



The State of National Service

Service Year Alliance

1400 I Street NW, #900
Washington, DC 20005

June 2020

THE STATE OF NATIONAL SERVICE

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	4
Section 1: Background and Federal Models of Service.....	4
Introduction: The Moral Equivalent of War	4
Civilian Conservation Corps: A Solution to the Needs of the Nation	5
Successes of the CCC	6
The End of the CCC & Challenges of Recreating It.....	8
VISTA: A Political Tool for the War on Poverty	10
Successes and Challenges of VISTA.....	12
Reception and Outcomes	13
AmeriCorps: The Swiss Army Knife.....	14
Successes of AmeriCorps	16
Challenges of AmeriCorps.....	16
YouthBuild.....	18
Non-Federally Funded Service	19
Faith-Based Programs.....	19
State Funded Programs	20
Service in Other Nations.....	20
Lessons from the History	23
Section 2: National Service Today.....	26
Defining National Service.....	26
Voluntary vs. Mandatory Service	27

Volunteering Vs. National Service: How Much Service, and When?	29
Voluntary Universal National Service for the United States	31
The National Service Field	33
Service Year Alliance	33
Other National Service Organizations	38
Costs of National Service.....	39
Benefits and Outcomes of National Service	40
Service Years & Higher Ed.....	43
Routes to Scale through Higher Education	48
Service Years and Corporate Programs	50
Paths to Scale for Corporate Models	52
The Serve America Act and the Movement to Date	54
ARRA Funding	54
The Serve America Act.....	55
Recent Movements and Legislation.....	55
Section 3: Conclusions.....	58
Path to Universal National Service	58
Developing New Champions	60
Local Policies and Infrastructure	64
Implementing Growth.....	65
National Service - A Solution for Challenging Times	66
Bibliography	68

Executive Summary

After over a century of consideration in the United States and almost 90 years since it was first put into practice, national service has seen a great deal of turbulence, starts, and stops. In AmeriCorps, however, national service finally has its most established vehicle, and after COVID-19, national service has seen perhaps its biggest opportunity to be part of a civilian solution to a crisis on a national scale.

The movement for national service in America has reached an inflection point. After years of effort, the field of federal, state, local, private, and faith-based programs is unified under a common banner. Enough evidence, examined in more detail in this report, exists to stand firmly behind an expected but voluntary model rather than a mandatory one. We are beginning to build stronger connective tissue among national service experts and those in other fields -- from health to aging to civics to criminal justice and more -- in both the public and private sectors, learning from lessons of the past and responding to crises of the present. This connectivity, as well as research and thought leadership over the past seven years, has been the result of several thoughtful and successful convenings. And a generation of post-9/11 veterans and former senior military leaders now stand behind both national service and military service as critical to our American project.

Research undertaken in developing this report draws upon the lessons of history, from past programs in the US to systems adopted overseas. It includes a landscape analysis of the movement of the present, as well as an examination of cross-sector partnerships in the national service space. The research indicates the best paths forward in funding an American system of national service and challenges that must be overcome to realize success. This report finds a number of critical lessons worth considering when developing a strategy to achieve universal national service.

First, a universal national service system should be voluntary, rather than mandatory. History, the current political landscape, human nature, economics, and funding realities have led us to conclude that making service an expectation and opportunity for every young American means the nation needs approximately one million corps members annually. And until it is institutionalized permanently, a national service program -- in this case AmeriCorps -- must be flexible enough to adapt to the ideology of each administration, yet have concrete goals worth pursuing, to make funding and expanding it a priority across the political spectrum.

This report acknowledges a tension between the historical lessons -- which suggest that programs with a cohort experience, centralized training, and common purpose are more valuable to individuals -- with the current reality: that garnering widespread, bipartisan support for a system of universal national service in the modern era must be grounded in response to localized

needs. We present two paths forward that recognize this tension: the addition of a fellowship model to the national service landscape, which if executed responsibly can ensure that national service meets local needs, and an investment in “Impact Communities,” which are an organized and purposeful response to the local demand for national service with our nation’s biggest challenges in mind.

After considering the costs of universal national service and exploring paths to scale through higher education, corporate models of service, and national service through federal expansion, the report concludes that federal expansion is critical to achieving universal national service. It is the most practical method of implementation on issues of national import, the most feasible funding path to scale, and the best way to make service an American cultural touchstone. While AmeriCorps should continue to utilize cost-sharing partnerships in funding national service, focusing efforts on the single largest funding entity -- in this case, the federal government -- will yield the greatest results, while also bringing other public and private entities to the table. This is due to both the yearly costs to run AmeriCorps at scale -- around \$20 billion in federal responsibility -- and an understanding that federal, state, and local government would realize the bulk of the cost savings that AmeriCorps would ultimately provide, and are therefore the entities that are most likely to prioritize funding it consistently.

Building a constituency for universal national service will require a combination of champions and policies that have the necessary policy feedback loops to build continued political momentum for national service. This includes Republicans in Congress, whose support is necessary to appropriate funds on a national level to maintain the program, as well as experts in other fields. This report outlines some common questions from Republicans that Service Year Alliance is working to address to secure their support. Additionally, with the help of outside experts, national service would more quickly be able to pivot to address longstanding and emerging needs, particularly in a crisis. And a concerted effort to learn and develop alongside experts from other sectors that have a stake in national service will yield the champions critical to a permanent, and relevant, system.

The report indicates that more research, planning, and funding must be directed to understanding local and state policy, as well as the local infrastructures that could more effectively and efficiently implement national service as a central tool in community development to create maximum impact. This work is inclusive of, but not limited to, the Impact Communities network supported by Service Year Alliance. Qualitative evidence thus far suggests that service year program coalitions who work in close partnership with local governments have been effective in growing national service, overcoming barriers to growth, and mobilizing corps members in a crisis. Though more research is needed, it appears that such local service infrastructure and partnerships make the highly decentralized model of AmeriCorps far more resilient and able to conform to local needs and contexts.

Finally, while we are considering national service in this paper in a broader moment of crisis -- a global pandemic, social unrest, and unprecedented unemployment -- framing it as a

response to not just *this* crisis, but also to *future* crises, is critical to building the ideological argument for its permanence. The formation of a national service system should be grounded in a multidimensional framework that is understood as necessary -- such as impacting communities, transforming lives, and fueling civic renewal -- rather than any singular, and possibly fleeting, reason. When the purpose of the CCC shifted to job training primarily, it damaged a broader argument about the need for the corps to exist at all. It's through the lessons of history and the data available to us today that Service Year Alliance pursues the Serve America Together campaign to make national service part of growing up in America, a necessary part of the American experience.

Though this moment is fragile -- especially given the recent years of polarization and distrust from which we suffer -- it is filled with opportunity that this report concludes must not be missed.

Introduction

In an effort to understand the historical context, modern landscape, policies, research, and concepts surrounding national service today, Service Year Alliance, with the generous support of the Lodestar Foundation, developed the following report to help inform the strategic direction of both the organization and the national service field more broadly. The report includes a number of initiatives in the national service space that, with appropriate resources, could have an outsized impact on the effort to achieve enduring universal national service.

This report will primarily review domestic national service programs as they both began at greater scale and are also the most scalable with appropriate funding. Notably, in the interest of focusing the report on the areas of greatest interest and relevance, this omits a thorough review of the history of the Peace Corps. It is not considered a model for the current national service system, AmeriCorps, although it is touched upon in other sections and is considered highly successful.¹

Finally, a note on terminology: in this report, Service Year Alliance uses the terms national service and civilian national service synonymously. The latter term is generally used to make a special distinction between national service and military service. Further, Service Year Alliance outlines in Section 2 a definition of national service, as well as a definition of a “service year.” These two terms are also largely synonymous in most contexts. The primary distinction between the two terms is the possible source of funding.

Section 1: Background and Federal Models of Service

Introduction: The Moral Equivalent of War

Over the last 90 years, the United States has made forays into national service on a federal scale once each generation: in the 1930s with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), in the 1960s with VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Peace Corps, and in the 1990s with the establishment of AmeriCorps. Each time, the functions and vehicles through which national service operated were largely reinvented, though inspiration and some lessons learned were taken into consideration.

Civilian national service was conceived of by American philosopher William James, who in his essay *The Moral Equivalent of War* sought to lay out a pacifist’s vision of national service that could serve as a “substitute for war’s disciplinary function... [as] war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community” (James 1910: 405).² James further hoped to recreate, as the military does, a collective effort that needs the service of an individual and values their

¹ To learn more about the Peace Corps, visit <https://www.peacecorps.gov>.

² The version cited in this report is a later version of an essay that is available [here](#).

contribution to the whole, because he felt that need bestowed upon that individual a unique worth not otherwise found in society at the time.

James argued that while society clearly desired military superiority, citizens should want superiority in all things for their country, not just military strength. To him, the military could not meaningfully contribute to other dimensions of a nation's superiority. James instead proposed that the "whole youthful population" be conscripted to dedicate a period of their life working at an activity of their choice that contributes to the national good (James 1910: 408).

Over the next century, James's idea sparked a desire in many to establish a similar vision of civilian national service in the United States that creates a common idea of citizenship while allowing young people to develop skills and contribute meaningfully to the country.

Civilian Conservation Corps: A Solution to the Needs of the Nation

A piece of the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was the first definitive implementation of civilian national service in the United States and the only iteration that has achieved civilian service at scale. It was established in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a way to combat widespread unemployment caused by the Great Depression and "to rehabilitate, protect, and build the nation's natural resources by planting trees, building dams, forging trails, fighting fires, preventing floods, and more" (Bass 2013: 1). In a feat of government rapid response, only 37 days elapsed between Roosevelt's inauguration and the enrollment of the first corps member of the CCC. It utilized multiple departments throughout the government, including the Army, to develop projects, coordinate supply and transportation chains, and set up camps in which corps members would live.

From the beginning, the dual purposes of doing public work, largely environmental and infrastructure work, and providing employment for struggling youth were understood as equally important. On the fourth anniversary of the CCC, its Director said, "the jobs needed the men as badly as the men needed the jobs" (Bass 2013: 43). It did not take long, however, for a strong workforce development and youth training mentality to become incorporated, ensuring that corps members left the program with education and transferable skills. After the work day, corps members were offered classes that improved literacy and other education outcomes or given vocational training. Most central to what architects of the program considered to be their charge for individuals was the creation of service-oriented citizens who were contributors to the economy and to the community.³ Corps members received room and board in camps near worksites that consisted of the team and supervisors and were paid \$30 a month, \$25 of which was required to be sent home to families.

³ Civic lessons were generally not explicitly taught, but rather taught through the design of the program. "Enrollees were learning to be contributing citizens by *being* contributing citizens" (Bass 2013: 76, emphasis original).

At the peak of the program's enrollment in 1935, the CCC had approximately 500,000 corps members (Spooner, n.d.) serving in a year. With a population of about 132 million living in the United States during the 1940 census, about 43% of whom were between the ages of 18 and 44, there were on average around 2.2 million people of a given age in the country, meaning about 23% of that population could complete a term of service at the peak of the program. As women were not eligible participants, this meant that nearly half of all young men had the opportunity to serve in the CCC. Enlistment lasted for a term of 6 months, though many reenlisted after their first term (Spooner, n.d.).

Successes of the CCC

National service in the 1930s had a number of temporary and short term impacts: it was, if not singularly, then certainly significantly impactful to the corps members who served in the CCC by providing them with education, job training, and an income, which solved short term problems and set them up for long term successes. Their income went home to their families through mandatory remittances, providing short term economic relief to those struggling through the Depression. Politicians of the 1930s also believed the CCC was largely responsible for a more than 50% reduction in crime during the time of its operation. For decades after the dissolution of the CCC, employers indicated that they preferred to hire CCC alums because they had a stronger work ethic (Spooner, n.d.).

In the middle and long term, there were substantial effects on the environments and communities that were recipients of the services and improvements made by the CCC. Beyond their well-known restoration and infrastructure building efforts, they prevented fires by creating fire breaks, access roads, and water storage structures, among other things. In fact, though a record number of fires were reported at that time, the amount of land lost to fires in the US was at its lowest point to date. The CCC also worked to preserve and restore historical sites and monuments. Another CCC activity included the prevention of diseases in native species. For example, the CCC had a huge role in stopping non-native diseases from completely eliminating white pine trees and preventing insects like bark beetles and gypsy moths from destroying large swathes of forests. Further, they worked to restore the populations of native species, both plant and animal (Salmond 1967: Chapter 7).

The CCC camps did a great deal to stimulate regional economies. The economic impacts of the CCC -- of service at scale in communities throughout the nation -- were notable. With an average of 300,000 corps members enrolled annually it was estimated that communities collectively made more than \$3 million a month on food sales. Approximately \$5,000 a month (about \$100,000 in today's dollars) was estimated to be spent by each camp, adding much needed funds to local economies. In some communities, these were significant enough factors that the CCC's presence was credited with lifting entire towns out of depression (Salmond 1967: Chapter 6).

It is impossible to accurately calculate the value of the CCC's long term impact on the country, but it is estimated that it vastly outweighs the approximately \$1,000 per capita cost (Salmond 1967: Chapter 7). The effects on corps members, their families, and communities were substantial.

Further, the population who came of age in the era of the New Deal and WWII were, for many reasons, considered to be one of the most civically active generations in US history, and certainly of the 20th century (Mettler 2005). While there are many factors like the GI Bill that might have influenced this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Civilian Conservation Corps had an impact on the deep-rooted civic engagement of the following decades; education and skills training offered in the camps, clear relationships drawn between the government and the benefits it provided for individuals, and the many young men who later volunteered for the military in WWII all lent to the effect. "Overall, the CCC's ultimate civic success was giving enrollees the sense that they were valued and valuable citizens, with the program contributing, along with others such as the GI Bill, to the creation of America's 'civic generation'" (Bass 2013: 76).

Much can be learned from the ways in which bipartisan support was constructed around national service once it was implemented as the CCC. While the speed at which the CCC initiative was enacted makes it difficult to understand the political lead-up to the policy, there are still lessons from the 1930s about how national service garnered support, even given the differences in today's news cycle and policy formulation process.

Roosevelt was strategic about where CCC camps were placed. In areas where the New Deal and its implications would have critics, Roosevelt garnered political support by establishing camps and demonstrating the economic benefit and environmental impact of the CCC program to those communities (Maher 2009: 11).

This was a successful method. Congressmen constantly requested new CCC camps in their districts and frequently combined their appeals with local citizen petitions. In states where there were few CCC camps, it became a political weapon of the other party. "In 1935 Senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania... claimed that Republicans were making political capital out of the fact that the state had comparatively few camps and 'if carried through, serious [e]ffects will be felt in the election'" (Salmond 1967: Chapter 6). Salmond continues:

"The quest for camps was by no means a Democratic party prerogative, however, and Republicans took full advantage of the chance to benefit their home districts and states. Representative R. F. Rich of Pennsylvania carried out a constant, and eventually successful, campaign for more camps within his own district. Senators Arthur Capper of Kansas and Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota were a Republican duo whose deep interest in the benefits of CCC work to their states often led them to request more camps. Nye even took the issue to the President, stressing the 'dire need of steps in this direction being taken.' This should scarcely be surprising. The CCC's appeal was far wider than the

Democratic party alone. Much of its best work was, in fact, done in the Midwest or in New England, in rural areas where local Republicanism was strong.”

In the mid-1930s, the CCC was considered the most popular and successful part of the New Deal. In fact, it enjoyed support not only from Democrats but from 67% of Republicans as well, including the Republican party presidential nominee (Bass 2013: 48). Evidence from the 1930s suggests that if we can achieve service at scale, the impact could create the conditions in which support from skeptical members of Congress is politically necessary due to the sheer popularity of the program with their constituents.

Because of this far-reaching impact of the CCC, the core desire for the continuation of support for the program was local. Support came from “the communities where camps were established and in the big cities or small towns from which the enrollees came. That camps were popular with the local citizenry is indicated by the hundreds of testimonials... attesting to their worth, and by the anguished petitions of protest whenever a camp was withdrawn” (Salmond 1967: Chapter 6). This illustrates the power of public support to influence the aforementioned political support of the program.

The End of the CCC & Challenges of Recreating It

There are two major reasons behind the discontinuation of the CCC. The first reason was that as WWII took shape, funding for the program seemed like a wasted expense in comparison to funds needed for war relief, particularly because a stark division existed between civilian and military service conceptually (Bass 46-47). Second, an improving economy meant that enrollment decreased or people left their positions for better paying jobs. From the outset, the CCC was not formed around an ambition or value statement of permanence. “There was little in the CCC’s original purpose or design to allow it to expand beyond helping the poor or to justify its existence in good times” (Bass 2013: 45). Specifically, its initial role as a work relief program was not justifiable in a good economy.

Some advocates tried to shift their language away from work relief to focus on youth training, but in doing so de-emphasized many of the core moral themes of national service that were central to the CCC’s establishment: the meaningful contribution to the country, the hard work ethic that the jobs instilled, and the reciprocal nature of citizenship. To President Roosevelt and other proponents, the original missive of the CCC focused on training only insofar as training did not conflict with the work so that in all circumstances, the public would benefit. As a result, though the program shifted to prioritize training, it did so without messaging those shifts to the public. The CCC thus continued to be perceived as a work relief program -- a brand that was out of touch with a rapidly recovering economy.

“By severing the connection between the CCC and work relief, advocates undercut an often overlooked but important goal of national service -- the example that enrollees and

the CCC set for the country.... To sustain the sense of purpose in the absence of crisis, the CCC would have needed to adopt an explicit national service framework, stating that the CCC's goal was to create needed public goods (such as healthy forests) and in the process create and inspire good citizens (or conversely, to create good citizens by having them create needed public goods) regardless of the economy" (Bass 2013: 46).

Other factors contributed to keeping the CCC from becoming permanent prior to its dissolution. First, some lawmakers acknowledged how difficult it is to undo a program made permanent and were thus hesitant to add to a growing bureaucratic system. Second, establishing the CCC permanently would be making a moral statement that conservation would always be necessary work and that young men would always need training. Were that idea established as law, any attempts to roll back the program would likely be deemed unpatriotic, even while the need for the program signaled a perception to the public that the nation would always be in some way lacking in jobs or quality training (Bass 2013: 53). Finally, Congress denied the CCC permanence as a message to President Roosevelt that he could not always have his way.

In spite of the availability of jobs and the clear shift in priorities, roughly 200,000 positions divided among 900 camps remained filled in 1941 near the time of its discontinuation (Spooner, n.d.) - a testament to the demand for the program even in a much stronger economy.

