

Task Force on Expanding NATIONAL SERVICE



Final Report to the President





January 15, 2015

Dear Mr. President,

In your Presidential Memorandum on Expanding National Service, you charged us with a specific goal to build on our country's longstanding tradition of citizen-led solutions: Bring together public- and private-sector partners to create more opportunities for Americans to participate in national service. Consistent with your charge, we convened a Task Force to carry out the vision you outlined in the Memorandum. Together, we focused on building partnerships that give more Americans the opportunity to serve and respond to pressing challenges in our nation; utilizing national service as a pipeline to employment both inside and outside the federal government; and facilitating participation in service and volunteerism through coordination, innovation, and recommended policy changes.

We are pleased to present you with this report describing recent partnerships that have committed up to \$35 million in additional resources to national priorities, which, when coupled with up to \$40 million invested by CNCS, have created approximately 4,500 opportunities to serve in AmeriCorps. Additionally, this report includes recommendations on what the Administration can do to build on this momentum and announces new commitments that expand national service.

Over the last year and a half, the Task Force's 18 participating agencies and offices worked together to determine how national service can help them achieve their agency's goals. Representatives of these agencies heard from AmeriCorps members, Senior Corps volunteers, and Peace Corps Volunteers about how service has affected them; from agencies that have already applied the power of AmeriCorps to their agency's mission; and from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) about how national service can be a flexible and effective delivery mechanism for work supporting agency missions.

First and foremost, the Task Force worked to create national service partnerships that would give more Americans the opportunity to serve and would apply the power of national service to an agency or Administration priority. To that end, CNCS and DPC met with the leadership of each of the participating agencies to discuss specific ideas about problems that national service can help solve.

For example, the Department of Justice (DOJ) shared its goals of creating a pipeline of public-service-oriented attorneys and protecting vulnerable populations. As a result of this dialogue, CNCS and DOJ created *justice AmeriCorps*. In its first year, *justice AmeriCorps* will engage approximately 100 AmeriCorps members as attorneys and paralegals who will work to enhance the effective and efficient adjudication of immigration proceedings involving certain children who have crossed the U.S. border without a parent or legal guardian. The agencies are planning the expansion of *justice AmeriCorps* next year to provide representation to additional vulnerable populations, including at-risk youth and victims of elder abuse.

Similarly, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), which was already working with CNCS on anti-hunger issues, shared its need within the U.S. Forest Service to address unmet conservation efforts and its desire to support the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. CNCS and USDA worked together to provide additional AmeriCorps members—primarily disadvantaged youth and veterans—to Forest

Service projects that had unmet needs. This partnership expands national service, contributes to USDA's mission, and is aligned with the Administration's My Brother's Keeper initiative.

These are just two examples of the interagency partnerships that were created or expanded as a result of the Task Force. In addition, the Task Force led to the creation of public-private partnerships, such as a new initiative funded by the Citi Foundation that will deploy approximately 230 AmeriCorps members to build a large-scale volunteer response to the crisis of low college and career attainment. The Task Force also inspired state-level efforts to expand national service, including a state task force on expanding service convened by the governor of Iowa.

In addition to the creation of partnerships to expand national service, the Task Force led to substantial improvements in the effort to utilize national service as a pathway to employment, including the Employers of National Service initiative that you announced at the White House on the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps and guidance from the Office of Personnel Management that is already being utilized by at least 20 federal agencies.

Perhaps most importantly, the Task Force highlighted overarching priorities that can serve as a guide as we continue the work to expand national service. Our vision is for national service to be seen across the federal government as a problem-solving tool that can be directed to various issues. For this reason, the first priority identified in this report is to cement national service as a problem-solving tool. We offer several recommendations on how to achieve this goal, including continuing to convene Task Force agencies and integrating service into several national initiatives.

Second, we recognize that resource constraints are a major barrier to expanding national service; therefore, our second priority is to pursue creative strategies to expand national service opportunities, including facilitating outreach to private sector funders.

Our third priority involves further expanding the pipeline to opportunity for national service participants. As was clearly stated in your Presidential Memorandum, participation in national service helps individuals prepare for long-term careers and often leads to continued public service. We offer recommendations, including increasing focus on career and recruitment and encouraging colleges and universities to match AmeriCorps' post-service education award, that will help national service members reach their education and employment goals.

Thank you for the commitment you have shown to national service throughout your Administration and for the opportunity to co-chair the Task Force on Expanding National Service. Though the Task Force has formally ended, we speak for many of our colleagues within government, our state-level partners, and our nonprofit allies when we say that we look forward to continuing the work directed by the Presidential Memorandum.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Muñoz
Assistant to the President and
Director of the Domestic Policy Council

Wendy Spencer
Chief Executive Officer of the
Corporation for National and Community Service

*Task Force on
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Executive Summary

AmeriCorps has changed the life of our nation. And now it's up to us to make sure it continues. Because we're not just here today to celebrate what's already been achieved. We're here to rededicate ourselves to the work that lies ahead.

- President Barack Obama, September 12, 2014

Overview

Over the last 20 years, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs have worked to solve difficult problems in communities across the country. Recognizing the value of national service, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA), enacted in 2009, focused the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS's) work on six areas of national importance. The SAA also encouraged CNCS to partner with other agencies and the private sector in order to direct national service toward issues being tackled elsewhere in government and society. President Obama furthered this directive by creating the Task Force on Expanding National Service.

Since that time, CNCS has collaborated with other federal agencies and private-sector partners to increase opportunities for service in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps and address our national priorities. Through recent partnerships, up to \$35 million in additional resources have been committed to national priorities, coupled with up to \$40 million invested by CNCS, which has created approximately 4,500 opportunities to serve in AmeriCorps. This report describes these advances, includes recommendations on what the Administration can do to build on this momentum, and announces new commitments that expand national service through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Peace Corps, including:

- A collaboration between CNCS and the Department of Transportation to encourage states to utilize their MAP-21 transportation funding to engage AmeriCorps youth and conservation service corps.
- A collaboration between CNCS and the Department of Health and Human Services to promote national service to health systems and their partners.
- A collaboration between CNCS and the Department of Education (ED) to showcase AmeriCorps to the 21st Century Community Learning Center grantee network.
- A collaboration with HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to develop and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding to support recently resettled refugees.

Background

In addition to the new announcements above, these early partnerships, which pre-dated the Task Force, demonstrated the possibilities of national service partnerships:

- FEMA Corps: AmeriCorps NCCC members provide critical support in disaster response and recovery at a cost that allows FEMA to meet its force strength needs while efficiently providing services to disaster survivors.
- Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps: The Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds AmeriCorps VISTA members focused on building anti-hunger and nutrition solutions at the local level through education and information services. Importantly, USDA is supporting AmeriCorps VISTA members in a fuller effort to support programs that build connections to employment and training services for participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- School Turnaround AmeriCorps: In partnership with ED, AmeriCorps members are placed in the nation's lowest performing schools where they work to boost student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates, complementing the ED's existing investments through School Improvement Grants.

These partnerships illustrated the opportunity for AmeriCorps to deliver cost-effective solutions to another agency's goals. For example, by training and deploying AmeriCorps members to supplement their existing reservist workforce, FEMA can reduce response and recovery costs during a disaster and save millions of dollars. Another example of cost-savings: The National Park Service found that utilizing conservation service corps for maintenance at parks saved 65 percent on average. Moreover, with the additional resources provided by other agencies, CNCS was able to provide the opportunities and benefits gained by serving with AmeriCorps to thousands of individuals. These AmeriCorps members:

- Contributed to solving a difficult problem.
- Served with others dedicated to improving their communities and their country.
- Gained valuable skills that could serve them well in future employment or education.
- Obtained an education award at the end of their term of service that could be applied to future education or student loans.

Recognizing the power of partnerships and cooperation to meet the missions of government agencies and the opportunity for service to transform the lives of participating individuals, President Obama created the Task Force on Expanding National Service in his Presidential Memorandum of July 15, 2013. The Task Force brought together representatives of the Departments of Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Treasury; the Peace Corps; the National Science Foundation; the Office of Personnel Management; the Environmental Protection Agency; and the White House Office of Cabinet Affairs.

