

USA Freedom Corps

Principles and Reforms for a Citizen Service Act

*Fostering a Culture of
Service, Citizenship, and Responsibility*



President George W. Bush
April 9, 2002

Foreword by President George W. Bush

Americans have always believed in an ethic of service and civic responsibility that includes helping those in need and promoting the common good. Since September 11, Americans have demonstrated their true character in unity, generosity, patriotism, and civic pride.

Today, Americans serve in their neighborhoods and communities in countless, extraordinary ways. While most of our Nation's civic work is being done without the aid of government, the Federal Government can do a much better job in helping support and encourage a culture of community service and civic responsibility.

During my State of the Union address, I encouraged all Americans to give at least two years – or 4,000 hours – of service over their lives. I announced the establishment of the USA Freedom Corps to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility. The USA Freedom Corps helps introduce citizens to volunteer opportunities in their local communities. It also creates new service opportunities within: (1) a new Citizen Corps, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to strengthen homeland security; (2) a reformed AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America, which are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service; and (3) a strengthened Peace Corps, run by its Director. I have also charged Executive Departments and Agencies to identify service opportunities sponsored by them and any barriers within their Departments and Agencies to community and other service.

Reforming and enhancing AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and other programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service are important steps in providing hundreds of thousands of Americans with meaningful service opportunities. Taken together, the reforms and improvements in this package represent a framework in which we all can work together to strengthen Federal support for citizen service.

I look forward to working with the Congress in a bipartisan fashion over the next several months, and in the coming years, to ensure the Federal Government does its part to support the commitment of Americans to our communities and our Nation.

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Executive Summary

Citizen service has always been a cornerstone of our democracy. Citizens have acted individually or through voluntary associations to found hospitals and libraries, start fire companies and civic improvement projects, and help cure diseases and advance rocketry that would fulfill our most distant dreams. Today, millions of Americans continue this tradition of service.

Some observers, however, have indicated a decline in civic participation in recent decades. Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone*, highlights a decline in membership in service-oriented organizations such as churches, Rotary Clubs, and PTAs. Dr. Putnam recently noted that “in the aftermath of September’s tragedy, a window of opportunity has opened for a sort of civil renewal that occurs only once or twice a century. But though the crisis revealed and replenished the wells of solidarity in American communities, so far those wells remain untapped.”

Out of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Americans are looking for more ways to do good. We must do all we can to support them. While the vast majority of service in the United States will and should continue without the support of government, the President, leaders in the Congress, and government itself can play key roles in encouraging more Americans to serve their communities and country and in facilitating more meaningful full-time and part-time service opportunities. Since the State of the Union address, in which the President called on all Americans to give at least two years of service to their communities and country, interest in service opportunities is on the rise. In a little more than one month, applications to AmeriCorps programs at the Corporation for National and Community Service have increased by more than 50 percent and interest in Senior Corps programs at the Corporation has risen dramatically.

President Bush created the USA Freedom Corps to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility – to capture a unique moment in history and sustain an ethic of service for generations to come. The President has identified a number of actions to encourage and support those who want to serve their country. One such action is legislation to reform and enhance national and community service programs administered by the Corporation.

A Citizen Service Act will provide new service opportunities for: (a) 25,000 new AmeriCorps participants, leveraging at least 75,000 additional volunteers; (b) 100,000 new Senior Corps volunteers; and (c) an estimated 200,000-300,000 students in colleges and universities. The Administration calls on the Congress to authorize a \$290 million increase from last year’s budget – the full funding requested in the President’s Fiscal Year 2003 budget – to support these initiatives.

Principles and Reforms

The Administration will work closely with the Congress to reform and enhance national and community service programs for five years, consistent with the following principles and reforms for a Citizen Service Act:

1. Support and encourage greater engagement of citizens in volunteering.

President Bush is proposing to reform and enhance national and community service programs to increase the quantity and quality of service opportunities for Americans by:

- Generating more volunteers for each government dollar spent by making volunteer mobilization and program sustainability explicit criteria for grants to service organizations.
- Providing more incentives for seniors' participation in AmeriCorps by permitting them to earn education awards that can be transferred to their children, grandchildren, or another individual in need.
- Improving education awards by working with the Congress to eliminate their taxability, adjust them for inflation, provide greater flexibility on eligible schools and loans, and test new uses for the awards.
- Testing, on a pilot basis, approaches that will allow individuals more choice in where they volunteer.
- Lowering the age for participation in Senior Corps programs from 60 to 55 and eliminating income tests as a criterion for participation in the programs so vital needs are met.
- Providing a stronger challenge grant fund to encourage private support of community-based service organizations.
- Working with the Congress to require that at least 50 percent of Federal Work-Study funds be devoted to community service so that hundreds of thousands of additional students will serve an average of 10 hours a week in community-serving organizations.
- Eliminating barriers to participation in service programs by Americans with disabilities.