There are a number of factors that make a total recreation of the CCC unlikely as well as lessons to learn from its shortcomings. The CCC was exclusively brought about because of the passion of one president as a solution to a significant economic crisis. The funds and deployment of resources were vast and stretched across multiple federal agencies in relatively efficient ways. That kind of coordination would be difficult, if not impossible, in today's bureaucratic systems and with the broad range of interest groups that have influence. Using funds, equipment, and other resources, for example, from the Department of Defense, the Department of Interior, and the Department Housing and Urban Development to provide transportation, housing, training, and tools for a national service program would face fierce opposition from those internal and external to the departments who want to preserve existing funding. Even President Clinton, who considered AmeriCorps to be one of his greatest achievements, needed to significantly alter some of the efficiencies and impact of the program in the name of compromise with Republicans and more left-leaning Democrats. For all intents and purposes, Roosevelt needed no compromise. Furthermore, today's political environment might encourage opposition parties to withhold support or funding for a preferred program of a president, as Republicans did with AmeriCorps in the 1990s, making it even more difficult to maintain funding.

The CCC had many factors working in its favor, as discussed above: a proven track record of success, visible public good projects, and broad and bipartisan public support. However, the inability of the program's defenders to pivot the program ideologically from a solution to a crisis to a permanent part of defining America was central to its discontinuation, particularly when resources were beginning to be diverted to a war effort and jobs were more plentiful. "Its training focus... created a gap that made it difficult to argue that the CCC could

always address emergencies, first the Great Depression and next the coming war” (Bass 2013: 46-47). The key lesson to take away, then, is the need for national service to be framed as something central and necessary to the American experience that can be used to solve many problems and crises, not as a tailored solution to a fleeting and temporary problem, such as a recession.

VISTA: A Political Tool for the War on Poverty

VISTA, or Volunteers in Service to America, was founded in part based on the successes of the Peace Corps. Many began wondering: if the US can send young people abroad through the Peace Corps to tackle the challenges of poverty, why not have a similar program domestically? Thus, VISTA was created with a mission to reduce the effects of poverty domestically by placing volunteers in local organizations with the following goals: 1) encouraging local volunteerism, 2) undertaking development and fundraising work to garner private investment, and 3) build the capacity of local organizations to serve low-income communities.

The concept was originally proposed under President Kennedy as the National Service Corps. Congress declined to take up the program under that mantle as it was deemed federal overreach (Bass 2013: 97). Under President Johnson, the administration renamed the program to Volunteers in Service to America and added to the program a provision that would allow governors to veto projects. The legislation was tacked onto the Economic Opportunity Act, where it made up a fraction of a percent of the cost. It passed with almost no political attention or news coverage.

Initially, policymakers explicitly divorced the idea of national service from VISTA (Bass 2013: 82). Where national service was a program meant for corps members to both provide service and receive benefits, VISTA was purely meant to take middle-class or affluent college graduates and have them experience poverty first hand. The CCC, by contrast, took economically depressed individuals and gave them work and enough pay to send home to their similarly economically depressed families. VISTA was never meant to be job training for the individual serving, nor to offer real benefit to the individual at all, also unlike the CCC. Further, the original aim for VISTA was to do capacity building work at nonprofits in disadvantaged communities; the CCC was well known for their direct service on public works. While VISTA’s creators were aware of the CCC, they took little from the design of that program to influence the design of VISTA (Bass 2013: 90).

Though it was ostensibly based on the Peace Corps, it was also not quite the same as that program’s design, either. In the Peace Corps, host countries had minimal influence over the work of Peace Corps volunteers. In a program in the US, not only would the structure be different -- significantly more stakeholders had a say in the selection of projects -- but the problems on which the VISTAs intervened were social and structural, requiring different solutions than the largely technological challenges faced by Peace Corps volunteers (Bass 2013: 82)

The purpose of VISTA was never clearly articulated: was it meant to “bring the poor into the mainstream of a basically just society? Or was it to change a fundamentally unjust society?” (Bass 2013: 89) The lack of clarity around the program’s goals further led to confusion about the civic outcomes of the program, leaving it open to manipulation to fulfill differing political ideologies. Depending on the goal (and which party controlled the administration), VISTA could either be instructive in service-oriented citizenship or critical citizenship -- effectively, either giving people what they need, or teaching people how to get what they need for themselves through civic action.

Under President Nixon, who formed the ACTION agency, national service as a concept was oriented towards direct service. ACTION put all of the programs having to do with civilian service under one umbrella, including Peace Corps and VISTA. Nixon hoped to enlist millions of citizens to combat the country’s social ills, and to that end, he altered the goals and outputs of VISTA. The program became more centralized and coherent in its mission (Bass 2013: 93).

A group of former and contemporary VISTAs formed the National VISTA Alliance (NVA) in opposition to the changes made by the Nixon administration, arguing that these changes were “part of a conspiracy to change VISTA into a ‘service-oriented, Red Cross-type program.’” (Bass 2013: 93). They felt that a shift away from VISTA’s previous aims of helping the poor help themselves was unacceptable. The NVA unsuccessfully sued the administration to have the previous work reinstated. This was, in many ways, the start of the collection of special interest groups that would take an interest in national service. “Unlike the CCC, which operated mainly on federal lands at a time of few organized environmental interests, VISTA would work in communities over which the national government had little authority, that were full of contending interests” (Bass 2013: 97).

All of the changes made by the Nixon administration were reversed under that of President Carter, which oversaw a very left-leaning, community organizing program (Bass 2013: 94), restoring the programmatic outcome of critical citizenship.

President Reagan’s administration saw the concept of paid volunteers and the very idea of national service “misconceived” (Bass 2013: 95). It sought to actively eliminate VISTA, though a series of special interest groups, an embedded group of career officials within ACTION, and Congress stopped the administration from outright thwarting the program. The administration emulated Nixon’s tactics of shifting to direct service activities instead. President George H.W. Bush, the first president in the series to inherit the program from a predecessor of the same party, lauded it, praising volunteers who were quietly undertaking service in communities.

As elaborated on below, VISTA was able to remain in place in part because it was ideologically flexible enough to shift the type of service and its outcomes to accommodate the views of incoming administrations. However, the original intent of the program was never to

scale up -- it was only meant to have around 5,000 participants. VISTA was almost constantly playing defense to ensure its survival despite its small size.

Successes and Challenges of VISTA

Many of VISTAs successes were also challenges, and vice versa -- it is, as a result, difficult to untangle the two.

One unmitigated success was that, despite Republican concerns to the contrary, VISTAs were successful in increasing volunteerism in the communities in which they worked. Though enacted by Johnson, it was part of Kennedy's initial vision that VISTAs would spark a desire for other Americans to serve their fellow citizens (Bass 2013: 83). Republicans were skeptical that anyone would continue to volunteer for their communities if others were being paid, but this fear was, as it turned out, unfounded.

Among the decidedly mixed results was the fact that VISTA was largely unassociated with either the spirit of Peace Corps, as Kennedy had sought in its original concept, or with Johnson's efforts against poverty. This dissociation allowed it to continue on through the next few administrations. However, it was also the reason those administrations could use VISTA to their own advantage in the political struggles to tackle poverty, imbuing it with their own vision. This also made VISTA the battleground in the ideological war over the meaning and intent of national service (Bass 2013: 83). For this and other reasons, it was ultimately incorporated into, but not used as a template for, the later establishment of AmeriCorps.

Though some suggested that VISTA was part of a "War on Poverty," its association with the military ended there. VISTA's architects did not want such an association, and that attitude prevailed in the federal and public mind. Kennedy initially intended to nominate the well-regarded first nuclear-submarine commander, William Anderson, as head of the program, expecting his reputation to help gain support for the program. Instead, Congress wanted to know how a military official was qualified to run a social welfare program. While military expertise had been central to the successful implementation of the CCC, it was considered irrelevant to managing or implementing VISTA. Further, that VISTA became known as a refuge for draft dodgers did not help in making it a moral equivalent to military service -- nor did the fact that one could apply for but was not guaranteed draft deferment as a VISTA (Bass 2013: 84-85). These factors added to the perception that military service was more important and valuable).

Training for VISTAs posed another problem. "With decentralized training and weak supervision, administrators had few ways to communicate the boundaries of acceptable action" (Bass 2013: 92). Minimal staff at the national level, and few, if any, responsible for creating a consistent experience that reminded participants that they were part of a bigger effort meant that VISTAs also did not strongly identify with the program (Bass 2013: 100).

With little centralized training and a lack of explicitly civic-oriented instruction -- nor a recognized goal toward that end -- the civic effects were dampened, making “the lessons it did teach less positive” (Bass 2013: 89). As Bass notes, many accounts both past and present have indicated that VISTA volunteers often come out of their experience frustrated with the system in which poverty continues and at times with their placement, but they become more active, critical citizens as a result -- *despite* the program.

Unlike the CCC, the work of VISTAs was nearly invisible, either because the administration in charge sought for that to be the case or because the goal of VISTA was to help communities help themselves. It garnered deep support from certain interest groups and the program sponsors that relied on the work, but interest from the public was generally either non-existent or misinformed.

Reception and Outcomes

Though the public was largely indifferent to VISTA as a program, the unspecific goals of countering poverty made the program flexible enough to be adapted to whatever administration was in charge, even if it made tangible impact challenging to achieve with no long-term blueprint. What successes it did have garnered enough attention from special interest groups and certain members of Congress that, when threatened, VISTA avoided demise from both Republican administrations who were skeptical of the concept of paid service and Democrats who, as we will see, sought to create a bigger, bolder national service infrastructure for the nation.

In the years following the establishment of VISTA in the 1960s, a new movement began that sought to scale national service -- typically mandatory in nature -- which would have civilian and military service operating within the same framework. The concept was popular with the American people: 79% of Americans in 1969 supported a one-year service requirement for men (Bass 2013: 86).

What is notable is that most of these plans barely mentioned VISTA. Language used by both the Carter and Reagan administrations suggested that VISTA was scarcely, if at all, considered national service. After Nixon merged Peace Corps and VISTA into the ACTION agency, the agency’s director under President Carter suggested that these programs were not considered “national” or for the nation, but should be thought of as community programs (Bass 2013: 86-87).

Because of all of these factors, VISTA was not considered as a program model for national service. But the champions the program created would ensure that VISTA was folded into the next federal national service initiative, AmeriCorps, and would eventually become AmeriCorps VISTA.

AmeriCorps: The Swiss Army Knife

As a central piece of the Clinton campaign in the early 1990s, national service once again took center stage. This time, however, it was tied less explicitly to job creation, as the CCC was, but still had tangible benefits that were central to a multi- purpose program. For President Clinton, national service -- and public service more generally -- would be tied to college access as part of two policies. The first would be to encourage people to take lower paying public service jobs by introducing a pay-as-you-earn, or income-based loan repayment option. The second was the creation of AmeriCorps, through which young people could complete a year of national service and in exchange earn an education award to put towards attending college or paying student loans.

Bass put it this way: “Central to AmeriCorps are the principle[s] of reciprocity, a commitment shared by the CCC, and the idea of government as catalyst, shared by VISTA. The belief that both the nation and the program's participants should benefit was especially strong under AmeriCorps’s founding administration... With respect to citizenship, AmeriCorps draws on multiple traditions: it strongly emphasizes the service perspective, as VISTA did, but also incorporates aspects of the constitutional, patriotic, and work perspectives, as the CCC did” (2013: 147). Though it pulled in familiar ideologies, the structure and model of the program were new.

Ahead of Clinton winning the nomination, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) created a national service plan that would have made two years of national service a requirement to qualify for college financial aid, mimicking G.I. Bill-like benefits. When President Clinton adopted the concept of national service, he opted to avoid the ire of liberal interest groups and instead determined that individuals who complete a year of service would receive additional aid to help pay for school (Waldman 1996: 3-4).

President Clinton was adamant that he did not want a program that would have a big bureaucratic structure, preferring something more in the hands of the states. However, the program architects vehemently did not want AmeriCorps to turn out like the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), a jobs program from the 1970s that was wildly unsuccessful and unpopular. A report on what went wrong with CETA suggested that the program was unsuccessful *because* it was highly decentralized, giving money through states to the local level where it was often wasted. The solution to wanting something neither completely centralized nor completely decentralized was to create state service commissions that would operate independently from governors, and allow the nascent central federal agency called the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to administer funds for AmeriCorps programs. Most of the federal funds would be allocated to the state level, while CNCS would distribute the rest nationally through competitive grants (Waldman 1996: 108-109).

Under the charge of Eli Segal, the legislation was announced on the 101st day of the Clinton administration. It took another few months to align the support of existing programs and special interest groups, Democratic lawmakers, and Republican champions in the House and Senate to secure enough support for passage. In September 1993, after a lengthy filibuster by Republicans in the Senate, President Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act into law, authorizing and funding AmeriCorps.

Some Republicans, especially those that had a “national greatness” mentality, felt that AmeriCorps was an idea that they should support because of the civic duty implications. Around the time of passage, some even argued that Clinton’s team had structured the program as a Republican would -- largely decentralized, with a lot of power held at the state level (Waldman 1996: 187). But it was certainly not without opposition, which was led primarily by conservative critics at the Cato Institute, Discovery Institute, and Hoover Institution. These opponents professed a principle that a government obligation is not true service, and that the government should not run a volunteer program -- that those two concepts were contradictory. Politically, they recognized that decreasing the disconnect between the federal government and its citizens would be a bad thing for conservatism (Bass 2013: 154)

The Clinton administration in part created AmeriCorps to do direct service, much unlike the original capacity building charge of VISTA. In part, this was an attempt to head off anticipated Republican pushback against AmeriCorps. It was surprising, then, that when President George W. Bush and his administration took office, they aimed to usher in an era of compassionate conservatism, which they saw as helping to bolster nonprofits to better serve their communities -- much like the VISTA model traditionally did. The Bush administration also integrated civic engagement requirements into the program as a whole.

After 9/11, as the public was eager to serve, Bush put an emphasis on the ways in which service could contribute to homeland defense. He increased AmeriCorps work in public safety, health, disaster relief, and other homeland security tasks and increased the number of available positions by 25,000 a year (Bass 2013: 168-169).

Leading into the 2008 election, national service was a guarantee, as both then Senator Obama and Senator McCain had plans to expand national service. After winning the election, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act within his first 100 days with bipartisan support, which authorized an increase in AmeriCorps positions to 250,000 a year and established five types of service corps within AmeriCorps. Unfortunately, the Act was never appropriated. What looked like an unbreakable coalition of Democrats and service-minded Republicans at the time has since been unable to fund an expansion in service beyond the approximately 75,000 positions that are available today.

As it is currently structured, AmeriCorps is made up of three programs. The first is the only federally run CNCS program: [National Civilian Community Corps](#). NCCC is most closely modelled after the CCC, but in scale it pales in comparison with only 2,200 members in NCCC

and FEMA Corps combined. It is, however, capable of taking on projects with more national scope and is not bound by state lines. It operates most similarly to the military in that participants wear a uniform, operate in teams, and are provided housing by project sponsors. Second is AmeriCorps VISTA, which is largely VISTA housed under a new agency. It has some centralized training and federally-distributed positions. The biggest program in the agency is AmeriCorps State and National, which is funded either nationally through competitive grants directly from CNCS or at the state level through state service commission funds. The commissions themselves have fixed and competitive funds that they can award to grantees within the state.

Successes of AmeriCorps

By and large, AmeriCorps has demonstrated success through a variety of evaluations and significant bipartisan support, though increased partisanship has stalled its growth and put it on defense for appropriations funding. It is imperfect: there is uneven commitment to quality at the state level, with limited repercussions for states that do not perform as strongly, making it difficult to guarantee consistent outcomes. With that caveat, AmeriCorps is widely understood by those aware of it to “get things done” while providing opportunity to corps members and increasing civic engagement and volunteerism among alums.

To illustrate one of its successes, not long into its establishment, Republican members of Congress began questioning whether service undermined volunteering: why, they thought, would one volunteer for free if they could instead get paid? CNCS had to begin making the argument that service and volunteerism were in fact complementary. Eventually, CNCS reports proved that, rather than undermining volunteerism, national service actually increased the amount and efficiency of volunteering. This soon came to be recognized by Millard Fuller, the formerly skeptical founder of Habitat for Humanity (Bass 2013: 167), whose testimony added political weight to the claim.

Another group of reliable defenders was governors. Their support of AmeriCorps and the impact it had in their states generally helped to ensure GOP support for national service and funding for CNCS. Generally, governors like the fairly flexible funds that come to their states that can go towards projects of need.

Challenges of AmeriCorps

Some early challenges with AmeriCorps stemmed from a lack of clarity about its primary purpose. Political strategists in the Clinton administration thought the winning answer was that its primary function was to help individuals pay for college. Policymakers understood the primary purpose was the service itself -- and the impact of that service. But the question still remained and seems to remain today: Is AmeriCorps a workforce development program that helps the individuals serving, or is it about citizenship, duty to the nation, and impact on

communities (Bass 2013: 156)? Once again, this flexibility of purpose has made the program able to shift to better become a tool for different administrations, allowing it to survive multiple administrations of different parties. But the lack of clarity has meant the program is less able to demonstrate and articulate impact, and has likely contributed to its difficulties scaling to something closer to universal.

Further, AmeriCorps was intentionally created to have less federal bureaucracy, unlike the CCC (or current smaller, federally-run programs such as FEMA Corps, AmeriCorps NCCC, or the Peace Corps). While this may make the program more responsive to local community needs, the counter-effect has been that there is little tying one's experience in "national" service to the nation itself, limiting opportunities for common experiences across different service years. Because of this diffuse model, ties between service and the nation or service and citizenship have been obscured (Bass 2013: 151). It is more difficult to identify the AmeriCorps program -- or for AmeriCorps members to identify themselves -- as agents of positive government impact when individuals more heavily identify with the specific program they participated in rather than the national service system writ large.

Additionally, AmeriCorps' grant structure and small administration has resulted in grants being awarded unevenly. Many small grassroots nonprofits cannot afford the uncertainty or funding structure of the grants nor address the costs and administrative overhead of managing a federal grant well enough to ensure they receive it again in the future (Bass 2013: 177-78). As discussed below, some models, such as the Service Year Fellowship, seek to rectify this, but those models have yet to be tested and implemented.

One final challenge is that the benefits of service in the program have not kept pace with cost of living and education in a variety of ways, unlike other service options like the military. Original plans for national service sought to make it more closely aligned with the military in both organization and benefits by providing a \$10,000 award for each year of civilian service and \$12,000 for military service. The details were ultimately changed for a variety of reasons, including opposition from veterans groups and members of Congress. What was significant about this plan was that it signaled what the administration felt was the value of service; military service was still valued more because of a risk to one's life, but civilian service was of nearly equal value. When it was being discussed, \$10,000 was nearly the cost of two years' tuition at a public university. Once it became clear that the program was going to be open to more than just the college-bound or college graduates, the administration considered a two-pronged award: \$10,000 for college-bound corps members and \$5,000 for those who wanted the funds paid out. This signaled the value the administration placed on attending college as a way to access the middle class. Existing national service programs and interest groups, however, balked at a split and preferred all corps members getting the same amount (Waldman 1996: 96-101).