Mission of the Task Force

Through the Presidential Memorandum, the Task Force was asked to:

- Identify existing, and, if appropriate, recommend new, policies or practices that support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities that align with the SAA and agency priorities;
- Make recommendations on the most effective way to coordinate national service and volunteering programs across the Federal Government;
- Identify and develop opportunities for interagency agreements between CNCS and other agencies to support the expansion of national service and volunteering;
- Identify and develop public-private partnerships to support the expansion of national service and volunteering;
- Identify and develop strategies to use innovation and technology to facilitate the ability of the public to participate in national service and volunteering activities; and
- Develop a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of national service and volunteering interventions in achieving agency priorities, and aggregate and disseminate the results of that evaluation.

In addition, the Task Force was charged to improve pathways to employment inside and outside the federal government for national service participants.

Summary of Findings and Accomplishments

Identify existing, and, if appropriate, recommend new, policies or practices that support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities that align with the SAA and agency priorities.

The report details several policies and practices that could be expanded or implemented to support the expansion of national service and volunteerism. These include facilitating increased use of the AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge in order to give more Americans the opportunity to participate in national service, expanding state and local engagement to create national service partnerships, continuing to work with other agencies to identify opportunities for national service partnerships, and creating a congressionally chartered Peace Corps foundation.

Make recommendations on the most effective way to coordinate national service and volunteering programs across the Federal government.

CNCS surveyed Task Force agencies about their existing service and volunteerism programs. Through this effort and consultation with participating agencies, CNCS identified opportunities for coordination and streamlining of efforts, especially in the recruitment of volunteers by federal agencies.

Identify and develop opportunities for interagency agreements between CNCS and other agencies to support the expansion of national service and volunteering.

The Task Force led to the creation of several interagency partnerships, including:

- justice AmeriCorps: A CNCS and Department of Justice (DOJ) partnership to engage AmeriCorps members as lawyers and paralegals to assist in the adjudication of immigration proceedings involving certain children who came to the United States without a parent or legal guardian.
- U.S. Forest Service Partnership: A CNCS and USDA partnership that connects youth and veterans as AmeriCorps members who will restore the nation's forests and grasslands as part of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps.
- Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps: A CNCS and DOJ partnership, aligned with My Brother's Keeper, to enroll hundreds of at-risk and formerly incarcerated youth as AmeriCorps members to provide increased skills-building opportunities and pathways to education and employment.
- Affordable Housing AmeriCorps: A partnership between CNCS and the Department of Housing and Urban Development that will engage 90 AmeriCorps VISTA members in affordable housing preservation and quality of life improvements.
- ORR Partnership: A proposed partnership between CNCS and ORR to support recently resettled refugees by coordinating services and expanding socioeconomic, health, and educational opportunities.
- Office of Surface Mining Partnership: An expansion of a Department of the Interior partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA to place 125 AmeriCorps VISTA members in underserved rural communities—including tribal communities—that have been impacted by environmental degradation.

The participation of the Peace Corps in the Task Force highlighted the synergies between service in AmeriCorps and service in the Peace Corps. CNCS and the Peace Corps have begun to look at areas where both agencies can work together, including recruitment, creating pathways to employment for alumni, and creating projects where Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) work alongside AmeriCorps members. The Task Force also brought to light the ways in which Peace Corps can partner with other federal agencies to utilize the skills of RPCVs to help achieve their mission.

In addition, the Task Force identified opportunities for the development of additional interagency partnerships by integrating national service as a strategy in priority initiatives.

Moreover, the Task Force inspired partnership efforts on the state level. The governor of Iowa has created a state-level task force on expanding service, and the governor of Washington state has issued an Executive Order calling on the state service commission to identify opportunities to expand national service.

Identify and develop public-private partnerships to support the expansion of national service and volunteering.

Engagement of the private sector through the Task Force yielded new and expanded partnerships with corporations, including:

- Aspire Mentoring Corps: A CNCS collaboration with AT&T and MENTOR that will support AmeriCorps VISTA members placed at MENTOR affiliates around the country. The AmeriCorps VISTA members will help build the capacity of local mentoring programs to engage with partners with a particular focus on mobilizing more private sector employee involvement in mentoring thousands of at-risk youth. This work will include coordination with AT&T's Aspire

initiative and other community partners engaged in the My Brother's Keeper initiative. The location of the AmeriCorps VISTA members will be announced at the 2015 National Mentoring Summit at the end of January.

- **Financial Opportunity Corps:** A CNCS partnership with Bank of America and Points of Light in which AmeriCorps VISTA members help launch and support proven financial coaching programs for low- and moderate-income families.
- **ServiceWorks:** A groundbreaking national service partnership with the Citi Foundation and Points of Light that engages opportunity youth, ages 16 to 24, who are enrolled in the program as a means to gain the leadership skills that will empower them to achieve career and educational goals and make positive changes in their communities.
- **Shriver Corps:** An AmeriCorps VISTA collaboration between CNCS, A Woman's Nation, LIFT, and Bank of America to support holistic services to help people get a job, a safe home, and a quality education for themselves and their children.

Identify and develop strategies to use innovation and technology to facilitate the ability of the public to participate in national service and volunteering activities.

The report includes recommendations around streamlining online recruitment of volunteers by federal agencies and continuing coordination with a technology platform for expanding service that is under construction by the Aspen Institute's Franklin Project.

Develop a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of national service and volunteering interventions in achieving agency priorities, and aggregate and disseminate the results of that evaluation.

CNCS's Office of Research and Evaluation is conducting evaluations of certain national service partnerships, including the School Turnaround AmeriCorps program. Once the results of this evaluation are available, they will be shared with the White House and Task Force agencies. Additionally, AmeriCorps State and National is implementing a tiered evidence approach in the 2015 grant competition, and CNCS is exploring collective impact models in gathering evidence.

Improve pathways to employment inside and outside the federal government for national service participants.

The Task Force also strengthened the pathway between national service participation and employment inside and outside the federal government. Through the Task Force, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued guidance about federal agencies' recruitment and hiring of national service alumni. At least 20 federal agencies are using OPM-approved language to bolster their recruitment of AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni. In addition, CNCS and its partner organizations created the Employers of National Service initiative which creates a talent pipeline that connects AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni to employers from the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. By providing opportunities for national service alumni to emphasize their valuable experience and skills during the hiring process, Employers of National Service connects employers in search of skilled workers with national service alumni that possess those skills.

Organizations that have signed on as charter members of Employers of National Service include:

- *Corporations:*
Amalgamated Bank, America Learns, Chemonics International, Civic Enterprises, Comcast and NBCUniversal, CSX, Disney, eLynx, Envision, Global Upside Inc., International Education Opportunities, McChrystal Group, the Mobile Majority, Red's Piggly Wiggly #242, Sonoma Raceway, Trojan Battery Company, Vacasa, VISIONS Service Adventures
- *State and local government entities and school districts:*
The cities of Nashville, TN, Newton, MA, and South Sioux City, NE; Coconino County, AZ; Cities of Service; Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service; Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism; Miami-Dade County Public Schools; ServeNebraska; Serve Washington; and Volunteer Tennessee
- *Federal government agencies:*
CNCS, Peace Corps, National Science Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Park Service, and the Office of Personnel Management
- *Nonprofit organizations:*
AIDS United, American Academy of Pediatrics California, American Red Cross, America's Service Commissions, AmeriCorps Alums, Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies, Atlas Corps, AVODAH, Be the Change Inc., Blue Valley Community Action, Camphill Communities of North America, Campus Compact, the Capital Good Fund, Center for Inspired Teaching, Citizen Schools, City Year, CitySquare, College Access Now, College Possible, CollegeCommunityCareer, Communities In Schools of Florida, Community Action of Nebraska, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, Dignity Health, Educational Enterprises, EducationWorks, the Franklin Project, Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Habitat for Humanity International, Heart of Los Angeles, Heifer International, IHS: The Institute for Human Services, Inter Tribal Sports Inc., Iowa Campus Compact, KaBOOM!, the Learning Lamp, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands, Manna Project International, Massachusetts Service Alliance, Michigan Nonprofit Association, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Conference on Citizenship, New Profit, Noble Network of Charter Schools, Northwest Community Action Partnership, Ohio Campus Compact, OneStar Foundation, Our House Inc., Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp, Points of Light, Radio Eye Inc., ReasoningMind, Senior Action Inc., Senior Services, the Service Collaborative WNY, ServiceNation, Southwest Wyoming Recovery Access Programs, Teach for America, Thresholds, Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation, United Way of Greenville County, United Way Worldwide, UP Education Network, Urban Teacher Center, US2020, Voices for National Service, Youth Service America, Youth Volunteer Corps, YWCA Adams County.