2. Make Federal funds more responsive to state and local needs.

President Bush is proposing to give state, local and community officials more authority and flexibility to provide service opportunities to the citizens they represent by:

- Giving states more authority to select AmeriCorps programs, unlike current law that requires states to compete at the national level for over half of their funds.
- Easing the administrative burden on states and local communities and providing greater flexibility in the use of funds.
- Permitting AmeriCorps members to work with community organizations on capacity-building activities, such as working to recruit and manage additional volunteers for various projects.

3. Make Federal support more accountable and effective.

President Bush supports investing in opportunities that will produce results for the communities they serve. To create greater accountability for results, the President supports reforms that will ensure:

- All grantees in AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America programs will have specific program objectives and accountability requirements. The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be given statutory authority to: (1) work with grantees to establish performance measures; (2) require corrective plans for those not meeting goals; and (3) reduce or terminate grants if corrections are not made.
- The average cost per participant will be lowered by providing adequate opportunities for part-time members, and members who receive partial living allowances or education benefits only. Total costs for AmeriCorps participants will be contained by establishing a statutory cap for the average cost of full-time equivalents. Such a cap will ensure that Federal resources open up more service opportunities to more Americans.

4. Provide greater assistance to secular and faith-based community organizations.

President Bush is proposing to include more community- and faith-based organizations in more national and community service programs through the following reforms:

- Strengthen and reform AmeriCorps*VISTA, which has a long history of working closely with local community and faith-based organizations on anti-poverty efforts, by providing greater flexibility and local control in its administration.
- Test, on a pilot basis, allowing individuals choose the organizations they wish to serve with from among a variety of options, including smaller community and faith-based organizations.

Background

The reforms and principles proposed for a Citizen Service Act will make significant changes to the domestic service programs that are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

About the Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service is an independent Federal agency created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Two statutes authorize most of the major federally funded volunteer and community service programs in America: the National and Community Service Act and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act. In general, the Corporation administers the programs authorized by these two statutes.

Legislative History

The National and Community Service Act authorizes several programs administered by the Corporation including: AmeriCorps Grants, Learn and Serve America, the National Civilian Community Corps, and the Points of Light Foundation. The Domestic Volunteer Service Act authorizes the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps – known as Senior Corps. Authorization of funding for both statutes expired at the end of fiscal year 1996. Programs authorized by these statutes have continued to receive funding through appropriations legislation.

As part of his call to service, President Bush is asking the Congress to pass a Citizen Service Act that will encompass the reforms and principles set forth in this document. None of the Corporation's programs has had the benefit of a thorough review and discussion by the Congress for nearly a decade. To make our domestic service programs stronger and more effective in providing assistance to the communities they serve, the President urges the Congress to pass these principles and reforms in a Citizen Service Act.

About the Programs

AmeriCorps: Created in 1993, the AmeriCorps grants program provides a network of community and volunteer service opportunities for participants who are 17 years or older. By statute, AmeriCorps programs and participants must address educational, public safety or environmental needs through services that provide a direct benefit to their communities. Major programs administered by AmeriCorps include *State and National grants* to support local nonprofit organizations across the country; the *National Civilian Community Corps*, a federally-operated 10 month residential program for young people 18-24; and *AmeriCorps*VISTA*, a federally-operated program that works closely with faith-based and other community-based organizations to alleviate poverty.

Senior Corps: The National Senior Volunteer Corps program is comprised primarily of the *Foster Grandparent Program*, the *Senior Companion Program*, and the *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program*. These programs are designed to utilize the skills of senior citizens within their communities to meet priority needs.

Learn and Serve America: Learn and Serve America includes three service-learning programs that have been authorized since 1990: community based programs for school-age children, school-based programs for K-12 students, and higher education initiatives to involve college and university students in community service. Service-learning is a teaching method by which students or participants learn and develop skills and concepts through active participation in service activities that meet the needs of their communities.