The administration then settled on tying the education award to the average cost of a year of tuition at an in-state university: \$6,500 in 1993 (Waldman 1996: 101). However, after it became clear that veterans groups continued to oppose the idea of benefits that appeared to come

close to those given to the military in the G.I. Bill, civilian service benefits were again cut to be 80% of the lowest GI Bill benefit, with the education award settling at about \$5,000 per year of service. Military leaders were also concerned that having a civilian service option could look more appealing and draw away some of their best recruits (Bass 2013: 156).

Currently, the education award is tied to the maximum amount of money one can receive in a Pell Grant.⁴ The average cost of in-state tuition in 2020 is near \$10,000 a year, excluding room and board, and around \$25,000 for out of state tuition.

YouthBuild

As a program, **YouthBuild** functions somewhat differently and outside of the structure of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), though some of its programs receive CNCS grants. Housed and funded under the Department of Labor, YouthBuild is administered by the Employment and Training Administration. YouthBuild USA has built an expansive network of 252 urban and rural YouthBuild programs in 46 states, while the newer international organization has exported the YouthBuild model outside of the US and currently works in 19 other countries.

Sponsored and managed by local nonprofits, community colleges, and public agencies with YouthBuild's national organization providing training and technical assistance, the program's mission is to provide opportunities to young people who have left high school without a degree. Through the programs, 8,000 young people a year spend 10 months completing academic training towards earning a high school diploma and participating in hands-on job training in high-demand areas. According to their website, over the course of the year, YouthBuild members:

- Achieve their high school equivalency credentials or high school diplomas in a caring, individualized context
- Obtain job skills and earn a stipend, wage, or living allowance for building affordable, increasingly green housing for homeless and low-income people in their communities
- Gain industry-recognized certifications in preparation for productive careers (in addition to construction, some train for jobs in healthcare, technology, or customer service)
- Solve personal problems with counseling support, addressing urgent needs for housing or childcare, record expungement, or other problems
- Give back and lead through participation in community service and advocating for their communities on the local and national levels

⁴ According to studentaid.gov, a Federal Pell Grant is awarded only to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. For 2020-21, the maximum Pell Grant amount is \$6,345.

- Transition into post-program placements, college, registered apprenticeships, other postsecondary opportunities, and employment, with support of a transition coordinator and mentors

The AmeriCorps arm of YouthBuild uses YouthBuild USA, Inc. as a National Direct grantee, through which about 3,000 of YouthBuild's 8,000 members can qualify for the Segal Education award as they perform community service-oriented projects. Since 1994, they have rebuilt or restored 4,500 affordable housing units and refurbished 5,000 computers for low-income families and nonprofits. In addition, local YouthBuild programs have recruited 59,000 local volunteers who have given over 1 million volunteer hours towards community initiatives.

One interim report tracking YouthBuild graduates and a control group over 30 months (out of a 48 month study) suggests that the programs had positive effects on the rate at which participants earned their GED and enrolled in postsecondary institutions and a small positive effect on wages (Miller et al 2016: 63). Importantly, programs had a significant effect on volunteering, with 54% of program participants indicating that they volunteered in their communities compared to 31% of the control group (Miller et al 2016: ES-8). As YouthBuild programs integrate values of leadership and community service in their programs -- particularly those funded through CNCS -- this is a strong positive indicator of the civic effects of an intentional service program.

Non-Federally Funded Service

Faith-Based Programs

Though many programs are in some way rooted in faith-based work, some have maintained an intentional faith lens to their programs, like Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Good Shepherd Volunteers, Episcopal Service Corps, Notre Dame Mission Volunteers, Appalachia Service Project, Mennonite Mission Network, Young Adult Volunteers, Global Mission Fellows, National Benevolent Association XPLOR Program, and Quaker Voluntary Service. Faith-based organizations can sponsor AmeriCorps members as long as they do not undertake overt religious activities. Some programs operate outside of the AmeriCorps system and are rooted in a particular faith tradition. Two examples are [Jesuit Volunteer Corps \(JVC\)](#) and [Repair the World](#).

JVC was founded in 1956, when a handful of college students built and taught at a school for native children in Alaska. Today, about 200 people volunteer in the program a year, serving 46 communities in 6 countries, bringing Jesuit values to their service, including simple living, community, spirituality, and social justice. Their 11,000 alums have served over 100,000 people.

Founded in 2009 in New York City, Repair the World, a nonprofit that seeks to mobilize Jewish people to take action to create a more just world, engages about 20 fellows a year in service in one of 8 communities in the US where they work in teams on issues like environmentalism, homelessness, food access, education, or criminal justice, all through a social justice lens. The organization believes that volunteers are one of the most powerful sources of change.

There is certainly room to grow for non-AmeriCorps faith-based programs to take on national service and forge new dimensions of understanding and tolerance in communities, creating a more vital democracy. Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE), for instance, launched a [Faith and Democracy](#) pilot funding initiative “to explore the ways faith and faith communities can support democracy and civic life.”

State Funded Programs

There are a handful of state service corps that operate somewhat or entirely on state funds. The oldest and most notable of these is the [California Conservation Corps](#). Founded in 1976, the California Conservation Corps was inspired by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s. It is a department in the California Natural Resources agency. Every year, they host about 1,500 positions that are mostly emergency response and natural resource management. Some projects in the corps are in partnership with AmeriCorps, but the vast majority of funding, including scholarships for post-service education, housing for some corps members, and credentialing during service are funded by the State of California. The current Governor Newsom initially proposed a budget of over \$133 million for the program during the 2019-20 budget cycle (State of California 2019) which includes not only the cost of corps members but also permanent staff and equipment expenses.

Service in Other Nations

While a number of other nations have compulsory military service, the number with voluntary or compulsory civilian national service is limited. Instead, most civilian service options are alternative to compulsory military service for those unable or unwilling to participate in military service. In general, there has been a global trend of moving away from conscription and to voluntary service for those nations who had previously made it mandatory. In fact, the only countries who have adopted mandatory service since the turn of the century are almost entirely newer nations or those facing significant military threats near their borders. This includes Lithuania, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, South Sudan, and Ukraine. Even Sweden, which abandoned conscription in 2010, only reinstated it in 2017 because of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, a move it perceived as an increased threat in its neighborhood (Chandler 2017).

France

Compulsory conscription ended in France in 1997, but under President Emmanuel Macron, France launched a new [general national service \(SNU\)](#) pilot in 2019, voluntary at present but with a goal of becoming compulsory in the next few years. In this plan, 15- to 17-year-olds participate in a “cohesion retreat” for two weeks, then spend another two weeks volunteering with a nonprofit organization or public institution. They can opt into an additional three-month commitment, which will have additional benefits. The goal is to instill in young people a sense of national and cultural unity and promote common values.

Though polling suggested that 60% of the population approved of the plan, just under half of young people agreed. Youth interest groups and organizations objected to the compulsory nature, preferring the plan to be voluntary (Williamson 2018).

Austria & Finland

As part of its position of neutrality vis-à-vis NATO, Austria has six months of compulsory military service in lieu of a professional military. For those who object to military service, alternative civilian service is available upon application. For Austrians abroad, there are options to do a social or environmental protection year, or two years of international development assistance.

Similar to Austria, Finland has a civilian service option for those who object to military service called [Siviilipalvelus](#). For men, service is mandatory, but it is voluntary for women; however, the government has recently considered making civilian service mandatory for women (News Now Finland 2019). Those serving receive housing and food during a one-month period at a non-military education center. This month includes general training, history, and a first-aid training course. They can then serve in a nonprofit or governmental institution, but they cannot do their service for a political party. During their service, members receive housing and a stipend for food and living expenses, paid for by the host organization.

Nigeria & Ghana

The [National Youth Service Corps](#) was established in 1973 after the Nigerian Civil war. It is a one-year commitment for college grads under 30 years old that fosters economic development, ethnic tolerance, and educational equality by sending young people to work outside their home states. University and polytechnic grads, about 200,000 annually, must all serve for one year in an area of the country that is not their own tribal community. This requirement was established to build social cohesion among the 56 tribal groups in Nigeria. Without the program, many areas would lack teachers, engineers, doctors, pharmacists, and accountants, as their website indicates.

Ghana has a very similar system in which young adults who graduate from college or trade school are required to support the national development of the country by spending a year strengthening the country in sectors such as agriculture, health, education, local government, rural development, and youth development. The program, also established in 1973, is called the [National Service Scheme \(NSS\)](#) and operates under the Ministry of Education. Technically the program is required for all citizens 18 years and older, but the mandatory enforcement is only for those who graduate from tertiary educational institutions.

Israel

Israel has a longstanding national service program, made up of both a mandatory military service in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and a voluntary civilian national service program, [Sherut Leumi](#) which is largely comprised of women. Due to various categories of exemptions -- mostly religious -- only about half of all Israeli youth aged 18 to 24 years old serve in the military. From the same age bracket, about 15% serve in civilian national service. Although Arab Israelis and Ultra-Orthodox Jews are exempt from mandatory military service, 30% of those exempt youth voluntarily choose to do a term of military service. In comparison, only 4% of American youth serve in the military and less than 1% serve in civilian national service.

Israel's civilian national service program requires 30 to 40 hours per week over one to two years through selected organizations in the areas of education, health, welfare, environmental projects, and homeland security. Participants receive a living stipend, travel costs, health insurance, tax exemptions, and possible tuition reimbursements. While the program is operated by the Israeli National Civic Service Authority, it also receives support from The Opportunity Fund for Civic Service and other philanthropic sources. In recent years, there has been a push to engage different populations in service, including Arabs, Ultra-Orthodox youth, disabled individuals, individuals with criminal records, and at-risk youth.

Shnat Sherut, or a Pre-Army Service Year, is a program where high school graduates defer their military service a year to participate in a volunteer service program. The program is highly selective since the IDF only allows about 3,000 deferments each year. Almost all graduates will serve in the IDF after the service year, usually in highly regarded positions. Students do not receive post-service benefits such as tuition reimbursements, but their organization provides housing, a living stipend, and pocket money during the year. Students may work in areas such as supporting immigrants, education, helping at-risk youth, and working with underserved children. There is also a particularly selective component of the program created in 1998 under the [Jewish Agency for Israel](#) that sends over 100 students to serve the Jewish diaspora around the globe.

United Arab Emirates

Bucking the global trend away from mandatory military service, the UAE instituted conscription in 2014 for male citizens. It is relevant to this study because of the intent behind the program. Although participants wear uniforms and undergo basic military training, there is a significant focus on soft skills, leadership, and tolerance, as well as a specific civic training element and, more generally, an eye towards diversifying the economy away from oil. Further, as the nation is relatively new and has had a population boom from immigration over the last few years, the conscription program also serves as “the state [taking] a leading role in articulating and asserting a more homogenous Emirati identity that supersedes local, tribal, religious, or ideological affiliations” (Alterman & Balboni 2017: 5) as well as developing a national identity rooted in service.

In a post-Arab Spring Middle East, “citizens [have] rising expectations that their governments [are] effective, efficient, and represent their best interests, but they [feel] little sense of reciprocal duty” (Alterman & Balboni 2017: 7). As Alterman & Balboni say, the aim is “to instill an understanding of citizenship as a performance, and not just an inheritance... the state is not merely the provider and protector. Citizens, through their efforts, build and protect the state as well” (Alterman & Balboni 2017: 32). While the intent is by no means entirely benevolent, many of the goals are relatable to those that the civilian national service movement in the United States aims to achieve -- better civic education and cross-cultural understanding, skill development, and making the country a better, safer, more sustainable place to live.

In terms of understanding the impact, the program seeks to track the effects on participants’ civic performances, such as “monitoring increases in positive civic behavior such as volunteerism, and reduction of negative behavior such as reckless driving” (Alterman & Balboni 2017: 32).

There are significant costs associated with conscription of the entire male population aged 18-30 -- an enormous age range -- both in terms of running the program and in terms of lost economic output. Having modeled their program off those of South Korea, Finland, and Singapore, clearly the UAE has identified real advantages to having a large portion of the population participate in such a costly civic-building venture.

Lessons from the History

A few points can be summarized from this historical context of national service in the US and informed by other programs around the world. First, having clear, measurable goals for the programs make them easier to grow but more difficult to maintain without establishing national service as an institution that is considered necessary, like the military. The CCC had clear goals - putting people to work on meaningful, national tasks during the Great Depression -- and while

it grew to scale, it ultimately disappeared once the jobs crisis subsided. VISTA suffered the opposite problem in the past; it was flexible enough ideologically to survive but lacked clear enough goals to make it worth significant expansion. AmeriCorps has fallen somewhere in between CCC and the original VISTA program in terms of its resilience. As we will see, although AmeriCorps has broad support as a concept, it is regularly playing defense during budget negotiations and has yet to attract enough Congressional support to invest in a significant expansion, despite being authorized to do so.

Second, holistic, centralized programs -- programs that have a cohort experience, centralized training, and common purpose -- result in corps members who more strongly identify with the overall program, learn civic lessons related to cultural competency, and may have higher levels of satisfaction with their experience. The CCC was an all-encompassing experience in which every participant lived communally, worked a full work week, and underwent education and job training after hours. Well-established service programs in other nations have a similar approach, with strong centralized training for members who are then dispersed to their service sites. Indeed, a 2016 report on AmeriCorps Alums found that NCCC alums, the most centralized, holistic AmeriCorps program, were most likely to be satisfied with their service experience and strongly agree that it was a defining personal experience (Friedman et al. 2016: 28-29). These alums were also more likely to have learned civic lessons such as cross-cultural competency, and they were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they re-examined their beliefs or attitudes about others because of their service (Friedman et al. 2016: 26). An AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Summary Report from 2015 also found that 88% of NCCC alums closely or very closely associated their service with AmeriCorps, whereas VISTA and AmeriCorps State and National alums were about as likely to associate with AmeriCorps as with their individual program (Cardazone et al. 2015).

Third, shifting the focus away from the actual work product and putting more emphasis on training individuals became a detriment to the CCC, as the effects on the individual and the impact on conservation and other public works, once equal, became uneven. While there is a temptation to emphasize workforce development and job training in national service, historical examples suggest that this should be done with great care and that job training should not be emphasized at the expense of the impact of the work.

Similarly, as the CCC was in part a solution to joblessness during the Great Depression, proponents were unable to position the program in a broader ideological framework as being a mitigation strategy for *any* domestic crisis. As joblessness continues as a result of COVID-19, history suggests that caution must be taken not to define service as a solution to one particular problem, such as unemployment, or a singular response to COVID-19, such as contact tracing. Instead, national service should be understood as the “Swiss Army Knife” capable of aiding in *any* crisis so long as the infrastructure is in place to respond.

To illustrate the ability of service to respond to a crisis, take Flint, MI, a current Service Year Alliance Impact Community (discussed further below). When the vastness of the Flint

Water Crisis became clear in 2015, Flint was in the early stages of launching their [National Service Accelerator](#), aiming to increase their service positions from 25 to 200 in five years. Using a combination of corps members already working in the community and NCCC corps members, national service became a significant [part of the crisis response](#). NCCC alone provided aid to nearly 100,000 people, including distributing bottled water, information, filters, and preparedness kits as well as recruiting and coordinating volunteers and facilitating trainings. Anticipating about 20 years of long-term needs associated with the water crisis, the accelerator also helped to establish the Flint Recovery Corps to address many of those needs. With a community plan and a combination of existing members and infrastructure to take on additional members through the crisis, AmeriCorps helped provide immediate relief to those affected and will be part of the long-term solution, building the community's resiliency to this and any other potential crises. To reiterate, the operative concept was not that national service was an effective way to respond to a water crisis, but that national service was an effective way to respond to crisis overall, highlighting the flexible and transferable aspects of service.

Fourth, combining federal dollars with other public money is a likely way to achieve service at scale while securing further permanency. The first example here is the California Conservation Corps, which is paid for by a combination of AmeriCorps funding and state support. This diversification of funding allows 1,500 people to serve in the corps annually. YouthBuild similarly draws upon Department of Labor funds, addressing that agency's needs and increasing their size and impact with support from AmeriCorps. Teach for America functions similarly. Not only do these programs diversify funding sources in order to meet multiple needs but they also go a long way in embedding national service into other governmental structures. For service to survive and thrive long term, other important institutions, such as state governments or federal agencies should have a stake in maintaining service.

Finally, public awareness and support is critical to establishing national service as an American institution. Two political science and public policy terms for understanding how policies become solidified as institutions are "path dependence" and "policy feedback loops." Path dependence suggests that over time an established policy that people rely on or want in some capacity becomes increasingly difficult to reverse or significantly alter, even if that policy is less than ideal in function (Bass 2013: 7). For example, tenets of a welfare state -- social security, Medicare and Medicaid, military and veteran benefits -- have remained firmly in place despite a conservative and Libertarian insurgency over the past few decades intent upon dismantling them in the US (Skowronek & Orren 2016: Chapter 2).

To set a policy on the road to path dependence, thereby establishing it as an institution that is durable against shifting political sands, one might seek to establish a positive policy feedback loop. This concept exists when well-designed policy establishes a demand for that policy, which in turn creates a political need to support that policy, "refashion[ing] the political environment to comport with its particular purposes" (Skowronek & Orren 2016: 33).

In her book on the effects of the G.I. Bill on citizenship, Suzanne Mettler describes the positive feedback loop that established veterans benefits as an institution:

“The G.I. Bill’s education and training benefits spoke volumes to beneficiaries about the role of government in their lives and their inclusion as full citizens. First, the program’s design... made veterans perceive that the bill made a marked difference in their opportunity to acquire education or training. Second, beneficiaries experienced its implementation as fair and efficient, managed through procedures that made them feel treated as respected citizens. Third, the bill’s socioeconomic effects left many with highly positive views about how government had played a role in transforming their life circumstances. These attitudinal effects coalesced to make recipients more cognizant that government was for and about people like them, and they responded by participating as more active citizens. The program, in other words, produced effects that subsequently transformed citizens and their likelihood of expressing their political voice, and that could in turn affect the political system itself” (Mettler 2005: 110).

Mettler goes on to note that these positive citizenship and policy effects were likely amplified because of the inherent nature of military service: taking young people out of the environments they are used to, exposing them to a broader world and new people with different backgrounds, and giving many of them leadership experience. Much of this sounds remarkably similar to what national service often does.

Just as the CCC produced avid supporters among its ranks and among the public who benefited from their service, and as VISTA developed a narrow but deep well of support among participants and special interest groups, so too must national service develop a critical mass of supporters by doing more visible work on behalf of communities and the country or by translating the more intangible work completed by service members into stories that communities can understand, value, or benefit from. This would establish a demand and constituency for the policy -- national service through AmeriCorps -- thereby creating additional political support in a positive policy feedback loop.

Section 2: National Service Today

Defining National Service

Today’s national service movement is built upon the successes and failures of past civilian service models. To unite existing federally-funded programs such as AmeriCorps with privately- or locally-funded opportunities, Service Year Alliance popularized the term “service year,” knitting together a category of experiences with common characteristics (year-long, paid,

hands-on) and outcomes (developing real-world skills, meeting community needs) under one umbrella, building a consensus and a united field for the first time.