Through these new partnerships, CNCS created additional opportunities to engage more Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds as AmeriCorps members. In addition to the skills these AmeriCorps members acquire through their service, Employers of National Service helps create further opportunity for those who need it most.

The Path Forward

The Task Force accelerated the process of integrating national service as a solution to Administration and agency priorities. As the Task Force worked to address the mission outlined in the Presidential Memorandum, CNCS and DPC identified three overarching themes that we recommend as priorities for expanding national service moving forward. These priorities are to (1) cement national service as a problem-solving tool for government, (2) pursue creative strategies to increase national service opportunities, and (3) expand the pipeline to opportunity for national service participants.

It is our belief that efforts to expand national service and integrate service as a tool to address national needs can and should continue beyond the life of the Task Force. As summarized in the chart below, these three priorities and the corresponding recommendations reflect our suggested path forward to make the promise of expansion and integration of national service a reality.

Fig. 1: Priorities for Expanding National Service

Priority	Short-term Recommendations	Long-term Recommendations
Cement National Service as a Problem-Solving Tool for Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize CNCS Board of Directors to continue work of the Task Force Integrate national service into pressing priorities Utilize the skills of returned Peace Corps volunteers Utilize technology and coordination to expand and streamline national service and volunteer opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage interagency collaboration through the Volunteer Generation Fund
Pursue Creative Strategies to Increase National Service Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge in order to give more Americans the opportunity to participate in national service Explore expansion state- and local-level partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to align Federal Work Study community service placements with AmeriCorps positions Create a congressionally chartered Peace Corps foundation
Expand Pipeline to Opportunity for National Service Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Employers of National Service by identifying more public, private, and nonprofit employers that will commit to recruiting national service participants Increase participation in the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award Matching Program Implement a Record of Accomplishment for AmeriCorps participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase CNCS's focus on recruitment, skills development, and creating pipelines of opportunity Implement digital badging for AmeriCorps and Peace Corps programs as an indicator of skills gained through service

Conclusion

The Task Force on Expanding National Service provided an invaluable opportunity for national service programs to grow through partnership. With continued enthusiasm to “get things done for America,” CNCS and DPC look forward to building upon the accomplishments of the last 18 months in order to realize the full potential of service as a solution to national needs.

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Accomplishments and
Recommendations

Introduction

Through the spirit of civic engagement, volunteers and national service members are already responding to national needs, working to improve their communities, the lives of their fellow Americans, and their own skills and experience. The federal government has an important role to play in supporting, incentivizing, and directing the focus of these efforts to maximize impact. Harnessing the energy of Americans to serve their community and country is one tool to address some of our nation's most pressing challenges. Thus, supporting service and volunteerism contributes to the spirit of citizenship that makes America great and contributes valuable improvements to our nation.

For 20 years, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has been the federal agency tasked with supporting volunteerism and implementing national service programs. Participation in national service can develop hard and soft skills for members that translate directly to the workforce and to further education. Indeed, most AmeriCorps members feel they will be better equipped in the workforce after serving and that their service will benefit their future educational, professional, or civic endeavors. According to the 2011, 2012, and 2013 AmeriCorps exit surveys:

- Almost three-quarters of members reported that during AmeriCorps they figured out next steps in terms of school or career goals.
- More than three-quarters of members thought AmeriCorps would improve their chances of finding a job.
- More than three-quarters of members thought AmeriCorps would improve their performance at a future job.

Similarly, for more than 50 years, service in the Peace Corps has had positive benefits both for the nation and the individuals who commit to international service. As the preeminent international service organization of the United States, the Peace Corps sends Americans abroad to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world. Peace Corps Volunteers work at the grassroots level toward sustainable change that lives on long after their service—at the same time becoming global citizens and serving their country. When they return home, Volunteers bring their knowledge and experiences—and a global outlook—that enriches the lives of those around them.

Since 1994, 900,000 Americans have served through AmeriCorps providing more than 1.2 billion hours of service. Senior Corps engages more than 300,000 individuals in service per year. National service members are serving in about 11,700 public schools, and in 2013, AmeriCorps members managed or mobilized four million community volunteers.

The accomplishments of AmeriCorps members, Senior Corps participants, and Peace Corps Volunteers have been inspiring, and more people want to serve. The number of applications for AmeriCorps member positions far exceeds the number of available positions, and strong programs are seeking more AmeriCorps members than CNCS can fund. Similarly, under recent reform efforts to streamline the application process and introduce choice, the Peace Corps has seen historic numbers of applications, reaching a 22-year high for the agency and an increase in applications of more than 70 percent. Requests from host country governments exceed the number of Peace Corps Volunteers available to serve.

Recognizing the demand for national service, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA) called for the expansion of AmeriCorps and focused AmeriCorps programs on six areas of national importance: Education, Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures, Disaster Services, Environment, and Veterans and Military Families. In addition, the SAA gave CNCS broad authority to partner with other federal agencies to direct service programs to help meet their missions. In Peace Corps' 2014–2018 strategic plan, the agency articulates its goal and is taking strategic steps to increase the number of Volunteers serving annually to 10,000 by fiscal year 2018, which is consistent with the Peace Corps Act authority to maintain a corps of at least 10,000 individuals.

Since passage of the SAA, national service partnerships have demonstrated their value in helping achieve critical goals of other federal agencies. At the same time, these partnerships have directed additional resources to national service programs, thereby increasing the number of individuals who have the opportunity to serve in AmeriCorps. Early examples of interagency partnerships include:

- FEMA Corps: AmeriCorps NCCC members provide critical support in disaster response and recovery at a cost that allows FEMA to meet its force strength needs while efficiently providing services to disaster survivors.
- Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps: The Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds AmeriCorps VISTA members focused on building anti-hunger and nutrition solutions at the local level through education and information services. Importantly, USDA is supporting AmeriCorps VISTA members in a fuller effort to support programs that build connections to employment and training services for participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- School Turnaround AmeriCorps: In partnership with the Department of Education (ED), AmeriCorps members are placed in the nation's lowest performing schools where they work to boost student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates, complementing the agency's existing investments through School Improvement Grants.

During the same time, there has also been increased attention on the importance of national service both inside and outside the federal government. One example is the Aspen Institute's creation of the Franklin Project, which strives to drastically expand the number of service opportunities and make participation in a year of service an expectation for young Americans. The Franklin Project is developing a technology platform in collaboration with CNCS that could be a valuable tool in expanding service positions.

In addition, Cities of Service, a coalition of cities committed to using volunteer service to solve local challenges, has grown from 17 cities in 2009 to nearly 200 today. The Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service, with support from Cities of Service, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National League of Cities, generated participation from more than 1,700 mayors around the country in 2014. Moreover, the National Service Caucus in Congress reflects growing, bi-partisan support for national service.

On July 15, 2013, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum on Expanding National Service with the goal of identifying additional opportunities for national service partnerships, among other objectives.

Fig. 2: Timeline of National Service Expansion



This report details the accomplishments of the Task Force created by the Presidential Memorandum and outlines opportunities and recommendations for continuing the work of expanding national service and volunteerism. The report will:

- Discuss lessons learned through the Task Force’s work to expand national service.
- Detail accomplishments in expanding national service, including new interagency agreements and public-private partnerships that have been developed as a result of the Task Force.
- Identify opportunities for additional partnerships.
- Describe accomplishments in providing a path to employment for national service alumni.
- Make recommendations on how to continue progress in expanding national service and in increasing the impact of national service as a solution to address national needs.

