

National Service and Civic Engagement Grant Competition FY 2015

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Purpose/Research Questions:

Previous research suggests that participation in civic engagement activities, such as membership in AmeriCorps State and National programs, can have positive labor market outcomes for young people and that hiring managers see volunteering as relevant when making employment decisions. However, little is known about whether including service on a resume increases prospects of employment for AmeriCorps alumni.

The research proposes a randomized experiment to test the effects of listing an AmeriCorps service experience on one's resume. Researchers will create fictitious resumes for applicants and vary the service experiences and how they are described to see which forms of service and which ways of presenting it are most attractive to hiring managers. The outcome will be the likelihood of being selected for an interview by a real hiring manager. Use of a true experimental design will allow us to yield simple and compelling findings. Presuming the results are positive, this research has the potential to strengthen the case for the expansion of government support for volunteer service as a strategy for improving economic prosperity and inclusion. This study could also provide a strong argument for individuals to seek volunteer experience as a step toward their own employment. Finally, by varying the volunteer experiences and how they are presented on a resume, the research can yield practical advice for volunteers and former volunteers about how to present themselves on the job market.