The term “service year,” defined by Service Year Alliance as “a paid opportunity to develop real-world skills through hands-on service,” is not wholly distinct from past descriptions of national service, but emphasizes the time frame -- about 10-12 months -- and deliberately de-emphasizes the idea that federal funding is necessary: service years can be funded by local, state, federal, or private entities. Sherradan offers a strong option for a standard definition of “national service”: “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant” (2001: 2). Service Year Alliance, which largely, if not exclusively, pushed the term “service year” into the mainstream, uses the terms “national service” and “service years” interchangeably in their work to create a common expectation and opportunity for every young American to serve.

Voluntary vs. Mandatory Service

Service Year Alliance and its partners unequivocally support voluntary service rather than mandatory service. This decision is based on a combination of quantitative and values-based reasoning, as well as conversations with partners across the field. Other partners continue to reinforce this choice; as an example, the report released by the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, had a sweeping mandate to examine all aspects of service and chose not to recommend mandatory service.

Of primary concern is the fact that Americans, particularly younger Americans, do not support mandatory national service. According to a Harvard IOP poll in early 2017, 61% of young Democrats, 64% of young Republicans, and 51% of young Independents support the creation of “a national service program for Americans under the age of 25 that would be linked to student loan forgiveness or other relevant incentives.” Those polled were asked if they supported mandatory vs voluntary national service (military, domestic, or international “improvement programs such as AmeriCorps or City Year or...the Peace Corps”). Of all 18- to 29-year-olds, 7% supported mandatory service (Volpe & Flieguaf, 2017).

This opposition is fairly sustained. An earlier poll from 2013 showed that 80% of voters support a system of voluntary national service “in which people of all ages would be given opportunities to serve America in a military or civilian capacity for one year and receive a living allowance and education award.” This support was high across the political spectrum. However, when asked about a system of mandatory national service, 71% said they would oppose such a system. More than half were “strongly opposed” and 59% of younger voters ages 18 to 39 strongly oppose such a system (Civic Enterprises 2013).⁵

⁵ Only 42% of those over age 65 expressed “strong opposition”

Finally, while a 2017 Gallup Poll showed just under half of Americans favored "requiring" national service, 57% of 18- to 29-year-olds were opposed to the question, "would you favor or oppose requiring all young men and young women in the US to give one year of service to the nation -- either in the military forces or in nonmilitary work here or abroad" (Norman 2017)?

Service Year Alliance retained [Public Opinion Strategies](#) to conduct a combination of focus groups in Washington, DC and an online survey among adults nationally. They found that 63% of Americans (including 69% of conservatives, 70% of the middle class, and 64% of millennials) say they would support the establishment of "a system of national service for young Americans to serve in a civilian or military capacity for at least one year." However, a chief concern amongst respondents in opposing such a system was that it would be mandatory. Service Year Alliance's own internal reviews of available polling, largely since 1993, conclude that most Americans of every demographic description, socioeconomic status, partisan identification, and ideological disposition favor "national service" if it is "voluntary" and oppose it if it is "mandatory" or "compulsory."

Furthermore, finding Congressional champions for mandatory national service would be challenging considering low support for the idea. One [recent example](#) comes from Beto O'Rourke's Senate run in Texas; he had to immediately walk back his support for mandatory national service because of opposition from his voters. Representative Chuck Rangel repeatedly attempted to introduce and/or pass mandatory national service legislation from 2003 to 2015, without success. Multiple former senior military leaders have suggested that an influx of four million young Americans per year being trained, but not utilized, by the US Armed Forces may not be an appropriate strategy to address domestic challenges faced by American society.

There are additional long-term social impacts of military conscription that likely would carry over to civilian conscription. In one study, Yaakov Lifshitz explored the economic impact of mandatory military service in Israel by looking at the draft in the United States in the 1970s. He states:

"The economic discussion perceives compulsory military conscription as a sort of hidden tax. Those required to serve in the military are forced to relinquish a civilian income they could have been earning, but the hidden tax exceeds the loss of their alternative civilian income due to differences in convenience between a 'normal' way of life and the physical and social conditions of military service. Without a doubt this tax is unique in nature. Typically, people are taxed for the compensation they receive in exchange for their work, whereas here, what is being taxed is the time of the individual. The tax is the work itself, not a portion of the income derived from the work" (Lifshitz 2016: 28).

Lifshitz (2016: 29) goes on to describe the idea that having freedom of choice in one's vocation creates increased economic efficiencies. Because in a mandatory system one must complete service within a very small age range, that service might disrupt years of high

economic productivity. In a voluntary system, one might choose to do service to explore other career options, for example. This allows an individual to insert service into their career path to help them attain skills and experience when it matters most to them (while also allowing them to give back altruistically to their country). Removing choice from the equation has significant costs for the economy because it can stunt citizens' careers and mobility which is needed in a strong economy.

Krebs provides another historical example of the potentially negative effects of conscription: "Even in the 'good war' of World War II, US soldiers generally perceived their years of service as 'a vast detour made from the main course of life in order to get back to that main (civilian) course again'" (Krebs 2004: 112). Ensuring service is voluntary does much to eliminate the perception of service being a detour with detrimental effects.

From a financial and infrastructure perspective, the current US service system is a combination of (1) a civilian structure arranged so that the federal government runs very few programs itself, and instead it relies on nonprofits or local governments to run programs and raise matching funds (a main requirement in AmeriCorps State & National); and (2) an all-volunteer military. To have a mandatory, fully civilian national service system operating within the current AmeriCorps structure, there would likely need to be around 4 million positions available annually.⁶ While Service Year Alliance's research shows that the current system can support one million corps members annually, there isn't evidence to suggest this number could be quadrupled -- nor that there is meaningful work to be done above that number. Therefore, an entirely new system would have to be created with positions addressing needs that have not yet been identified. Making national service compulsory would also likely quadruple the cost of the program to \$100 - \$200 billion annually. Costs could be minimized by offering fewer opportunities and selecting participants by lottery; however, those selected benefits would then only be available to a random sample of the population.

Service Year Alliance does not believe there should be criminal sanctions that effectively force young people to comply with a compulsory system. This is both a value inherent to the organization and one learned from history, particularly opposition to the US military draft in the 1970s in response to the war in Vietnam. Service Year Alliance believes that paid, universal national service that is voluntary is an even more ambitious plan for the country than making national service mandatory, and that voluntary national service is hinged on building the kind of transformative culture and citizenship that will make America stronger.

Volunteering Vs. National Service: How Much Service, and When?

There are two main distinctions between national service and volunteering for the purposes of this report: length of time and benefits. First, to return to our definition of national

⁶ According to census data, this could rise to as many as 6 million in the next few decades based on population increases.

service, “substantial engagement and contribution” cannot feasibly be fulfilled by intermittent volunteering. This longer period of dedicated time to a meaningful cause allows an individual to develop the skills to serve the intended community, making their service more impactful.

Second, volunteers do not receive pay or tangible benefits. While in the past it has been controversial to insist that those who undertake national service are compensated in any way, even modestly, there are two reasons why this is critical.

The first speaks to the next part of the definition of national service -- its “recognition and value.” Generally, the value of one’s service is understood to be recognized by the end of service award offered to the individual -- in this case, the [Segal Education Award](#). Without some form of benefit, there is not much of a way to either entice willing participants (and their willingness is what makes the service impactful, even if they were conscripted in a mandatory system) or communicate to society how valuable the work is. For example, as discussed above, AmeriCorps participants were initially meant to receive nearly identical benefits in education awards to that of those serving in the military. When politics necessitated the award be decreased, it communicated that civilian service was less valuable to the nation than military service -- and was worth less to the nation than a year of public university education.

Second, the minimum of a living stipend allows for everyone in the nation, no matter their socioeconomic status, access to participate and gain the same civic experience as their peers. To have no stipend would mean that either the programs would have to provide for housing, food, and other necessities to participants or relegate national service to those whose parents are wealthy enough to support their children to volunteer for a year.

Further -- and to again return to recognition and value -- if we pay members of the military to serve for our common defense, why would we not pay civilian service members a modest stipend to serve for our common benefit?

Little research has been done to fully understand how much volunteering or service is psychologically or socially needed to learn the civic lessons that are intended for an individual through such an experience -- this is potentially an area for future research to understand the ideal lengths of programs for maximum effect. However, other factors do indicate the amount of time necessary for the effects of service to have impact.

Service Year Alliance describes a [service year](#) as lasting typically between 10 and 12 months. On the most basic level, this is because many service programs occur in and around schools, so it makes sense for many programs to operate on an academic calendar to ensure consistency across the entire school year. This term of service is also sensible for participants, many of whom serve immediately after high school or college, aligning the start of their service around the time their previous commitments end. Thus, most corps members start in mid-to-late-summer and end their service early the following summer.

Additionally, substantive impact on a particular community challenge requires a longer-term commitment. While the CCC had 6-month terms of service, members were addressing environmental needs rather than social ones -- and those corps members were immersed in their service experience 24/7. Even so, many CCC members reenlisted for a second term, as mentioned above. Many service activities today require an individual to work with others, build rapport, lead teams, understand systemic issues, or learn about complex systems. This takes time. Many members involved in social change and capacity building work feel that a year is not enough to make a real impact (Bass 2013: 135), and professionals in volunteer management have in the past expressed concerns in the same vein (Ellis 2010).

In order for national service to be impactful for both the individual serving and the challenge they are working to address, it must be long enough so that connections are built upon trust developed between service year corps members and individuals in the community in which they serve. Volunteer engagement -- committing physical, cognitive, and emotional energy to the work -- and a connection to beneficiaries are two factors that increase the time, intensity, and commitment to service. To get the full effects of service, then, one must do it for long enough to build a connection to the people who are impacted by service, as well as long enough to commit oneself to the work (Shantz et al. 2013).

Research on the ideal age of corps members is somewhat more comprehensive, given that much more is known about the emerging adulthood phase of one's life (Swanson 2016). This is further described in one of Service Year Alliance's [resources](#) on disconnected youth, which finds that for those who do not opt to go straight to college, service is a practical way to begin building connections and skills, as a high school education is generally no longer enough to prepare an individual for today's workforce. For those who do not gain skills and connections within their first few years out of high school, the achievement gap significantly widens as they miss out on crucial career building years.

For the civic lessons taught by service and how they affect the individual, the research is a little more mixed. Many studies show that some attitudes are solidified in early adulthood, while others are malleable throughout one's life. Others suggest that while learning and attitude change can happen at any point in life, it is instead the environment around an individual that becomes stable after early adulthood. "When social networks are stable, attitudes are stable, but when social networks are disrupted, change is likely because beliefs will be exposed to challenge" (Krebs 2004: 110). Should a young person, through their exposure to service, choose to continue associating themselves with the community or individuals that supported that service, then, it seems likely that service-oriented beliefs will persist.

Voluntary Universal National Service for the United States

Service Year Alliance frequently uses the term "universal national service" to describe a vision for the future in which national, public, and military service are all highly valued

American institutions through which a significant portion of the population have, are, or will serve. Any changes to public and military service are outside of the scope of this report; therefore, the following section will focus on how to achieve a significant scale of national service in America to make it a common expectation and opportunity for every young American.

Service Year Alliance envisions universal national service to mean approximately one million young people in national service annually. The goal is that over the course of a few decades, between a third and half of the population will have served in some way -- through national, military, or public service -- making service a common expectation. The demand that this expectation generates would then be met with the appropriate number of opportunities so that everyone who wants to serve, can serve. As research indicates, cultural and social norms around civic engagement have a greater impact on creating an individual who is most likely to serve (Zaff et al. 2008), thus creating the cultural expectation over time is a highly important long-term goal.

In order to understand benchmarks to success, Service Year Alliance recently laid out criteria for achieving universal national service:

1. Service is scaled to the size of the nation's population
2. Service meets the needs of the nation
3. Service is an opportunity to which everyone has access
4. Service pays sufficiently in stipends or in-kind for individuals to support themselves
5. Service creates education or career pathways for those who serve
6. Service creates better citizens by providing a common experience

In 2017, Congress established the bi-partisan [National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service](#) to reassess selective service and understand the ways in which a greater ethos of service could be established among American youth. The Commission released its report (Inspire to Serve 2020) in March 2020 with recommendations on how to elevate all forms of service with a goal of 5 million people serving in a public, military, or national service capacity annually by 2031. Additional recommendations include revitalizing civic education in schools, creating a council and cabinet-level position in the White House that oversees service government-wide, establishing joint recruitment efforts, and creating a platform to help Americans find service opportunities. For national service specifically, the report calls for:

- Creating a fellowship model that expands the universe of opportunities, particularly in rural and underserved areas
- Expanding opportunities to serve for opportunity and tribal youth, Americans with disabilities, and returning citizens
- Engaging the private sector to embrace various contributions to service
- Making disaster response programs more flexible

- Increasing the value and improving the flexibility of the Segal Education Award and living allowances and making them tax exempt

Part of the Commission's recommendations include improving the incentives and removing disincentives and barriers to service, since the primary way to maintain a healthy voluntary system is to demonstrate the value of service with tangible benefits, as discussed above. Other incentive structures are possible, however, and could create an even stronger desire to serve and a more inclusive system, such as replacing education awards with a funding mechanism like the National Service American Dream Account (NSADA).

The NSADA, a concept originally proposed in 2008 by some of the modern founders of the national service movement, envisions the federal government putting \$5,000 into a tax-free investment account for every infant born in the US which, by the time they turn 18, should accrue about \$18,000. In an example of reciprocal democracy, once that young American completes a year of service, they gain access to the funds in that account. If by the time they turn 28 they have not completed a year of service, the funds get distributed into new accounts for newborn Americans (Brown et al. 2017).

An incentive like this would create expectations of service early on, establishing a culture of service among young people. It has the added benefit of what social scientists refer to as asset effects, encouraging positive attitudes and behaviors that lead an individual toward obtaining that asset and towards goals they intend to achieve with those funds, such as attending college or starting a business. It would also strongly incentivize Congress to fund programs at a level that ensured there would be positions for all who want them and incentivize the service year field to grow enough to absorb these young people (Bass 2013: 244-245).

With the right incentives, cultural expectations, and commitment from Congress, developing a voluntary universal national service is not only possible, but it would also create opportunities that would contribute to a more equitable society with restored access to the American dream and renewed purpose for and faith in the nation.

The National Service Field

Service Year Alliance

Service Year Alliance was created in 2016 as the result of a merger of ServiceNation, a project of Be The Change, Inc., the Franklin Project at The Aspen Institute, and the Service Year Exchange, a project of the National Conference on Citizenship. The three separate entities, working on grassroots advocacy and marketing, convenings and thought leadership, and developing a service year certification program, respectively, recognized that they had similar goals and a shared mission. Over the course of the merger, they sought to understand why

national service had stalled in order to inform the organization's strategic direction and goals (Sagawa 2016).

As highlighted in Service Year Alliance [press release](#) in 2016, the research concluded a few things:

- 70% of young Americans and their parents were unaware of the opportunity to do a service year.
- There was not enough proof of impact, and more demonstration projects were needed to illustrate the impact of service to tackle specific challenges and transform communities.
- More engagement and partnerships were needed with other sectors like higher education, the private sector, and local government.
- Knowledge was not being shared across the sector effectively.
- Additional supports were needed to help programs interested in scaling and help organizations interested in starting a program do so.
- More congressional champions were needed.
- There lacked an organization outside of the government with sufficient capacity to take on these many needs in a big, comprehensive way.

The organization set out to achieve two goals as part of a four-year strategic plan: to grow the field to about 100,000 positions a year and to create the conditions necessary for faster growth beyond 2019.

As of 2019, these two milestones had not yet been reached. Service Year Alliance's new CEO, Jesse Colvin, began a strategic planning process to uncover how to best advance these goals and the organizational mission. As the 2016 press release lays out, there were conditions in the field and in the nation that needed to change in order for those goals to be hit sustainably -- and some of those are certainly further along than they were in 2016. For example, in the last three years, substantial progress has been made against: moving national service from a niche topic to a more national movement; establishing service years as a problem-solving strategy for communities; and bringing the field into alignment. While COVID-19 has brought to the fore the challenges inherent to a decentralized model when the country faces a national crisis in need of coordinated response, it has also highlighted the real strengths of national service and provided clarity on additional needs to strengthen the system.

In 2019, Service Year Alliance launched the [Serve America Together](#) campaign to make national service part of growing up in America. It included a Presidential Challenge, which four democratic primary candidates formally accepted, including Pete Buttigieg, Kirsten Gillibrand, Tom Steyer, and Deval Patrick, and eight more responded indirectly with [national service plans](#). Between the presidential election campaign and the COVID-19 pandemic, the movement has gained real momentum, particularly in the media, as people recognized the possibility of national service being part of the solution to crisis the country faces.

To develop evidence that service years are a problem-solving strategy and demonstrate the power of scaled-up service in a place, Service Year Alliance launched its [Impact Communities](#) initiative, a network of cities and states around the country who lay out their plans and goals for growth and share best practices for overcoming barriers with one another. With ten communities formally involved at the time of writing, Impact Communities have been a source of fruitful knowledge and partnerships. Service Year Alliance believes continued investment in these communities -- and through them, demonstration projects that show that service years are powerful and sustainable community development tools -- will have a significant impact on the movement and the quality of service in the future.

The final condition, an aligned national service field, is harder to measure. However, the organization has worked to engage non-publicly funded programs, from faith-based to fellowship models to issue-specific corps created to address challenges in media and the local government workforce. This has resulted, for the first time, in knowledge-sharing and coordination across publicly and privately funded service year programs advocating for a greater role for national service in American society. Further, in part through the Serve America Together Campaign and the formation and conclusions of the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, the civilian national service field is more aligned than ever with the military and veterans communities. Rather than competing or disassociating with one another, as was the case for the CCC, VISTA, and the early days of AmeriCorps, military and civilian national service are working together to make service of any kind part of growing up in America and strategizing on ways that they can be supportive of one another on issues like recruitment.

Service Year Alliance strongly believes that national service and service years transform lives, strengthen communities, and make people better, more engaged, and more tolerant citizens, fueling civic renewal. The organization's current initiatives aim to encompass all three of these areas -- as do high quality service year programs.

In Service Year Alliance's 2020 strategic plan, the organization outlines a theory of change based on (1) developing and documenting the evidence that is needed to support cases that convince decision-makers of the benefits, successes, and effectiveness of national service, so that (2) decision-makers, be they federal, state, or local government officials, private sector representatives, philanthropic organizations, or higher education administrators, unlock funds for national service that support the creation of new, high quality service year positions.

The Service Year Exchange

The Service Year Exchange platform, [ServiceYear.org](#), has been hosted and continuously refined by Service Year Alliance since the merger in 2016. [ServiceYear.org](#) is a state-of-the-art marketplace and resource hub that connects young people interested in doing a service year with service year opportunities.

