positive change in behavior.

Prior to the establishment of the Interfaith RSVP program, the MPS Recreation Department had a 55+ Tutor Program which was discontinued due to budget cuts. The MPS Recreation Department was able to partner with Interfaith's RSVP program, and the volunteers became a key partner and resource to sustain critical tutoring efforts with the public school system that would have been lost due to local budget cuts. Since its launch in January 2011, the RSVP program quickly reached and surpassed its initial goal of 150 volunteer tutors serving in MPS elementary schools.

### Classroom Instruction/Teacher Training

Teach For America (TFA) is building a diverse pipeline of high-impact teachers and leaders for high-needs schools across Milwaukee. Since 2009, over 500 TFA AmeriCorps members have served in Milwaukee schools, including nearly 200 members who served specifically in Milwaukee Public Schools. This year, 58 TFA AmeriCorps members serving across 31 MPS schools will be impacting 4000+ students. Last school year, members who used nationally-normed Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) interim assessments led their students to an average of 1.3 years of growth in reading and/or math.

### Reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and Family Engagement

More than 30 AmeriCorps members serve as part of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's Spheres of Proud Achievement in Reading for Kids (SPARK) Members work with students in preschool through third grade who have been identified by their classroom teachers as struggling readers. AmeriCorps members implement the SPARK Program by providing one-on-one tutoring sessions and/or small group reading activities that build students' phonemic awareness, phonic skills, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Each AmeriCorps member supports five to six students whom he/she meets with three times per week, for 30-minute sessions, with the goal of improving students' literacy skills and developing strong, consistent relationships with them and their families through home visits and school activities which parents and families attend.

### What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***"None of this happens without partnership. When we talk about college and career readiness...that's where our team from the AmeriCorps members have come in to support us, allowing us to build a pipeline around students who are receiving support around social-emotional, attendance and behavior focused on reducing suspensions."*** – Dr. Darienne Driver, Superintendent, Milwaukee Public Schools from the Alliance for Excellent Education's webinar on leveraging national service to improve low-performing schools. <https://all4ed.org/webinar-event/partnering-for-success-how-milwaukee-public-schools-is-leveraging-national-service-to-improve-low-performing-schools/>

***"The group of students that have worked with the (RSVP) tutors have all had their test scores and grades go up. The students are always so excited to see the tutors walk through the door. I sometimes feel sad for my students who do not get a chance to go with them. Perhaps next year we will work something out where more students will get to have the tutoring experience."*** – MPS Teacher Aleina Hodnett

### Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from MPS' approach:

- AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs can be implemented in multiple schools across your district. Senior Corp's Interfaith RSVP is in 54 MPS schools, TFA is in 50 schools, and College Possible is in 15 schools.
- Promote collaboration among partners in order to better support student success. As demonstrated by Milwaukee's 5-in-1 Collaborative, which includes two AmeriCorps grantees, bringing in multiple

organizations to work together and providing a variety of services to students can accelerate academic improvement. Collective impact models can maximize the work of individual programs.

- Utilize national service programs to address under-funded areas. By partnering with Interfaith Milwaukee's RSVP program, MPS was able to re-launch its 55+ Tutor Program which had been discontinued due to budget cuts.

## Orange County Public Schools



### Overview of Orange County Public Schools

- 10th largest school district in the nation.
- Serves more than 200,000 students across 188 schools.
- Over 70% of students are minorities, including 40% Hispanic and 26% Black.
- 67% of students are low-income.

### National Service Supporting Orange County Schools

AmeriCorps and Senior Corps national service programs support thousands of Orange County Public Schools' (OCPS) elementary, middle, and high school students throughout the cradle to career pipeline. More than 200 national service members are in OCPS schools providing additional services and support to low-performing schools and at-risk student populations. Members work directly and indirectly with students inside and outside the classroom, provide tutoring and mentoring, develop after-school programs, ensure students are in school and on track to graduation, and help students apply for college. Programs have had a substantial impact on test scores, graduation rates, and attendance rates. Due in part to support from national service members, OCPS achieved a 5% increase in completed FAFSA applications in 2016, making it the top county in Florida by FAFSA completions. Support from national service members has been made possible by partnerships between OCPS, the City of Orlando, and nonprofits.

### Some program highlights include:

#### State, City, and School District Partnership

The Orlando Partnership for School Success program (O-PASS), managed by the City of Orlando, represents Florida's Governor/Mayor Initiative, a state-city partnership funded by CNCS. The program deploys 30 AmeriCorps members to eight middle schools to improve the academic achievement of low-income students. The City of Orlando also receives AmeriCorps funding for 65 members who support five high schools and 2,000 students through tutoring and academic counseling for juniors and senior residing in some of Orlando's lowest-income neighborhoods. The two year investment in this Operation AmeriCorps program has supported more than 1,000 high school graduates to enter college or careers. At Edgewater High School, which represents an area that has the highest number of juvenile arrests in the state of Florida, AmeriCorps members aided students to receive over \$150,000 in scholarships.