Goals of the Task Force

As directed by the Presidential Memorandum, the Task Force on Expanding National Service sought to create partnerships that give more Americans the opportunity to serve and respond to pressing challenges in our nation. The Task Force also worked to improve national service as a pipeline to employment both inside and outside the federal government. In addition, Task Force agencies facilitated participation in service and volunteerism through coordination, innovation, and recommended policy changes. The following sections detail the results of this work, organized around three priorities for expanding national service moving forward: (1) cementing national service as a problem-solving tool for

government, (2) pursuing creative strategies to increase national service opportunities, and (3) expanding the pipeline to opportunity for national service participants. As the framework for the work that lies ahead, the report outlines both short- and long-term recommendations for how to achieve the three priorities.

Priority 1: Cement National Service as a Problem-Solving Tool for Government

Accomplishments in Cementing National Service

The Task Force provided an exceptional opportunity to begin the process of educating other federal agencies about the possibilities of partnering with AmeriCorps. CNCS and the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) held four Task Force meetings, in which representatives of these agencies heard from AmeriCorps members about how service has impacted them; from agencies that have already applied the power of AmeriCorps to meet their agency's mission; and from CNCS and DPC about how national service can be a flexible and effective delivery mechanism for the work they want to get done. CNCS also consulted individually with each of the agencies about what aspect of their mission national service could best address and held meetings with potential private sector partners. Although these meetings were productive and resulted in numerous partnerships, they also demonstrated how much more work needs to be done to raise awareness about what national service is and what it can do. The recommendations outlined here will serve to increase awareness and maintain an infrastructure to promote interagency partnerships.

Short-term Goals for Cementing National Service

Recommendation: Utilize CNCS Board of Directors to Continue Work of the Task Force

By statute, leaders of federal agencies, including the Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Interior, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and Defense; the Attorney General; the Director of the Peace Corps, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, serve as ex officio members of the CNCS Board of Directors. This structure provides a natural opportunity to continue the interagency collaboration conducted through the Task Force. As part of its work to address the Presidential Memorandum's charge to "develop opportunities for interagency agreements," CNCS should invite these leaders or their designees to at least one meeting of the Board of Directors per year in order to discuss alignment of agency efforts and potential national service growth through interagency partnerships.

Recommendation: Integrate National Service into Pressing Priorities

Due to the focus on national service created by the Presidential Memorandum, AmeriCorps has been seen as a potential avenue for addressing several recent Presidential priorities, including My Brother's Keeper and the Reach Higher initiative. Through AmeriCorps partnerships, other agencies and private-sector partners have been able to maximize their contribution to these initiatives. In fulfillment of the Presidential Memorandum's charge to "identify and develop opportunities for interagency agreements ... [and] identify and develop public-private partnerships," the Task Force recommends integrating national service partnerships as a potential tool to address current and future initiatives.

For example, CNCS utilized several partnerships to contribute to the My Brother's Keeper initiative by creating or supporting corps to engage youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. These partnerships included:

- Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps, which engages at-risk and formerly incarcerated youth as AmeriCorps members.
- The Aspire Mentoring Corps, which increases the capacity of mentoring programs to build cross-sector collaboration and expand mentoring opportunities to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The U.S. Forest Service partnership, which seeks to engage disadvantaged youth and veterans as AmeriCorps members on 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) conservation projects.

In addition to helping to meet the goals of My Brother's Keeper, these partnerships increased awareness of national service and promoted the idea that national service can be a problem-solving tool. CNCS is also contributing to the goals of the My Brother's Keeper initiative through the Senior Corps Foster Grandparent program, which is planning to award approximately \$2 million to grantees that will serve and engage Native Americans and Native Alaskans by recruiting seniors to provide academic enrichment and mentoring to children. As agencies and private sector entities look to make further contributions to My Brother's Keeper, they should consider whether a national service partnership can assist in achieving their goals.

Similarly, AmeriCorps VISTA is contributing to the Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative, which is helping the communities hardest-hit by the recession by coordinating federal investments to create stronger cooperation to spark economic growth. AmeriCorps VISTA members play a key role in the initiative by building the capacity of the participating communities to coordinate efforts and serve the most economically-disadvantaged residents.

In school years 2013-14 and 2014-15, USDA funded a cooperative agreement to support up to 40 AmeriCorps members serving with FoodCorps in schools in 13 states. Tasked specifically with building or maintaining school gardens, incorporating agricultural and food based nutrition education into the school's culture and curriculum, and supporting school food service personnel in procuring or promoting local and regional products for the school meal program, these national service members directly support implementation of the provisions provided in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. In addition, national service members are also responsible for designing projects that can be maintained long after their year of service has come to an end.

Moreover, AmeriCorps has been supporting the President's Educate to Innovate initiative by supporting nonprofits engaged in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education. National service programs like AmeriCorps are well-positioned to provide additional support to STEM education efforts by contributing to cross-sector collaboration in this space. This contribution could include AmeriCorps VISTA members who could provide capacity-building contributions like mapping current STEM education investments in a community, seeking to fill gaps in opportunities available to students, providing infrastructure to build coalitions across sectors, and fundraising to direct local philanthropy to where their investment would make the most impact. AmeriCorps members could also be deployed to provide the additional boots on the ground needed to address missing pieces in a community's STEM efforts.

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Administration for Community Living and CNCS signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 2014, which includes the goals of increasing the number of older adults and persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual and

developmental disabilities, engaged in national service and volunteering, and bolstering the ability of older Americans and people with disabilities to live independently at home with the supports they need and to participate fully in their communities.

National service partnerships could replicate these successes with other national initiatives. For example, CNCS is working with the Reach Higher initiative to expand national service in areas that increase college enrollment rates by providing AmeriCorps members to serve as college transition coaches and supportive agents for college preparation and the application process. Several existing AmeriCorps programs have extensive evidence basis for this type of intervention, including randomized controlled trial studies demonstrating their effectiveness. National service partnerships could also contribute to the President's Climate Action Plan by increasing AmeriCorps positions focused on energy efficiency, waste cleanup, infrastructure support, or other environmental efforts. In addition, the President's State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience recommended the creation of a community resilience initiative, a possibility that CNCS looks forward to exploring.

In general, when formulating new initiatives, agencies, this Administration, and future Administrations should consider the role that national service can play to fulfill a wide variety of goals. Although they are not intended as formal recommendations, the ideas in the chart below reflect conversations that arose through the Task Force and exemplify how national service can contribute to a number of pressing priorities.

Fig. 3: Examples of Ways National Service Can Support Administration Priorities

My Brother's Keeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members. • Form partnerships to provide mentoring and other services to opportunity youth.
Reach Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize AmeriCorps members to help with college applications and transition. • Align Work Study placements focused on college access with AmeriCorps.
Climate Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage AmeriCorps members to prepare communities to mitigate extreme weather.
Rural and Tribal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop AmeriCorps partnerships to engage and serve rural and tribal communities.
Veterans and Military Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage returning veterans as AmeriCorps members. • Develop partnerships to serve veterans and military families.
Women and Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize AmeriCorps partnerships to engage girls in technology and other STEM education efforts.
White House Conference on Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage more seniors in service and volunteerism, which promotes healthy aging.

Recommendation: Utilize the Skills of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Federal agencies and AmeriCorps programs should work to connect Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who have language, intercultural, and technical skills to service and volunteer opportunities that meet the needs of the increasingly multi-cultural and newly arrived immigrant and diaspora communities in this country.

Fig. 4: Examples of Ways RPCVs Can Address National Priorities

Refugee resettlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage partners, such as the International Rescue Committee, to support refugees as they settle in the United States.
Pathway to citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help immigrants on their path to citizenship.
Unaccompanied immigrant minors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with resettlement of the migrant children fleeing from Central America to the United States, as these children are typically from countries the Peace Corps serves. • Connect unaccompanied youth to services and provide other support following court proceedings, working closely with members of the newly created <i>justice AmeriCorps</i>.
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist people new to this country in navigating the health insurance system, or with health system strengthening needed in resource limited communities in this country.
Disaster Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust with immigrant communities affected by disaster and assist them in accessing disaster services.