Certification is one of the unique features that ServiceYear.org offers. Unlike the My AmeriCorps portal, where individuals can only browse federally funded domestic opportunities, ServiceYear.org includes listings from non-federally funded programs, as well as international opportunities offered through the Peace Corps. ServiceYear.org's certification process allows all organizations with service year programs to submit their positions, and those that are deemed to meet Service Year Alliance's [certification criteria](#) are able to have their organization profile and positions appear in its public directory. By deploying fresh technology and a wide range of service year opportunities, ServiceYear.org helped fill gaps created by dated and less comprehensive platforms.

Service Year Alliance has deployed significant efforts through digital advertising and targeted user engagement to raise awareness of service years and to build a pipeline of individuals on ServiceYear.org who apply for service year opportunities. Prior to launching its initial advertising, Service Year Alliance commissioned an intensive research survey with the help of Penn Schoen Berland in 2015 on the awareness and perception of the service year experience. This research helped inform initial ad and message strategies that Service Year Alliance has continued to refine in an effort to increase awareness and connect individuals to best fit service year opportunities.

In addition to recruitment efforts, ServiceYear.org also connects service year programs, corps members, and alums to resources and guides through the Service Year [Resource Hub](#). This includes best practice guides and webinars to support program staff in areas such as recruitment and engaging opportunity youth.

ServiceYear.org works to support corps members all the way from initial awareness through when they become alums. Accordingly, programs are able to enroll their corps members into their organization on ServiceYear.org, including ones they recruited through other channels. In 2019, Service Year Alliance launched the [Virtual Companion](#), an initiative that allows every service year corps member serving in a position on ServiceYear.org to receive tailored email messages throughout their service year with content adapted to best support them based on where they are in their service year journey. This includes helpful guides from the Resource Hub. Along with receiving content through the Virtual Companion, enrolled corps members have the ability to post about their experiences through the Journey feature on ServiceYear.org, and they have the ability to send messages other corps members and alums. At the end of service, corps members can be exited by their program and issued an automatically generated certificate of completion.

Convenings

Both Service Year Alliance and its predecessor organization, The Franklin Project, have sought at various points to bring together individuals within and outside the national service field. Here we will highlight a few of the most prominent convenings.

Over three days in June 2014, The Franklin Project hosted the [Summit at Gettysburg: Our Unfinished Work](#) in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. This Summit brought together more than 350 advocates of national service from across the spectrum of supporters for the first time, including military leaders, AmeriCorps alums and advocates, White House administration officials, faith community leaders, higher education and private sector champions, and journalists to discuss how national service could grow and shape American identity, new and creative program models, partnerships, and the importance of universal national service.

The primary purpose of the Summit was to shift people's thinking from a belief in the goodness of universal national service to a belief in its achievability. Millions of dollars were also committed in support of national service, including a \$3 million matching challenge grant from Cisco, a \$3.1 million investment from Delaware North in the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, \$30 million in education scholarships announced by the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the creation of Justice AmeriCorps to engage lawyers and paralegals in service. Jamie Merisotis, CEO of the Lumina Foundation, said that all learning should count, including a year of national service that translates into course credit. More than 70 people spoke at the summit, including General (Ret.) Stan McChrystal, Walter Isaacson, Barbara Bush, Chelsea Clinton, David Gergen, EJ Dionne, SE Cupp, Wes Moore, Wendy Kopp, Paul Begala, Cecilia Munoz, Michael Gerson, Melody Barnes, Ray LaHood, Tim Shriver, and more. A pledge signed by more than 200 retired Flag and General Officers and 60 retired Sergeants Major was unveiled in support of civilian service. The Summit saw significant media coverage, the launch of ServiceYear.org, and forged the National Service Alliance that eventually became Service Year Alliance.

In 2017, Service Year Alliance partnered with NationSwell, a social impact media company and diverse membership community that helps organizations advance and scale solutions that make the country better. This collaboration included three symposiums in Washington, DC; New York City; and San Francisco throughout 2017, as well as private stakeholder collaboration dinners, in order to build a bigger tent around particular elements of national service, such as national security, policy, funding, cross-sector partnerships, and innovation. Speakers included former governors, defense officials, and retired generals; philanthropic leaders, such as Chelsea Clinton; and business leaders from companies such as Airbnb, LinkedIn, Google, and Starbucks. The events generated new partnerships and awareness about national service among leaders that would otherwise have been challenging to reach. This partnership continued into 2018 with the creation, publication, and circulation of mini documentaries on the power of national service in different locations and sectors, from the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, to the Employers of National Service program and Farmers Insurance.⁷

⁷ Other documentaries cover Green City Force and opportunity youth, Higher Education, Veterans, Habitat for Humanity, Policymakers.

The Mount Vernon convening, also in 2017, aimed to build upon the Gettysburg Summit by bringing together about 40 stakeholders in national service, including existing advocates and potential champions, to put together a timeline on advancing a strategy and campaign for universal national service, which would later become the Serve America Together campaign. Much of the feedback generated by the summer expressed the importance of involving military and faith-based communities and organizations in the call for universal national service. In short, the movement needed non-traditional champions to speak to the need for and power of service. Other key constituencies that could yield strong champions included higher education representatives, media, young leaders, technology leaders, mayors, parents, teachers, national security leaders, and policy staffers. A number of attendees made commitments for how they would advance national service during the event such as writing op-eds and growing the number of service positions in programs.

Finally, the [Service Year Community ChangeMaker Summit](#) took place in 2019 in Washington, DC. Funded by the Kresge Foundation and hosted by the National League of Cities, it brought together representatives from each of Service Year Alliance's Impact Communities, along with individuals from emerging Impact Communities, national organizations working on issues related to service, faith-based programs, and elected officials, to participate in two and a half days of programming and workshops to discuss successes and remove barriers to scaling service years in their communities. Among some of the Summit's outcomes were connecting state legislators to one another across the country, re-energizing the work of the Impact Community Network, and spurring local government officials to become more involved with national service.

Other National Service Organizations

Other than the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), there are two other national organizations that do not operate programs but have a significant impact in the service year field.

Voices for National Service

Housed out of City Year, [Voices for National Service](#) is a membership and advocacy organization charged with the offense and defense of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps in the federal appropriations process. Voices for National Service was founded in 2003. Their members include most of the large, national service year programs such as Jumpstart, City Year, Campus Compact, Teach for America, and The Corps Network, as well as a number of state service commissions and national volunteer organizations. Voices had a significant role in designing and passing the authorization for the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009. They are known for bringing national service champions to the hill for annual hill days and in recent years have led the annual fight to protect AmeriCorps appropriations when threatened in the President's budget proposal.

America's Service Commissions (ASC)

As the association that supports all of the state service commissions across the country, ASC is a nonpartisan peer network of commissioners and commission staff. They focus on helping state service commissions build capacity, advocating on behalf of the network, and convening the state commissions. It was launched in 1997 by a group of state service commissioners and executive directors. They also hold yearly regional conferences to uplift best practices, lessons learned, and new compliance needs in the AmeriCorps State and National process. The events are heavily attended by both state service commission staff and by organizations running national service programs. They play an important leadership role in facilitating the adoption of new practices, driving innovation in the field, and disseminating information among state service commissions.

Costs of National Service

The most recent, [all-inclusive study](#) of AmeriCorps programs was conducted in 2013 by the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education at Columbia University, in association with Voices for National Service and the Franklin Project.⁸

In this study, Belfield highlights a few things. First, he calculates the total costs versus the total social and fiscal benefits of national service. The costs, which include federal funding, matching funds, and tax burdens, equal about \$1.7 billion annually. The social benefit, which includes a variety of factors that experts have found ways to quantify reliably, is about \$6.5 billion -- a return on investment of about 3.95 for every dollar spent (Belfield 2013: ii). The strictly fiscal return on investment is about 2 for every dollar spent (Belfield 2013: iii).

There are multiple benefits identified as returns for AmeriCorps -- these can be broadly broken into returns for the individual and returns for society at large. For the individual, things like labor market prospects, health care access, and reduced delinquency are estimated to be worth about \$1.9 billion. The benefits to society include improved health, reduced delinquency and associated costs,⁹ increased productivity, increased volunteerism, taxes on increased income, and changes in public spending, equaling about \$2 billion in offset or reduced costs (Belfield 2013: 13-14). Add to that the worth of direct services calculated at about market wages provided across multiple sectors of about \$700 million.

When scaling national service to 1 million positions annually, the costs per person decrease, making the programs more effective the more members they have (Belfield 2013: 20). Larger programs are thus a better use of funds than are one-off programs with individual member

⁸ A new cost-benefit analysis study is due to be released in 2020 from Voices for National Service.

⁹ For additional context, the UAE cited a drop in crime by 75% among conscription-age individuals after instituting mandatory service for men (Alterman & Balboni 2017: 45).

placements. At 250,000 members, the expansion currently authorized by Congress, Belfield estimates a cost of about \$5 billion between federal and match funding. The return on this investment is estimated to be about \$23.3 billion, or 4.61 for every dollar spent. At 1 million positions, the cost would be approximately \$21.7 billion for the federal government and would generate an estimated return of about \$92.6 billion.¹⁰

What is unique about national service is that it fulfills multiple needs: It transforms the life of the individual, strengthens the community in which the individual serves, and offers civic renewal for all involved. Few other programs can claim such significant and far-reaching effects. For example, while there are [tangible career outcomes](#) for those who have completed a year of service and programs that put a [focus on talent development](#) can certainly have a lot of success, service years are not jobs programs. Jobs Corps, which is an intentional jobs program, is found to be more effective at securing higher earnings for program participants in the short term, but the cost-benefits of the program appear to plateau or decrease with time, maxing out around two dollars for every dollar spent at its most effective (McConnell & Glazerman 2001; Schochet 2018). The gestalt of national service, then, is much more significant than any individual impact that service has.

Benefits and Outcomes of National Service

As mentioned, national service has a triple bottom line that, taken all together, accounts for a return on investment far greater than a program focused on any one of these things is able to achieve: service years transform lives, strengthen communities, and fuel civic renewal.

The primary funder of studies that consider the impact of national service is CNCS's [Research and Evaluation](#) department, as monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of national service is part of their charge. However, their purview only extends to grantees, leaving service years not funded by AmeriCorps unaccounted for in much of the research. Further, very few studies have looked at the impact of service overall, instead tending to focus on individual places or programs. To summarize some of the evidence, a few studies are considered below, followed by some of Service Year Alliance's initiatives aiming to fill in some gaps in understanding with demonstration projects. For the most recent review of the literature, see *National Service Systematic Review and Synthesis of National Service Literature* (JBS International 2015).

In a 2016 study of AmeriCorps alums, researchers found that 82% of alums described their program as a defining experience in their life. 90% of AmeriCorps alums said their experience made them better problem-solvers, 80% felt they knew how to address community issues and how to get others to care about them, 94% said that their experience made them better understand different communities, and 93% said they felt comfortable interacting with people from different backgrounds. Further, 94% of alums are registered to vote, and 79% are or plan to become actively involved in their community. Finally, 80% of alums indicated that AmeriCorps

¹⁰ With matching funds, it is estimated that the cost of the program would be about \$40 billion in all.

benefited their careers, and 42% of alums who were employed within six months of their service said they found their job through connections made during their service (Friedman et al. 2016).

A similar study was conducted by Burning Glass Technologies on behalf of Service Year Alliance in 2018, *Pathways After Service: Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni*. After reviewing the resumes of over 70,000 service year alums with a comparison group of 100,000 peers, they found that alums who did not have a bachelor's degree during their service year are 13% more likely to go on to earn one. Alums are also 23% more likely to go into public service careers like education or social services, and they are more likely to advertise skills related to organization and leadership than their peers (Walsh et al. 2018: 1).

CNCS's most recently published State of the Evidence report discusses a few additional outcomes (CNCS 2017). One study conducted by Tufts University considered resumes of national service alums and found that service had a positive impact on job prospects. Another by Arizona State University found that 8 out of 10 organizations that hosted AmeriCorps members went on to hire at least one AmeriCorps member since 2012; over half of the positions were newly created. These outcomes have been validated through the Employers of National Service Program, a joint venture of Service Year Alliance, CNCS, the Peace Corps, and the National Peace Corps Association, which asks employers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors that value the skills gained in service years to commit to targeting alums in their hiring process.

In terms of citizenship and civic engagement, a few things are worth noting. First, research conducted on volunteerism and service-learning indicate some strengths and weaknesses in civic development. Looking at six dimensions of citizenship including citizenship-related cognitive understanding, citizenship attitudes, citizenship skills, institutional change, philanthropic and civic behaviors, and political behavior, Perry and Katula (2001) found that service-learning helped individuals formulate solutions to social problems and view the world in complex ways. The only study in which service-learning appeared to have no effect on cognitive understanding of citizenship saw only limited volunteering of 3 hours per week over 8 weeks, highlighting the need for higher intensity experiences to have an impact. The study also found that service positively affects philanthropic giving and volunteering later in life. More research, however, must be conducted to draw further conclusions, ideally with more service year programs and consistent data collection across studies.

The State of the Evidence report further reviews literature that indicates that strong civic engagement promotes better quality of life and increases upward mobility (see CNCS 2017: 5). Indeed, two reports from the National Conference on Citizenship (2012) found that cities and states with higher levels of civic engagement in 2006 had better economic resiliency and suffered less unemployment during the Great Recession. This was in part due to the presence of nonprofits that provided social benefits or socialization opportunities. The other factor that predicted better resiliency was social cohesion, defined generally in the study as how much residents interact, communicate, and collaborate with one another.

After looking at further findings about people’s feelings towards their communities, the report theorizes that higher rates of these two factors, nonprofits and social cohesion, also contributed to the amount of pride and attachment individuals had towards their communities, which in turn predicted positive views of the local economy. The study hypothesizes that these factors lead to individuals who are more actively engaging in a local economy, allowing local conditions to improve and flourish. This indicates generally that increases in civic engagement are good for the economy and good for economic resiliency.

While there certainly seems to be a strong correlation between AmeriCorps members and higher levels of civic engagement, little has been done to understand the impact of AmeriCorps on civic engagement in the communities served by corps members with one notable exception.

In a recent, pivotal study on this topic, researchers at the University of Texas at Austin hypothesized that national service programs have an impact on the subjective well-being of communities served by corps members. The researchers considered five dimensions to measure well-being, including engagement, disengagement, positive and negative emotions, and negative relations. They used data from Twitter in over 1,300 US counties between 2005 and 2013, including some counties that had AmeriCorps programs introduced as an intervention (Velasco et al. 2019: 275). They found that communities with AmeriCorps programs had greater subjective well-being, as these programs are a defense against threats to well-being. While they found that all types of AmeriCorps programs mitigate social ills, the presence of VISTA programs appear to actively increase engagement. “While the associations we find are modest in size, they are robust to several threats to interference” (Velasco et al. 2019: 285). Further, the greater the number of years in which AmeriCorps programs are present, the greater the gains for the community (Velasco et al. 2019: 285).

One final finding is that AmeriCorps programs tend to be allocated to communities that already have a higher subjective well-being, suggesting that communities that have active organizations are better able to obtain grants and positions (Velasco et al. 2019: 286). This indicates a need for a grant structures that can place members in communities that most need them, an issue that Service Year Alliance hopes to address by advocating for a new fellowship model, discussed below.

A further element of this may be understanding how programs, especially K-12 education adjacent programs, might be impacting youth served. While Service Year Alliance has done some work to understand the [outcomes of national service programs in schools](#), more could be understood about the ways AmeriCorps members are or could be modeling civic behavior to help reinforce a civic environment. Noted by Zaff et al. in their study on positive citizenship in adolescents, “programs [that] promote civic engagement need to begin by focusing on social relationships in youths’ lives with parents and peers and the environment in which youths live, such as neighborhoods and schools, as well as on promoting civic values... These influences in early adolescence lead to civic engagement in late adolescence, which in turn predicts civic engagement in young adulthood” (Zaff et al. 2008: 13).

Just as scaling service years are proportionally more cost effective, one significant gap in research is understanding how scaling service years may proportionally increase impact. The CCC arguably achieved national service at scale, and though their impact was significant, their charge was narrow and their data collection on impact was scant. As no one city or state has yet had 10% of young Americans, much less 25%, engaged in national service at any one time, it is difficult to know what the impact would be at scale. This is one reason why Service Year Alliance established the Impact Community network, introduced above.

To become a member of the Impact Community network, a community must have an anchor organization that coordinates the initiative and represents the community on network calls, and they must outline a growth plan. The initiative was originally developed as a community of practice centered around a modified collective impact strategy¹¹ in which service years are a powerful tool for community development, though research has yet to be conducted that collects common data across all of the impact communities for comparison.

One thing the network has taught us throughout dealing with COVID-19 is that the impact communities with robust, pre-existing coalitions of programs and either a strong relationship with or anchor organization housed in local government were decisive in ensuring corps members could continue their service or in redirecting the activities of disrupted members quickly, while those that did not lagged behind their peers. This observation has demonstrated that in a decentralized structure like AmeriCorps, local national service structures that include local governments are important in creating efficiencies, particularly in times of emergency or disasters. It is also likely that were AmeriCorps to receive an influx of funds to create new positions, these coalitions will be best equipped to create and implement plans that help service grow rapidly to meet the needs of the community, which the coalitions have already defined in joining the network.

Service Years & Higher Ed

In the past, Service Year Alliance had an active role in trying to engage higher education institutions on service years, with staff dedicated to such strategies.¹² Service Year Alliance has since shed almost all of these initiatives due to a relative lack of success in pushing national service forward in this particular arena, though the organization has maintained some critical relationships with colleges and universities who have continued to engage students in national service. Some resources produced by Service Year Alliance related to higher ed include:

¹¹ For more information on collective impact, see <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>

¹² See https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/higher_education.

- [Service Year + Higher Education Toolkit](#)
- [Service Year + Academic Credit Guidelines](#)
- [White Paper: Role of National Service in Improving Education](#)
- [ASU National Service & American Democracy Course Syllabus](#)

In the Higher Education Toolkit, a collaboration between Service Year Alliance and [Campus Compact](#), a number of options are available in which colleges and universities can engage to promote a service culture on their campus. These include allowing deferrals for those who plan to do a service year, giving preferred admission to individuals who have completed a service year, providing a Segal Education Award match or scholarship opportunity, hosting or sponsoring service year opportunities and programs, or providing academic credit for service years. Of these five types of service support, preferred admission and the Education Award match are fairly straightforward; it is worth noting, though, that some universities have signed onto the Turning the Tide initiative (Making Caring Common 2016), which seeks to demonstrate the value of service and selflessness through the admissions process.

