



AmeriCorps: Changing Lives, Changing America

A Report on AmeriCorps' Impact on Members and Nonprofit Organizations



2007

Authors

Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development

LaMonica Shelton, Senior Policy Analyst

Brooke Nicholas, Policy Analyst

Lillian Dote, Policy Analyst

Robert Grimm, Jr., Director, and Special Counsel to the CEO

Suggested citation: Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development.
AmeriCorps: Changing Lives, Changing America, Washington, DC, 2007.



The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation provides opportunities for more than two million Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 606-5000 • TTY: (202) 606-3472
info@cns.gov • www.nationalservice.gov
May 2007

Upon request this material will be made available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

Overview

AmeriCorps is designed to help strengthen and rebuild communities affected by poverty, impacted by disasters, and marked by crime. From the initial members who served during the “Summer of Safety” in 1994 to the soon-to-be 500,000th member in 2007, AmeriCorps members have been on the front lines of service every day, recruiting and managing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds—1.4 million in 2006 alone. Together, AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they mobilize tackle some of our nation’s toughest problems: crime, illiteracy, homelessness, gang violence, and drug abuse. They teach and tutor to help students improve academically, mentor children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, run after-school programs, reconnect prisoners with mainstream society, care for seniors, and protect the environment.

Not only do communities touched by AmeriCorps benefit from the services that members provide, but AmeriCorps members benefit from their own service experience.

Members are given opportunities to learn skills during their specific service assignment, such as tutoring or construction. Even more so, members are given opportunities to develop leadership qualities and to enhance skills such as time management and conflict resolution. The nonprofit organizations with which members serve are also capitalizing on members’ newfound or improved skills. Many organizations rely on AmeriCorps members to help mobilize the volunteers necessary to expand the organization’s reach within its community.

This report examines the results from a longitudinal study of AmeriCorps members and surveys of members, alumni, and the organizations where members served to examine the impacts of national service on members’ civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills. Findings reveal that AmeriCorps alumni are more connected to their communities, continue to participate in community activities, and choose public service careers after their service with AmeriCorps.



“As any member will attest, there are many sacrifices one makes when joining AmeriCorps. Money is tight and we are sometimes overworked, but the personal growth I have experienced and the gratitude and satisfaction I see in the faces of patients make the sacrifices miniscule.”

Key Findings

AmeriCorps' Impact on Members

Skill Development

AmeriCorps helps members develop leadership and job-related skills.

- ▶ Nearly all (90%) members report that they have gained useful skills from their AmeriCorps experience, with 57.8 percent reporting to a large extent and 31.7 percent reporting to a moderate extent.
- ▶ Nearly half (46%) of members identify “gaining new skills” as their primary or secondary reason for joining AmeriCorps.
- ▶ Of the members who joined AmeriCorps to gain new skills, 99 percent report that their goal was met, with 76 percent saying to a great extent and 22 percent saying to a moderate extent.¹
- ▶ Most (91%) alumni report that since they completed their term with AmeriCorps, they have used the skills they gained during service, with 53.9 percent reporting to a great extent and 37.5 percent reporting to a moderate extent.

Ethic of Service and Civic Engagement

AmeriCorps alumni continue to be highly engaged in their community.

- ▶ A majority (80%) of members report they are more likely to participate in community service as a result of their AmeriCorps experience, with 34.3 percent reporting they are much more likely and 45.3 percent reporting they are more likely to participate.²
- ▶ In fact, a significant number (72%) of members continue to volunteer after completing their service.
- ▶ Over half (57%) of AmeriCorps alumni volunteered a considerable amount of time (more than 80 hours total) two to three years after completing their service.
- ▶ Alumni who did not volunteer prior to AmeriCorps are much more civically engaged than a comparable group of individuals who expressed interest in, but did not join, AmeriCorps. There is a 25-percentage-point difference in their rates of volunteering.³

¹ This result combines the top two response categories for this question. Members were asked the extent to which AmeriCorps helped them achieve their goal(s). The top two response categories for that question are “to a large extent” and “to a moderate extent”. This also applies to two bulleted findings in this Skill Development section that follow.

