

Serve America Act Summary

(S. 3487, as introduced 9-12-2008)

Learn & Serve America (amending Subtitle B)

- Youth Engagement Zone Program: Authorizes the Corporation to make direct competitive grants to eligible partnerships to carry out service-learning programs with secondary school students and out-of-school youth to address specific community challenges and to improve student engagement (incl. graduation rates). Partnerships include at least one community-based agency with a demonstrated record of success in carrying out service-learning programs with low-income students, at least one local education agency serving a low-income population with a low graduation rate, and either a State Commission, a state education agency, or a community-based agency, and may include others. Grantee must assure that, within 5 years, service-learning will be a mandatory part of the curriculum in all secondary schools served by the local education agency.
 - Grant Amount: \$250K - \$1M; Grant Period: 5 years
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$20M for 2009, increasing to \$40M in 2013.
- Campuses of Service - Authorizes CNCS, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to annually designate up to 30 institutions of higher education as “Campuses of Service” from institutions nominated by State Commissions (limit 3 per Commission). A designated Campus of Service would be able to apply to CNCS for funds to implement strategies to encourage students to pursue careers in public service and would be permitted to nominate additional individuals for “ServeAmerica Fellowships” (described below). Designations are based on, among other criteria, the institution’s record of student engagement in service and service-learning and the percentage of Federal Work Study funds being used for community service positions.
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$10M for 2009 and thereafter through 2013.
- Longitudinal Study on Service-Learning Programs: Directs CNCS to procure an independent entity to conduct a 10-year longitudinal study on the benefits/ impact of service-learning programs (incl. impact on academic achievement, student engagement, and graduation rates).
 - Authorizes appropriation: such sums, 2009 – 2013.

Supporting Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (new Subtitle F)

- Commission on Cross-Sector Solutions to America’s Problems: Establishes a commission – “the Commission on Cross-Sector Solutions to America’s Problems” - comprised of 21 qualified diverse and bi-partisan presidential and congressional appointees, to expire after 6 years, and to perform the following duties:
 - Conduct a study of ways in which the Federal Government can work more efficiently and effectively with nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to address national and local challenges, improve accountability and utilization of resources, and improve collaborations;

- Advise the President on grants to build capacity of non-profit sector, support research on the sector, support social entrepreneurship, and enable nonprofit organizations to replicate and expand effective solutions to national and local challenges;
 - Advise the President and Congress on matters concerning the nonprofit sector and social entrepreneurship;
 - Submit a report to Congress detailing the findings of the aforementioned study, the aforementioned advice, and recommendations based on the study; and
 - Provide advice to Congress or any Federal agency on the implementation of their recommendations.
- Any Corporation employee may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement.
- Authorizes appropriation: such sums, 2009- 2013
- Community Solutions Funds grant program: Directs the Corporation to establish a grant program to make competitive grants to eligible entities to assist the entities in paying for the cost of providing national leveraging capital for “Community Solutions Funds” (CSF). To be eligible, among other criteria, entity must be a grantmaking institution or a partnership between a grantmaking institution and a State Commission/other grantmaking institution/CEO of local government unit. Grantees managing CSFs will make 3-5 year competitive subgrants of no less than \$100K to community organizations to replicate or expand proven initiatives in low-income areas.
 - Grant amount: \$1-10M per year; Grant period: 5 years; Match: \$1 for \$1
 - Directs the Corporation to procure an independent entity (using no more than 5% of funds appropriated to carry out the CSF program) to
 - evaluate the eligible entities, and the initiatives they support, and best practices, and submit an evaluation report to the Corporation and Congress;
 - provide TA to the recipients of CSF grants; and
 - maintain a clearinghouse for information on best practices resulting from initiatives supported by the CSF grants.
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$50M in 2009, increasing to \$100M in 2013, and such sums thereafter.
- Innovation Fellowships Pilot Program – Directs CNCS to make competitive grants to individuals to establish innovative nonprofit organizations to address local and national challenges (max. 25 such grants annually). To be eligible for a grant, the individual must have completed at least one term of service in a national service position (incl. AmeriCorps State & National, VISTA, NCCC, and new Subtitle G Service Corps) or be a veteran. Receipt of funds in the second year of the grant is contingent upon the grantee’s performance in the first year.
 - Grant amount: less than \$100K; Grant period: 2 years
 - Match: none in year 1, \$1 for \$1 in year 2.
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$3.5M for FY09, \$5M thereafter
 - Allows CNCS to withhold 15% annually for T/TA.