In the context of COVID-19, where many brick and mortar universities will likely need to remain remote for the next semester, deferral options are increasingly in the public conscience, as many students (and parents) are disinterested in paying for tuition and all of the in-person benefits built into it if they are unable to participate in person. [Gap Year Association](#) has identified some colleges and universities that offer deferrals. One can also find lists of colleges that have the highest quality and value deferral programs,¹³ many of which count service among their deferral reasons. Featured in the toolkit, Dartmouth admissions specifically encourages students to complete a service year as a gap year. As the their admissions website [states](#):

Considering community service? A service year can be beneficial for the students that participate and can provide numerous benefits to the communities they serve. Dartmouth believes that getting more individuals involved in service programs will have a positive effect on the civic health of our society, and is committed to helping students who plan to enroll at the College learn about service year opportunities.

There are certainly some service year programs hosted by universities, and [Campus Compact's](#) website features a number of resources that can help a university get started. Arizona State University (ASU) Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation, for instance, hosts a Public Allies program with 15 corps members placed in various nonprofits in the Phoenix area, and it has [recently launched](#) an expansion into Tucson with an additional 10 members. While the program benefits from receiving AmeriCorps funding from CNCS, the university is responsible for contributing a 50% match in funds plus operating costs.

¹³ See Top 35 Colleges that Support a Gap Year: <https://www.valuecolleges.com/ranking/supportive-college-gap-year>

Inspired by The Franklin Project and featured in the toolkit, William & Mary College launched the Community Engagement Fellowship program in 2015, which allowed four recent graduates of William & Mary work to improve the community around the college by dedicating 10 months of service in a non-AmeriCorps funded service year. The college paid for the student stipends and provided on-campus housing. The program lasted for a few years, but, as it was funded by the office of the former president, when the college brought on a new president, the funding was cut to prioritize other programs.

Another example of a non-AmeriCorps program that is still in operation is [Elon-Alamance Health Partners](#). A partnership between Elon University and four health organizations in Alamance County, the program allows four Elon graduates a year to become Elon University employees on a one-year contract. If they remain in North Carolina for graduate school or accept employment in or near Alamance county, they receive an additional end of service stipend -- an incentive to keep their talent local. Elon has launched a similar program for an additional two graduates who assist in early childhood education.

It is of note that, in some cases, universities are heavily involved in the national service movement but host few, if any, programs. The Institute for Emerging Issues, located within North Carolina State University system, hosts the [Service Year NC](#) initiative. They are a part of the Service Year Alliance Impact Community network and work with programs and institutions across the state to scale service year opportunities. Similarly, the Central Florida Service Collective, a soon-to-be Impact Community, is a consortium of programs that jointly recruit at the University of Central Florida (UCF). The anchor organization that nominally runs the collective is the UCF Center for Community Partnerships. UCF is even more unique in that they have an AmeriCorps recruiter working for the college who speaks to students specifically about AmeriCorps programs and helping them find one that is a good fit.

Providing academic credit for service years is another option with great deal of potential. A handful of universities like Tufts, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Miami Dade, and Drexel have such service options. Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life is particularly known in the service year field for their [1+4 Bridge Year](#) program, which allows about 15 students a year to undertake service internationally before attending college. Tufts provides financial support for those participants who qualify. Due to COVID-19, however, the program has been cancelled for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Service Year Alliance, in an attempt to expand the number of colleges and universities that offer course credit for service, partnered with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to try to advance opportunities for corps members to receive course credit. The partnership resulted in a [webinar](#), but ultimately, both organizations found that a number of factors, including getting universities to count service towards degree requirements, were too challenging to pursue further.

Indeed, issues of accreditation have been some of the biggest barriers to embedding national service into universities as a way of incorporating service into the college experience more sustainably. One higher education professional with expertise in the intersection of national service and higher education explained some of the challenges that come with receiving course credit for service experience. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), an association of liberal arts colleges and universities, has developed a list of 11 high-impact educational practices that have tested and proven outcomes for students (Kuh 2020). Each has rubrics and best practices in place, provided by AAC&U, that help higher education institutions systematically implement them.

One of these practices, Service Learning or Community-Based Learning, sounds similar to service:

In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

This higher education professional noted a few reasons why, in general, implementing service-based learning is challenging for universities. A basic understanding of what service-learning could entail would be a course that supplements in-class lectures with community-based activities. One would inherently imagine the burden of putting the course together, developing partnerships with community-based organizations with which students could meaningfully volunteer, and finding ways to ensure consistent learning connected to the course material would fall on a professor. There is currently little incentive for a professor to undertake all of that work. Should some particularly committed professor undertake the work, most institutions have no oversight to ensure a consistent experience for students. Further, to whom would that professor go for support in developing the experience -- a student affairs office, community engagement office, or enrollment? The institution would need to know where this sits and fund individuals and resources to support the effort.

If the stars align and a service-learning course is established, this is, in theory, only one course out of four or five that a student might take in a semester, meaning the student would not have a significant number of hours to dedicate to service. To increase the amount of time, and potentially course credits, one receives for a service-learning course, one starts to encounter issues of on-time graduation for the former problem, and credit transferability in the latter.

To have the highest quality service-learning experience, according to expert interviews, it is worth comparing the amount of time undertaking service learning to a semester-long internship or a semester abroad. Some universities and colleges, particularly with high standing in the higher education space, might be able to ensure the experience is of high enough quality to receive course credit that would be recognized by other schools. This is a bigger challenge for schools like community colleges, whose credits can be difficult to transfer for even the most basic courses without pre-existing cooperating agreements.

Then there is the issue of equitable access. Students in STEM fields, for example, tend to have very specific sequences of courses that they need to graduate with their major, which often prevents them from participating in programs like study abroad (Klawe 2019). Such a student might not participate in a more intensive service semester without interrupting their required courses and potentially delaying graduation. Similarly, a first-generation college student who both attends classes and works might not have the time to dedicate to service-learning without it being intentionally built into their college experience or offering them a stipend.

One way to approach the course credit issue is through mapping service years to courses. [The Military Guide](#), for instance, has helped to evaluate the education experiences of service members and help map them to course credits since 1954. A similar initiative undertaken by a well-regarded education association could have benefits, as long as universities are willing to participate.

Further, were an organization to pursue course credit through service or otherwise intentionally build service programs into graduation requirements, graduate school and Master's degree programs would be the ideal place to start. Peace Corps has already pursued some programs with higher education institutions through their Peace Corps Prep certification for undergraduates and their Master's International program, which ceased to operate in 2016. Similarly, Leslie Garvin, Executive Director of North Carolina Campus Compact, suggested that while such models have been complex to start, the most impactful way to incorporate service would be at the degree level, either through course requirements or through departments -- the education department, biology department, history department, etc. -- hosting programs geared towards putting students to work doing service using the skills they learned through their major into practice.

A higher education specialist suggested that a deferral policy or a university-sponsored AmeriCorps program model are the two most probable ways to scale service through higher education, noting that the latter option, though by far the most expensive, is a way for universities to serve the communities around them. Particularly in a time of what universities will experience pandemic-related scarcity and significant budget cuts, though, the higher education professional interviewed by Service Year Alliance expressed concern that such programs could be stood up and maintained in the long run. One benefit that higher education institutions do have over other potential program placements is the ability to offer housing, a benefit that seems to appear more often in the non-AmeriCorps models. This may also be

negatively impacted by the pandemic, however, as the risk might be too great if students are not allowed on campus.

One staff member at ASU's Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, says that the two dozen or so positions run out of ASU cost the college approximately 1.5 times what they get through CNCS AmeriCorps funding, as they not only have to match the grant in accordance with CNCS grant structure, which pays for corps member benefits, but they must also fund the staffing and infrastructure required to run a program. As stated above, while it becomes proportionally cheaper to host each corps member as a program scales up, the costs are by far the biggest barrier to higher education institutions hosting programs -- and those are the programs that have AmeriCorps funding to offset costs.

Garvin agreed with the idea that higher education institutions would be an ideal setting to scale national service but cited similar funding and logistical challenges. She also knew of very few programs that operated outside of the structure of AmeriCorps at higher education institutions, noting Elon-Alamance Health Partners as the only such program in her purview. She went on to highlight the need for comprehensive training on the structure of AmeriCorps and program design, as well the role of higher education in recruitment. Indeed, a recent study by Plante, Kinzey, & Renney (2020) in which the researchers conducted pre-, during, and post-service surveys with University of Central Florida students who participated in AmeriCorps positions indicated that the biggest role for universities may be to be more effective recruiters of young people to national service and cultivators of a service mentality.

Routes to Scale through Higher Education

Research and interviews with experts who have or are currently working in the fields of both national service and higher education indicate a few things:

1. Higher education can be a strong way to scale service year *programs* because of opportunities to provide housing, better fundraising networks, and their existing infrastructure. This seems to be most true if these are AmeriCorps programs hosted or sponsored by the university. Programs can further allow a college or university to tangibly give back to the community that surrounds them.
2. Higher education can offer a strong source of *recruitment* of graduates for their and other service year programs, as they have access to a significant portion of the young adult population.
3. Higher education can provide Education Award *matches* to recruit students who have completed a year of service, rewarding them for their commitment to service and decreasing the financial burden of attending a higher education institution.
4. Higher education can allow for and encourage *deferrals* so that students who are interested in completing a service year as a gap year can do so, thus supporting the development of more civically-minded, committed students.

Pursuing these options over developing models for course credit require less coordination with other schools. Further, they by and large solve a problem that operating national service at scale solely through higher education institutions would encounter: not everyone has access to or a desire to attend college. Were service opportunities only available to college students through their institutions -- as would be the case with course credit models -- many low income or otherwise disinterested individuals would not benefit from learning the strong civic and community volunteering lessons as their peers. Given that national service is a proven way to help people with many fewer opportunities gain access to options like college aid through the Segal Education Award, skill-building, and job networking, it would be a significant loss to have opportunities geared only towards college students.

Three additional challenges remain to this work, particularly to the highly impactful work of institutions hosting programs. The first, as mentioned before, is funding. While higher education institutions have strong fundraising networks, it is no small quantity of money to operate a high-quality program, especially in institutions in which there are often competing priorities. As mentioned before, this will be doubly true in times of economic uncertainty.

Second, there must be a strong willingness from administrators to commit resources to service. Both Service Year Alliance and North Carolina Campus Compact have seen firsthand how difficult it can be to ensure follow-through even when some sort of commitment has been made. NC Campus Compact, for example, held a convening a few years ago to bring presidents and administrators from colleges and universities across the state together to inform them about the opportunities of national service. While a handful went on to promote national service at the schools in various ways, most did not commit to any action. Service Year Alliance's [Service Year EDU](#) initiative similarly sought commitment from higher education institutions to advance service in one of the key ways highlighted in the Higher Ed Toolkit. While a number of institutions are nominal partners in this initiative, there is no real way to continuously incentivize their commitments. Virginia as a state, for instance, committed all of its universities to completing at least one of the ways to promote service from the governor's office, but there was no real incentive to actually implement this at the universities.

Finally, there is an ideological challenge. In completing a year of national service, most service advocates hope that there are some common, national lessons to impart about one's role as an American citizen. It is in a college or university's best interest, however, to ensure that the impact of a program is associated more with the university and less with national service. While intentional messaging could certainly do both, it is more likely that, as is the case for almost all national service programs, the public will associate the work far more with the programs and their sponsors than with national service broadly.

With around 4,000 higher education institutions in the US, were each institution to sponsor 10 corps members, there would be around 40,000 new positions in national service. Were each institution to commit about the same number of positions as ASU sponsors annually

for Public Allies, there would be over 100,000 new positions -- more than the number of service year positions that exist today, but only about 10% of the one million goal that Service Year Alliance has identified. To use ASU's model, though, there would have to be simultaneous increases in both AmeriCorps funding and matching funds from colleges and universities. It seems as though colleges and universities would make excellent partners in scaling service years, but without a significant investment from higher education institutions across the board, they are unlikely to be able to carry the sole burden of national service successfully.

Service Years and Corporate Programs

The corporate model for service years is a relatively new extension of the service year ecosystem, but what has been done suggests some significant opportunity for growth in this area. Other than assisting with match funding as donors, corporates can start their own programs to help solve problems such as expanding the pipeline of people entering their field of interest, creating more well-rounded employees, and increasing their positive impact and footprint in their communities. Here we will look at three different corporate models of service -- the first two of which Service Year Alliance played a significant role in helping to create: Home Instead's Champions of Aging, CitiBank Employee Deferral Service Year, and the Starbucks Foundation Service Fellows.

Champions of Aging

[Home Instead Senior Care](#) is a company that aims to change the face of aging by improving the lives of the aging population and their families. Home Instead's team recognized that the proportion of the population in the aging category is only growing -- 2 billion people in the world will be over the age of sixty by 2050. In order to effectively care for that population, they saw a need to expand the pipeline of young people informed about how we best support older adults, and bring that understanding to their future careers in business, medicine and social services. With the help of Service Year Alliance, they created [Champions of Aging](#), a service year program in which corps members work at service sites either directly serving the aging population, or helping to build the capacity of an organization that helps the aging. Jeff Huber, CEO of Home Instead, hopes to see the program become the "Teach for America" of the aging sector, creating lifelong advocates and champions for improving the lives of older adults.

The first year of the program was launched in 2018, and included only part time corps members who were students at local universities. Starting in 2019, the program began recruiting for both part time students still in school as well as full time recent grads. The service years take place in Omaha, Nebraska, where Home Instead is headquartered and staff offer in person training supplemented with a robust online curriculum.

After the first year of the program, Service Year Alliance conducted a review to learn about what worked well and what needed improvements. The review concluded that this service

year model successfully taught corps members transferable skills, made them more comfortable with and knowledgeable about the aging population, and delivered much needed services to seniors. Through this service year program, Home Instead has been able to make a greater impact in their community and better serve their mission by slowly but surely changing perceptions of aging and developing a new pipeline of students into the aging sector.

CitiBank Corporate Deferral

The [Citi Service Year](#) program, provided through the Citibank (Citi) Human Resources department, is an opportunity offered to Citi Summer Analysts who receive an offer of employment from Citi after graduating college. They are able to defer their employment offer for a year to participate in a service year at a local nonprofit organization, generally in New York City (NYC). Citi provides training and a cohort experience for the corps members, funds the majority of their stipend -- about twice the amount of a typical AmeriCorps stipend -- and provides relocation assistance. The host nonprofit provides a portion of the stipend, the option of health insurance, and other fringe employment costs.

Citi hopes to achieve a few things by offering this deferral option. First, they see service as a solution to the development of a more well-rounded, innovative employee. Second, they feel the program is a valuable marketing and recruitment tool in a crowded financial services job market, that allows them to attract talented young individuals that value social impact in their communities. Finally, the program increases their presence in the nonprofit space and contributes to their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Nonprofits appreciate the opportunity to employ fellows with a background in finance or tech that they may not otherwise attract, with many of the expenses for that person's service year position offset by Citi's contributions.

After facilitating four successful service year cycles, it is clear that there is potential for both Citi, nonprofits hosting members, and corps members to continue to engage in NYC. Corps members have on many occasions expressed the impact of their service year, sharing that the challenges they faced equipped them with tangible skills and contributed to their ability to be more conscientious community members and better Citi employees.

Starbucks Foundation Service Fellows Program

A partnership between The Starbucks Foundation and Points of Light, the [Starbucks Foundation Service Fellows](#) program, inspired by AmeriCorps, takes Starbucks employees and places them part-time at Points of Light affiliated nonprofits while they continue to work part-time for Starbucks for seven month terms. Points of Light then oversees training, program management, and evaluation with a \$3.5 million grant from Starbucks. About 50 fellows per class currently work across 20 cities.

Both Starbucks and Points of Light consider the program to be highly successful in developing service-minded individuals and supporting local initiatives. In a blog post on Starbucks Stories & News, one program affiliate CEO said of the program: “It’s an available model for privatizing national service... now proven on a national scale. If other corporations can bet behind this and use it to inspire their employees... it will be life changing” (Warnick 2019).

It is worth noting that, as mentioned above, some volunteer management professionals have concerns that even a year for an AmeriCorps member doing some of these activities is not enough and could encourage nonprofits to devote fewer resources to a robust volunteer management plan. AmeriCorps, particularly through VISTA, has had time and experience to refine the training provided to their corps members. With that in mind, six months of part-time service may be insufficient to make a real impact in capacity building activities.

Nevertheless, [in her testimony](#) to the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, Points of Light President & CEO Natalye Paquin, Esq. uses the Service Fellows program as an example of how to create more readily accessible opportunities through companies, explaining that the real question is not how to get people to serve, but how to remove barriers to entering service and make it easier for people to do. This model certainly has potential to make service more accessible, though further (or publicly available) evaluation would be useful to understanding how this model compares to those used by certified AmeriCorps programs.

Paths to Scale for Corporate Models

It seems unlikely that corporate models are a singular path to scale for national service. While the Starbucks Service Fellows program seems to be an exception, the year-long, full-time programs offered by Home Instead and Citibank only add about 10 positions each to the field in each year. Were every major company to contribute to the field with such a deferral program, it could certainly be impactful. If every US company with over 1,000 employees contributed in some way to about 10 service year positions either through their own deferral program or sponsoring an existing one, it would contribute about 100,000 new positions to the field a year, about the same as higher education institutions. With a more committed model like that of the Starbucks Foundation, this could of course look more like 500,000 positions, but without further evaluation of the program to understand the costs, effects, and impact of a part-time service experience over a shorter term, it is difficult to know if the program is replicable.

Further, there is little in place to incentivize companies to do this. Citi pays about \$50,000 per corps member a year plus operating costs, and the hosting nonprofits contribute another \$20,000. Citi pays their corps members more than other national service positions, to be

sure, but this is part of the incentive structure to get people to forgo their well-paid analyst job for a year. Champions of Aging directly contributes to their mission so they have a higher incentive to run the program, but this will not be the case for many, if not most corporate entities. The Starbucks Service Fellows program is run out of the Foundation side of the company, which has a clear mission of corporate social responsibility and therefore looks a little like a hybrid philanthropic effort than a corporate one.

These programs also have little incentive to teach explicit civic lessons that help create the common sense of citizenship, and shared purpose of an intentional AmeriCorps program. It is in the best interest of companies to associate their brand with the service provided and develop loyalty in the corps members to the company, as well as loyalty from the organizations and people served to the company. While these positions build cultural competences and tolerance, they would need very intentional programming to connect the work to citizenship.

Finally, there are issues of equity, particularly in the Citi model. Most of the Summer Analysts selected by Citi who will then be eligible for the Citi Service Year are from Ivy League schools, which are often not demographically diverse (Gross 2019). While there is something to be said for establishing a service mindset and the experience that come with it within young people of privilege, it also means that these opportunities are inherently inequitable to those who are less privileged, which is doubly problematic when the stipend for these opportunities are so much higher than those of other service positions.