² This result combines the top two response categories for this question, “very likely” and “somewhat likely.”

³ Members who participated in the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study served in AmeriCorps between 1999 and 2000. Their post-service volunteer activities referenced above took place between fall 2000 and fall 2002.



“If you want to grow your program, sign up with AmeriCorps! We had a fledgling program of six dedicated members that is now 280 strong – providing literacy programs from Head Start to adult ed, and AmeriCorps is the reason we can help so many people.”

Pipeline to Public Service

AmeriCorps alumni are more likely to enter public service careers than a comparable group of individuals who did not join AmeriCorps.

- ▶ The majority (66%) of alumni choose to go into a public service career, with 35 percent working in the public sector and 31 percent working in the nonprofit sector.
- ▶ There is a seven-point difference between the percentage of alumni who went into a public service career after service and a comparison group of individuals who expressed interest in AmeriCorps but did not join.

Education

Members who do not have a college degree receive substantial benefits from their AmeriCorps experience.⁴

- ▶ Nearly three-quarters (71%) of members report that the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award was an incentive for them joining AmeriCorps, with 35.6 percent reporting it influenced their decision to join to a large extent and 35.2 percent to a moderate extent.⁵
- ▶ Forty-one percent of members obtained a four-year degree within three years of enrolling in AmeriCorps.
- ▶ Over half (52%) of members without a college degree and no history of volunteering before joining AmeriCorps report that they have volunteered since completing their service.

AmeriCorps' Impact on Organizations

Volunteer Recruitment and Management

Nonprofits report that AmeriCorps increases their ability to serve their community.⁷

- ▶ Recognizing that members help to strengthen organizational capacity, nearly all (93%) organizations rate the members who served with them as excellent or good—54 percent and 39 percent, respectively.
- ▶ Most organizations (93%) report that members helped them to serve additional persons in the community, with 69 percent reporting they were helped to a large extent and 24 percent to a moderate extent.
- ▶ Eighty-four percent report that AmeriCorps and its members helped them to leverage additional volunteers, 49 percent to a large extent and 35 percent to a moderate extent.

Evidence of Additional Capacity-Building Efforts

Members help nonprofits build relationships with other organizations and secure additional resources, which allow them to expand their reach in the community.

- ▶ Additionally, 88 percent report that the AmeriCorps program and members contributed to their organization's ability to develop additional partnerships with other organizations, 51 percent to a large extent and 37 percent to a moderate extent.
- ▶ Furthermore, 62 percent report that the members helped to bring in donations of goods or services, 32 percent to a large extent and 30 percent to a moderate extent.

⁴ This section provides results based on education. Therefore, these results may be slightly different from those in the Skills Development and Ethic of Service categories.

⁵ The results in this section combine the top two response categories for each question. For example, organizations were asked the extent to which members helped them recruit more volunteers. The top two response categories for that question were "to a large extent" and "to a moderate extent."



“The accomplishments of the AmeriCorps members far exceed expectations. Their presence is a significant catalyst for change.”

AmeriCorps operates under the auspices of the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation), an independent federal agency. AmeriCorps is a network of three programs—Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and AmeriCorps State and National (State/National)—that each year supports 75,000 Americans in service to meet critical needs in education, the environment, public safety, disaster relief, and other areas. (See Appendix for more-detailed program descriptions.) Since 1994, 500,000 AmeriCorps members have provided more than 630 million hours of service with tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide. Members tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, run after-school programs, care for the elderly, clean parks and streams, and respond to disasters. They also recruit, train, and manage community volunteers—more than 1.4 million in 2006 alone. In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that they can use to pay for college or pay back qualified student loans. Members have earned more than \$1.2 billion in education awards since 1994.

The Corporation’s mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. As each member takes the

AmeriCorps pledge, he or she commits “to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier” by providing services that support the Corporation’s mission. Members also pledge to uphold this commitment even after their year of service, a promise that is taken very seriously by our former members (alumni), as evidenced by their continued volunteering and civic participation.