Service Corps Programs (new Subtitle G)

- Directs CNCS to establish four new accounts (the Education Corps Fund, the Healthy Futures Corps Fund, the Clean Energy Corps Fund, and the Opportunity Corps Fund)(see description in table 1, below) from which CNCS will make grants (in consultation with other specified agencies) to States and eligible entities to pay for the Federal share of carrying out full- or part-time national service programs that are generally consistent with subtitle C programs and use national service participants to improve performance on relevant indicators (see table 1). To be eligible for a subgrant from a Commission, an entity must be a nonprofit with a record of improving or with a plan to improve specified indicators, that meets eligibility criteria in subtitle C. To apply directly to CNCS, a nonprofit entity must operate in 2 or more states.
 - Allocation of funds (for each Corps):
 - 33⅓% to States by formula
 - Each State shall make an effort to make available at least 10% of funds for programs with a significant number of members aged 50 or older (“Encore Service programs”).
 - 1% to U.S. territories by formula
 - 1% to Indian tribes by formula
 - Remainder to combined States/National Direct competitive
 - CNCS shall make an effort to make available at least 10% of funds for Encore Service programs.
 - CNCS may reserve an equal amount from each Corps (max. 4%) prior to allocating funds for its grant review expenses and for training and technical assistance to grantees.
 - Service Corps participants:
 - Eligibility, terms of service, selection, terms of service, and benefits consistent with subtitle C, except –
 - Age eligibility criteria may be waived for Education Corps participants;
 - Participant selection requirements subject to waiver if grantee selects from pre-specified group;
 - Service activities may include direct service, recruiting/coordinating volunteers, and building the capacity of local organizations and communities
 - Authorizes Education Award Only positions, capped at 35%
 - Directs CNCS to allocate funds so that 50% of positions are full-time
 - Directs CNCS to approve 25K positions in 2009, increasing to 175K by 2013.
 - Other distinctions from subtitle C:
 - National service priorities identified in Section 122(c) do not apply
 - Different selection criteria (see priorities in table 1)
 - There is a separate application and approval process for each Corps, however, a State may request a waiver to use funds allotted for one Corps to fund programs in another Corps should the State not receive enough quality applications for a particular Corps.
 - Report required: For each program, CNCS must submit a report to Congress within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year describing, among other things, how grants were allocated, how CNCS is coordinating Corps programs with similar programs carried out under subtitles B, C,

and the DVSA, and the programs' impact on the relevant indicators.

- Authorizes appropriation: such sums, 2009 – 2013, with at least 35% reserved for the Education Corps Fund, and 35% for the Clean Energy Service Corps Fund.

Table 1: Service Corps Programs

	Education Corps Fund	Healthy Futures Corps Fund	Clean Energy Service Corps Fund	Opportunity Corps Fund
Purpose	Improve performance on educational indicators	Improve performance on health indicators.	Improve performance on clean energy indicators	Improve performance on opportunity indicators.
Examples of Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student engagement • academic achievement • HS graduation rates • college-going rates 	Economically disadvantaged people's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to health care • participation in disease prevention and health promotion activities • health literacy • enrollment in health insurance programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of housing units of low-income households fitted to improve energy efficiency • number of government parks/trails/rivers improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial literacy of and access to job training and job placement services for economically disadvantaged individuals • housing units built or improved
Priority to be given to -	Not specified	Programs that support participants in pursuing future career addressing above indicators, and those operating in medically underserved areas	Programs that recruit economically disadvantaged members, and those that provide members job training for careers addressing above indicators.	Programs that recruit economically disadvantaged members, and those serving a community with a high percentage of families living below the poverty line.
Consultation required	Secretary of Education	Secretary of HHS and Director of CDC	Secretary of Energy and Administrator of EPA	Secretaries of HHS and Labor

