



AmeriCorps and Senior Corps Quantifying the Impact

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Authors: Dominic Modicamore and Alix Naugler
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9300 Lee Highway Fairfax, VA
www.icf.com

Executive Summary

About National Service

Nationwide, more than 275,000 Americans are serving their communities through two civilian national service programs, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. These national service members are meeting pressing needs by mentoring students, helping communities respond to and recover from natural disasters, fighting the opioid epidemic, connecting veterans to job and education resources, supporting independent living for seniors and Americans with disabilities, helping families achieve economic self-sufficiency, and more. Through their service, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members gain skills and experiences that help them develop as professionals, make connections to further employment and educational opportunities, earn money for college, and enhance their health and well-being.

AmeriCorps and Senior Corps are programs operated and supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a federal agency established in 1993 to create opportunities for Americans to serve their communities. CNCS is the largest grant maker for service and volunteering in the nation and provides support to many national and local nonprofits, such as Habitat for Humanity, City Year, Teach For America, and conservation service corps throughout the country. Through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, CNCS connects full and part-time service members with opportunities to address critical community needs through intensive and sustained service.

About this Study

AmeriCorps and Senior Corps provide benefits to the people and communities they serve. They also benefit the members who serve, the government, and society, increasing social well-being across the nation. This cost-benefit analysis, commissioned by Voices for National Service¹ with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, explores and quantifies the economic and fiscal benefits that CNCS's AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs have on their members, society, and the government, specifically the benefit-cost ratio and return on investment (ROI) of CNCS funding.

This study calculates three metrics:

- **Benefit-Cost Ratio:** A comparison of the summation of all society, member, and government benefits to the combined budgeted federal and match spending.
- **Federal ROI:** The return on investment of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs to the federal government alone. This metric compares only fiscal benefits to fiscal costs to determine if the federal government is receiving a positive return for tax dollars spent on CNCS.
- **Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio:** The federal benefit-cost ratio uses components from the overall benefit-cost ratio and the federal ROI. Specifically, this metric includes all society, member, and government benefits derived from national service programs (like the benefit-cost ratio) and includes only the cost of federal CNCS funding (like the federal ROI).

Results

¹ Voices for National Service is housed and operated by City Year, Inc.

Benefit-Cost Ratio: For every \$1 of federal and match funding invested in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, the return to society, program members, and the government is \$11.80.

The total of all these benefits for the most recent program year is just over \$17.5 billion, while the cost is just under \$1.5 billion for FY2017. Thus, the overall benefit-cost ratio for national service programs at the national level is 11.8.

Federal ROI: For every \$1 of federal funds invested in national service programs, the federal government alone receives \$3.50 in return from tax revenue gains and savings.

The federal fiscal benefits from national service programs amount to almost \$4 billion during the most recent program year, while the budgeted federal cost is just over \$1 billion to taxpayers. The federal ROI is 3.5.

Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio: For every \$1 in federal taxes spent on supporting AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, the return to society, program members, and the government is \$17.30.

As noted above, the total benefits to society, program members, and government for the most recent program year is just over \$17.5 billion, while the cost to the federal government is just over \$1 billion, resulting in a benefit-cost ratio of 17.3.

Exhibits of Results

Exhibit ES1: Breakdown of Different Calculations by Benefits and Costs Included

	Benefits (numerator)	Costs (denominator)
Benefit-Cost Ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All society, member, and government benefits derived from national service programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeted federal CNCS funding Budgeted match funding
Federal ROI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal tax gains and federal cost savings derived from national service programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeted federal CNCS funding
Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All society, member, and government benefits derived from national service programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeted federal CNCS funding

Exhibit ES2: Summary of Resulting Benefit-Cost Ratios and ROI Metrics

	Benefit-Cost Ratio	Federal ROI	Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio
Total Monetized Benefits	\$17,687,616,867	\$3,631,382,609	\$17,687,616,867
Total Costs	\$1,495,341,930	\$1,025,358,000 ²	\$1,025,358,000
Result	11.8	3.5	17.3

Conclusion

² Corporation for National and Community Service. (n.d.). Fiscal Year 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/budget-and-performance/budget/fiscal-year-2017>. In FY2017, total federal funding for CNCS was \$1,030,358,000. The funds appropriated for *Innovation and Demonstration* were excluded because this is funding for non-AmeriCorps and non-Senior Corps programming. When removed, the total federal funding amounts to \$1,025,358,000.

This study illustrates that there is a significant return on investment for national service programs that play a critical role in leveraging the skills and talent of citizens to address unmet community needs across the nation. Based on the results of these analyses, we conclude that AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs result in significant monetary benefits to the federal government, to all program funders, to communities, and to those who serve.

Flint Case Study

In addition to calculating these metrics at the national level, a case study of national service in Flint, Michigan, was completed, measuring the benefit-cost ratio and ROI of CNCS programs that actively serve the Flint community. Flint was chosen for this case study because the city serves as a model for how intentionally prioritizing and fostering a robust culture of national service affects a community and its residents. Moreover, there has been increased federal and local investment in national service programs in the city over the last few years to address pressing community needs.

The results for Flint are higher than those at the national level. The primary reason for the difference is the Flint National Service Accelerator, housed by the United Way of Genesee County. In 2011, community leaders in Flint began organizing around the idea of national service being a key community revitalization strategy, committing to increasing the number of service members in Flint-area organizations, engaging them more effectively, and collaborating with other organizations that host members to offer better experiences and realize greater gains from service programs. The Accelerator was established to support the national service organizations and their members, provide coordination for recruitment, and help offset the costs of hosting AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members. Data for almost every AmeriCorps and Senior Corps program that operates in Flint was available through the Accelerator, and their monetized benefits were incorporated into an analytical framework.

Flint Results

Flint Benefit-Cost Ratio: For every \$1 of federal and match funding invested in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs in Flint, the return to society, program members, and the government is \$27.40.

Flint Federal ROI: For every \$1 of federal taxes invested in national service programs in Flint, the federal government alone receives \$8.40 in return from tax revenue gains and savings.

Flint Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio: For every \$1 in federal taxes spent on supporting AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs in Flint, the return to society, program members, and the government is \$35.90.

Exhibit ES3: Summary of Benefit-Cost Ratios and ROI Metrics for Flint

	Benefit-Cost Ratio	Federal ROI	Federal Benefit-Cost Ratio
Total Monetized Benefits	\$80,479,733	\$18,899,689	\$80,479,733
Total Costs	\$2,934,964	\$2,241,226	\$2,241,226
Result	27.4	8.4	35.9

About Voices for National Service

Voices for National Service is a coalition of organizations that believe citizens are central to solving the problems facing their communities. Voices for National Service has built strong bipartisan support for national service among our nation's leaders and helped to elevate national service as a powerful strategy for harnessing the energy of citizens to tackle unmet needs, prepare young people for work, unite the country, and develop civic character. Voices for National Service commissioned ICF to explore and quantify the economic and fiscal benefits that the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs have on their members, society, and the government, specifically the benefit-cost ratio and return on investment of CNCS funding.