While previous research has focused on the impact of AmeriCorps programs on communities, this report looks at the impact that AmeriCorps has on the members who serve and the organizations that sponsor them. Based on data collected by the Corporation from 1999 to 2006 through the “AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study”⁶ and three satisfaction surveys,⁷ this report demonstrates that AmeriCorps members gain new and useful skills, advance their education, and become more connected to their communities. True to their pledge, AmeriCorps members continue to volunteer in their communities after their term of service ends, and are more likely to enter public service careers than a comparable group of individuals who did not serve with AmeriCorps. The report also shows that the organizations where AmeriCorps members serve highly value them because they help the organizations to expand their reach and effectiveness toward achieving their mission.

⁶ *The AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps*, is an independent evaluation conducted by Abt Associates, Inc. Visit http://www.cns.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp#AC_LONG to view the full report. The study compares a nationally-representative sample of AmeriCorps members with a comparison group who expressed interest but did not enroll in AmeriCorps. The study controlled for interest in national and community service, member and family demographics, and prior civic engagement.

⁷ These three satisfaction surveys, the AmeriCorps Member, Alumni and Organization Satisfaction Surveys, were conducted in conjunction with the Urban Institute. AmeriCorps members are surveyed close to the end of their service term, while alumni are surveyed two to three years after successfully completing their service.

AmeriCorps members are highly satisfied with their service experience. Many attribute much of that satisfaction to the invaluable experience gained from their service, including the opportunity to acquire additional skills for school and work. Alumni overwhelmingly report that AmeriCorps has positively affected their lives. As a result of their service, they enhanced their skills and strengthened their desire to continue volunteering.

In looking more closely at members' satisfaction levels, we find:⁸

- ▶ 91 percent of members report that their overall AmeriCorps service experience was excellent or good.⁹
- ▶ 94 percent would re-enroll in AmeriCorps if given the opportunity.¹⁰
- ▶ 95 percent would recommend AmeriCorps to a friend or family member.¹¹

Skill Development

Through the "AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey," we find that members join AmeriCorps for a number of reasons. Forty-six percent of members join AmeriCorps to gain new skills as their primary or secondary reason (27% and 19%, respectively). Helping communities is the only goal that ranks higher (52%). AmeriCorps helped many members develop new skills. Almost all (99%) report their primary or secondary goal to acquire new skills was met.¹²

Furthermore, 90 percent of members report that they have gained new skills from their AmeriCorps experience,¹³ regardless of whether it was their primary or secondary goal for joining. These skills prove to be useful to members in their education and career pursuits, as 91 percent of alumni report that they have used the skills gained from their AmeriCorps service.¹⁴

According to the "AmeriCorps Alumni Survey," members report acquiring skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, time management, and decision-making. When analyzing long-term effects from the "AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study," we see members experience a greater gain in basic work skills¹⁵ when compared to a similar group of individuals who have no AmeriCorps experience.

Ethic of Service and Civic Engagement

Although members tend to already be a highly civically engaged group, our findings show that most continue to be actively engaged in their community after their service with AmeriCorps. According to the "AmeriCorps Current Member Survey," 80 percent say they are likely to participate in community service as a result of their AmeriCorps experience.¹⁶

Results from the "AmeriCorps Alumni Survey" reveal that close to that same number did volunteer after AmeriCorps—72 percent of members report that they have volunteered since completing their service. What's more, alumni contribute a considerable amount of time to volunteering after AmeriCorps. In fact, over half (57%) volunteer more than 80 hours

⁸The following three results include the top two response categories for each question.

⁹53.8 percent and 36.8 percent report their experience was excellent or good, respectively.

¹⁰75.5 percent report they would be very likely, and 18.7% report they would be somewhat likely to re-enroll in AmeriCorps. This excludes NCCC.

¹¹73.6 percent report they would be very likely, and 21.5 percent report they would be somewhat likely to recommend AmeriCorps to a friend or family member.

¹²76 percent say their goal was met to a great extent and 22 percent say it was met to a moderate extent.

¹³57.8 percent say they gained useful skills to a large extent, and 31.7 percent say to a moderate extent.