In addition to O-PASS, the City of Orlando sponsors an AmeriCorps VISTA program. AmeriCorps VISTA members support multiple programs within Mayor Buddy Dyer's Cities of Service Initiative: ORLANDO CARES. This initiative connects citizen volunteers as mentors for students. Since 2012, 55 VISTA members have served as "volunteer & outreach coordinators", recruiting and training volunteers to mentor students. To date AmeriCorps VISTA members have recruited more than 4,700 volunteers and raised \$2 million in cash resources, in-kind donations and volunteer hours resulting in 11,409 youth being served. Volunteers recruited by AmeriCorps VISTA members generated the following impacts:

- (Preschool Ambassadors) 'Ready Readers' & 'Early Literacy Liaisons': Prepare students and families for

kindergarten. Focus: Early Literacy.

- 92% of families who participated in 2 or more sessions could articulate letter recognition as it relates to literacy
- 79% of all participating families spent at least two hours/week reading together at home
- (Third Grade Reads powered by Read2Succeed) 'Reading Tutors': Provide one-on-one tutoring to first graders for vocabulary and second graders for reading fluency. Focus: to help students read on grade level by third grade.
  - 100% of participating students showed gains in vocabulary scores
  - 100% of participating students showed gains in reading fluency
- (PathFinders) Career Facilitators & Career Coaches: Guide students as they develop a path toward a successful future where students create an academic/career plan, attend a workplace tour, and learn from the various professionals on Career Day.
  - 100% of students completed an individual academic career plan
  - 88% of students showed an increased desire to graduate from high school
  - 98.6% of students obtained a 2.5 or higher GPA

### School Turnaround

The Together for Tomorrow program (TFT), a joint initiative between CNCS and the the U.S. Department of Education, was created to propel the improvement of low-performing schools. During the 2015-16 school year, AmeriCorps VISTA members recruited and managed 245 tutors/mentors to support 1,988 OCPs elementary and middle school students. Among students who were mentored, over 60% achieved a higher score on a standardized assessment test (relative to students from the same school who were identified for mentoring but who were not matched with a mentor), and 83% of middle school students had a better attendance record. In addition, VISTAs helped schools obtain \$81,000 in cash and in-kind contributions to help students with food, books, and school supplies to boost academic success.

### School Turnaround/Improved Attendance

City Year has been an OCPs partner since 2012. This year, 68 City Year AmeriCorps members are serving at seven Orange County schools reaching more than 9,000 students. Over 60% of the students receiving direct support from members moved from off-track (receiving a D or F) to on-track (receiving an A, B, or C) in their math or literacy grades. Two-thirds of students who were chronically absent (missing three or more weeks of school) moved to at least 90% attendance rates. One-hundred percent of principals agree that City Year Orlando AmeriCorps members served as positive role models for students, and 97% of partner teachers agree that corps members motivate students to learn. One in five City Year AmeriCorps members self-selects into teaching opportunities after service.

### One-one-One Mentoring

During the 2015-2016 school year, 366 Foster Grandparent volunteers mentored 1,247 special needs students while contributing 267,934 volunteer hours. Through the Foster Grandparents' one on one relationship/mentoring with students, 99% of children gained in school readiness skills, 97% of the elementary students improved their reading proficiency, 97% of elementary/middle school students below grade level were promoted to the next grade, and 100% of students showed improvement in their classroom participation.

### After School Programs

Collegiate Pathways uses AmeriCorps VISTA members to support its Tech Sassy Girlz program, which aims to develop the next generation of female STEM leaders. With just one member in 2016, the program engaged more than 300 middle and high school girls in STEM activities, raised over \$6,300 of in-kind support, and recruited more than 300 hours of volunteer service to support STEM programming.

### College Access/Teacher Pipeline

The Heart of Florida United Way's Pathways to Success program places 20 AmeriCorps member in two Title I schools, Evans and Oak Ridge high schools. Members provide academic support and college/

career mentoring to more than 600 10th-12th grade students each year. Before receiving resources from AmeriCorps members, the graduation rates for Oak Ridge and Evans were 74% and 78%, respectively. After two years of support, the graduation rate increased by at least 10% at both schools (2015-16 graduation rate was 89% at Oak Ridge and 88% at Evans). While the AmeriCorps program cannot claim sole credit for the turnaround, the program is a significant partner in helping students graduate and preparing them for post-secondary opportunities. Nine former Pathways to Success members are now teachers at Evans High School or Oak Ridge High School.

