Leveraging National Service in Your Schools

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

- Early Learning
- Mentoring Programs
- Tutoring
- Workforce Development
- College Access
- High School Completion
- Attendance Support
- STEM Programs
- After-School and Summer Programs

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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 in 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.

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 Corps members serve in schools, nonprofits, faith-based groups, local government agencies, and other community organizations to tackle pressing problems, including 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 Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and other volunteer programs.

Can School Districts Access This Resource?
Yes! AmeriCorps and Senior Corps national service programs allow schools, local education agencies (LEA’s), state education agencies (SEA’s), 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 identify 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 most AmeriCorps members typically 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. 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 improve school readiness, increase reading and math achievement, improve school attendance and behavior, and increase access to college and careers.
- Many students, particularly 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 a career in teaching.

Absenteeism & Math: Denver Public Schools’ Office of Family and Community Engagement runs the Family and Community Engagement Education Service Corps, an AmeriCorps program that provides attendance support and small-group math instruction to 6,000 students throughout the district. The Corps also leverages 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.

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 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 levels of students applying for post-secondary education and ACT composite scores. Prior to the programs 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 work done by AmeriCorps members.

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 student’s demonstrated improved academic engagement.
Is This Toolkit Relevant for State Education Agencies, Governors, Mayors, and State Legislators?
Yes! While this toolkit focuses on schools and school districts, most of the information is relevant for State Education Agencies, 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 entities for CNCS resources. As states work to implement their new Every Student Succeeds Act plans, they may want to 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.

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.

Learn more about how schools are utilizing national service in Appendix A.
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 varies 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 the year. 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:

1. **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.*)

   • Early learning
   • Mentoring
   • Tutoring
   • Family engagement
   • School climate
   • Service learning
   • STEM programs
   • After-school programs
   • Improving attendance
   • Social emotional learning
   • Wraparound services
   • Reading by 3rd grade
   • Classroom instruction
   • School turnaround
   • High school graduation
   • College access
   • Workforce development
   • Summer school
   • Community partnerships
   • Fundraising
   • Volunteer recruitment
   • Drug use prevention
   • Healthy habits (food and fitness)
   • Teacher training

2. **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, etc.).

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 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 includes a list of service locations. For each state, the Service Locations shows a comprehensive list of service locations, 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 resources. See Appendix B for contact information.
### Key questions to ask at each stage of the process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Determining Your Needs</th>
<th>Questions to Ask/Items to Consider</th>
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</table>
| 1. Review or conduct a comprehensive assessment of school and district-wide needs and assets. | • What are your goals/priorities for this year?  
  • What goals are you having trouble meeting?  
  • What goals are you seeing improvement in but would like to continue identifying innovative ways to accomplish?  
  • What services does your school need?  
  • Which are your highest need populations?  
  • What partners do you currently have, and what services do they provide? |
| 2. Prioritize needs that can be met through national service | • Which of your needs align with the people power provided by national service?  
  • Do any of your needs require one or more of the following?  
    • A sustained investment of time and resources that staff or volunteers may not be 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/or individualized support for students?  
    • Development of partnerships, fundraising, and/or outreach?  
    • Expansion of student services in a particular area?  
  • How can national service programs help you meet your needs? |
| 3. Determine the presence of national service participants in your area | • Are there national service participants in my school district?  
  o What services are they providing? Where?  
  o Can we expand the partnership to other schools?  
  • Are there national service participants in a nearby district?  
  o Can we bring those programs into our district?  
  o Can we gather feedback/advice from that district on how to implement national service programs?  
  • Are there national service participants in your state?  
  o Is there an opportunity to leverage statewide or multi-district national service projects?  
  o Does the State Education Agency have any opportunities for multi-district national service projects? |
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 are engaged in direct service. 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 helps improve the city’s high school graduation rate. Offered at 11 MPS school sites, SPARK Early Literacy Program uses AmeriCorps members to help boost the literacy skills of more than 750 K4 through 3rd grade students annually. The program operates during the school day in collaboration with the schools and classroom teachers.

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

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, a STEM curriculum, 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 between 15 and 40 hours a 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 STEM programs in 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.