Partnerships placing RPCVs in volunteer positions would reinforce the Administration’s focus on newly-arrived immigrant and diaspora communities and would further leverage the government investment in the Peace Corps by utilizing the skills gained through international service.

Recommendation: Utilize Technology and Coordination to Expand and Streamline National Service and Volunteer Opportunities

In the Presidential Memorandum, the Task Force was charged with making “recommendations on the most effective way to coordinate national service and volunteering programs across the Federal Government” and identifying “strategies to use innovation and technology to facilitate the ability of the public to participate in national service and volunteering activities.”

In order to meet these charges, the Task Force created a working group on innovation and technology and sought to understand the current landscape of service and volunteerism initiatives that are supported by federal agencies. Task Force agencies were asked to complete a survey listing their relevant service and volunteer initiatives, as well as policies, practices, technology tools, or grants that could be aligned with CNCS or other agencies. Eleven agencies completed the survey, and results suggest that some agencies have well-established, well-funded volunteer programs while others are looking for opportunities to increase volunteer engagement. For example, the Department of Justice (DOJ) runs a pro

bono legal program, Treasury supports Volunteer Income Tax Assistance counseling, and USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) rely on hundreds of thousands of volunteers to help care for public lands. HHS provides grants to states to train older volunteers who are designated to represent the Office of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, to investigate and resolve complaints, and serve as a resource to residents of long-term care facilities.

As the federal agency charged with promoting service and volunteerism, and the leader of President Obama’s national call to service initiative United We Serve, it is integral to CNCS’s mission to promote volunteer opportunities to the public. CNCS utilizes Serve.gov to call on all Americans to participate in their communities. United We Serve seeks to engage new volunteers in the work of existing organizations and encourage volunteers to develop their own “do-it-yourself” projects. The Federal Interagency Team on Volunteerism (FITV) maintains Volunteer.gov, a portal for natural and cultural resources volunteer opportunities. Although many federal agencies include a volunteer page on their agency website, a volunteer portal with opportunities presented by multiple federal agencies may create unnecessary competition with Serve.gov. The Task Force recommends consolidating volunteer.gov into serve.gov. If consolidating the websites is not feasible, at the least, the volunteer opportunities on both websites should be integrated in order to streamline efforts and provide a better product to the American public.

CNCS is also identifying ways to utilize technology to fund additional national service positions. In their effort to encourage every young person to commit to a year of service, the Franklin Project developed and is currently beta testing an online marketplace that will bring together young people seeking service positions, organizations seeking service members, and funders looking to support these efforts. The technology platform, which will include AmeriCorps positions, can serve as a valuable tool to increase private sector support and raise the prominence of national service. CNCS is working with the Franklin Project to ensure that the marketplace contributes to the Administration’s goal of expanding national service.

Long-term Goals for Cementing National Service

Recommendation: Encourage Interagency Collaboration through the Volunteer Generation Fund

The Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF), administered by CNCS, supports efforts that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skills-based volunteers, and develop strategies to effectively use volunteers to solve problems. As part of the Presidential Memorandum’s charge to recommend ways to coordinate volunteering programs, the Task Force encourages exploration of the use of the VGF as a delivery mechanism for agencies that currently run—or wish to support—volunteer initiatives. This alignment would allow federal agencies to coordinate their volunteerism efforts with those of CNCS while maintaining VGF’s focus on skills-based volunteering and improving volunteer management practices.

For example, with additional resources from agencies supporting efforts to engage STEM professionals as volunteers, CNCS can prioritize those funds in the VGF competition for STEM volunteerism efforts. VGF grantees already working in this space include the Kansas Volunteer Commission (KVC), which is launching the Kansas STEM Mentoring Initiative to increase the number of STEM mentors serving Kansas youth. In partnership with the Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas Mentors, the KVC is awarding five sub grants to local youth serving programs and local education agencies to implement and expand STEM mentoring programs.

Priority 2: Pursue creative strategies to increase national service opportunities

Central to the goal of expanding national service is the need to pursue creative strategies to increase national service opportunities and volunteering opportunities. Partnerships between CNCS and other partners mean that AmeriCorps can assist with meeting the partnering organization's goals, while also providing additional opportunities for Americans to serve.

Accomplishments in Creative Strategies

Interagency Partnerships

Through the structure of the Task Force, CNCS has consulted with each of the named federal agencies about opportunities to form interagency agreements (IAAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) that create and support new AmeriCorps initiatives. Prior to the Task Force, CNCS entered into IAAs with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), ED, and USDA. During the 18 months of the Task Force, CNCS entered into IAAs with DOJ, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and created other collaborations with USDA's U.S. Forest Service and DOI. CNCS is working with the Peace Corps to engage returned Peace Corps volunteers in partnerships where their skills can be utilized, and the Peace Corps often recommends service domestically through AmeriCorps to potential applicants where it would be a good fit.

For example, CNCS and DOJ launched *justice AmeriCorps* to increase national service opportunities while enhancing the effective and efficient adjudication of immigration proceedings involving certain children who have crossed the U.S. border without a parent or legal guardian. The partnership is a grant program that will:

- Respond to Congress's direction to DOJ's Executive Office for Immigration Review "to better serve vulnerable populations such as children and improve court efficiency through pilot efforts aimed at improving legal representation."
- Enroll approximately 100 AmeriCorps members as lawyers and paralegals to provide legal services to the most vulnerable of these children.
- Help identify unaccompanied immigrant children who have been victims of human trafficking or abuse to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those who perpetrate such crimes on those children.

In September 2014, DOJ and CNCS jointly announced that the grants would be awarded to Equal Justice Works, Casa Cornelia Law Center, Catholic Legal Services of Miami, Legal Services of South Central Michigan, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, the New York Immigration Coalition, and the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Their programs serve children in immigration court locations in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Las Vegas, Miami, New York, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, and Seattle.

CNCS also worked with DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create a partnership called *Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps*. The program, which totals up to \$9 million over three years, will enroll at-risk and formerly incarcerated youth in national service projects sponsored by the AmeriCorps program. The program hopes to engage as many as 850 youth over a three-year period, allowing them to participate in a variety of direct service activities.

CNCS and HUD have developed an AmeriCorps VISTA partnership, *Affordable Housing AmeriCorps*, focused on ensuring that affordable housing remains accessible for Americans in poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA members will build the capacity of nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations to assist, inform, educate, and engage tenants living in privately-owned, HUD-assisted properties when they are at risk of losing affordability protections or rental assistance. Moreover, AmeriCorps VISTA members will provide crucial quality of life support to residents of these properties, which could include development of community gardens; childcare, tutoring, or public safety programming; and other supports that may help families achieve self-sufficiency.

In July 2014, USDA and CNCS announced a landmark new partnership between **AmeriCorps and the USDA's Forest Service** that connects youth and veterans with service opportunities to restore the nation's forests and grasslands. Up to \$3.7 million in joint funding will provide resources for both AmeriCorps grantees and member organizations of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to support 300 new AmeriCorps members serving in U.S. forests and grasslands.

A partnership between **DOI and CNCS** will put 125 AmeriCorps VISTA members in some of our nation's most underserved and impoverished communities. The partnership, which involves up to \$2.7 million over a two-year commitment, includes five of DOI's bureaus: the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with assistance from the USDA 1994 Tribal Land Grant Colleges and Universities Program, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The AmeriCorps VISTA members will work with DOI Bureaus and local non-profits in 32 states and territories to address the root causes of poverty and protect America's natural resources, heritage, and tribal cultures. This partnership reflects the goals of both the President's Task Force on Expanding National Service and DOI's Youth Initiative focusing on preparing the next generation of leaders.

HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and CNCS have developed a partnership that will assist with the integration of refugee populations being resettled into the United States through national service opportunities. We envision that the partnership will increase engagement with refugee communities and facilitate the coordination of services for refugees at the local level. Working with faith-based and other refugee-serving organizations, we aim to develop a pipeline of former refugees participating in public service while expanding socioeconomic, health, and educational opportunities for the recently resettled refugees being served in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. This initiative further supports the Administration's efforts to promote refugee and immigrant integration, particularly with the recent Presidential Memorandum—Creating Welcoming Communities and Fully Integrating Immigrants and Refugees—which created a White House interagency task force on new Americans.

