



Metadata Glossary

CNCS Evidence Exchange

March 2016

This document was developed by the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation to serve as a guide for navigating the search categories in the Evidence Exchange. It also provides authoritative definitions for frequently used terms in research and evaluation at CNCS (as of March 2016).

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Corporation for National and Community Serviceⁱ

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. As the nation's largest grant-maker in support of service and volunteering, CNCS engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to their communities each year through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, the Social Innovation Fund, the Volunteer Generation Fund, and other programs, and leads President Obama's call-to-service initiative, United We Serve.

CNCS Program(s)ⁱⁱ



AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) taps the skills, talents, and passion of more than 7,000 Americans annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. The program's nationwide corps of VISTAs commits full-time for a year at nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to build the capacity of these organizations to carry out programs that tackle poverty.



AmeriCorps State and National supports a wide range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive community service each year. It provides grants to a network of local and national organizations and agencies committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.



AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) strengthens communities and develops leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. In partnership with non-profits—secular and faith based—local municipalities, state governments, federal government, national and state parks, Indian tribes, and schools, members complete service projects throughout the region they are assigned.



Volunteer Generation Fund strengthens the role of volunteers in tackling pressing problems by expanding the capacity of state service commissions and volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support and retain individuals to serve in high-quality volunteer assignments.

CNCS Program(s) continued



Social Innovation Fund (SIF) targets public and private dollars to expand effective solutions across three issue areas: Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures and Youth Development. The SIF is a competitive grant program that invests in innovative solutions with evidence of impact and that are ready to grow to meet the needs of more communities. This work will create a catalog of evidence-based approaches that can be replicated in communities across the country.



Senior Corps consists of three programs—RSVP, Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and Senior Companion Program (SCP)—that use the experience, skills and talents of more than 450,000 volunteers age 55 and older to serve at-risk youth, help seniors live independently and meet other community needs. Senior Corps volunteers serve through more than 65,000 local nonprofits, public agencies, faith-based and other community organizations.



Call to Service engages citizens in service opportunities that expand the impact of community organizations and encourage volunteers to develop their own “do-it-yourself” projects. Each year, annual service days, such as the MLK Day of Service and the 9/11 National Day of Remembrance and Service, mobilize millions of Americans to become active participants in community solutions.

CNCS Focus Area(s)ⁱⁱⁱ

CNCS utilizes six focus areas identified in the Serve America Act. The Serve America Act of 2009 reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) by amending the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

Disaster Services Build the capacity of national service network organizations to help their states and localities prepare, respond, recover and mitigate disasters and increase community resiliency

Economic Opportunity Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people

Capacity Building Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children

Healthy Futures Provide direct services that enable seniors to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity; and improve access to primary and preventive health care

Education Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children

Veterans and Military Families Demonstrate the potential for CNCS-supported national service interventions to 1) positively impact the quality of life of veterans and 2) improve military family strength

CNCS Focus Area(s) continued

<p>Environmental Stewardship</p>	<p>Provide direct services that contribute to increased energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, or improving at-risk ecosystems, and support increased citizen behavioral change leading to increased efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and economically disadvantaged communities</p>	<p>Energy Conservation (NCCC)</p>	<p>Energy Conservation projects promote energy efficient practices with organizations, communities, families, or individuals</p>
<p>Youth Development (SIF)</p>	<p>Preparing youth for success in school, active citizenship, productive work, and healthy and safe lives</p>	<p>Environmental Stewardship & Conservation (NCCC)</p>	<p>In the tradition of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, Environmental Stewardship and Conservation projects help preserve and enhance a community's natural resources</p>
<p>Healthy Futures (SIF)</p>	<p>Promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing the risk factors that can lead to illness</p>	<p>Infrastructure Improvement (NCCC)</p>	<p>Infrastructure Improvement projects contribute to the safety and well-being of community members through repairing and building structures. In addition, projects will improve basic facilities and services needed for community function</p>
		<p>Natural and Other Disasters (NCCC)</p>	<p>Natural and Other Disaster projects address the needs of communities affected by floods, hurricanes, wildfires and other disasters. The focus is on preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery projects</p>