### What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***“National service members play a critical role in helping schools in Orlando and across Orange County implement locally-selected, evidence-based improvement strategies, provide students with a well-rounded education, and support students’ health, safety, and well-being.”*** – Barbara Jenkins, Superintendent of OCPS, from her letter on the value of National Service

### Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from OCPS' approach:

- Develop partnerships with stakeholders. While school districts can apply directly for funding, OCPS has partnered with nonprofits and the City of Orlando to secure national service members. Partners can help apply for funding, manage funds, define member responsibilities, supervise members, and collect data for performance measures. Nonprofits, colleges/universities, and cities/mayor's offices are common partners for school districts.
- Identify schools and student populations within your district that require the most support, and direct national service resources to those populations. By supporting the schools and student populations that need it most, national service can help promote equity across your district. Directing the right resources to high need populations requires a well-coordinated approach between your district and partners.
- Take advantage of the breadth of services. OCPS receives support from both AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, including multiple types of AmeriCorps programs, which vary in the services they provide. By leveraging members from multiple programs, your district can ensure a diversity of services for students.
- National service can create a pipeline of teachers or other staff for your district. AmeriCorps members who choose to serve in schools already have a passion for education, and a significant portion of members decide to pursue a career in teaching/education after their service term.

## Providence Public Schools



### Overview of Providence Public Schools

- Serves 24,000 students across 42 schools.
- Over 90% of students are minorities, including 64% Hispanic, 17% Black, and 5% Asian.
- Nearly 60% of students come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken.
- 86% of students are low-income.
- 79% high school graduation rate.

### National Service Supporting Providence Public Schools

Providence Public Schools uses national service programs to provide early learning, STEM, family engagement, social-emotional learning, after-school, teacher training, and classroom instruction services

to its students. Hundreds of preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school students benefit every year from the services provided by AmeriCorps programs. Some of these programs have been making a sustained impact in Providence for more than a decade.

Some program highlights include:

#### Early Learning

Jumpstart at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has had a strong presence in the Providence community for several years. Jumpstart is a national early education organization providing language, literacy, and social-emotional programming for preschool children from under-resourced communities. During FY17, Jumpstart URI served a total of 96 children in Providence. Federal Hill House, a community center serving a high population of immigrants, is one of Jumpstart's project sites in Providence. Jumpstart URI worked with its entire preschool population this past program year, and has several bilingual AmeriCorps members to effectively engage the many dual language learning children.

#### One-on-One Mentoring

The Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program has made a long-term commitment to serving kids. For example, Young Woods Elementary School had their first Foster Grandparent volunteer in 1998 when it opened its doors and continues to have them today. Currently there are eight actively serving FGPs volunteers who work with students from kindergarten to 3rd grade. The Foster Grandparents serve an average of 30 to 50 students and are in the classroom four days a week. They assist in the classroom with reading and literacy skills, modeling good behavior, tutoring students, and assisting with art and language. The grandparents are a consistent presence in the school and teachers and administrators credit the Foster Grandparents for improved attendance and behavior.

#### Arts and After-School Programs

Since 2010, Providence CityArts for Youth's AmeriCorps program has trained 91 AmeriCorps members to serve in school-day and after-school programs in Providence. In the 2016-2017 school year, CityArts' AmeriCorps Turnaround Teaching Artist Program (TTAP) brought nine AmeriCorps members into collaboration with 15 academic classroom teachers to integrate the arts into classrooms through hands-on, experiential learning, which resulted in measurable improvement in student attitudes toward learning for 204 students. Projects included stop-motion videos that illustrated cell generation and designing sustainable housing. An additional 11 AmeriCorps members worked at the CityArts studios in the summer to provide a studio space where youth can engage in intensive arts learning that is similar to the arts learning opportunities available to their more well-resourced peers.

#### STEM and Family Engagement

The Providence Children's Museum AmeriCorps program deploys AmeriCorps members to deliver STEM learning experiences for children in out-of-school time programs. In partnership with local Boys and Girls Clubs, AmeriCorps members present Museum Learning Clubs to more than 250 second-fourth grade students annually, and measure outcomes pertaining to developing a growth mindset and increased knowledge of math concepts and applications.

In addition, the AmeriCorps members receive training and develop skills in family involvement and community engagement in the museum, at local parks, and in neighborhood libraries and Head Start programs. From its first cohort in 1997 to its 261st member in 2017, the mission of the AmeriCorps program at Providence Children's Museum has been to instill a lifetime love of learning in children, especially those whose exposure to rich educational experiences is limited.

#### Classroom Instruction/Teacher Training

Over the past seven years, Teach For America - Rhode Island has developed over 200 AmeriCorps members focused on improving educational outcomes for over 20,000 low-income students across the state. Members serve across Providence County by teaching in high need areas for at least two years. In 2017, 54 TFA AmeriCorps members are in Providence schools. Results from Teach For America's last

iteration of the National Principal Survey demonstrated that 100% of the principals agreed that TFA-Rhode Island teachers are making a positive difference in academic achievement, and over 90% also agreed that teachers are making a positive difference in school culture, collaboration, and relationships with parents.