¹⁴53.9 percent report having used those skills gained to a large extent, and 37.5 percent report using those skills to a moderate extent.

¹⁵Basic work skills was defined as solving unexpected problems, knowing how to gather and analyze information, listening and responding to others, stopping or decreasing conflicts, leading a team, negotiating and compromising, learning new ways of thinking and interacting, adapting plans, managing time, and dealing with uncomfortable working conditions.

¹⁶34.3 percent report they are much more likely, and 45.3 percent report they are more likely to participate in community service as a result of their AmeriCorps experience.

total two to three years after completing their AmeriCorps service.

Further evidence of AmeriCorps' influence on members is demonstrated through the "AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study" by comparing the habits of members after service with a group of individuals who chose not to enroll in AmeriCorps. We surveyed members who served in AmeriCorps between 1999 and 2000 about their volunteer activities in their community since completing their term with AmeriCorps (between Fall 2000 and Fall 2002).

We find members who did not volunteer prior to AmeriCorps are more likely than the comparison group to volunteer after their service (a 25-percentage-point difference).¹⁷ (See Figure 1.) What this tells us is that service through AmeriCorps sparks an interest in many members to become engaged in their community after their program experience.

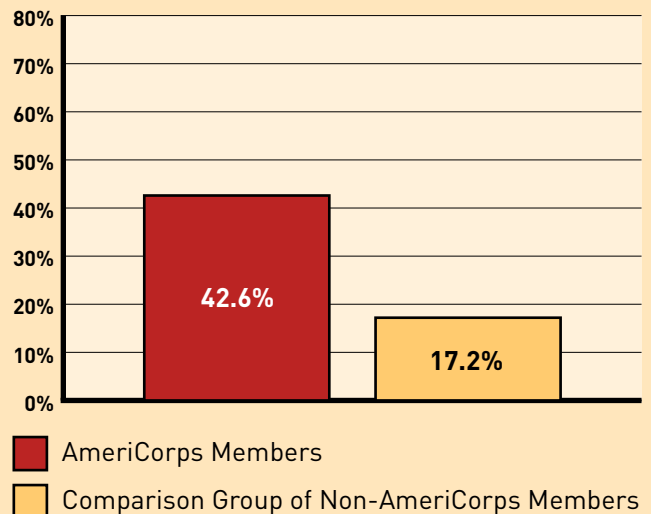
Pipeline to Public Service

AmeriCorps alumni are significantly more likely than a comparable group of non-AmeriCorps members to enter into a public service career such as teaching, public safety, social work, and military service. According to the "AmeriCorps Alumni Survey," 35 percent of members report working in the public sector and 31 percent in the non-profit sector since completing service. In fact, many members go on to pursue careers with people in need, including 67 percent of employed alumni who work with high-poverty populations, and 33 percent who work with the elderly.¹⁸ Members who reported that they had been employed since completing their term of service with AmeriCorps were asked a series of

¹⁷ This result is from the "AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study" and only includes State/National members.

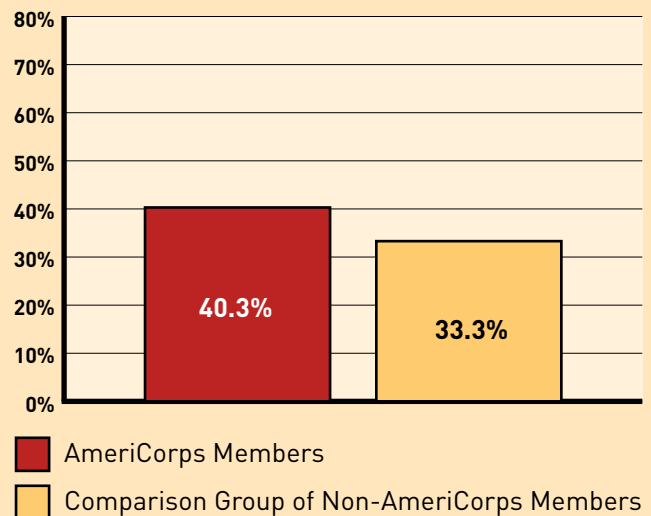
¹⁸ Members who reported that they had been employed since completing their term of service with AmeriCorps were asked a series of follow-up questions, including questions about the population(s) with which they worked.