CNCS Focus Area(s) continued

**Economic
Opportunity
(SIF)** Increasing economic opportunities for
economically disadvantaged individuals

**Urban and
Rural
Development
(NCCC)** Urban and Rural Development projects address the
special needs of communities in ways that improve
the quality of life for citizens and the success of
whole communities

Focus Population(s)/ Community(s)^{iv}

Opportunity Youth Sometimes referred to as "disconnected youth" – defined as people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working

Non-profits 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, which are the primary recipients of CNCS grants and resources

Veterans and Military Families Wounded warriors, veterans, military spouses, and their families

Suburban Communities Communities in the United States immediately adjacent/peripheral to metropolitan communities

Low-Income Communities Communities where the average income is below the federal poverty level

Schools Institutions in the United States that have the primary function of educating (K-12 public, private, charter schools; colleges and universities)

Tribes American Indian and Alaska Native people represented by federally recognized tribal governments

Rural Communities Communities in the United States with fewer than 50,000 residents and not adjacent or peripheral to larger communities

Urban Communities Metropolitan communities in the United States, typically with more than 50,000 residents

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Outcome Category(s)^v

Derived from the objectives of the [CNCS Performance Measurement framework](#).

Disaster Assistance Provided	Aging in Place	Energy Efficiency	K-12 Success	Benefit to National Service Member/Volunteer
Housing	Obesity and Food	Awareness of Environmental Issues	Post-Secondary Education Support	Improving CNCS
Employment	Access to Care	Green Jobs	School Readiness	Non-profit Development
Financial Literacy	At Risk Ecosystems	Veterans and Military Families Served		

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Program/Intervention

The name of the program or intervention being evaluated

Implementing Organization

The organization that is running the program or intervention

Intermediary(s)

Intermediary organizations—those that provide sub-grants to and place service participants with other organizations

Age(s) Studied

- 0-5 (Early childhood)
- 6-12 (Childhood)
- 13-17 (Adolescent)
- 18-25 (Young adult)
- 26-55 (Adult)
- 55+ (Older adult)

Study Type(s)^{vi}

**Case Study or
Descriptive**

Intensive study of one set (or unit) of something, based on a comprehensive understanding accumulated from an extensive description and analysis of the set (or unit) taken as a whole and in its context

**Cost-Benefit or
Cost Effectiveness
Study**

A study to determine the costs and benefits of a program or the implications of a program-related decision. The study documents the costs and benefits, and calculates monetary values for each. It may or may not include monetary value to costs and benefits that are difficult to quantify.

Feasibility

A type of analysis to assess the feasibility of implementing and operating an intervention.

Outcomes

Identifies the results or effects of a program and measures program beneficiaries' changes in knowledge, attitude(s), and/or behavior(s) that result from a program over a specific period of time.

Impact

An impact study aims to provide a quantitative estimate of the causal effects of programs or policies. The preferred method for impact evaluations are randomized experiments, but other comparison group designs (quasi-experimental) are also appropriate for impact evaluations. Impact evaluations may be accompanied by process analysis or implementation analysis to document specific details of the intervention.

**Review or Meta-
Analysis**

A scientifically disciplined approach to searching literatures, assembling studies for review, and analyzing, interpreting and reporting the results. The goal of the scientific approach is to reduce bias in the evaluation (ideological or theoretical preference). Other terms are systematic review, meta-analysis, and evaluation synthesis.

Study Type(s) continued

Implementation An implementation (process) study evaluates the implementation practices surrounding the intervention. This usually includes reviewing documents, administrative data, surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups.
The study can also describe the organization, management, and service delivery procedures of the intervention, as well as identify policy, bureaucratic, and political factors that influence the way the intervention is structured and managed.

Other Other evaluation designs.

Study Design(s)^{vii}

Experimental (RCT)

A randomized control trial (RCT) aims to identify the results or effects of a program and attribute those results or effects directly to the program. RCTs that utilize a control group require quantitative data and advanced statistical methods. The group receiving the intervention is called the treatment group. The control group is a group of individuals not participating in the program or receiving the intervention. The control group is necessary to determine if the program, rather than some other factor, is causing the observed changes. New eligible program applicants are randomly assigned to either the treatment group or the control group, and outcomes are compared between the two groups.

