

Principles and Reforms

The Administration will work closely with the Congress to reform and enhance national and community service programs for five years, in a cost-neutral way and consistent with the following principles and reforms for reauthorizing the national service laws:

1. Mobilize citizen volunteers to meet the most pressing challenges of our communities.

President Bush proposes to reform and enhance national and community service programs to increase the quantity and quality of service opportunities for Americans as follows:

- Make Senior Corps programs more performance-oriented by eliminating the presumption of continued funding included in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act.
- Allow challenge grant authority in all programs to encourage private support of local nonprofits.
- Make national service programs more attractive and accessible to Americans with disabilities.
- Permit students ages 14-16, including those at-risk of dropping out of high school, to serve as AmeriCorps members in peer-to-peer school-based programs.
- Recognize the Corporation's expertise and capacity to support activities related to mentoring and otherwise engaging at-risk youth in service at national and local levels.
- Enable the Corporation to conduct outreach to, and coordinate communication between the roughly 500,000 AmeriCorps alumni to promote their continued engagement in solving community challenges.

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

President Bush proposes to give state, local, and community officials more authority and flexibility to provide service opportunities to the citizens they represent as follows:

- Give the states more authority to select programs by increasing the level of formula state grants consistent with a cost-neutral reduction in state competitive grants.
- Reduce administrative burdens on grantees, to enable a stronger focus on results and impact, including authorization to develop a single application for all

Corporation programs, and the consolidation of AmeriCorps member support and operating match requirements into a single match requirement.

- Permit greater flexibility in the use of funds to support evaluation and dissemination of best practices.
- On a demonstration basis within AmeriCorps State/National funding, allow individuals to choose the organizations with which they wish to serve from among a variety of options, including smaller community and faith-based organizations, outside the current AmeriCorps grant structure.
- Enable the Corporation to collect and disseminate best practices, especially in regard to faith-based and other community organizations, in volunteer recruitment and management, to encourage innovative and social entrepreneurial activities in the nonprofit sector.

3. Provide flexibility to leverage federal resources, make federal support more accountable and cost-effective, and increase the effectiveness of the Corporation and its programs.

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

- Simplify and streamline grantmaking, enabling more cost-effective programs, while strengthening accountability for outcomes.
- Permit Board members to serve for one year beyond expiration of term if no successor is appointed.
- Strengthen measures to prevent, detect, and deter fraud in connection with national service programs.
- Promote more cost-sharing on the part of the Corporation's grantees and beneficiaries of the Corporation's services.
- Promote regular and rigorous evaluation of the Corporation's programs.

4. Meet the immediate and long-term needs of communities facing a large-scale disaster.

- Codify the Corporation's role in supporting FEMA in the event of a large-scale disaster, as articulated in the National Response plan.

- Reform the National Civilian Community Corps' (NCCC) as a more cost-effective program, with a focus on meeting the disaster needs of local communities.
- In the event of a large-scale disaster permit an extension of the statutory term of service for AmeriCorps members beyond 12 months to allow experienced members to bring their knowledge and training to relief efforts through continued service in AmeriCorps.
- Enable the Corporation to reach out to, and promote communication among alumni of Corporation-funded programs, state commissions on national and community service, and volunteer connector organizations, to harness their expertise and interest in responding to disasters.