Fig. 5: Interagency Partnerships to Expand National Service

<p>justice AmeriCorps</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> DOJ <i>Partner investment:</i> up to \$2 million per year <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~100 per year</p>	<p>Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> DOJ <i>Partner investment:</i> up to \$3 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~850</p>	<p>Affordable Housing AmeriCorps</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> HUD <i>Partner investment:</i> up to \$2 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> 90</p>
<p>Forest Service AmeriCorps Partnership</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> USDA <i>Partner investment:</i> ~\$2 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~300</p>	<p>DOI AmeriCorps VISTA Partnership</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> DOI <i>Partner investment:</i> up to \$1 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> 125</p>	<p>ORR AmeriCorps Partnership</p> <p><i>Partnering agency:</i> HHS <i>Partner investment:</i> TBD <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> TBD</p>

Promotion and Public Engagement Agreements

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), administered by the Department of Transportation (DOT), gives states the authority to use DOT funding to engage youth service and conservation corps to perform projects such as constructing and maintaining scenic byways, recreational trails, bicycle transportation, and pedestrian walkways. Utilizing this authority, the California Department of Transportation gives priority in the selection and funding of projects to agencies that engage or partner with conservation corps, many of which are AmeriCorps programs. These corps are capable of completing a wide range of project work, including tree planting along roadways and in medians, trail construction, creating walkways, and installing wildlife fencing along highways. These projects provide skills to the participants and help them move into jobs and careers in the transportation field. CNCS and DOT are working together to find ways to further incentivize this use of MAP-21 funds by encouraging state agencies that administer MAP-21 funding to coordinate with conservation corps and state service commissions.

ED has committed to working with CNCS to showcase AmeriCorps to the 21st Century Community Learning Center grantee network. Through webinars, conferences, and other engagement tools, ED and CNCS will highlight strategies for grantees to effectively develop high quality STEM education programs. Similar opportunities exist elsewhere at ED. State or Local Education Agencies could work with CNCS or their State Service Commission to identify or create evidence-based tutoring programs that would help achieve the goals of the Department of Education and would expand national service opportunities.

HHS will work with CNCS to promote AmeriCorps to hospital health systems and their partners that are implementing community health development strategies. With resources from the hospitals, AmeriCorps members could be placed in communities to connect patients to critical resources outside the health system that can support healthy living, map community resources, conduct education efforts, build coalitions of community resource providers, and other efforts.

HUD's regular Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provides communities with annual formula funding that can be used to address a wide range of community and economic development. Supplemental CDBG Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) assistance (when appropriated by Congress) provides flexible grants to help cities, counties, and states recover from natural disasters or extreme weather and assist in addressing climate change. States and communities could collaborate with state service commissions and CNCS state offices to use available CDBG or CDBG-DR funding to sponsor AmeriCorps projects that support cost-effective efforts to support recovery and resilience in areas in need.

HHS's Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (DCVMRC) will continue to encourage Medical Reserve Corps leaders to investigate the use of AmeriCorps members to support their local activities. As part of this effort they catalog and share stories/best practices of existing engagement with AmeriCorps members.

Public-Private Partnerships

In August 2013, CNCS joined with Bank of America and Points of Light to launch *Financial Opportunity Corps*, an AmeriCorps VISTA project that provides financial coaching to nine communities around the nation. The Financial Opportunity Corps mobilizes AmeriCorps VISTA members and community volunteers to deliver financial coaching and asset-building services in economically disadvantaged communities. The program helps community members increase their financial knowledge and develop strategies to reduce debt, improve credit, start saving for emergencies, access benefits, and build assets.

ServiceWorks—powered by AmeriCorps, the Citi Foundation, and Points of Light—is a groundbreaking, national program that uses volunteer service as a strategy to help 25,000 low-income youth and young adults in 10 cities develop the skills they need to prepare for college and careers. With the help of an investment of up to \$10 million, approximately 230 AmeriCorps members will deploy over three years and engage youth, age 16–24, in service and build a large-scale volunteer response to the crisis of low college and career attainment. The young people—in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Newark, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C.—will receive training in critical 21st-century leadership and workplace skills, the chance to build their networks and connections to their communities, and the opportunity to use their new skills by participating in and leading volunteer service projects. Thousands of professionals—including Citi employees—will participate as volunteer mentors and trainers.

In support of the President's My Brother's Keeper initiative, AT&T joined with CNCS in July 2014 to announce a public-private collaboration to strengthen mentoring. As part of the company's *Aspire* initiative—a \$350 million commitment focused on high school success and workforce readiness for students at risk of dropping out of school—AT&T and CNCS launched *Aspire Mentoring Corps*. Powered by AmeriCorps, AT&T, and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, the program will place seven AmeriCorps VISTA members in regions around the country and expand programs that engage thousands of at-risk youth in mentoring activities.

In July of 2014, CNCS, A Woman's Nation, LIFT, and Bank of America collaborated to create *Shriver Corps*—an AmeriCorps VISTA initiative honoring the legacy of Sargent Shriver on the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty. With the support of a \$500,000 contribution from Bank of America, 20 AmeriCorps VISTA members will be placed in LIFT's regional offices in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC to recruit volunteers and develop processes to support LIFT's efforts

over the long-term. LIFT strives to lift people out of poverty for good by connecting community members to volunteers who provide holistic services that help people get a job, a safe home, and a quality education for themselves and their children.

Fig. 6: Public-Private Partnerships to Expand National Service

<p style="text-align: center;">Financial Opportunity Corps</p> <p><i>Funding partner:</i> Bank of America <i>Partner investment:</i> \$1.5 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~60</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ServiceWorks</p> <p><i>Funding partner:</i> Citi Foundation <i>Partner investment:</i> \$10 million total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~230</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Aspire Mentoring Corps</p> <p><i>Funding partner:</i> AT&T <i>Partner investment:</i> TBD <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~TBD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shriver Corps</p> <p><i>Funding partner:</i> Bank of America <i>Partner investment:</i> \$500,000 total <i>AmeriCorps members:</i> ~40</p>

Evaluation of National Service Partnerships

CNCS is dedicated to assessing the implementation and outcomes of service interventions on both the beneficiaries and national service participants. The agency continually seeks to build evidence about how these new partnership programs are implemented and the extent to which they achieve intended results. For example, the 2014 and 2015 AmeriCorps grant competitions have featured a tiered evidence approach to assess applicants through which points were awarded based on the strength of the evidence provided. Thirty percent of applicants who were funded in the 2014 competition met the two highest evidence tiers.

CNCS, in its partnerships and its assessment of evidence, is also attuned to collective impact models. CNCS's involvement in the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative, AmeriCorps VISTA participation in the Promise Zone Initiative, and Operation AmeriCorps are all placed-based partnerships between federal government, local governments, and communities. Measuring and recognizing success in these ventures could involve measuring improvements in key metrics resulting from complex partnerships and collective efforts.

In order to address the Presidential Memorandum's charge to "develop a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of national service and volunteering interventions in achieving agency priorities," CNCS's Office of Research and Evaluation will conduct evaluations of certain national service partnerships, including the School Turnaround AmeriCorps program, which just completed its planning year and has started its first year of data collection. Though it is too early to glean findings from these evaluations, CNCS and its partners will use the lessons learned from these studies to ensure we are making smart investments.

Short-term Goals for Creative Strategies

The recommendations below, and the long-term goals that follow, represent the Task Force's response to the Presidential Memorandum's charge to develop "policies or practices that support the expansion of

national service and volunteer opportunities that align with the SAA and agency priorities.” These recommendations would build upon existing work to engage federal agencies and other organizations in the expansion of service and volunteerism. For example, agencies including DOI, ED, and the Environmental Protection Agency allow their funds to be used to meet the cost-sharing requirements of AmeriCorps grants.