### What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***“AmeriCorps members play an integral part in our school support network. They serve as relatable mentors and role models for our students and much-needed assistance for our staff. They interface seamlessly with teachers, families and other community partners, helping to create a positive and responsive culture in our schools.”*** – Christopher N. Maher, Superintendent, Providence Public School District

### Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from Providence’s approach:

- Consider using national service to provide a long-term, sustained source of services. The Foster Grandparent program has been serving in the same school for almost 20 years, and many AmeriCorps programs such as Jumpstart, CityArts, and TFA have all been supporting Providence students for at least seven years.
- Encourage your district’s office/staff dedicated to strategic partnerships to coordinate with national service programs. This can help ease the implementation process and lead to a stronger impact.
- National service members are adept at dealing with diverse and underserved populations. Members can help bridge the gap between staff, students, and families in school districts such as Providence where there is large minority population and a significant portion of families for whom English is a second language.
- National service programs support early learning. Programs like Jumpstart can be used to help prepare children with the skills they need to enter Kindergarten ready to succeed.
- AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs not only support students in schools, but out of school as well with after school programs, family engagement, wraparound services, and a variety of other services.

## Rural School Districts

Waynesville, MO • Eastern Kentucky



A significant portion of the over 300,000 national service members serving across the country are serving in rural communities, where in many cases the need for additional resources is particularly great. Schools in rural communities may not have the same access to local support and partnerships as schools in urban areas, making the presence of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members an integral part of student success. In addition to benefiting students, national service programs create job opportunities for their members in areas where there are limited employment opportunities. Programs in Missouri and Kentucky demonstrate the impact that national service can have in rural school districts.

## Waynesville, MO

### Overview of the Waynesville R-VI School District

- Serves roughly 5,900 students from central Missouri.
- 76% of students are military affiliated. Over 55% are replaced each year because of military relocations.
- Due to a drawdown of soldiers, student enrollment has decreased, leading to decreased state funding.
- One of the most diverse student populations in Missouri. 43% of students are minorities, including 16% Black.
- 45% of students are low-income.

## National Service Supporting the Waynesville R-VI School District

Waynesville R-VI sponsors its own national service programs, meaning that it has applied for and received funding for national service members from the Corporation for National & Community Service (the federal agency that manages national service programs). School district staff, including the district's Community Resource Office, supervise and manage its national service members. The district chose to apply for funding after determining that AmeriCorps members could increase student learning opportunities in areas of need.

In 2015-2016, more than 80 AmeriCorps State and National members, 21 full time AmeriCorps VISTA members, and 70 VISTA summer associates served within the school district. Members provided academic tutoring to students, led clubs and activities after school, developed community initiatives to support disadvantaged students, fostered partnerships between community agencies, and promoted economic development and growth. Nearly 80% of members were military-connected. District staff report that members have contributed to increased student growth, improvement in math and reading proficiency, college and career readiness, and have made great strides to help the community with food insecurity.

### Impacts of National Service (2015-2016)

- AmeriCorps members served almost 68,000 hours within the school district.
- Members provided tutoring and afterschool services to more than 5,729 K-12 grade students. This total included 4526 or (79%) who were military-connected students.
- Members provided tutoring services to more than 282 early childhood students, of whom 228 (81%) were military-connected.
- 93% of students (5271) tutored demonstrated academic gains in reading/math.
- AmeriCorps VISTA members supported efforts to provide supplemental food to over 300 students each weekend.
- AmeriCorps VISTA members developed a curriculum to equip high school and college students with tools to begin their professional careers.
- Members recruited and managed more than 1,800 volunteers who served almost 15,000 hours in the school district.

### What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***"We are so grateful for the relationships they (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and National Veteran Corps) build with our students...Our veterans who serve in these roles have the added importance of being a military presence in the lives of students whose parent may be deployed overseas."*** – Dr. Brian Henry, Superintendent, Waynesville R-VI School District

## Eastern Kentucky

### Overview of Eastern Kentucky School Districts

- National service supports multiple counties and school districts in eastern Kentucky, including Knox County, Perry County, Clay County, Madison County, and Leslie County.
- With the exception of Madison County, schools receiving national service resources are Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) schools.
- 99% of students in Knox, Perry, Clay, and Leslie Counties are low-income.

### National Service Supporting Kentucky Schools

School districts have partnered with Berea College, a college in eastern Kentucky, to support students with AmeriCorps resources. Berea College manages programs that use AmeriCorps members to provide school turnaround, tutoring/mentoring, and STEM services. As the grantee, the college assumes responsibility for applying for funding, deploying members to schools, supervising members, and meeting all other grantee requirements.

In 2013, Berea College received AmeriCorps funding for its PartnerCorps School Turnaround program. The program has had substantial success and was provided with additional funding after the original

grant cycle. The original grant served two PLA schools, Knox Central High School and Leslie County High School. In each school, 20 AmeriCorps members mentored students and assisted them with successfully navigating high school and pursuing post-secondary education, with a primary focus on improving attendance. Every student was assigned an AmeriCorps mentor.

Berea College also sponsored an AmeriCorps NCCC team through its Partners for Education program. Members supported a traveling, CSI-themed, STEM summer enrichment camp.

## Impacts of National Service

### PartnerCorps

After PartnerCorps School Turnaround's first year, 37% of students served improved attendance. In addition, both schools achieved historically high levels of:

- Number of students applying to post-secondary education.
- Number of students achieving college and career status.
- ACT composite scores.