Figure 1: AmeriCorps Alumni vs. Comparison Group: Volunteer Rates for Individuals Without a History of Volunteering*



* These data are from the "AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study." The data displayed in the chart compare the 2000 to 2002 volunteer rates of alumni with a comparison group (non-AmeriCorps members). Neither group volunteered prior to 1999-2000.

Figure 2: Employment in a Public Service Career*



* These data, reflecting those who enter a public service career such as teaching, public safety, social work, and military service, are from the "AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study."

follow-up questions, including questions about the population(s) with which they worked. When we look at the “AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study” to determine the long-term impacts of AmeriCorps, we find members more likely to be employed in public service than those from the comparison group—a seven-percentage-point difference. (See Figure 2.)

Education

Many members join AmeriCorps to gain experiences that will help them decide what kind of work they would like to do in the future. Some join in order to gain practical, hands-on experience that will help them in their future career. Others join to determine what their next step in life will be. Results from the “AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey” show that 71 percent report the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award was another incentive for them joining AmeriCorps.¹⁹ Members often report that as a result of their AmeriCorps service experience they are more likely to continue with their education. Moreover, three years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, 41 percent of members report they obtained a bachelor’s degree.²⁰

Furthermore, the “AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey” revealed that members with a four-year degree are more likely to have volunteered before AmeriCorps than members without a four-year college degree. Of these two groups, those without a degree (who did not previously volunteer) are twice as likely to become volunteers after their AmeriCorps experience. Among members with some or no college experience, 22 percent had not volunteered before joining AmeriCorps. Through the “AmeriCorps Alumni Survey” we find that of this 22 percent, a little more than half (52%) report volunteering since completing service in AmeriCorps. Members with a four-year degree who did not volunteer before AmeriCorps also increase their civic engagement. Thirteen percent of members with college degrees had not volunteered before joining AmeriCorps. Of this 13 percent, more than a third (36%) report volunteering since completing service in AmeriCorps.

These education differences speak to the possibility that while all types of members receive positive benefits from their AmeriCorps service, members with less than a college education and with less experience engaging in their community gain slightly more benefits than others.

¹⁹ 35.6 percent say the education award influenced their decision to join AmeriCorps to a large extent, and 35.2 percent say to a moderate extent.

²⁰ 63 percent of members were not college graduates at the time they participated in the survey.

The Right Fit Before Medical School

Before I committed myself to the rigors of medical education, I wanted to make a lasting contribution to a community in need. I heard about AmeriCorps from a premedical student and I searched the Internet site for volunteer opportunities. It did not take more than a few minutes for me to find the Children’s Clinic.

[An] added benefit of becoming an AmeriCorps volunteer has been the opportunity to learn. I have become active outside of

work through community organizations determined to increase the resources that are allocated by the city and state to communities that are in desperate need of money. . .

I feel infinitely more connected to the community that I serve, and I will take with me what I have learned as an AmeriCorps to my career as a physician.

AmeriCorps members serve through thousands of different national and local organizations, helping them expand their reach, serve more people, and better achieve their mission. These groups include community and faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, schools, public agencies, Native American Tribes, and more. AmeriCorps was designed to ensure that funding and decision-making occurs with those who know their states and communities best.

By providing existing organizations with dedicated individuals who make an intensive service commitment, AmeriCorps helps organizations accomplish more—both through the members who provide direct and capacity-building services and through the additional community volunteers whom they recruit and supervise. This section looks at the positive effects AmeriCorps members have on the nonprofit organizations they serve.²¹

The local nonprofit and community organizations that have AmeriCorps members have extremely favorable views about AmeriCorps. They report that members greatly contribute to their efforts to build the capacity necessary to do even greater work in their community. The AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey shows

that 93 percent of organizations rate the members who served with them as excellent or good,²² and 93 percent report that members help them to serve additional persons in the community.²³

Volunteer Recruitment and Management

Beyond their direct service, AmeriCorps members play a key role in helping organizations increase their capacity by recruiting more volunteers and serving as volunteer coordinators who train, manage, and support volunteers. Last year alone, AmeriCorps members recruited or managed more than 1.4 million volunteers.

