

State Commission

The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) manages a portfolio of 23 AmeriCorps State programs with more than 1,500 AmeriCorps members, addressing critical needs in the areas of education, environment, economic opportunity, disaster, and capacity building. In the 2014-2015 program year, AmeriCorps members in Massachusetts served more than 12,000 youth, including tutoring or mentoring over 7,000 children and providing more than 120 unaccompanied minors representation in court, provided legal service assistance to 1,227 individuals or families, improved 845 acres of parks and public lands and 163 miles of trails and rivers, and provided 1,000 individuals with disaster preparedness education and response/recovery services. In addition, MSA builds the capacity of nonprofits to engage volunteers through trainings and a bi-annual statewide conference on service and volunteerism. MSA administers Commonwealth Corps, a state supported year of service program that engages Massachusetts residents of all ages and backgrounds in direct service and capacity building to rebuild communities, address unmet community needs, and increase volunteerism.

AmeriCorps State

Youth Empowerment AmeriCorps members serve full time at the United Teen Equality Center in Lowell. The center's mission and promise is to ignite and nurture the ambition of Lowell's most disconnected young people to trade violence and poverty for social and economic success. AmeriCorps members serve youth in various capacities, including case management, teaching, coaching, job training, civic engagement, community service and mentoring. AmeriCorps members experience a unique and dynamic opportunity for professional and personal development, and they cultivate a variety of skills from project planning and management to public speaking, relationship building, and more. The United Teen Equality Center recruits AmeriCorps members from the communities served, including former program participants. In 2014-2015, 18 AmeriCorps members gave more than 25,000 hours of service and served than 250 young people, providing them with educational support, civic engagement opportunities, and life skills they need to lead peaceful and empowered lives. In addition, AmeriCorps members collaborated with more than 10 local organizations and leveraged more than 50 volunteers to help in projects at the center and special events.

In 2010, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust of Athol established the Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow (MassLIFT). MassLIFT is a collaborative effort of regional conservation organizations seeking to build public support for land conservation, increase regional conservation capacity, strengthen land stewardship, and provide opportunities for youth to connect with nature and engage in service learning. The overall goal of MassLIFT is to accelerate the pace of land protection across the Commonwealth. Through the program, 23 AmeriCorps members serving at 15 different organizations, helping them meet critical community needs for land protection, including conservation project initiation and implementation, stewardship of protected lands, outreach to the broader community, and service learning opportunities to engage young people in conservation. In 2014-2015, AmeriCorps members recruited and managed 1,492 community volunteers who served 6,821 hours building capacity at 15 different organizations. In addition, 44 organizations reported improved organizational effectiveness resulting from members' capacity building projects.

AmeriCorps National

Citizen Schools is a nonprofit organization that partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for children in low-income communities. Its AmeriCorps members serve at public schools in Boston, Charlestown, Chelsea, Dorchester, Roxbury, and Salem, leading real-world learning projects, providing academic support, and helping all students discover and achieve their dreams. In their two years of service, AmeriCorps members serve as Teaching Fellows, giving students months of extra learning through academic mentoring and skill-building apprenticeships that translate into college readiness and career opportunities. Citizen Schools has been recognized as a leader in engaging volunteers, generating student impact, and balancing direct service with systemic change efforts. Students who are supported by Citizen Schools graduated from high school within four years at a rate of 71 percent, compared to 59 percent among matched peers, and 61 percent of Citizen Schools' alumni enroll in college.

City Year Boston AmeriCorps has 265 members who serve full-time at 21 schools, helping more than 10,000 students with the greatest risk of dropping out. Working side-by-side with teachers, City Year AmeriCorps members work alongside teachers, using research-based tools to improve students' attendance, behavior, and performance in math and English. The members also lead afterschool programs and school-wide initiatives to improve school culture. Thanks to the members' service, 90 percent of students who were tutored in math and 88 percent of students tutored in reading and writing increased their scores on district tests. In a second year of tutoring, an additional 62 percent of students showed gains in English and math test scores, even though the number of AmeriCorps members remained the same.

College Advising Corps has 23 AmeriCorps members serving full-time as college advisors at 24 high schools in Boston. The members are placed in underserved high schools and work to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who enter and complete higher education. The members provide the counsel and encouragement that students need to navigate the college admissions process. The AmeriCorps members help students plan their college searches, complete admissions and financial aid applications, and enroll at schools that will serve them well. In 2015, these 23 members served 7,200 students, helping 1,152 seniors register for the SAT or ACT. They held 6,878 one-to-one meetings with students and met with 10,106 students in classroom presentations or group sessions. They also organized college campus visits for 1,004 seniors.

National Service Impact in Massachusetts

FoodCorps has 12 AmeriCorps members serving in Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Chicopee, Gloucester, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Lynn. FoodCorps is a nationwide team of AmeriCorps leaders who work under the direction of local partner organizations to connect children to real food and help them grow up healthy. They teach children hands-on lessons about food and nutrition build and tend school gardens, teach cooking lessons, and help change what's on lunch trays so that children can eat healthy food from local farms. In the past year, the FoodCorps members in Massachusetts served 8,746 children, built or brought back into use 40 school and community gardens, harvested 1,796 pounds of produce, and recruited 729 community volunteers.

New Sector AmeriCorps members in the AmeriCorps RISE program complete high-impact capacity-building projects for organizations in the Boston area that focus on education and economic opportunity. Their service helps local nonprofits with projects ranging from volunteer engagement to performance measurement and beyond, and allows the nonprofits to create, improve, or expand services to their community. In the past year, 22 New Sector AmeriCorps members completed projects to strengthen organizations that serve more than 10,000 children, 2,000 "opportunity youth," and thousands of low-income residents. The AmeriCorps members participated in up to 200 hours of training, mentorship, and coaching to strengthen their service and help them continue to serve through careers in the social impact sector.

One Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps member served this past year at Behavioral Health Network in Springfield. YMHFA is a certification course that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of adolescent mental health problems, focuses on the importance of early intervention, and teaches how to help adolescents who are in crisis or having a mental health or substance use challenge. The AmeriCorps member, who is a trained YMHFA instructor, certified 115 community members in the program. A three month follow-up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 416 adolescents who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness.

AmeriCorps VISTA

Vital Village, based out of Boston Medical Center, sponsors two AmeriCorps VISTA members. As a result of their combined efforts, they have formed a residents association and have developed a community survey engagement tool for a food and fitness coalition in an underserved section of Boston. The VISTA members have taken the survey and translated it to mobile technology to increase its sustainability, with the ultimate goal of conducting the survey in other neighborhoods.

Housing Families Inc., in Malden, sponsors two AmeriCorps VISTA members. Their combined efforts have increased the number of new successful grant proposals, developed a system to track lapsed grant sources, improved communication and graphic design, expanded Housing Families' video library, and created videos for specific expansion efforts.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The Community Harvest Project in North Grafton applied for an AmeriCorps NCCC team to help with farming activities and build a 40' x 100' greenhouse that would double existing greenhouse and hoop house space to grow and harvest plants. The project's mission is to build an engaged and healthier community by bringing volunteers together to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for hunger relief. The NCCC team assembled the greenhouse with minimal instructions. The greenhouse helped the program double their ability to grow – an increase of about 324,000 lbs. Besides the greenhouse work, members did a great deal of farm work: they harvested over 13,487 pounds of fruits and vegetables and washed and prepared over 16,689 pounds of fruits and vegetables. They also painted irrigation pump houses, built transportation stands, maintained the farming garden, and helped with the compost pile. They occasionally instructed drop-in volunteers on how to do some tasks activities when no project staff was available. Thanks to the work of the team, more needy families will get the healthy food they deserve.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with Mass Audubon, in Sharon, which works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. The team helped build new program space, renovate camp space, and landscape at Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary and at Stony Brook. At Moose Hill, corps members deep cleaned, installed insulation, and removed HVAC metal ventilation and duct work from a building to be used for camp programming. The team built raised garden beds at the CSA Farm and took a damaged roof off the nature center. At Stony Brook, the team expanded a long garden bed, cleared out bird houses and participated in "Amphibians after Dark," an education skit that teaches about frogs, salamanders, and vernal pools. Thanks to the work of the team, there is now more classroom and meeting space at Moose Hill. The garden beds they built serve as a learning opportunity, and protect the farmland from unwanted motorized vehicles. At Stony Brook, the expanded garden helped remove potential hazards, the clearing of bird houses helped bring in new activity, and the skit helps campers learn about amphibians they knew little about.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Action for Boston Community Development Foster Grandparent Program volunteers have worked with 17 Somali youth in the Boston area. These youth face many challenges trying to meet the expectations of two very different cultures. The negative portrayal of Somalis in the media, and a lack of role models, can create a sense of disengagement and a lack of investment in their futures as they transition into adulthood. Somali Foster Grandparents build connections with Somali youth in an afterschool program in Roxbury, and provide the students with mentoring and support that they do not get at home. By meeting with Somali youth, engaging in storytelling and discussions about life skills, the Foster Grandparents support youth who have suffered trauma in Somalia. Besides educating them on Somali culture and customs which would otherwise be lost to them, the Foster Grandparents encourage the youth to take control of their identity, develop their leadership skills, and take pride in themselves and their culture.

Senior Corps RSVP

Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands RSVP project has 51 volunteers who give approximately 6,500 hours of service each year, helping with environmental projects and other community priorities. The RSVP volunteers, many of whom are veterans themselves, have helped 578 veterans by providing information on how to access State and Federal veteran's benefits, as well as health education and career information.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Valley Opportunity Council Senior Companion Program has 36 volunteers who give in-home support to 179 homebound elders in Chicopee, Ludlow, and Holyoke. This support and assistance helps the elders continue to live independently. The volunteers help with transportation, socialization, wellness, and application assistance.

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is investing \$3,533,998 to expand the impact of 22 nonprofits in Massachusetts. In 2015, the SIF more than doubled the number of nonprofits working in Massachusetts that it supports. These nonprofits work on a variety of issues, including working to improve healthy living, fostering youth development and increasing economic opportunity throughout the state. People who are being served by a SIF subgrantee, AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, who had a detectable HIV viral load have shown an 81 percent decrease in their viral load after a six-month follow-up check. The SIF transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities.

Volunteer Generation Fund

The Massachusetts Service Alliance has continued to expand the Service Enterprise Initiative across Massachusetts by working closely with Volunteer Connector partners in Southeastern Massachusetts (United Way of Greater New Bedford), Cape Cod (Cape and Islands United Way), and most recently in Boston (Boston Cares). This evidence-based training and certification program has served as an ideal way for MSA to help build internal capacity for agencies of all sizes across Massachusetts and providing in-depth and individualized support. The curriculum allows MSA to offer best practices for the use of skill-based volunteers and expanding volunteerism within each participating agency. Each year MSA works with 10-15 new agencies to undergo the Service Enterprise transformation which culminates with a national certification and a portfolio of implemented best practices. In addition, MSA provides opportunities for nonprofits to introduce and recruit new volunteers to their agency through National Days of Service. MSA works with 20-30 agencies to host service projects to engage at least 21,000 community volunteers serving up to 42,000 hours across the Commonwealth.