Leslie County High School was one of the ten lowest performing high schools in the State of Kentucky prior to the program's implementation. It is now among the top ten high schools in the state, thanks in part to the service provided by AmeriCorps members. Due to the improvement by Leslie County High School, in its new grant cycle, PartnerCorps shifted resources and added a third school. The program now serves three schools, Knox Central High School, Perry County Central High School, and Clay County High School, with 20 members in each school providing tutoring and mentoring services.

In addition to placing members in schools for a year of service, PartnerCorps creates a pipeline for new teachers. PartnerCorps members are by and large from the community they are serving, and many are hired by the school system in which they served. Six former PartnerCorps AmeriCorps members have been employed by Berea College Partners for Education after completing service, and 15 former PartnerCorps AmeriCorps members have been employed by schools or the board of education in the community in which they served.

### Partners for Education

During the two-month project, the AmeriCorps NCCC team tutored over 260 middle school students in five of Kentucky's SOAR (Shaping Our Appalachian Region) counties, helping improve their math and science skills while also counteracting summer learning loss. SOAR, a bipartisan initiative to stimulate the economy in historically coal-dependent southeastern Kentucky, is spearheaded by U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers. In addition, the team led resilience activities, including physical training, and assisted the schools hosting the camp each week with their summer feeding program, resulting in more than 2,540 meals being served to students attending the camp.

## What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

***"Our kids face a lot of the same challenges as kids in urban areas...I think schools like in Eastern Kentucky and Appalachia in general could really benefit from PartnerCorps. I think we need it. I think we can save some kids with PartnerCorps and that's what it's all about."*** – Robert Roak, Principal Leslie County High School from a video with Berea College on PartnerCorps. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ds46UurZr7Y>

## Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from the approach taken by rural school districts in Missouri and Kentucky:

- There is more than one way to bring national service members into your district. The Waynesville R-VI school district decided to sponsor its own program, while districts in Kentucky have partnered with Berea College. The best approach depends on your district's resources and needs.
- Sponsoring a program: Applying directly as a school district allows you to take full ownership of managing funds, defining members' responsibilities, managing members, and supervising members

on a day-today basis. While this approach allows you to bypass the process of finding a partner, it also allocates additional responsibility to your district. As a grantee, you'll be solely responsible for meeting all grantee requirements and expectations pertaining to the program you choose to apply for. The Waynesville R-VI school district created an infrastructure for managing funds and members through its Community Resource Office. The office's staff, including its Director of Community Resource/ Alternative Education, Assistant Director of National Service, Payroll Generalist/VISTA Supervisor, Grant Financial Specialist, and HR Coordinator spend a portion of their time managing AmeriCorps grants. The office has defined clear expectations for its members and created a handbook with basic expectations for service members to reference during their service terms.

- Partnering with a local organization: This approach is particularly beneficial if your district lacks resources to manage funds and members. Partners can help apply for funding, manage funds, define member responsibilities, supervise members, and collect data for performance measures. Your district will still need to work with the partner to identify areas of need and ensure that resources are being allocated effectively. In addition to colleges/universities, nonprofits and cities/mayor's offices are common partners for school districts.

## COLORADO



### National Service Supports Colorado Schools

As part of its effort to improve educational outcomes, Colorado is leveraging national service programs to make a more targeted and sustained investment in education. Serve Colorado (Colorado's State Service Commission) and Colorado's CNCS State Office have partnered with local education policy experts and elected officials to address a host of education needs, with a particular focus on early childhood education, high school graduation, and services for rural youth. As part of its 2016-2018 State Service Plan, Serve Colorado pledged to play its part in improving the educational landscape of the state and to support AmeriCorps programs that increase the state's high school graduation rates in the ways that make the most sense for communities throughout Colorado.

**AmeriCorps State & National:** Across the state, 697 AmeriCorps State and National members in Colorado are supporting students. Members are providing tutoring to students below proficiency in mathematics; provide evidence-based and targeted interventions to students with attendance problems; improve literacy proficiency of kindergarten through third grade students in the highest-need schools through reading tutors; leverage volunteers in projects that improve school climate; and improve interest and engagement in STEM, knowledge of potential STEM careers, a more positive attitude toward STEM and academics.

**AmeriCorps VISTA:** Across the state, there are more than 130 VISTA members, some who serve in education-related positions with K-12 schools, community colleges, and afterschool programs. AmeriCorps VISTA members build the capacity of nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies to bring people out of poverty. In the education sector, VISTA members serve in K-12 and higher education settings. Activities include developing new programs, writing curricula, fundraising, building volunteer programs, forging partnerships, and designing evaluation systems. Their ultimate goals are to reduce poverty by increasing school engagement, retention, attendance, test scores, and graduation rates.

**Senior Corps:** Across the state, there are 300 Foster Grandparent volunteers and 4,100 RSVP volunteers, many of whom are supporting academic achievement. Senior Corps volunteers serve students through two programs: Foster Grandparents and RSVP. Foster Grandparents work with students one-on-one in

settings primarily including day cares, pre-schools, and K-12 schools. These students may be behind academically, have special needs, be considered at-risk, or suffer from abuse or neglect. RSVP volunteers provide a wide range of activities including tutoring and mentoring students or providing other needed volunteer services to schools.