While there are certainly structural and ideological barriers to scaling national service through corporate models, there is a wealth of opportunity for companies to contribute to the ultimate goal of one million positions a year across the nation. Incentivizing them to do so may be the biggest hurdle. Bridget Healey from the Watts School at ASU has been considering ways that might obligate companies to participate in such social good activities as contributing to national service. She suggested that in the context of COVID-19, creating service-related strings to corporate stimulus or bailouts by the federal government could create comparatively inexpensive ways for companies that recover and return to significant gains to give back to the communities that paid for their bailouts in taxes. It seems very in the spirit of national service -- in order for them to receive a benefit, they must do something for their country and contribute to a common purpose.

In the Points of Light testimony to the Commission, Paquin presented a list of opportunities for engagement with the private sector. These included:

- **Apprenticeship to Hire** programs that include a service element
- An **Entrepreneur Corps** to help provide support for small businesses or start-ups to help them succeed
- **Tax Credits** for employers who support employees to work in certified national service positions that help meet community or national needs

Ideas like this could go a long way in engaging the private sector with incentives to meaningfully encourage participation in national service and, as Paquin said, remove barriers that keep people from having the time or ability to commit fully to national service.

The Serve America Act and the Movement to Date

In 2009, two consequential pieces of legislation passed in President Obama's first 100 days. Neither quite resulted in the widespread adoption and growth of national service hoped for by champions, but each offered some lessons on how to advance a national service agenda at the federal level.

ARRA Funding

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed in early 2009 as a response to the Great Recession. Part of the act gave \$200 million in funding to CNCS to increase the number of AmeriCorps positions, provide matching funds relief for grantees, and improve CNCS's technology infrastructure. In CNCS's [final report](#) on ARRA funding, they provide examples of some of the work completed by around 15,000 corps members who were able to be hired with the funding.

While some successes can certainly be identified as outcomes of ARRA funds, a former Deputy Director of AmeriCorps at CNCS explained some of the problems CNCS and the field experienced. First, the funds were temporary -- a small bandage for an ailing economy and a nonprofit sector experiencing less giving. The funds and positions attached to them were not sustainable, leading to most programs shrinking back to their previous size even after successful use of funds. Second, the funds were given only to existing grantees, meaning a large number of nonprofits and other entities were excluded, limiting the reach. This decision was meant to increase the speed and efficiency with which funds were distributed, but was in many ways restrictive. Finally, the funds were meant to expand the number of positions, but not the capacity to manage those positions. Because of this, many programs lacked the ability to add positions in their existing programs.

Ultimately, the field considers the implementation of ARRA funding less than successful as programs were simply not able to expand to the degree that funding might have allowed. One take-away we heard from the former Deputy Director was that while an increase in funding is absolutely necessary to expanding national service, more work must be done to prepare the field's capacity for an increase in funding. This could be achieved by expanding the allowable uses of funds to help pay for increased capacity to manage positions, or by ensuring that infrastructure, such as coalitions or other partnerships similar to Impact Communities, are in place to successfully coordinate new positions in a place.

The Serve America Act

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA),¹⁴ a bill that reauthorized and sought to expand national service through AmeriCorps, was a bipartisan effort to substantially increase national service from about 75,000 positions to 200,000 positions by 2014. The Act, however, was never fully appropriated as significant budget cuts were instituted by Republicans after winning control of the House in 2010.

Other than expanding service, SAA sought to hone in on issues of national importance (education, health, clean energy, veterans, and economic opportunity), provide more resources to nonprofit infrastructures, and promote innovative service models, among other things. While some progress was made in focusing programming, most of the other aspects of the Act were not funded sufficiently to be achieved.

Though most of the service goals of the Obama administration were not met, the establishment of a partnership between FEMA and CNCS did successfully lead to a new branch of NCCC called **FEMA Corps**, which could serve as a model for future collaborations between CNCS and other federal agencies. FEMA Corps is a residential service program that supports disaster response and recovery. It serves a few purposes, including adding to a reserve of Americans who understand how to respond to disasters, adding capacity to disaster response in a cost-effective way, and provide job training and a more diverse talent pipeline to careers in FEMA and public service more generally.

Recent Movements and Legislation

The last few years, particularly since the end of the Obama presidency, have seen national service programs on the defensive. Even as President Trump's administration sought significant cuts or outright elimination¹⁵ of the program, Congress, though unwilling to commit to fully appropriating the Serve America Act, did appropriate modest increases to CNCS, demonstrating some remaining support for the program in the budget process. In the last few years, the field expected only minimal increases in the number of service years in the US, and certainly few by federal means.

One movement that has and continues to seek to bring national service back into the national conversation was the **Serve America Together** campaign. Led by Service Year Alliance, this campaign is a coalition of national service partners like YouthBuild, The Corps Network, America's Service Commissions, and Repair the World, along with other national organizations that uplift service to the nation, like The Mission Continues, Student Veterans of America, and Vets for American Ideals to for a first-of-its-kind movement to make a year of service --

¹⁴ See CNCS's website to learn more about the SAA: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation/edward-m-kennedy-serve-america-act>.

¹⁵ See Service Year Alliance press release: https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/response_fy20_budget.

national, military, or public -- a common opportunity and expectation for all young Americans. Co-Chairs of the campaign span the ideological spectrum and include General Stan McCrystal, Arianna Huffington, Bob Gates, Laura Lauder, Andrew Hauptman, and Jeff Huber.

During the presidential primary, the campaign sought to engage political leaders with the [Presidential Challenge](#), which aimed to have all presidential candidates commit to make national service a priority in their first 100 days in office and release plans that expand and transform national service in the US. While a majority of Democratic candidates had plans that utilized national service, four candidates formally accepted the Presidential Challenge: Pete Buttigieg, Kirsten Gillibrand, Tom Steyer, and Deval Patrick.

Once COVID-19 struck towards the end of the Democratic primary, however, the landscape altered. In the following weeks, Service Year Alliance sought to [position national service](#) as part of the solution to the public health and economic turmoil caused by the pandemic.¹⁶

However, the national service field faced its own challenges stemming from COVID-19. Peace Corps volunteers were recalled from their posts en masse for the first time in history, and NCCC was suspended for two months. Most programs were able to move their corps members to virtual service, though not without challenges. Some cities and states, most noticeably California where the Governor has a Chief Service Officer in his cabinet, quickly mobilized AmeriCorps members as part of the response to keep infrastructure like food distribution operating. The decentralization of authority left many in the field unsure about who made decisions: state service commissions or CNCS.¹⁷

The progression of the crisis gave birth to an unprecedented interest in national service as a human capital solution to the challenges of the pandemic. Multiple plans coalesced around using AmeriCorps to help solve some of the problems of the disaster. Representatives Houlahan (D-PA) and Bera (D-CA) spoke with Service Year Alliance about the possibility of using AmeriCorps to do the critical work of contact tracing, while Senators Van Hollen (D-MD) and Markey (D-MA) sought to repurpose returned Peace Corps volunteers in expanded service programs. The concepts coalesced around a bill led by Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) called the [Pandemic Response and Opportunity Through National Service Act](#), which was originally introduced by a large coalition of Senate Democrats and proposed increasing AmeriCorps to 750,000 positions over three years.

Service Year Alliance worked with the national service field to build bipartisan support for Senator Coons' bill. Senator Coons was able to secure bipartisan support for a scaled back version of his original Pandemic Response and Opportunity Through National Service Act. The newly negotiated Cultivating Opportunity and Response to the Pandemic through Service

¹⁶ See Service Year Alliance COVID-19 Response https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/covid19_response.

¹⁷ See <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about-cnccs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19> for more information on CNCS's list of FAQs on COVID-19.

(CORPS) Act is being led by Senators Coons and Wicker and currently has twelve cosponsors, including six Republicans, and the number continues to grow. The CORPS Act preserves many of the core features of Senator Coons' original bill and pulls back the cost elements. It increases national service to 250,000 positions over three years (instead of the original 750,000 positions) and reduces the total cost for those three years to about \$16.6 billion. The number of AmeriCorps positions would double in the first year to 150,000 positions, would grow to 200,000 positions next year, and to 250,000 by year after next. The CORPS Act also doubles the education award so that the maximum education award is equal to twice the amount of the maximum Pell Grant. It also preserves the 175% increase in the living allowance.

Another bill that The Corps Network is supporting, [21st Century Conservation Corps for Our Health and Our Jobs Act](#) sponsored by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), would put additional resources towards the environment as part of the response and recovery. This bill would provide almost \$40 billion in funding towards conservation, national land infrastructure and maintenance, and fire prevention projects throughout the nation, including the funding of corps to do the work.

Senator Booker (D-NJ) has also [written a bill](#) that would establish a DemocracyCorps, a service program modeled off of AmeriCorps that would help states administer elections as well as educate and register voters. Corps members in this plan would serve two-year terms, earn \$15/hour and be overseen by a president appointed and Senate confirmed board.

Though the situation remains fluid, the most recent legislation to be introduced and passed out of the House is the [HEROES Act](#). While there is not much explicit reference to AmeriCorps, there is funding to local health agencies. Part of the guidance for use of funds may include using AmeriCorps members as part of the workforce to implement public health initiatives like contact tracing through these funds. The Act also includes funding for a feasibility study for how CNCS might implement a significant amount of funding for a surge in AmeriCorps positions, such as what the Coons Bill calls for.

Finally, as the presumptive Democratic nominee, Service Year Alliance and others are engaging the Biden campaign to ensure that national service is part of his policy proposals for the Democratic platform. National service has a place in a few proposals already, including a [Housing proposal](#), two Climate proposals on [clean energy](#) and [communities of color](#), an [Ending Violence Against Women](#) proposal, and a [COVID Response](#) proposal. Service Year Alliance, through the Serve America Together campaign, is exploring ways to be included on both party platforms through infrastructure initiatives as well.

Section 3: Conclusions

The primary goal of this report is to understand the national service context in order to identify a path forward for voluntary universal national service. In summary, some lessons can be taken from previous and current iterations of national service to guide us. These include understanding the best path to scale based on historical and modern evidence, as well as an understanding of the costs vs. savings; growing Republican support and inviting new champions of national service into the field with diverse areas of expertise; and understanding the needs of the field to best be prepared to expand the number of positions in a decentralized system.

Path to Universal National Service

As outlined in Section 2, universal national service is defined by Service Year Alliance as having the following factors:

1. Service is scaled to the size of the nation's population
2. Service meets the needs of the nation
3. Service is an opportunity to which everyone has access
4. Service pays sufficiently in stipends or in-kind for individuals to support themselves
5. Service creates education or career pathways for those who serve
6. Service creates better citizens by providing a common experience

All of the examples of national service with more than several thousand corps members serving have been funded by the federal government, because few other entities can afford to or are willing to consistently fund service at such a scale. As an example of how this plays out, City Year, a well-established national program, had a budget of over \$160 million in 2018, which funded about 3,000 corps members. Of that, about half was private funding, while a quarter came from local and school funding, and another quarter from federal grants. An additional \$15 million or so in education awards is provided to City Year corps members by the federal government. Similarly, the California Conservation Corps' proposed budget for this year, as mentioned above, was approximately \$133 million for all operating costs, and included a mixture of state and federal investment. On average, a 1,500 to 3,000 person service year program, including all personnel, benefits, and infrastructure, costs somewhere around \$150 million a year.

Getting to the estimated \$40 billion total that would be required to fully fund 1 million service year positions, while technically achievable without federal support, is a tough proposition -- according to a 2015 annual giving report, the Walmart Foundation gave about \$1.5 billion in grants globally, for context. While this is not a small sum, it is far more realistic for the federal government to invest in a system like AmeriCorps at about 50% and encourage private matches than to expect philanthropy or the private sector to fully scale national service on its own. It is also fair to say that the 4 to 1 return on investment is something that the federal

government will see in the long run through more tax revenue and cost savings in other areas, whereas the private sector would be much less likely to see -- or prioritize -- a return of that scale. The true beneficiaries of cost savings brought on by national service will be local, state, and federal governments through better public health, higher quality and more equitable education, and better infrastructure, not to mention the benefits of engaging a large youth population resulting in less crime, higher levels of volunteerism, greater college or certification access, greater tax revenue, and more public sector workers (see Belfield 2013). The benefits would be both ideological and tangible for the federal government.

This is not to say the private sector does not have a role. AmeriCorps remains structured in such a way that most funds need to be matched by AmeriCorps host organizations who must raise those funds, sharing the burden between the federal government and other funding sources. There is also nothing to stop private organizations from developing their own programs either independent of or benefiting from the grant structure of AmeriCorps. Section 2 offered some ways to incentivize private entities to do so.

Federal support has two additional benefits: CNCS can ensure that programs meet a consistent quality to ensure that corps members and communities are benefiting from service, and it can provide centralized training to establish in corps members a common purpose and common understanding of citizenship to supplement the localized skills they learn on the ground through experience. National civic renewal through national service can only realistically come about if corps members leave their programs with a positive view of their service and their impact, if they understand how their work ties to a community and to the nation, and if they associate themselves with AmeriCorps and national service more broadly. As discussed at the end of Section 1, it is currently the centralized program of NCCC that does this most effectively.

Notably, while CNCS does track for the quality of a program through their grant monitoring and reporting, they do not currently do the ideological work of training corps members as citizens across all AmeriCorps programs. Trainings are instead left to the state service commissions and/or the programs, with varying degrees of effectiveness. This is often one of the reasons that individuals associate far more with their program than with AmeriCorps.

A very recent poll, conducted at the end of May 2020, by TargetPoint for Voices of National Service reconfirms a desire for service. Conducted in 16 battleground states, voters were told:

National service programs are service opportunities supported by the federal government. The U.S. military is one type of national service program. Programs like AmeriCorps and Senior Companions are national service programs for civilians. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members across the country have acted quickly and creatively to continue their critical work supporting communities in direct response to COVID-19. Together they have delivered millions of meals, conducted hundreds of thousands of wellness checks, set up temporary isolation

sites, organized blood drives and are providing virtual teaching, tutoring and mentoring to students, among many other things.

Knowing this, voters were asked: “would you support or oppose increasing funding for National Service programs so that they may continue -- and potentially expand -- efforts to fight against the effects of the Coronavirus?” 92% of Democrats, 76% of Independents, and 70% of Republicans supported increasing funding. This included 84% of voters under 30, 96% of African American millennials, and 75% of white, non-college educated individuals.

In summary, achieving voluntary universal national service by starting on the federal level is not only the most feasible because of cost, but it is also the most feasible based on which institutions would realize the cost savings. Because of the structure of AmeriCorps, private and non-governmental organizations will retain a significant role in funding and implementing national service. Stipends and benefits can also be distributed consistently, allowing for service to be more equitable -- a true opportunity for all. Finally, with some centralized training which would not be possible through independent paths to scale, every American participating in national service can develop a common understanding of what it means to be an engaged citizen with shared values.

Developing New Champions

In the past, Service Year Alliance has focused on three elements that it felt the national service field needed to grow: increasing the quality of programs, recruiting more potential corps members, and unlocking funding. While the true size of the field is difficult to measure -- no one other than Service Year Alliance is actively attempting to understand the number of non-AmeriCorps positions -- there has been little appreciable growth since the George W. Bush administration. In the current strategic direction of Service Year Alliance, we have narrowed our focus to increasing funding to the service year ecosystem, and particularly funding that leads to growth. To achieve this goal, Service Year Alliance builds coalitions and fosters strategic corporate, community, and research partnerships to unlock funds for service years. We develop service year programs and resources in priority focus areas to strengthen the case for service years. We advance policy proposals that unlock public funds for service years to create the opportunity for all young Americans to serve. And lastly, we elevate service years as an experience that transforms lives, strengthens communities, and fuels civic renewal.

As the argument above lays out, the best way to unlock funds is through a significant federal investment appropriated by Congress. While many Democratic members of Congress are supportive,¹⁸ convincing Republican members of Congress appears to be the most significant

¹⁸ There has been historical skepticism by members further on the left that these programs take away resources for poorer communities to create low-paying jobs, and it is therefore not a guarantee that the entire Democratic party would support a more moderate version of federal legislation without concessions to the left.

hurdle to federal funding. As the situation cannot be divorced from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic at this point, the pandemic is the context in which those members must be convinced.

From our current understanding, Republican members of Congress generally want to know:

- Why utilize national service instead of unpaid volunteers?
- How does national service effectively contribute to workforce development?
- Why are so few corps members working in rural communities?
- How can we quickly and cost-effectively mobilize a large number of individuals while minimizing the growth of federal bureaucracy?

Recently, questions regarding what national service has to offer that volunteerism or hourly jobs do not have come up around some of the work that could be done to respond to COVID-19. Service Year Alliance is currently working to quantitatively demonstrate how corps members are more effective, both in terms of impact and cost, than unpaid volunteers or hiring new paid, but temporary, staff to do the important work of contact tracing across the country. Successfully proving this would likely allow us to extrapolate that service years are in fact the more cost effective and beneficial way to respond to most sudden needs in the country that requires human power and modest training to be effective.

The country's reliance on unpaid volunteers for issues of national importance has the potential to cause problems better solved by dedicated corps members who can receive more intensive training, unlike intermittent volunteers, and are committed to addressing them over a substantial period of time. While the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), for example, has seen a surge in volunteers during the pandemic, they are highly decentralized, resulting in less consistent training, and have little in the way of additional resources to train or manage those volunteers. Further, as one study found, the greatest predictor of whether someone who signs up to volunteer during an emergency is likely to actually volunteer is their perceived self-efficacy, or how effective and knowledgeable they are at responding to that disaster. Individuals are less likely to actually volunteer if they do not feel they are equipped to successfully contribute (Errett et al. 2013). Here, corps members may be more reliable contributors to the nation's needs with more opportunities to train them in the skills they will need to respond, and do so confidently.

Workforce is a critically important issue during this pandemic. With at least 40 million people out of work at present and a lack of clarity on how many of those individuals will be able to return to work in the near future, the next few months will likely see many suggestions about how to get people back into the workforce. As young people, already at a disadvantage, have been hardest hit by unemployment (Fremstad and Rho 2020), it is clear that national service, a historical solution to the very same problem, should be strongly considered as a way to get young people back to work on meaningful tasks of national importance.

Before COVID-19 hit, Service Year Alliance was already developing and documenting evidence to understand how national service could be a workforce development strategy that creates talent pipelines to fill needs in local workforces, and we have produced a [resource](#) on the subject. With support from the Kresge Foundation, we have also been developing place-based pipelines in New Orleans and Detroit through service years. As discussed above, national service should not be exclusively considered a workforce development strategy, as there are programs that are more effective in this regard. However, its triple impact on the individual, the community, and civic renewal make service invaluable, and can improve workforce development while addressing civic health and community challenges at the same time.

To increase the number of service year corps members working in rural communities, there are a few proposals worth discussing. As noted above, there are some structural and systemic reasons that AmeriCorps members are sent to communities that already skew slightly towards having more resources and engagement. These communities tend to have more nonprofits at which AmeriCorps members can serve, as well as the resources to manage a state or federal grant and all of the administrative work that entails. This tends to leave out those organizations and communities who could desperately use corps members, including rural, tribal, and heavily economically depressed areas.