Strengthening AmeriCorps

Overview

There are three main components to AmeriCorps: (1) *AmeriCorps*State and National* provides grants to states and national organizations to support members in local nonprofit organizations across the country; (2) *AmeriCorps*VISTA* members focus their activities on supporting community- and faith-based organizations in meeting the needs of low-income communities; and (3) *AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)* members complete a ten-month, full-time residential service program for men and women that combines the best practices of civilian service with the best aspects of military service, including leadership and team building.

Most AmeriCorps members are selected by, and serve with, projects in their communities such as Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Watch organizations, the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, and local community- and faith-based organizations. State service commissions, appointed by the Nation's governors, allocate resources to these organizations within their respective states. Other grants are made to service organizations at the national level. After their term of service, AmeriCorps members receive education awards to defray college expenses or pay back student loans.

Slightly more than one-half of the individuals in these programs serve full-time and receive a living allowance, generally at the poverty level, in order to be able to serve. The other one-half serve part-time; they generally do not receive any living allowance but do receive an education award at the end of their service.

President Bush supports legislation to reform AmeriCorps programs so they can provide a solid foundation upon which to build an enhanced system of Federal support for service. The new AmeriCorps will engage Americans in intensive, results-driven service each year. AmeriCorps members will mobilize, manage, and train additional volunteers. The members, and the volunteers they help organize, will perform vital services such as teaching children to read, making neighborhoods safer, and helping build affordable homes for low-income families. These changes will be driven by reforms that enhance accountability for results, create greater flexibility in administration at the state and local level, and offer a sharper focus on investing in activities that use AmeriCorps volunteers to recruit and train additional community volunteers.

Summary of Proposals

To reform and enhance community-based service opportunities, the President proposes the following:

Generate more volunteers for each government dollar spent.

Mobilizing additional volunteers beyond those directly supported by AmeriCorps should be an explicit criterion for funding and evaluating programs. This is currently required through administrative guidance but should be statutory. Such a change will ensure that this policy will remain a top priority from Administration to Administration.

Enhance the role of states.

States should have more flexibility and clearer performance standards. Current law allocates one-third of AmeriCorps grants for state formula grants, up to one-third for Federal direct grants, and the balance to states on a competitive basis (chosen at the national level). The Administration proposes to consolidate the competitive and formula grants to states into one formula grant to each state in order to strengthen the role of states in the selection of grantees. A hold harmless provision would prevent the loss of funding to any particular state.

Ease the administrative burdens on states.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should have statutory authority: (1) to eliminate administrative requirements identified by states as impeding the effectiveness of service programs; (2) to simplify application procedures and reporting requirements to promote efficiency and eliminate duplication; and (3) to make adjustments to administrative support as necessary.

A state commission should have the flexibility, within its grant, to allocate necessary funds for administration, subject to a reasonable ceiling. Today, administrative funds are provided to states through a separate allocation that is not directly related to the size of the AmeriCorps programs operating within the state.

Encourage sustainability as a grantee objective.

Specific measures should be adopted to increase the sustainability of grantees' programs with non-Federal resources. For example, all AmeriCorps members should be permitted to assist grantee organizations in capacity building activities. Currently, this is limited to AmeriCorps*VISTA members.

Make cost effective approaches available on a more widespread basis.

Currently, some cost-effective approaches (such as the AmeriCorps education award program, where the Corporation pays up to \$500 per member and the education award) are only available under limited "demonstration authority." Cost effective models such as this should be made part of the AmeriCorps grants program where they can be expanded as desired by grantees, and can provide additional service opportunities to Americans.

Make AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps*NCCC) a model for public safety, public health and emergency response.

AmeriCorps*NCCC is a ten-month, full-time residential service program for young men and women focusing on the Nation's critical needs in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs. Using this very successful program as a model, the Administration proposes to authorize the awarding of grants for programs operated by public agencies and nonprofits that would primarily support public safety, public health, and emergency response efforts.

Work with the Congress to make the education award comparable to other programs, such as the G.I. Bill.

The Administration proposes a number of reforms to strengthen and improve the education award offered through AmeriCorps, including: (1) eliminating taxation of the education award; (2) providing for cost of living adjustments; and (3) broadening the educational institutions and lenders at which the education awards may be used. In addition, the Administration supports changes, including: (1) providing that education awards cannot be considered when determining eligibility for Federal student aid; (2) permitting transfer of the awards to another person's Coverdell education savings account; and (3) establishing pilot authority to use the awards for other purposes such as home purchase and job training.