### Colorado's Strategy for Using National Service to Improve Statewide Educational Outcomes

Colorado's CNCS State Office, the AmeriCorps NCCC Southwest Regional Office, and the State Service Commission have played a major role in engaging local leaders to develop solutions using national service. In 2013, Serve Colorado made a strategic decision that investing in AmeriCorps programs that have a positive impact on Colorado students was a worthwhile investment. To that end, Serve Colorado in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education developed programs that have an evidence-based approach to supporting Colorado children and families. More information about this commitment is available in the [2016-2018 Colorado State Service Plan](#).

Beginning in 2014, meetings were held between the CNCS State Office, the NCCC Southwest Regional Office, State Commission, elected officials and the Colorado Department of Education. CNCS mapped the allocation of national service investments, both programmatically and geographically, and worked with partners to identify unmet state priorities. Based on this evaluation, local stakeholders identified a lack of education services for rural youth as a pressing need that national service could be used to address. To further define "rural", they engaged with Colorado's Department of Education, and worked with the DOE and State Capitol to map graduation rates. Communities with the lowest graduation rates were prioritized for the development and implementation of AmeriCorps NCCC projects benefitting youth.

To demonstrate their support for the effort, Lt. Governor Joe Garcia sponsored an NCCC team that spent their entire service term in Colorado working on projects benefitting rural youth. Several members from that team went on to get jobs in education in the state, including one who is now a teacher at Denver Green School. The current Lt. Governor, Donna Lynne, has maintained that relationship, hosting NCCC teams at the Capitol to provide her updates on their work in the state, particularly in regards to rural youth. Among its projects, NCCC has:

- Partnered with Denver Green Schools (DGS) to use 106 AmeriCorps members on 11 teams since 2012 to provide math and literacy coaching, help launch DGS's farm to cafeteria program, and assist with other tasks as needed.
- Coordinated with the Colorado State Service Commission to create new strategic partnerships in education, including sponsoring a team to work exclusively on education projects in Colorado.
- Provided a variety of services in rural areas at schools, summer camps, and other community organizations. NCCC members have inventoried/shelved more than 28,000 books, recruited more than 2,400 volunteers, and performed infrastructure repair.

Another national service program that supports increasing graduation rates is the Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC) AmeriCorps Program. Currently, 28 AmeriCorps members provide services to off-track in-school and disengaged out-of-school youth and help them reengage and reenroll in school. Members serve at 15 sites within Colorado school districts including Aurora, Denver, Englewood, Mapleton, Adams 12, Adams 14, Jefferson, 27J (Adams and Weld counties), Poudre Valley, and Lake County. At the end of the third program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping 96 reenrolled students remain enrolled in an education program for a year and 150 in-school youth improve their academic engagement, as measured by increased attendance. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage additional volunteers who will be engaged in supporting and tutoring in-school youth.

### What State Leaders are Saying About National Service

***"AmeriCorps members all across the state, from Denver to Durango, are serving to help improve results in the lives of their students and the communities they work in. They do this by bringing optimism, excitement and energy to the classroom and serving as in-class role models. They are an invaluable resource to our state and we are exceptionally proud of their service."*** – Donna Lynne, Lieutenant Governor, State of Colorado

*“We are incredibly grateful to our AmeriCorps members who devote their time and effort to serve as mentors, helping students with math, reading and other knowledge they need to graduate ready for college and careers. For many schools across Colorado, AmeriCorps is a vital partner in our mission to ensure equity and opportunity for every student, every step of the way.” – Katy Anthes, Colorado Commissioner of Education*

### What can other States Learn from Colorado's Approach to Leveraging National Service?

- Promote collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Each state has a CNCS State Office and State Service Commission that provide AmeriCorps and Senior Corps resources. These agencies can bring national service expertise into discussions with elected officials, State Education Agencies, and other local leaders who have identified state education priorities. In Colorado, the CNCS State Office, State Service Commission, elected officials, State Capitol, and Department of Education were all engaged in the development national service solutions.
- Evaluate your state's current national service landscape to identify communities where the level of funding/resources may not match the need for additional education services. Colorado mapped the allocation of national service investments as a starting point for its discussions with local leaders.
- Align national service with your state's priorities/challenges. By evaluating the allocation of national service investments vs. unmet state education needs, Colorado identified early childhood education, high school graduation, and services for rural youth as needs that national service could be used to address.
- Prioritize areas in your state where the need is greatest. In Colorado, communities with the lowest graduation rates were prioritized for the development and implementation of AmeriCorps NCCC projects.
- Issues where a lack of manpower is a primary roadblock may be a good fit for national service. National service programs provide a low-cost, consistent, and recurring source of human capital.