Volunteers are arguably an organization's most important resource. They are vital for helping an organization expand its reach in a community. The Corporation's "Volunteer Management Capacity Study" demonstrated the importance of implementing effective volunteer management practices (such as training and screening volunteers) as necessary ingredients to successfully recruit and manage volunteers. That study found that one of the most popular capacity-building options among charities with social service outreach activities is placing someone like an AmeriCorps member with the

²¹ The capacity-building results in the organization section include only those organizations who reported that these activities were a part of the members' work.

²² 54 percent and 39 percent of organizations rate members as excellent or good, respectively.

²³ 69 percent of organizations report that members helped them to serve additional persons in the community to a large extent, and 24 percent report they helped to a moderate extent.

Rebuilding in the Gulf

Since September 2005, thousands of AmeriCorps members have leveraged tens of thousands of volunteers to support efforts in the Gulf to help "muck out" and rebuild homes and help nearly 2 million people in need. They were able to support organizations such as the Red Cross, United Way, and the Salvation Army by coordinating and managing donations and volunteers—tasks that would have been extremely challenging for local communities without their assistance.



organization, and making that member responsible for volunteer recruitment and management.

As we learned from the “Volunteer Management Capacity Study,” an estimated four out of every five public charities rely upon volunteers. AmeriCorps recognizes the value of volunteers and many programs assign members to recruit and manage volunteers. Eighty-four percent of organizations in the study report that members helped the organization to leverage additional volunteers.²⁴ In fact, the AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey shows us that most members spend at least some time recruiting and/or managing volunteers (76% recruit and 62.5% manage volunteers). We believe the presence of the members and their efforts to increase the number of managed volunteers within an organization relates to the percentage of organizations who report that members have helped the nonprofit to serve additional persons in the community (93%).²⁵

Evidence of Additional Capacity-Building Efforts

Nonprofits further report that members help them

develop additional partnerships and increase their in-kind donations. One way for an organization to expand its reach is to develop more partnerships. Partnerships can broaden an organization’s expertise, strengthen resources, and provide an entry into new communities. Many successful service projects and programs are built on partnerships similar to the Habitat for Humanity example, (see text box below), which is just one of many partnership examples. Resources from AmeriCorps, including members, play a key role; in fact, 88 percent of organizations report that AmeriCorps has helped them to develop partnerships with other organizations,²⁶ according to the “AmeriCorps Organization Survey.”

In helping to build capacity, organizations also look to increase the amount of in-kind and other resources they receive to help expand their reach in communities. Members help coordinate the collection of food, clothing and other items, as well as help to target and augment development efforts. In addition to raising funds and writing grants, members are helping to bring in donations of goods or services to organizations, as 62 percent of organizations report.²⁷

²⁴ 49 percent of organizations say AmeriCorps helped them to leverage additional volunteers to a large extent, and 35 percent say to a moderate extent.

²⁵ 69 percent of organizations report that AmeriCorps helped them to serve additional persons to a large extent, and 24 percent report to a moderate extent.

²⁶ 51 percent of organizations report that AmeriCorps has helped them to develop partnerships to a large extent, and 37 percent report to a moderate extent.

²⁷ This data is from the “AmeriCorps Organization Survey”. 32 percent of organizations say AmeriCorps helped them to a large extent and 30 percent say to a moderate extent.

Program Example of Partnership Development

To help achieve its mission and goals, Habitat for Humanity works with AmeriCorps members, local governments, and corporations to identify or provide additional funding resources, mobilize corporate and other employees as Habitat volunteers, and help raise awareness about the housing issues that many people are facing. In 2005 alone, 650 AmeriCorps members serving with Habitat for Humanity recruited and worked with more than 140,000 community volunteers to build 1,500 homes that would not have been built otherwise.