Recommendation: Expand the AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge in order to give more Americans the Opportunity to Participate in National Service

The AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge encourages applicants and their funding partners to develop proposals to address community needs by engaging AmeriCorps members. Through the challenge, applicants apply for Education Award Program grants from CNCS, through which CNCS supports education awards for successful applicants while the sponsoring organization covers operations and living allowance costs. This process allows AmeriCorps to grow without placing significant resource burdens on the agency. CNCS should explore ways to increase the frequency of review of Education Award Program applicants and should develop proposals to streamline the application process in order to increase use of the AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge.

The AmeriCorps Partnerships Challenge could work in conjunction with colleges and universities that support students completing a year of service before matriculation (“1+4”) or after graduation (“4+1”). For example, Tulane University has created a 4+1 AmeriCorps Fellows Program whereby Tulane supports students engaging in a year of service through AmeriCorps VISTA.

The Franklin Project and the National Conference on Citizenship are encouraging additional institutions of higher education to create similar programs. For example, these groups—as part of the National Service Alliance—are running an innovation challenge for institutions of higher education. The challenge, which is making \$100,000 in prize money from the Lumina Foundation available, encourages colleges and universities to design a service year program at their school. Creating a simplified way for these institutions to align their efforts with existing national service programs may be a good way to expand service opportunities and contribute to the Franklin Project’s goal of making a year of service an expectation for young Americans.

Recommendation: Explore Expansion of State- and Local-Level Partnerships

AmeriCorps programs work in conjunction with a network of governor-appointed State Service Commissions in each state. The state commission infrastructure can be a powerful driver of national service expansion at the state and local level. For example, many federal agencies distribute their funds in formula grants to states. In these situations, partnering at the federal level is not feasible, but agencies can encourage states to utilize those funds to support national service programs by working with their State Service Commission. Moreover, CNCS’s state offices can expand Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA programs in their communities.

In an effort to deploy national service programs on behalf of state goals, the Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad, created the Governor’s Council on National Service in Iowa, a Task Force on Expanding National Service, led by Iowa’s State Service Commission. The Council is working to identify policies, develop partnerships, and use technology to expand opportunities for citizens to meet critical needs through service.

In Washington, Governor Jay Inslee charged the state service commission with identifying new policies or practices that will lead to the expansion of national service opportunities in Washington and support the President's Task Force on Expanding National Service. In order to maximize growth efforts on the state level, states could replicate the efforts of Iowa and Washington or include their strategy for expanding national service in their state service plans.

State legislatures in 2013 appropriated more than \$17 million in funding to Senior Corps grantees in 19 states. These state funds supplement the federal investment, and are often designated for grantees to:

- Augment the federal investment, so that the project can enroll more volunteers to serve more clients in Senior Corps' Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs
- Help the grantees meet the required non-federal share of their grants
- Assist with administrative support, including staff.

For example, in Syracuse, NY, the school board approved funding to place a Senior Corps Foster Grandparent volunteer in every first and second grade classroom starting in the fall of 2014. These 131 Senior Corps volunteers are supported by \$350,000 in local funding and are bringing a valuable new resource into the city's schools. CNCS is working with partners on the ground to set this new effort on a path to success.

CNCS also wants to promote national service as a problem-solver on the local level. As part of a new initiative, Operation AmeriCorps, CNCS is seeking to partner with governments of U.S. cities, counties, or towns; federally-recognized Tribes; Territories; and school boards to engage AmeriCorps members as the transformative catalyst to address a pressing problem. Leaders (a tribal leader, mayor, county executive, or other chief executive of a locality) will identify a high priority local issue that AmeriCorps members can address in a comprehensive way in a relatively short period of time (no more than two years). Operation AmeriCorps, which advances the Administration's Ladders of Opportunity agenda, will support place-based and ambitious solutions to community problems.

Another example can be found with the DCVMRC which developed a cooperative agreement with the National Association of County and City Health Officials that provides capacity-building awards to Medical Reserve Corps units. One focus area of the awards is related to the engagement of AmeriCorps members to expand their service to meet critical needs in community empowerment, capacity building, and sustainable solutions that surround poverty.

Moving forward, CNCS should increase engagement of state service commissions in order to assist efforts to expand national service on the state level. Moreover, CNCS should work with the National Governor's Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, and Cities of Service to identify and implement state and local partnerships that respond to pressing needs and expand opportunities to serve.

Long-term Goals for Creative Strategies

Recommendation: Identify Ways to Align Federal Work Study Community Service Placements with AmeriCorps Positions

AmeriCorps can help students finance the costs of postsecondary education. In addition to a post-service education award, AmeriCorps members receive a living stipend during their service. Students can also

work during their education through the Federal Work Study (FWS) program. FWS provides funds for employment to help eligible students finance the costs of postsecondary education. Students can receive FWS funds at approximately 3,400 participating postsecondary institutions. Students may be employed by the institution itself; a federal, state, or local public agency; a private nonprofit organization; or a private for-profit organization.

Institutions must use at least seven percent of their Work-Study allocation to support students serving in community service jobs, including reading tutors for preschool age or elementary school children; mathematics tutors for students enrolled in elementary school through ninth grade; literacy tutors in a family literacy project performing family literacy activities; or emergency preparedness and response. CNCS and ED are exploring additional ways to engage institutions of higher education to support community service through FWS and contribute to expanding national service. For example, CNCS could work to ensure that, to the extent possible, FWS students in community service work study positions work on projects with an active AmeriCorps presence, which would help ensure that students engaged in community service with FWS funds would be serving in programs that are tied to a national effort that emphasizes measuring evidence and impact. FWS students could focus their service on activities that lead to improved education outcomes generally, such as reading, math, and literacy tutoring or activities that improve college access.

In addition, CNCS can work with ED to ensure that individuals who pursue community service after completing their education know about the various income-based repayments and loan forgiveness opportunities. These programs help eliminate student loan debt as a reason not to pursue community or public service after completing college.

Recommendation: Create a Congressionally Chartered Peace Corps Foundation

Congressionally chartered foundations (CCFs) have proven to be useful tools to develop public-private partnerships. Peace Corps is developing a plan to create a Peace Corps Foundation. It is examining various CCF models including the governance, structure, and lessons learned from organizations such as the CDC Foundation, USDA Foundation, EPA Foundation, National Park Service Foundation, and others. This proposed foundation would raise funds to further the Peace Corps Act. The benefits of such an entity include the fact that it would: a) allow partners greater flexibility and the ability to support the Peace Corps' mission through a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, b) avoid conflicts of interest, c) reduce the time and level of effort to engage prospective donors, d) simplify the donation and due diligence processes, e) provide the infrastructure needed to maximize fundraising, f) have an affiliation with a government agency yet with an independent status, and g) require limited or no appropriated funds from Congress as its funding would come from private sector donations, and h) be a private charitable nonprofit foundation with broad fundraising mandate unencumbered by federal agency regulations. Congressional endorsement would play an important role in validating the mission and vision of a Peace Corps Foundation.

In the future, CNCS could explore whether a similar congressionally chartered foundation to support AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and the National Service Trust would be viable and beneficial.

Priority 3: Expand Pipeline to Opportunity for National Service Participants

National service can develop hard and soft skills that can make AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni assets for government agencies, organizations, and companies seeking high-quality employees. For this reason, service in AmeriCorps and Peace Corps can build a pipeline to employment. Task Force agencies created a working group on expanding this pipeline, and as directed by the Presidential Memorandum, CNCS and the Peace Corps worked with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and other Task Force agencies to expand opportunity for national service participants through OPM guidance and input from potential employers.

Development of new corps through interagency partnerships has also expanded the pipeline to opportunity. For example, at least 25 FEMA Corps members have been hired by FEMA after their AmeriCorps service.

Accomplishments in Expanding Pipeline

Office of Personnel Management Guidance

On November 15, 2013, the Director of the OPM, Katherine Archuleta, issued a memorandum for agency heads and Chief Human Capital Officers that articulates recruitment guidance for national service participants. The memorandum outlines several recruiting strategies, including:

- Working with CNCS to conduct outreach and publicize to national service alumni regarding open positions.
- Using the "Spotlight" feature on USAJobs.gov to attract national service participants.
- Educating human resource managers and other agency hiring managers about the value of national service experiences.
- Educating national service alumni on how to find and apply for federal jobs.