## MINNESOTA



### National Service Supports Minnesota Schools

**AmeriCorps State & National:** More than 2,100 AmeriCorps State and National members in Minnesota are supporting students throughout the cradle to career pipeline. Members are engaged with students from the time they begin learning to the time they enter college, providing early learning, reading by 3rd grade, 8th grade math proficiency, high school completion, and college access services. Members are serving in more than 1,300 sites and across many focus areas including:

- Ready for Kindergarten: 624 AmeriCorps members
- 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency: 783 members
- 8th Grade Math Proficiency: 325 members
- High School Completion: 290 members
- College Admission: 81 members

**AmeriCorps VISTA:** Across the state, 70 VISTA members are currently serving in education-related positions with K-12 schools, community colleges, and after-school programs. VISTA members build the capacity of nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies to bring people out of poverty. In the education sector, VISTA members serve in K-12 and higher education settings. Activities include developing new programs, writing curricula, fundraising, building volunteer programs, forging partnerships, and designing evaluation systems. Their ultimate goals are to reduce poverty through increasing school engagement, retention, attendance, test scores, and graduation rates.

**Senior Corps:** Throughout Minnesota, there are 568 Foster Grandparent volunteers and 662 RSVP volunteers supporting academic achievement. Senior Corps volunteers serve students through two programs: Foster Grandparents and RSVP. Foster Grandparents work with students one-on-one in settings primarily including day cares, pre-schools, and K-12 schools. These students may be behind academically, have special needs, be considered at-risk, or suffer from abuse or neglect. RSVP volunteers provide a wide range of activities including tutoring and mentoring students or providing other needed volunteer services to schools.

### **Minnesota's Strategy for Using National Service to Improve Education Outcomes:**

#### Minnesota Reading and Math Corps

In 2002, ServeMinnesota worked with a Minnesota state legislator to better understand statewide education issues and develop ways to utilize national service as a strategy to address critical state needs. State legislator Alice Seagren, the Chair of the Minnesota House's K-12 finance committee, was interested in finding ways to improve the state's persistently low early literacy rates. She saw value in the unique capacity of AmeriCorps to provide a significant, consistent, and recurring source of human capital, and propose that the State Service Commission match the people power of AmeriCorps with a data-driven model designed by literacy experts to address reading challenges across the state.

In 2003, Minnesota's state legislature allocated \$150,000 to implement the new program, now known as Minnesota Reading Corps. The program began by working with students in Head Start. Following early success, it expanded to include K-3 reading programs in order to ensure Minnesota students were reading by 3rd grade. As school districts began to see the impact the program was making, and evaluations demonstrated the effectiveness of the program, Minnesota's state legislature increased appropriations, growing from \$150,000 in 2003 to nearly \$8 million in 2017. Since 2003, Minnesota Reading Corps has provided early intervention services to more than 200,000 age 3 – grade 3 students, and annually the program reaches approximately 30,000 students.

ServeMinnesota and the Minnesota Reading Corps work closely with the Minnesota Department of Education to implement the program across the state. Appropriations for Minnesota Reading Corps flow through the state education agency, which has included the program as part of its budget. The program works closely with the agency to understand its policy objectives and align priorities and resources with those objectives.

By using AmeriCorps members to implement an "out of the box" solution developed by literacy experts, the state legislature was able to achieve its goal of improving literacy without a significant additional cost burden on school districts. Following expansion in Minnesota, Reading Corps expanded nationally, and is now in 12 states and Washington D.C. serving in over 350 school districts across the country. Building on the success of the model, the Minnesota Math Corps was created in 2008 to help 8th graders prepare for and improve in algebra.

#### GradMinnesota and the Minnesota Alliance with Youth

GradMinnesota is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Governor's Office and the Minnesota Alliance with Youth. It is part of the GradNation campaign led by America's Promise Alliance to end the nation's dropout crisis. Using a collective impact approach, GradMinnesota helps stakeholders and the community work side-by-side to identify and address the challenges and opportunities around educational equity and successful high school graduation for all youth. Minnesota Alliance with Youth engages 220 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows who serve in middle schools, high schools, and community based organizations across the state to reduce high school dropout rates with interventions focused on attendance, behavior, and coursework.

Additionally, Minnesota Alliance for Youth supports VISTA members throughout Minnesota who enhance efforts of the Minnesota Department of Education including:

- Creating a map of Minnesota counties with the lowest high school graduation rates to enable

- organizations to target resources and services.
- Planning an event with the Department of Education to bring together community leaders to discuss the importance of integrating and supporting English Language Learners.
- Serving on GradMinnesota Advisory councils and other local community councils focused on improving graduation rates.

There is strong collaboration between GradMinnesota and the Minnesota Department of Education. The GradMinnesota VISTA member serving at the Alliance spends one day a week at the MN Department of Education.