Reform AmeriCorps' VISTA program (AmeriCorps*VISTA) by devolving more control to community- and faith-based organizations.

AmeriCorps*VISTA is a vital component of AmeriCorps that has a long history of working closely with local community- and faith-based organizations focusing on anti-poverty efforts. AmeriCorps*VISTA has been effective in these efforts, but can be improved. The Administration urges the Congress to transition AmeriCorps*VISTA from a federally-operated program in which the Federal Government selects and supervises members, to a federally-assisted program, in which sponsoring organizations select and supervise members, similar to other AmeriCorps programs. This change would provide greater control and flexibility to nonprofit organizations in program design and delivery, as well as additional incentives for potential members to join.

Test alternative approaches in the delivery of AmeriCorps.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be empowered to test, on a pilot basis, innovative and flexible programs designed to involve more people in public service. For example, the Corporation should be able to test a model by which individuals determine where they wish to serve from among a variety of options, rather than being selected by the grantee organizations. This would permit more AmeriCorps members to serve at small community- and faith-based organizations.

Demand accountability for results.

AmeriCorps grantees should have specific program objectives and accountability requirements. The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be given statutory authority to: (1) work with the grantees to establish performance measures; (2) require corrective plans for those not meeting goals; and (3) reduce or terminate grants if corrections are not made. The Chief Executive Officer should also be given statutory authority to establish performance measures and corrective plans for any pilot programs that enable individuals to select and serve in small community- and faith-based organizations.

Provide more participation incentives for seniors.

More senior citizens can be encouraged to participate in AmeriCorps if they are permitted to earn education awards that can be transferred to their grandchildren or another individual in need.

Recognize homeland security programs as eligible for AmeriCorps grants.

AmeriCorps members support citizen engagement activities that promote public safety, public health, and disaster relief and preparedness. The national service laws should reflect the increase in citizen interest in these types of activities following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Recognize technology programs as eligible for AmeriCorps grants.

AmeriCorps members currently assist individuals in making effective use of technology through after-school and weekend programs. However, while the national laws explicitly identify a long list of program areas as eligible for AmeriCorps grants, technology is not among them. In view of its importance for education, literacy, and other human needs, the authorizing statute should reflect the role of technology within AmeriCorps.

Contain costs.

While the average costs to finance AmeriCorps members is relatively modest (\$10,000 average cost including full-time and part-time members), enacting a statutory cap on average per-member expenditures will ensure future cost containment and maximize service opportunities for more Americans. The Federal cost for full-time members includes 85 percent of a living stipend of about \$9,300 that permits individuals to devote their full time to community service during their year as an AmeriCorps member. Other costs include basic health insurance, training, and an education award of \$4,725 at the conclusion of service. This proposal would set a cap per average cost of full-time equivalent members.

Authorize Appropriations.

The Administration calls on the Congress to authorize a \$230 million increase from last year's budget – the full funding of AmeriCorps requested in the President's FY 2003 budget – which would permit AmeriCorps participation to increase from 50,000 Americans per year to 75,000. These 25,000 new AmeriCorps participants, in turn, will leverage at least 75,000 additional volunteers for community service organizations.

Enhancing Senior Corps

Overview

The Corporation for National and Community Service administers the National Senior Service Corps, which provides opportunities for approximately 500,000 older Americans to serve their communities. The Senior Corps is comprised of three major programs: the ***Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)***; the ***Foster Grandparent Program***; and the ***Senior Companion Program***. The Corporation makes grants to nonprofit organizations and public entities to support these programs.

- ***RSVP*** matches older Americans who are willing to help with local problems in their communities. RSVP volunteers provide a wide range of important services, such as tutoring youth, responding to natural disasters, serving as citizen patrols for local police departments, teaching parenting skills to teen parents, getting children immunized, and mentoring troubled youth. RSVP volunteers serve without stipend for an average of four hours per week. To best meet the needs of their communities, RSVP volunteers choose how and where they serve.
- ***Foster Grandparents*** provide valuable assistance to children with exceptional needs. Foster Grandparents serve in schools, hospitals, drug treatment centers, correctional institutions, Head Start and day care centers. Foster Grandparents help abused and neglected children, mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers, and care for premature infants and children with disabilities.
- ***Senior Companions*** provide comfort to frail, homebound individuals, most of them elderly. These clients have difficulties with daily living tasks, and Senior Companions help them retain their dignity and independence.