On July 22, 2014, Director Archuleta issued additional guidance to promote the value of national service experience in hiring decisions. This guidance will help federal agencies recruit and hire AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni by providing standardized language to be included in job opportunity announcements that encourages the inclusion of national service and volunteer experience as part of an applicant's qualifications. The standard language states:

Experience refers to paid and unpaid experience, including volunteer work done through National Service programs (e.g., Peace Corps, AmeriCorps) and other organizations (e.g., professional; philanthropic; religious; spiritual; community, student, social). Volunteer work helps build critical competencies, knowledge, and skills and can provide valuable training and experience that translates directly to paid employment. You will receive credit for all qualifying experience, including volunteer experience.

At least 20 agencies are already using versions of this language in thousands of individual job postings on USAJobs.gov.

Employers of National Service

We want to do more to help talented national service members find good jobs after they wrap up their service. And that's the idea behind an initiative we're announcing today called Employers of National Service. [...] If you're an employer who wants to hire talented, dedicated, patriotic, skilled, tireless, energetic workers – look to AmeriCorps, look to the Peace Corps. [...] Citizens who perform national service are special. You want them on your team.

- President Obama, September 12, 2014

In cooperation with the Peace Corps, the Franklin Project, and AmeriCorps Alums, CNCS is leading an initiative that encourages public, private, and nonprofit employers to create recruitment, hiring, and advancement opportunities for alumni of AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps. Employers of National Service, announced by President Obama on September 12, connects employers in search of skilled workers with national service alumni that possess those skills. As part of the initiative employers are taking specific steps to recruit national service alumni by providing an opportunity – such as a check box on a job application – for people who served in AmeriCorps and Peace Corps to highlight their service experience during the hiring process. Although all employers participating in this initiative are taking steps to emphasize national service experience during the hiring process, some Employers of National Service have also taken the additional step of providing special hiring consideration for national service alumni including guaranteeing an interview to any minimally qualified AmeriCorps or Peace Corps alumnus or including the resumes of all qualified national service alumni as part of the list of recommended candidates that hiring managers receive.

Employers of National Service benefits both employers and AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni. Participating employers can more easily locate a pool of highly-qualified and mission-oriented individuals. National service alumni have an improved pipeline to employment and the opportunity to apply their skills in the workplace.

Organizations that have signed on as charter members of Employers of National Service include:

- *Corporations:*
Amalgamated Bank, America Learns, Chemonics International, Civic Enterprises, Comcast and NBCUniversal, CSX, Disney, eLynx, Envision, Global Upside Inc., International Education Opportunities, McChrystal Group, the Mobile Majority, Red's Piggly Wiggly #242, Sonoma Raceway, Trojan Battery Company, Vacasa, VISIONS Service Adventures
- *State and local government entities and school districts:*
The cities of Nashville, TN, Newton, MA, and South Sioux City, NE; Coconino County, AZ; Cities of Service; Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service; Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism; Miami-Dade County Public Schools; ServeNebraska; Serve Washington; and Volunteer Tennessee
- *Federal government agencies:*
CNCS, Peace Corps, National Science Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Park Service, and the Office of Personnel Management

- *Nonprofit organizations:*
AIDS United, American Academy of Pediatrics California, American Red Cross, America's Service Commissions, AmeriCorps Alums, Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies, Atlas Corps, AVODAH, Be the Change Inc., Blue Valley Community Action, Camphill Communities of North America, Campus Compact, the Capital Good Fund, Center for Inspired Teaching, Citizen Schools, City Year, CitySquare, College Access Now, College Possible, CollegeCommunityCareer, Communities In Schools of Florida, Community Action of Nebraska, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, Dignity Health, Educational Enterprises, EducationWorks, the Franklin Project, Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Habitat for Humanity International, Heart of Los Angeles, Heifer International, IHS: The Institute for Human Services, Inter Tribal Sports Inc., Iowa Campus Compact, KaBOOM!, the Learning Lamp, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands, Manna Project International, Massachusetts Service Alliance, Michigan Nonprofit Association, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Conference on Citizenship, New Profit, Noble Network of Charter Schools, Northwest Community Action Partnership, Ohio Campus Compact, OneStar Foundation, Our House Inc., Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp, Points of Light, Radio Eye Inc., ReasoningMind, Senior Action Inc., Senior Services, the Service Collaborative WNY, ServiceNation, Southwest Wyoming Recovery Access Programs, Teach for America, Thresholds, Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation, United Way of Greenville County, United Way Worldwide, UP Education Network, Urban Teacher Center, US2020, Voices for National Service, Youth Service America, Youth Volunteer Corps, YWCA Adams County.

Organizations participating in Employers of National Service will be asked to provide information describing their efforts and achievements which will be compiled into an Employers of National Service Summary Report.

Short-term Goals for Expanding Pipeline

Recommendation: Expand Employers of National Service by Identifying More Public, Private, and Nonprofit Employers that will commit to Recruiting National Service Participants

As noted above, Employers of National Service is an exciting new way for employers to identify AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni in their hiring processes. CNCS, Peace Corps, and our other partners will seek to greatly expand Employers of National Service in the coming years, with a goal of having 10 federal agencies and 200 organizations participating by next year.

Recommendation: Increase Participation in the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award Matching Program

An education award is provided to all AmeriCorps members who complete their term of service. This award may be used to pay educational costs at eligible post-secondary educational institutions (including many technical schools and GI-Bill approved educational programs) or to repay qualified student loans. As part of recent partnerships, CNCS has dedicated approximately \$19 million in funds to ensure that AmeriCorps members serving in new partnerships receive their post-service award.

The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award Matching Program is an opportunity for higher education institutions to recruit AmeriCorps alumni by offering cost of attendance benefits. More than 130 institutions currently participate in the program by providing at least \$1,000 of benefits to at least one AmeriCorps alumnus per year. Expanding participation in the program will provide additional support

to put AmeriCorps alumni on the pathway to educational opportunity.

Recommendation: Implement a Record of Accomplishment for AmeriCorps participants

The President announced a plan for CNCS to implement a Record of Accomplishment (ROA) to facilitate the ability of prospective employers to understand the value of the AmeriCorps member experience by describing their national service activities, accomplishments, and skills acquired. This form provided to AmeriCorps members upon completion of their service will provide a common framework for employers to understand the value of national service, including skills applicable to the workplace. This form will be the civilian equivalent to the Department of Defense's DD Form 214, provided to military service members when they leave active duty.

Long-term Goals for Expanding Pipeline

Recommendation: Increase CNCS's focus on Recruitment, Skills Development, and creating Pipelines of Opportunity

CNCS should increase focus within the agency on expanding recruitment efforts, increasing skills-building opportunities for AmeriCorps members, and working in collaboration with grantees and existing career services providers to expand pipelines of opportunity with potential employers.

Expanding recruitment efforts could increase participation in national service by underrepresented groups as one means to expand their economic opportunities by developing skills and building relationships and contacts while contributing to their community in a meaningful way. These opportunities could be particularly beneficial to individuals such as opportunity youth, transitioning veterans, and people with disabilities. Indeed, this effort could align with the Administration on Community Living and CNCS MOU, which recognizes the value of service and volunteerism as a means for older participants and people with disabilities to find a pathway to employment.

CNCS could support efforts by grantees to increase pipelines to employment for their members. CNCS could also collaborate with groups like the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps Alums to connect AmeriCorps participants with existing career services, such as those at universities, AmeriCorps Alums' professional development opportunities, and American Jobs Centers. This increased effort could also support the long-term goals of the Employers of National Service initiative.

Recommendation: Implement Digital Badging for AmeriCorps and Peace Corps Programs as an Indicator of Skills Gained through Service

Digital badging is an innovative way for individuals to showcase the skills they have gained through informal educational experiences like participation in national service. This emerging practice could be a tool that complements the Record of Accomplishment for AmeriCorps members and the Description of Service for Peace Corps Volunteers, adding to the efforts of Employers of National Service. Through collaboration with the interagency group working on digital badging, as well as innovative grantees, CNCS and the Peace Corps could integrate badging into national service programs as a way to further demonstrate value to potential employers.