“In our area, we are one of the primary providers of after-school tutoring, mentoring and assistance. We impact tens of thousands of urban youth, teachers, and administrators every year. We couldn’t do that without AmeriCorps.”

Overall, our findings suggest that the AmeriCorps service experience reaps multiple benefits for members, which contribute to their high satisfaction levels. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for members to develop a variety of new and useful skills they can apply in their future endeavors, and most members report that they have indeed applied these skills.

AmeriCorps members also say that their experience has contributed to their interest in advancing their education. A majority of members report that the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is an incentive for them to join the program, and many who did not have a four-year degree at the time they served go on to obtain one later.

Although most members continue to volunteer after their service, we find that AmeriCorps sparks future community engagement among people who do not have a history of service, demonstrating AmeriCorps’ benefits to them years afterward.

Members simultaneously provide numerous benefits to communities. As they assist organizations in increasing their capacity to manage more volunteers and serve additional people, members are also helping organizations develop the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of their communities after the members have left the organization.

DATA SOURCES

Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps, 2002, updated August 2006

AmeriCorps Satisfaction Surveys

Member Survey, 2006

Alumni Survey, 2005

Organization Survey, 2005

Volunteer Management Capacity Study, 2004

AmeriCorps Member Demographics

- ▶ 73% are women
- ▶ 38% are from typically underrepresented racial or ethnic groups (including 18% African-American, 12% Hispanic, and 9% Multiple/Other Races). This is 13 percentage points greater than the general American population
- ▶ 32% are college graduates
- ▶ 23% are enrolled in college (does not include those in graduate school) while serving in AmeriCorps

(Source: 2006 AmeriCorps Member Satisfaction Survey)



Background

AmeriCorps participants are known as members while they are serving and alumni after completing their service. Members must be at least 18 years of age or older, with some exceptions for those 16 and 17 years of age. While members are serving, they receive a number of benefits, including training and development, which they can use in all aspects of their lives. Many

members also receive a living allowance and health benefits. Upon successfully completing service, members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award equivalent to their time commitment to AmeriCorps during the year.²⁸ The education award can be used to defray the costs of college or graduate school or to repay qualified student loans.

The chart below shows specific information about the three AmeriCorps programs.

²⁸ Some VISTA members opt for a cash stipend in place of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

²⁹ AmeriCorps State and National is composed of two separate components, AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps National.

PROGRAM	MEMBERS	SERVICE	PURPOSE
AmeriCorps VISTA	6,000 full-time members each year	Serves more than 1,200 nonprofits, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies	Help build capacity in the organization's they serve, and to create and expand programs that ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty
AmeriCorps NCCC	Full-time, 1,100-member, team-based residential program for men and women ages 18–24	Serves with nonprofits, faith-based, and other community organizations, and public agencies on 550 projects annually	Respond to community based requests for short-term assistance on projects in the areas of disaster services, the environment, housing, youth development, and other unmet needs. Support to the Gulf rebuilding effort is a high priority
AmeriCorps State and National ²⁹	60,000 plus members age 18 and older (with some exceptions for those 16 and 17 years of age serving full- and part-time	<p>AmeriCorps State: works with governor-appointed State Service Commissions to provide grants to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including hundreds of faith-based and community organizations, higher education institutions, and public agencies</p> <p>AmeriCorps National: provides grants directly to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs in more than one state, Indian tribes, and consortia formed across two or more states, including faith-based and community organizations, higher education institutions, and public agencies</p>	Use grants to recruit, train and place members in a variety of capacity-building and direct services in education, public safety, health, and the environment. The grants also support the members during their service

**Serving Country and Community:
A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps
(2002, updated 2006)**

The study sample comprises a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 AmeriCorps members from over 100 AmeriCorps State and National programs. Also included were three (of five) AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps regional campuses, and almost 2,000 non-members in comparison groups. VISTA was not included. The study compares changes over time in the attitudes and behavior of AmeriCorps members to a group with similar interests and backgrounds who did not enroll in AmeriCorps. The study controlled for interest in national and community service, member and family demographics, and prior civic engagement among the groups.