AmeriCorps
• If you want a large number of people to actually do the tutoring (direct service) – AmeriCorps State and National could be a good fit.
• If you want a few people 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.
For more detailed information on each program, including eligibility and other criteria, see:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Project Criteria</th>
<th>Length of Project</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Other Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>AmeriCorps State and National</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Grant applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state and local governments.</td>
<td>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. Programs must provide matching funds (cash or in-kind) from 24 to 50% to help support the programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Project sponsors may be state or local agencies; nonprofit organizations (i.e., faith-based agencies, educational institutions, etc.), or tribal nations.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)</td>
<td>NCCC projects must meet the following criteria: address a compelling community need; have clearly stated and well planned tasks and objectives; 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 at least one full team NCCC teams are available to help community and faith-based organizations, national nonprofits, schools, local</td>
<td>Project sponsors are required to provide materials, specialized tools, orientation, training, and technical supervision. When teams are based</td>
<td>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.</td>
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Senior Corps: Foster Grandparent Program

To be considered for the Foster Grandparent Program, applicants will 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 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.

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 necessary. 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. (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, Florida, 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.

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 sixteen 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 1000 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: The City of Flint supports 55 AmeriCorps members to help increase attendance, improve third grade literacy, increase graduation rates, and make schools a resource in the community at eleven 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 originally 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 high school and attend college. 90 AmeriCorps members provide 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 impact 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 skill, reduce absenteeism, and get students on track for high school graduation. City Year Orland serves in seven Orange County schools and members reach more than 9,000 students.
- **Local Partners:** Collegiate Pathways uses AmeriCorps VISTA members to support its Tech Sassy Girlz program, which develops the next generation of female STEM leaders. The program engaged over 300 middle and high school girls in STEM activities and recruited over 300 hours of volunteer service to support STEM programming.

For a full profile of Orlando, see Appendix B.

**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 stakeholders and 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 achieve the schools’ school improvement goals. An implementation evaluation of the AmeriCorps School Turnaround program found that the program is perceived as contributing positively to achieving key outcomes, including improving students’ academic achievement and socioemotional health. For the full national evaluation, see [https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange/school-turnaround-final-report](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 elementary and middle schools across the city. Members work one-on-one or in small groups providing proven, data-driven models to students struggling with math and also provide fun science enrichment activities afterschool. Members follow a curriculum and conduct progress monitoring to ensure their students are proficient in algebra by the end of eighth grade.
Waynesville, School District: The Waynesville School District in Missouri utilizes over 70 AmeriCorps members who provide almost 68,000 hours of support to students in the district. Members provide academic tutoring to students, lead clubs and activities after school, develop community initiatives to support disadvantaged students, foster partnerships between community agencies, and promote economic development and growth. 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. 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% were 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 the State Service Commission
• Applying for AmeriCorps VISTA or Senior Corps – Contact the 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 Commissions 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 group that handles the distribution of grant funding and the grant management functions. State Service Commissions are also charged with encouraging volunteering 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 one pager “National Service Strengthens Education”
• The Service Year Alliance report on “How National Service Can Support Students in Low-Income Schools” 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://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.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/
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 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 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 planning, 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.
  o Members can apply to serve with organizations that interest them in specific geographic locations.
  o 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.
  o A full-time AmeriCorps member who successfully completes one full term of service will receive an education award equivalent to the Pell Grant. As of October 2017, this amount is approximately $5,980 after one service term. Individuals can earn up to two full-time education awards.
  o 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.
  o Members spend a significant amount of time serving at nonprofits or other community organizations on substantive assignments where they gain valuable work related skills.
  o For many members, AmeriCorps service is their first professional experience.
  o 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 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

Appendix A: Examples of How School Districts Are Leveraging National Service
This section highlights the ways that some urban and rural school districts across the country are using national service programs. The approaches taken by these districts can serve as examples for leveraging national service in your school, district, or state. The following are provided for each of the highlights:

• Quick facts
• The role that national service plays
• A few examples of national service programs
• Takeaways for other school districts interested in implementing national service

Appendix B: National Service Contacts for Each State
State contact information for CNCS State Offices, State Service Commissions, and NCCC regions.