- Incentives for Encore Service –
 - Study and Pilot Program – Directs CNCS to conduct study on use of incentives (other than those provided in this Act) to attract participants age 50 and older, prepare report on study's results within 2 years, and then implement through a pilot program any incentives found through the study to be effective.
 - 3 term maximum - Permits individuals who are age 50 or older on their first day of service to receive education awards for up to 3 terms of service in a Subtitle C or new Subtitle G program. Such individuals would receive the standard education award for the first two terms and would be eligible for a reduced education award for 3rd term equal to ½ the standard education award.
 - Transfer of education award - Permits an eligible individual to elect to receive a reduced education award (½ value) and transfer the reduced award to a designated individual, who may then use the award for its traditional uses (tuition, repayment of qualified student loans).
 - To be “eligible,” the participant must: (1) have served in a subtitle G program; and (2) be age 50 or older.

- Designated individual must: (1) be designated by the participant; (2) meet education and citizenship eligibility requirements; and (3) be the participant's child/grandchild.
- Gives a designated individual 15 years to use the award, as opposed to the standard 7.

Civic Health Index (amending Subtitle F)

- “Civic Health Index”: Directs CNCS to collect civic health data, conduct related analyses (based on age group and education level of individuals), and report the data and analyses. ‘Civic health data’ includes indicators related to volunteering and community service, voting and political engagement, charitable giving, connecting to civic groups and faith-based organizations, and understanding U.S. history and government as well as other information as necessary to analyze the role of internet technology in strengthening or inhibiting civic activities, the role of specific programs in strengthening civic activities, and the civic attitudes and activities of new citizens/immigrants.
- Research and Evaluation: Directs CNCS (acting in conjunction with the Commissioner of Labor Statistics) to provide for baseline research and tracking of domestic and international volunteering and to research and evaluate the impact of volunteering, including an assessment of best practices and ways to improve volunteering through enhanced collaborations among entities that recruit, manage, support, and use volunteers, institutes of higher education, and research institutions.
- Authorizes appropriation: \$5.6M for Civic Health Index and Research & Evaluation, for 2009- 2013
 - No more than \$800K annually to collect civic health data
 - No more than \$200K annually for compiling the Civic Health Index report and holding the forums/conferences
 - No more than \$200K in 2009, 2011, and 2013 for establishing or updating indicators

ServeAmerica and Encore Fellowship Programs (amending current subtitle H)

- ServeAmerica Fellowship Program - Directs CNCS to make grants to State Commissions on a formula basis to enable the Commissions to award fellowships to support service projects in specified areas of national need (education, health care access, clean energy, economic opportunities for the poor, or disaster response/preparedness).
 - Selection of eligible fellowship recipients: selected by the State Commissions from a pool of individuals who applied directly to the State Commission and individuals who applied to and were nominated by a Campus of Service (at least 8 nominees) or an institute of higher education (at least 4 nominees). 10-15% of selectees must have been nominated by a Campus of Service or institute of higher education.
 - Selection of service sponsor organizations: Each State will compile a list of non-profit organizations who have registered with the State and have agreed to abide by program requirements (including a requirement to certify the number of hours the fellow served) and provide a share of fellowship funds to the Fellow(s) they sponsor. Eligible fellowship recipients choose a service sponsor from a list provided by the State and enter into an agreement with the sponsor specifying the terms of service.
 - Provision of Fellowships: The State Commission gives an amount to the Fellow equal to 50% of the VISTA annual subsistence allowance, and the sponsor will provide additional amounts so that the Fellow receives, in total, between 70%-100% of the VISTA annual subsistence allowance.