Quasi-Experimental (QED)

A quasi-experimental design (QED) also aims to identify the results or effects of a program and attribute those results or effects directly to the program. QEDs utilize a comparison group, require quantitative data, and advanced statistical methods. The group receiving the intervention is called the treatment group. A QED uses statistical matching procedures to form a comparison group from a similar population of individuals (e.g., similar participants from another program, extra applicants, etc.), and outcomes are compared between the two groups. The comparison group is necessary to determine if the program, rather than some other factor, is causing the observed changes. The QED is considered less rigorous than the RCT.

Study Design(s) continued

Non-Experimental

Any non-RCT or QED design. Examples include:

Single group post design

- Examines outcomes for program beneficiaries after they receive program services

Single group pre-post design

- Provides a comparison of outcomes for program beneficiaries before and after they receive program services

Retrospective pretest

- Respondents are asked about their level of understanding or skill after an intervention occurs and are then asked to think back to their understanding prior to the intervention.

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Level of Evidence^{viii}

AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)

No Evidence The applicant has not provided evidence that they have systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

Pre-Preliminary The applicant has demonstrated data collection experience testing or tracking at least one aspect of its logic model. For example, the applicant has collected systemic and accurate data on one or more of the following: the community need the proposed intervention will address, the program intervention's activities and services delivered, participation in the intervention by the target population, and/or participant outcomes (for example, performance measurement data or a process evaluation assessing implementation of the intervention.)

Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)

No Evidence No comparable category.

Pre-Preliminary No comparable category.

Level of Evidence continued

AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)

Preliminary¹ The applicant has described up to two outcome studies about the intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or a similar intervention that the applicant will replicate with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows: (1) The applicant must describe at least one outcome study that was conducted of their own intervention. This must include a detailed description of the outcome study data from pre and post-tests without a comparison group or post-test comparison between intervention and comparison groups. An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement.;
OR (2) The applicant must describe at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation (e.g. propensity score matching) that found positive results for the same intervention that the applicant plans to replicate.;

Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)

Preliminary Evidence that is based on a reasonable hypothesis supported by credible research findings. Thus, research that has yielded promising results for either the program model or a similar program model will meet CNCS's criteria. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track participants through a program and measure participants' responses at the end of the program; and 2) third-party pre- and post-test research that determines whether participants have improved on an intended outcome.

¹ This has been shortened for this document.

Level of Evidence continued

AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)

**Preliminary²
continued** OR (3) The applicant may submit evidence from both bullets listed above. In this case, the applicant must provide data from an outcome study of an intervention it has previously implemented (see above) and also proposes to modify their program by replicating another random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation. The description should include details about how the intervention studied and the applicant's proposed approach are the same and how the applicant will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model.

² This has been shortened for this document.

Level of Evidence continued

AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)

Moderate The applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies that evaluated the same intervention described in this application and identified evidence of effectiveness on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant’s logic model. Evidence of effectiveness (or positive findings) is determined using experimental design evaluations (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)) or quasi-experimental design evaluations (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site). The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)

Moderate Evidence from previous studies on the program, the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity). This also can include studies for which the reverse is true — studies that only support moderate causal conclusions but have broad general applicability. The following would constitute moderate evidence: 1) At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study supporting the effectiveness of the practice strategy, or program, with small sample sizes or other conditions of implementation or analysis that limit generalizability; 2) at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study that does not demonstrate equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry but that has no other major flaws related to internal validity; or 3) correlational research with strong statistical controls for selection bias and for discerning the influence of internal factors.

Level of Evidence continued

AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)

Strong

The applicant has demonstrated that the intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented QED or RCT. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive. Findings from the RCT or QED studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)

Strong

Evidence from previous studies on the program, the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and that, in total, include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the state, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity). The following are examples of strong evidence: 1) More than one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study or well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program; or 2) one large, well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled, multi-site trial that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program.

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