In both the Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions programs, members have low-incomes, serve 20 hours per week, and receive a modest stipend of \$2.65 per hour. RSVP volunteers receive no allowance and may select their level of service.

As we look to the future and a rapidly expanding population of seniors interested in helping to meet community needs, we need to enhance the effectiveness of these programs and remove barriers that inhibit service opportunities. These efforts should build on the best from our past experience and incorporate emerging knowledge about the preferences, education, and capacities of the coming waves of retirees.

The Administration advocates the strengthening of senior service programs administered by the Federal government to enable more older Americans to have expanded opportunities to serve their communities.

Summary of Proposals

To strengthen service opportunities for our Nation's seniors, the President proposes the following reforms:

Reduce barriers for participation in all Senior Corps programs by lowering the age of eligibility from 60 to 55.

Currently, participants in Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions must be 60, while people can participate in RSVP beginning at age 55. The age of eligibility should be 55 for all Senior Corps programs.

Remove income eligibility limitations that restrict participation in Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions.

Removing the income eligibility restrictions will permit currently under-subscribed programs to be fully utilized, ensuring that more youth at risk and frail elderly can be served by our Nation's seniors. When lifting the income eligibility restrictions, the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be directed to ensure effective outreach to, and continued availability of, opportunities for persons with low incomes. Projects will have greater flexibility in making stipends available to volunteers, based on intensity of service, not income.

Permit innovations in programming.

The Administration proposes to add new flexibility to the Senior Corps by permitting, for example: (1) Foster Grandparents to provide a broader range of services to children, including to more than one child at a time; and (2) allowances for RSVP participants serving for lengthy periods of time.

Demand accountability for results.

Senior Corps grantees should have specific program objectives and accountability requirements. The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be given statutory authority to: (1) work with the grantees to establish performance measures; (2) require corrective plans for those not meeting goals; and (3) reduce or terminate grants if corrections are not made.

Provide greater flexibility to local communities.

The Administration proposes to create greater flexibility in the use of Federal resources by easing requirements that govern the activities and support of volunteers. For example, under current requirements, seniors must serve 20 hours per week to participate in Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions. There should be more flexibility in the number of hours per week that individuals may serve.

Authorize grants to support a senior scholarships program.

The Administration supports the creation of a senior scholarships program to promote mentoring and tutoring by seniors, who may receive or transfer a \$1,000 “Silver Scholarship” to their children, grandchildren or another designated individual.

Authorize Appropriations.

The Administration urges the Congress to authorize a \$50 million increase from last year’s budget – the full funding of Senior Corps programs requested in the President’s FY 2003 budget. This increase in funding will permit participation to increase from 500,000 seniors per year to 600,000. The funds have been requested under “Special Volunteer Programs,” to permit flexibility in how the funds may be used.

Promoting Student Service and Effective Service-Learning

Overview

The goal of the Learn and Serve America programs is to make service an integral part of the education of all young people and instill a lifelong ethic of civic engagement and service. All Learn and Serve America programs – for K-12 and higher education – integrate community service with academic curricula or with extracurricular learning opportunities. Students who participate in these programs demonstrate increased civic and social responsibility and higher academic achievement. In addition, Learn and Serve America programs encourage and foster beneficial collaboration among schools, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and others, to meet community needs and to strengthen the fabric of local communities.

A 1999 U.S. Department of Education study identified a growing trend within public elementary and secondary schools to offer service and service-learning classes. The study found that 32 percent of all public schools organized service-learning as part of their curricula, including nearly half of all high schools, and 57 percent of all public schools organized community service activities for their students. This growth is significant when compared to a similar study conducted in 1984 that found only 9 percent of all high schools offered service-learning, and 27 percent of all high schools offered some type of community service (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). In higher education, service-learning has had similarly expansive growth.

Unfortunately, Federal Work-Study program participation among college and university students does not reflect the same trend. The original Federal Work-Study Program had as its purpose: “to encourage students receiving Federal student financial aid to participate in community service activities that will benefit the Nation and engender in the students a sense of social responsibility and commitment to the community.” Current law requires that colleges and universities place only 7 percent of Work-Study students in community service positions. Even so, many colleges and universities fail to meet this very minimal requirement. Moreover, many colleges and universities fail to inform students that they have the option to perform community service to meet their Work-Study requirements.