- The sponsoring organization must report to CNCS on the hours the Fellow serves on a bi-weekly basis through a web portal developed by CNCS.
- Fellows receive education award upon successful completion of service.
- CNCS to establish number of positions at 1,000 in 2009, increasing by 1,000 annually to 5,000 in 2013.
- Authorizes appropriation: such sums, 2009 – 2013 (allows reservation of 3% for costs of administering program)
- Encore Fellowship Program - Directs CNCS to establish and carry out an “Encore Fellowship Program” through which CNCS will award fellowships to enable individuals age 50 or older to carry out 1-year service projects in areas of national need (education, health care access, clean energy, economic opportunities for the poor, or disaster response/preparedness) at eligible organizations and to receive training for full-or part-time public service in the nonprofit sector or government (provided by the eligible organization).
 - Selection of eligible fellowship recipients: CNCS selects a maximum of 10 Fellows from each state, giving priority to individuals with highly needed skills.
 - Selection of eligible organizations: To be listed, an organization must be selected by CNCS. Each Fellow selects an organization from the list for placement, or may submit an application for an organization for CNCS’s approval.
 - Provision of Fellowships: A Fellow selects an organization from the list, and, if the Fellow’s skills match the organization’s needs, CNCS will place the Fellow, and provide \$11,000 directly to the organization to enable the organization to pay for the living expenses of the Fellow.
 - The organization must also provide leadership development and training to and manage the Fellow.
 - Organizations must provide a \$1 for \$1 match.
 - Fellows who complete terms of service are entitled to a pro-rated education award, and are eligible to transfer their awards (same rules for transfer as Subtitle G).
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$7M for 2009 – 2013.

Additional Demonstration Programs (amending current Subtitle H)

- Volunteer Generation Fund - Directs the Corporation to award competitive grants to eligible entities to increase the number of volunteers available to carry out activities that address areas of national need (education, health care access, clean energy, economic opportunities for the poor, or disaster response/preparedness) through civic entities or, in the case of State Commissions, to increase the number of volunteers available to carry out statewide volunteer initiatives that address State priorities with regard to areas of national need. To be eligible, an entity must be a State Commission or a nonprofit entity that provides technical assistance and support to civic entities in recruiting, managing, and supporting volunteers (e.g., volunteer coordinating agency).
 - Grant period: 3-5 years; Match: \$1 for \$1
 - Grantees must annually gather information on the number of volunteers recruited and supported and the amount and types of activities the volunteers performed and submit annual reports to the Corporation with this information and performance measurements.
 - Authorizes appropriation: \$50M in 2009, increasing annually to \$100M in 2013.

- National Service Reserve Corps: Directs CNCS to establish a National Service Reserve Corps to prepare and deploy individuals who have completed a term of national service (in AmeriCorps, NCCC, VISTA, a Service Corps, or a ServeAmerica or Encore Fellowship) to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.
 - Corporation, in consultation with FEMA, to conduct or coordinate annual training sessions for individuals who have completed a term of national service and wish to join the Reserve Corps.
 - Corporation to, bi-annually, certify organizations with demonstrated experience in responding to disasters for participation in the program.
 - Corporation to develop a database listing Reserve Corps members and certified organizations
 - Deployment – In case of disaster or emergency designated by the President, CNCS to (in consultation with FEMA) to deploy Reserve Corps members on 30-day assignments to assist with local needs related to preparing for/recovering from the incident through the listed organizations, make travel arrangements for the Corps members, and provide funds to the organizations to cover the Corps members’ housing, living stipends, and insurance.
 - CNCS may partner and coordinate with Citizen Corps programs in the affected areas.
 - Authorizes appropriations: \$6.5M in 2009 (at least \$5m for Stipend Fund, which covers deployment costs; no more than \$1.5 for all other expenses); for each succeeding fiscal year, such sums as needed so that Stipend Fund has \$4M, and \$1M for all other expenses.
 - Stipend fund (separate fund to cover deployment costs) is available for obligation for 2 years.

- Call to Service Campaign - Directs the Corporation to conduct a “Call to Service” campaign to encourage all U.S. citizens to volunteer.

Other Provisions –

- Codifies Volunteers in Prosperity Program in USAID, authorizing \$10M for 2009 – 2013.