AmeriCorps Satisfaction Surveys (2005, 2006)

The 2006 member survey is designed to gauge members' levels of satisfaction with their AmeriCorps service experience. Through this effort satisfaction levels were obtained based on random samples of AmeriCorps State members and members from the largest AmeriCorps National programs, as well as a census of eligible NCCC and VISTA current members, for a total of 9,986 members invited to participate. In addition, a survey of a random sample of 3,075 invited former members (alumni) from the three programs was conducted in 2005.

For the alumni survey, we recoded four questions to create a variable indicating whether a member had a college degree. Two of the four questions asked were about attending school prior to AmeriCorps, and two asked about attending college after AmeriCorps.

Members who indicated high school attendance or some college experience were coded as less than a four-year degree or non-college graduates. Members who indicated they were in graduate school after AmeriCorps were coded as having a college degree. If members did not respond to the post-AmeriCorps college attendance questions, they were excluded from the analysis.

The organization survey is designed to gauge AmeriCorps nonprofit organizations' levels of satisfaction with the services provided by AmeriCorps and its staff. Through this effort satisfaction levels are obtained based on a random sample of 1,249 AmeriCorps organizations that host members.

Volunteer Management Capacity Study (2004)

The study is based on a nationally representative sample drawn from separate populations of congregations and charities in the U.S. Findings are based on a sample of 2,993 charities and 1,003 congregations.

The Office of Research and Policy Development

The Office of Research and Policy Development (RPD) is part of the CEO's Office within the Corporation for National and Community Service. RPD's mission is to develop and cultivate knowledge that will enhance the mission of the Corporation and of the volunteer and community service programs.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following staff at the Corporation for National and Community Service: Sandy Scott, Peter Shifter, Jonathan Williams, Mark Abbott, Kristin McSwain, Jean Whaley, Carol Rogers, Merlene Mazyck, Mike Berning, Kimberly Spring, Shelby Jennings, Darcy Dubinsky, and Kevin Cramer.

Corporation Research Reports on Volunteering and AmeriCorps

Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life (2007). Presents the second annual national, regional, and state-by-state analysis of volunteering trends and provides state rankings for key measures of volunteering. For the first time, the report includes historical comparisons of state volunteer rates using Census Bureau data from 1989 and 1974, as well as a new “Civic Life Index” that uses 12 indicators of volunteering, voting, neighborhood engagement (informal volunteering), and nonprofit and religious infrastructure to measure civic participation levels in every state.

Youth Helping America Series. Leveling the Path to Participation: Volunteering and Civic Engagement among Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances (2007). Examines the attitudes and behaviors of young people from disadvantaged circumstances including volunteering and other forms of civic engagement.

Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends Since 1974 (2006). Provides an in-depth look at volunteering over the past 30 years, with particular attention paid to changing historical volunteer patterns by select age groups.

Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings (2006). Presents a national, regional, and state-by-

state analysis of volunteering trends, and provides state rankings for key measures of volunteering.

College Students Helping America (2006). Identifies key trends in volunteering among college students, discusses future implications for volunteering given the changing college environment, and provides state rankings for volunteering among college students.

Volunteers Mentoring Youth: Implications for Closing the Mentoring Gap (2006). Provides a greater understanding of the characteristics and traits that distinguish individuals whose volunteering includes mentoring youth from volunteers who do not mentor.

Keeping Baby Boomers Volunteering (2007). Describes volunteering trends for Baby Boomers and projections for older Americans. Also provides strategies to harness Baby Boomers’ experience and energy, and identifies the factors likely to impact their decision to volunteer.

Youth Helping America Series. Educating for Active Citizens: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Youth Civic Engagement (2006). Takes a closer look at youth participation in school-based service and the relationship between different service-learning experiences and civic attitudes and outcomes.

Youth Helping America Series. Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering (2005). Explores the state of youth volunteering and the connections to the primary social institutions to which youth are exposed – family, schools, and religious congregations.

To read or download our reports, visit www.nationalservice.gov.



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Corporation for National and Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
www.AmeriCorps.gov

AmeriCorps engages 75,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet community needs in education, the environment, public safety, and other areas. AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, which also oversees Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America.