The Administration proposes to make changes in Learn and Serve programs at all education levels to increase the number of students participating in high quality service programs.

Summary of Proposals

To foster more quality service learning and opportunities for students in K-12 and higher education, the President proposes the following reforms:

Enhance quality by more effectively targeting Learn and Serve America grants.

Under current law, a majority of Learn and Serve America resources are divided into formula grants to the states. Each state education agency then divides its formula grant amount into smaller grants to local schools and school districts. This formula funding approach should be balanced with more targeted funds awarded to research-based, high quality service learning programs. In addition to state education agencies, the list of entities eligible for Learn and Serve America grants should be expanded to include a wider range of public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Moreover, Learn and Serve America funds should be made available for research and demonstration projects that highlight quality service learning programs.

Demand accountability for results.

Grantees must have specific program objectives and accountability requirements. The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service should be given statutory authority to: (1) work with grantees to establish performance measures for each grantee; (2) require corrective plans for those not meeting goals; and (3) reduce or terminate grants if corrections are not made.

Amend the Higher Education Act to require every college and university to increase, over several years, the percentage of Federal Work-Study funds devoted to community service to 50 percent.

In addition to increasing the participation requirement to allow more college and university students to engage in community service activities, colleges and universities should be encouraged to devote at least 5 percent of Federal Work-Study funds each year to homeland security activities (including public safety, public health, and emergency preparedness). Financial incentives, such as increased flexibility in using student financial aid administrative funds, should be provided for institutions that meet these goals.

Administrative, Management, and Other Improvements

Overview

While demanding greater accountability for the use of Federal resources, there are opportunities to improve the way the Corporation for National and Community Service does its business. This should strengthen support in the private sector for community service, open up service opportunities for Americans with disabilities, and increase participation by smaller community- and faith-based organizations, while improving the Corporation's management controls. Some of these proposals were identified in the relevant program section. Others are included below.

Summary of Proposals

To strengthen and improve the administration of national and community-based service opportunities, the President proposes the following reforms:

Provide for a challenge grant fund to support the growth of service and volunteerism.

Require \$1 in private support for every \$1 provided by the Corporation as a challenge grant, and emphasize the importance of using such grants to build up the capacity of non-profit organizations, especially small community-based organizations. Once such challenge grants are funded, provide for a 2-to-1 match in subsequent years.

Authorize the Corporation to establish a veterans service initiative for youths.

To support the service of veterans and retired military personnel as tutors and mentors, the Administration is proposing to establish a veterans component to the Corporation's youth-serving programs.

Eliminate barriers to participation in national service programs by individuals with disabilities.

Grants for accommodation to increase the placement of individuals with disabilities should no longer be limited to certain parts of AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps benefits should no longer negatively affect entitlement to disability benefits, and participation in AmeriCorps may lead to new opportunities for productive work for Americans with disabilities.

Authorize the Corporation to consolidate or modify application procedures and reporting requirements under the national service laws to promote efficiency and eliminate duplicative provisions.

States should be permitted to file a single application rather than the multiple applications required under current law to access Corporation funds.

Authorize the Corporation to eliminate administrative requirements.

The Administration proposes to eliminate the administrative burdens that have been identified by states as impeding the coordination and effectiveness of their national and community service programs.

Conduct research on program effectiveness and evaluate best practices.

Make available up to 3 percent of program funds from AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America for research and evaluation purposes.

Authorize the Corporation to support a management clearinghouse.

To provide small community-based nonprofit organizations with technical advice and assistance, the Administration proposes the specific authorization for a management clearinghouse to be supported by the Corporation.

Make a series of technical adjustments to strengthen AmeriCorps programming and reduce burdens on grantees.

The Administration supports a number of technical adjustments to the authorizing statutes in an effort to strengthen AmeriCorps programming and reduce burdens on AmeriCorps grantees, including: (1) using AmeriCorps funds to support training and technical assistance for all national service programs receiving assistance; (2) authorizing grants which, by design, support allowable costs without requiring grantees to maintain source documentation and detailed financial records; (3) providing for an adjustment to living allowances for members who serve less than 12 months; and (4) permitting an individual to receive the aggregate value of two full-time education awards.