#### What State Leaders are Saying About National Service

***“AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs are providing vital support to students across Minnesota. From kindergarten readiness and reading well by third grade, to high school graduation and college success, national service is a cost-effective strategy that is making a big difference in our state.”*** – Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Education

***“Reading Corps and Math Corps have not only helped our students to learn how to read and perform better in math, these AmeriCorps programs have also saved our district in special education costs.”*** – Dr. Julia Espe, Superintendent, Princeton Public Schools

#### Takeaways for Other States: What State Education Agencies, State Legislators, and other Public Officials can learn from Minnesota's Approach to Leveraging National Service

- Align national service with your state's education priorities and challenges. Governors, State education officials, and state legislators can work with their State Service Commissions and CNCS State Office to figure out how national service can be used to address critical education needs in the state. From Kindergarten readiness, reading by third grade, to high school graduation and college and career success, national service is a strategy that can be utilized to support students across the state.
- Using national service as a statewide solution can benefit multiple stakeholders:
  - State Education Agencies can add national service programs to their budget and/or leverage programs to advance their policy objectives,
  - Legislators can use national service to help create low-cost solutions to challenges they have identified,
  - And State Service Commissions can expand the reach and impact of their programs.
- Issues where a lack of people power is a primary roadblock may be a good fit for national service. National service programs provide a low-cost, consistent, and recurring source of human capital.
- Encourage participation by your state's education/policy experts when developing solutions. Bringing together knowledgeable experts and national service resources can lead to more sustainable, replicable, and impactful solutions.
- Look for programs that are scalable by using an existing evidence based approach/model or creating a new model that can be replicated by multiple schools across the state. Look for programs that are moving the needle for students and can be implemented across the state wherever they can help meet a need.
- Match the manpower of national service programs with your scalable solution. ServeMinnesota leveraged literacy experts to develop the model for Minnesota Reading Corps, and relied upon AmeriCorps members to implement the model in schools across the state. Reading Corps started as a small program and now tutors serve in over 900 elementary school and preschool settings across Minnesota.
- State Service Commissions and CNCS State Offices can serve as a bridge between schools, education policy experts, and legislators/public officials. When designing a national service solution, State Commissions and CNCS state Offices can act as an intermediary to convene multiple stakeholders while providing a depth of knowledge of national service programs.

# Appendix B: National Service Contacts for Each State

<b>Alabama</b> CNCS State Office Jacqueline Bishop 205-731-0030 al@cns.gov	Alabama Governor's Office of Volunteer Services Lisa Castaldo, Coordinator, Director 334-954-7444 lisa.castaldo@servealabama.gov <a href="http://www.servealabama.gov">http://www.servealabama.gov</a>	NCCC Southern Region 601-630-4040 NCCCSouthern@cns.gov
<b>Alaska</b> CNCS State Office Jennifer Moore 206-607-2603 ak@cns.gov	Serve Alaska Katie Abbott, Executive Director 907-269-6720 katie.abbott@alaska.gov <a href="http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/dcra/servealaska.aspx">http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/dcra/servealaska.aspx</a>	NCCC Pacific Region 916-640-0310 NCCCPacific@cns.gov
<b>American Samoa</b> CNCS State Office Derrick Ariyoshi 801-524-2832 DAriyoshi@cns.gov	The American Samoa Special Service Commission is currently inactive. For information on AmeriCorps grant opportunities in American Samoa please contact by email at AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov	NCCC Pacific Region 916-640-0310 NCCCPacific@cns.gov
<b>Arizona</b> CNCS State Office Kimberly Will 602-514-7171 az@cns.gov	Arizona Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism Bob Shogren, Executive Director 602-364-2248 bshogren@az.gov <a href="http://volunteer.az.gov">http://volunteer.az.gov</a>	NCCC Southwest Region 303-844-7400 NCCCSouthwest@cns.gov
<b>Arkansas</b> CNCS State Office Opal Sims 501-324-5234 ar@cns.gov	Arkansas Service Commission Will Roark, Executive Director 501-320-6137 WillRoark@DHS.Arkansas.gov <a href="https://www.volunteerar.org/AC-State-Programs">https://www.volunteerar.org/AC-State-Programs</a>	NCCC Southwest Region 303-844-7400 NCCCSouthwest@cns.gov
<b>California</b> CNCS State Office Laurie Cannady 310-893-2287 ca@cns.gov	California Volunteers Karen Baker, Chief Service Officer 916-323-7646 Karen.baker@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov <a href="http://www.californiavolunteers.org">http://www.californiavolunteers.org</a>	NCCC Pacific Region 916-640-0310 NCCCPacific@cns.gov
<b>Colorado</b> CNCS State Office Dan Dunlap 303-390-2212 CO@cns.gov	Serve Colorado Antonio Mendez, Executive Director 303-866-2524 antonio.mendez@state.co.us <a href="https://www.colorado.gov/servecolorado">https://www.colorado.gov/servecolorado</a>	NCCC Southwest Region 303-844-7400 NCCCSouthwest@cns.gov
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South Dakota does not currently have a commission. For information on AmeriCorps grant opportunities in South Dakota, please contact CNCS via email at AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov

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Information current as of December 2017. For most recent information see:

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- **State Service Commission:** [www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions)
- **NCCC Regional Office:** [www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/amicorps-nccc/sponsor-amicorps-nccc](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/amicorps-nccc/sponsor-amicorps-nccc)