One method to help combat this issue is the introduction of fellowship models. First introduced in the Serve America Act, fellowships are a way to award positions differently than the current grant structure allows. The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service's report elaborated on and made adjustments to the fellowship model, calling them Serve America Fellowships and expanding the number of positions. Service Year Alliance has recently offered our own fellowships model, Service Year Fellowships, which takes the aspects of these models and incorporates feedback from other stakeholders, such as America's Service Commissions and Republican thought leaders on national service.

Our Service Year Fellowships would award young people who apply to serve with fellowship positions, allowing for smaller organizations to take on one or a few members without building a whole program model like AmeriCorps State and National. These young people then have the opportunity to choose to serve with one of a wide variety of smaller nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations that have been certified by state service commissions and certifying nonprofit organizations. This bipartisan concept empowers individuals with additional choice in where they want to spend their service years.

Fellowship positions would be distributed to state service commissions, which would provide oversight and award the fellows to entities in the state. They would be encouraged to be awarded equitably across congressional districts, with special opportunities afforded to organizations with fewer than 10 full-time and 10 part-time employees. Some preference would also be given to organizations that have established community service plans, or plans for growing national service -- including Impact Communities. Ideally, 25,000 fellows would be awarded the first year, with an additional 25,000 fellows awarded every year until we reach a

maximum of 250,000 fellowships. Further, unlike most CNCS grants, the fellowships would be fully federally funded, removing the burden of match funding from small, under-resourced organizations.

Part of the goal of this new service model would be to ensure that every congressional member has at least a handful of examples of national service happening in their district. This is valuable not only because each member would feel as though they are directly benefiting from the funds distributed to their states, but also so that constituents in those districts are more likely to benefit from service and therefore more likely to support it. As more communities recognize its value, more will want the programs to continue, thereby slowly establishing public support for service. As discussed at the end of Section 1, this would create a positive policy feedback loop that would encourage representatives on both sides of the political spectrum to continue their support for national service.

One additional method worth considering that could demonstrate the impact of national service is a place-based initiative that grows service to scale in a particular geographic area and documents the impact. This is another intention of Service Year Alliance's Impact Communities, which are already committed to growth in service and are working on the necessary partnerships with local government, employers, universities, existing programs, and nonprofits to build the infrastructure that would allow significant numbers of positions to be supported and utilized to maximum effect. Understanding how service at scale could transform and strengthen a community could not only be extraordinarily beneficial in creating champions from that community, but could also be invaluable in convincing others of the value of service at scale in their own communities.

Beyond the need for Republican champions and a robust series of arguments that sway them towards supporting national service, other champions are necessary. Particularly in the context of COVID-19 -- and with the historical lessons learned from the CCC's failure to obtain permanence -- the national service field needs to cultivate external expertise. This expertise would, we believe, allow national service to more effectively and safely be a solution to national crises both systemic and sudden.

Had national service organizations developed relationships in advance of COVID-19 with the CDC, local health officials, or other experts in the field of public health, for example, the field might have avoided a month of uncertainty and been quickly utilized to fill essential roles in the pandemic. There will undoubtedly be a "next crisis," and having those relationships and that expertise already bought into the flexibility and utility of national service could be crucial to saving time, money, and lives.

Local Policies and Infrastructure

Here it is worth acknowledging the tension that exists throughout this report. Centralized programs with clear goals are most effective at quickly changing course in a crisis and at imparting upon their participants the skills and lessons of citizenship while creating a satisfying experience; yet, the individual needs of local communities -- as well as political support from those who oppose government bureaucracy -- demand a flexible, diffuse, and decentralized model.

On some points, the two can meet in the middle. Offering a stronger common training from CNCS on the lessons of citizenship, in which everyone participates throughout their service, could help instill common values and purpose and can be done virtually, with little interruption in the work on the ground. More complex, though, are issues of effective response to local needs, as well as the ability and authority to reprioritize work in times of crisis. We suggest the best solution to this tension is Impact Communities, or similar localized infrastructure that can coordinate and plan for community needs.

Understanding more about what infrastructure and partnerships are critical to helping service years thrive in a place would be of significant benefit. Communities with national service were put to the test when COVID-19 struck, and some common themes appear to be emerging. Those themes are in need of further study, testing, and cultivation.

Early qualitative data suggests that in a decentralized program such as AmeriCorps where authority is spread across states, localities, and programs, involving local governments appears to be crucial to coordinating for maximum impact, as is building the lines of communication throughout all of those organizations who want to be involved in that impact. Policy changes on the local level to support this work could be significant -- if AmeriCorps members are understood by a local government as essential to crisis response and management, those members can be more effectively part of the response instead of having their work interrupted or even disbanded. This is a highly underexplored area that is worth pursuing in an attempt to make service more impactful and resilient.

Increasing the resources going towards developing local coalitions of programs and partners, including partners with topical expertise, would further smooth implementation of service on the local level and ensure that there is coordination and not duplication of effort. Ideally, such a coalition would, either on their own or in partnership with the local government, develop a community plan that would outline community needs areas for growth. The Flint Accelerator is one example of a community plan worth replicating.

Our Service Year Fellowships model further attempts to relieve some of this tension. Because fellowships would be fully federally funded, some of the implementation burden of raising matching funds would be lifted, allowing for more flexibility for local entities. But the

Service Year Fellowship model, unlike other models authorized in the Serve America Act and the Commission report, would give preference to those communities that have already developed plans for their coordination and implementation. This would encourage a less ad hoc and more strategic deployment of national service in a community. Additionally, since the fellowships are very individualized by design to give young people more choice and small nonprofits more opportunity and access, awarding a number of fellowships to a community with a plan increases the likelihood that the fellows would be treated as a cohort, giving them an additional sense of camaraderie and the opportunity for a more holistic expertise despite diverse placement.

AmeriCorps as a program was created with this tension between cohesion and local independence, not entirely by design but in large part out of political necessity. The policy itself does little to resolve the struggle between the many stakeholders who have a say in how the program is run. Rather than have those many stakeholders independently scramble to respond to local needs in a crisis or otherwise, careful planning and coordination between stakeholders on the local level *proactively*, with the support of CNCS, could transform AmeriCorps, making it healthier and more vibrant in its capabilities. Such interwoven networks of local policies, community plans, state-level synchronization, and federal support could truly make national service capable of being everything it needs to be.

Implementing Growth

Finally, it is valuable to discuss what might happen after national service is funded at the levels needed to achieve scale. While there are some communities and programs that might be prepared to take on an influx of corps members, most feel that they do not yet have the infrastructure in place to support such a surge, another reason why the less restrictive fellowship model could be of benefit in this moment.

Some programs and communities have struggled to recruit candidates to fill all of their positions when the economy is strong. As touched upon above, this is largely an awareness issue -- most young people are unaware of the opportunity to do paid service. While we are living through what might be a significant recruitment opportunity due to unemployment and what will likely be disruption to a normal college experience, alerting the public of the opportunity to serve would likely remain a barrier to expansion.

Here again we could perhaps learn something from the CCC, which filled their ranks by contacting young men from work relief rolls (Speakman 2006). With proper coordinating support, it seems entirely plausible that positions in an expanded national service system could be filled by contacting those receiving unemployment benefits and asking them to apply for national service. It is commonly understood that one of the greatest barriers to individuals entering national service is that those Americans have never been asked to serve the country as a civilian. This could finally put that notion to the test. Sending information about national service

to FASFA applicants could feasibly reach many of the young people (and their parents) who may have qualms about starting or returning to college in a virtual or truncated environment. With some very basic government support and creativity, getting the word out about the opportunity to serve should be possible, thereby contributing to the solution of the recruitment problem in ways that have not yet been supported.

Finally, rapidly developing or packaging existing program models may assist the field with immediate growth, giving potential host organizations models they could quickly put into action. Were a national service bill to pass during the COVID-19 pandemic, it could aid in immediate response and recovery needs and then shift to address longer-term challenges. Even without such an investment we are already seeing service year programs pivot to meet these needs in their own communities. Several places are piloting contact tracing efforts; service year programs are discussing how to help both recent high school and college graduates, as well as to help students over the summer and into the fall; many service programs are on the front lines of addressing needs from food security to summer learning loss in an environment where service delivery has been substantially disrupted. We want to help these local efforts succeed and thrive, so that best practices are established and that these efforts are replicated across the country. We are initially focused on contact tracing, but envision this evolving as our country's response and recovery evolves to support local efforts in addressing other emerging challenges. This collaboration should yield scalable, responsive service year models focused on high-impact in sectors that require both human power and infrastructure, but little specialized training, to achieve critical results.

National Service - A Solution for Challenging Times

Throughout this report, we have identified areas of opportunity and likely and unlikely paths to scale. To conclude, we should briefly return to why national service, the Swiss Army Knife the government barely knows it has, may be the best and only solution that could tackle many of the needs of the nation. America's recent challenges are significant: the deaths of well over 100,000 people in the coronavirus pandemic at the time of this writing, and ongoing police violence, of which people of color are disproportionately the victims. America entered this national health crisis incredibly divided; we risk leaving it even more polarized. A universal national service system can be the reinvigoration that our society needs in order to thrive. Our collective health and well-being depend upon it.

While in recent years America has suffered from political and cultural divisions, the risk of increasing political extremism has become critical. A preliminary study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York has found, after controlling for additional factors, deaths from the Spanish Flu in Germany correlated with significant austerity measures -- the more deaths, the less money was spent on the local level, especially on programs and services that affect young people, such as education. These factors in turn correlated with an increase in right-wing extremist voting and blaming the "other," possibly contributing to the rise of the Nazi party

(Blickle 2020). The coronavirus pandemic risks exacerbating the ideologies on the extreme ends of the spectrum, and leaving young people disconnected from their normal life course and vulnerable to polarizing influence. Not only can national service help address the economic fallout by providing much-needed services and employment pathways in strapped localities, but through participation, young people can develop a sense of worth, self-esteem, purpose, and camaraderie with other Americans from different backgrounds, mitigating some of the factors that can leave one vulnerable to radicalization. This is one of many factors that led the United Arab Emirates to institute their military service program (Alterman & Balboni 2017), and it is worth exploring further as a way to not only instill positive ideas of being an American, but also stemming negative ones.

The [Global Health Security Index](#), a comprehensive assessment and benchmarking of health security and related capabilities across 195 countries, found that as of October 2019, the United States ranked first among countries best prepared and able to respond to a global health crisis. However, it identified that one of the greatest risks to response was a lack of trust and socioeconomic resiliency, where the US ranked 59 out of 195 nations. This is a likely result of years of increasing distrust in institutions, media, and government prevalent in American society.

The last five months have demonstrated the need for organized, national responses in moments of crisis. They have demonstrated the need to be able to quickly deploy well-coordinated human capital against enormous nationwide public health and economic challenges. Few American institutions are set up well to do that. National service -- by virtue of its scalability and its flexibility to address many different challenges -- is among those institutions. And unlike many of the others, national service will allow a generation of young people the chance to participate in jointly solving the country's most pressing needs while connecting their lives to the story of America (Bridgeland 2016: 137).

To paraphrase what was said of the CCC, young people need the work as much as the work needs those young people. But our nation is also in need of a system that rebuilds a better society through national service, where our common ideals as Americans are forged through working together. The nation needs those people and those common ideals now more than ever.

Bibliography

- Alterman, Jon B., and Margo Balboni. Report. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2017.
- Bass, Melissa. *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, Vista, and AmeriCorps*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013.
- Belfield, Clive. Rep. *The Economic Value of National Service*. *Voices for National Service and The Franklin Project*, September 2013. http://voicesforservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Sep19_Econ_Value_National_Service-2.pdf.
- Blickle, Kristian. "Pandemics Change Cities: Municipal Spending and Voter Extremism in Germany, 1918-1933." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3592888>.
- Bridgeland, John M. *Heart of the Nation: Volunteering and America's Civic Spirit*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016.
- Brown, Michael, AnnMaura Connolly, Alan Khazei, Wendy Kopp, Michelle Nunn, Gregg Petersmeyer, Shirley Sagawa, and Harris Wofford. "A Call to National Service." *The American Interest*, June 15, 2017. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2008/01/01/a-call-to-national-service/>.
- Cardazone, Gina, Adam Farrar, Rebecca Frazier, Susan Gabbard, Trish Hernandez, Stacey Houston, Jaslean La Taillade, Peter Lovegrove, Donald Pratt, Nicole Vicinanza, Joseph Willey. "AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes: Summary Report" Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), October, 2015. https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf.
- Chandler, Adam. "Why Sweden Brought Back the Draft." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, March 3, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/sweden-conscription/518571/>.
- Civic Enterprises, and Hart Research. *Voters for National Service: Perspectives of American Voters on Large-Scale National Service*, 2013.
- "Corporation for National and Community Service 2017 State of the Evidence Annual Report," 2017. https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_2017%20State%20of%20the%20Evidence%20Report_0.pdf.

- Della Volpe, John, and Erik Fliegauf. Rep. Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service 32nd Edition. Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, February 2, 2017.
https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/170201_Harvard%20IOP%20Winter%20Poll_Executive%20Summary.pdf.
- Ellis, Susan J. "AmeriCorps and Senior Corps Targeting Volunteer Management." *Energize*. Adisa, March 1, 2010. <https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2010/march>.
- Errett, Nicole A., Daniel J. Barnett, Carol B. Thompson, Rob Tosatto, Brad Austin, Samuel Schaffzin, Armin Ansari, Natalie L. Semon, Ran D. Balicer, and Jonathan M. Links. "Assessment of Medical Reserve Corps Volunteers' Emergency Response Willingness Using a Threat- and Efficacy-Based Model." *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science* 11, no. 1 (2013): 29–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bsp.2012.0047>.
- Fremstad, Shawn, and Hye Jin Rho. "The Impact of the Pandemic on Young People's Employment and Economic Security." Center for Economic and Policy Research, May 28, 2020. <https://cepr.net/the-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-young-peoples-employment-and-economic-security/>.
- Friedman, Eric, Brian Freeman, Benjamin Phillips, Lily Rosenthal, David Robinson, Haleigh Miller, and Allan Porowski. "New Methods for Assessing AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes: Final Survey Technical Report." Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), August 22, 2016.
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_AmeriCorpsAlumniOutcomesFinalTechReport.pdf.
- "Gap Year." Gap Year | Dartmouth Admissions. Dartmouth College. Accessed June 10, 2020. <https://admissions.dartmouth.edu/apply/gap-year>.
- "Government Considering Civilian Service for Women." News Now Finland, June 17, 2019. <https://newsnowfinland.fi/domestic/government-considering-civilian-service-for-women>.
- Gross, Daniel A. "How Elite US Schools Give Preference to Wealthy and White 'Legacy' Applicants." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, January 23, 2019.
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/23/elite-schools-ivy-league-legacy-admissions-harvard-wealthier-whiter>.
- Inspire to Serve (2020). <https://inspire2serve.gov/sites/default/files/final-report/Final%20Report.pdf>.
- JBS International, Inc. "National Service Systematic Review and Synthesis of National Service Literature." Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), August 19, 2015. https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_NationalServiceSynthesisReport.pdf.

- Klawe, Maria. "Why We Need More STEM Students To Study Abroad." *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, March 6, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mariaklawe/2019/03/06/why-we-need-more-stem-students-to-study-abroad/>.
- Krebs, Ronald R. "A School for the Nation? How Military Service Does Not Build Nations, and How It Might." *International Security* 28, no. 4 (2004): 85–124. <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288041588278>.
- Kuh, George D. "High-Impact Educational Practices." *Association of American Colleges & Universities*. AAC&U, May 1, 2020. <https://www.aacu.org/node/4084>.
- Lifshitz, Yaakov. "Compulsory Conscription or Mobilization Using Market Forces: Economic Aspects." Essay. In *Military Service in Israel: Challenges and Ramifications*. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2016.
- Maher, Neil M. *Nature's New Deal: the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009.
- Making Caring Common. Publication. *Turning the Tide Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions*. Harvard University, January 2016. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b7c56e255b02c683659fe43/t/5bae62a6b208fc9b61a81ca9/1538155181693/report_turningthetide.pdf.
- Mettler, Suzanne. *Soldiers to Citizens: the G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- "Military Guide Online." American Council on Education, April 30, 2020. <https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Credit-Transcripts/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>.
- National Conference on Citizenship. "Civic Health and Unemployment II: The Case Builds." Tufts University, September 12, 2012. <https://circle.tufts.edu/index.php/latest-research/civic-health-and-unemployment-ii-case-builds>.
- Norman, Jim. "Half of Americans Favor Mandatory National Service." *Gallup.com*. Gallup, April 8, 2020. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/221921/half-americans-favor-mandatory-national-service.aspx>.
- Plante, Jarrad D., Amanda Kinzey, and Brooke M. Renney. "Chapter 14: Civic Value of National Service: Ethics to Students." Essay. In *Handbook of Research on Ethical Challenges in Higher Education Leadership and Administration*, edited by Victor Wang, 265–80. Hersey, PA: IGI Global, 2020.
- "Public Allies Arizona Announces Expansion into Greater Tucson, Hosts Reception on Nov. 12." ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation. Arizona State

- University, October 28, 2019. <https://lodestar.asu.edu/content/public-allies-arizona-announces-expansion-greater-tucson-hosts-reception-nov-12>.
- Sagawa, Shirley. "Nonprofit Mergers: The Missing Ingredient." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Stanford University, October 17, 2016. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/nonprofit_mergers_the_missing_ingredient.
- Salmond, John A. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: a New Deal Case Study*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967.
- Selby, W Gardner. "PolitiFact - Beto O'Rourke Flip-Flops on Requiring Young to Perform Public Service." *PolitiFact*. The Poynter Institute, January 10, 2018. <http://www.politifact.com/texas/statements/2018/jan/10/beto-orourke/beto-orourke-flip-flops-requiring-public-service-y/>.
- Shantz, Amanda, Tina Saksida, and Kerstin Alfes. "Dedicating Time to Volunteering: Values, Engagement, and Commitment to Beneficiaries." *Applied Psychology* 63, no. 4 (2013): 671–97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12010>.
- Sherraden, Michael. *Civic Service: Issues, Outlook, Institution Building*. St. Louis, MO: Washington University in St. Louis, 2001.
- Skowronek, Steven. "Pathways to Dependence: Political Development in America." Essay. In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, edited by Karen Orren, 27–47. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Speakman, Joseph M. "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps." *Prologue Magazine* 38, no. 3, 2006.
- Spooner, Alicia, ed. *Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)*. Accessed June 10, 2020. <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1586.html>.
- State of California. "Governor's Budget Expands CCC Role to Create California For All." *California Conservation Corps*, 2019. <https://ccc.ca.gov/governors-budget-expands-ccc-role-to-create-california-for-all/>.
- Swanson, Joan Ann. "Trends in Literature About Emerging Adulthood." *Emerging Adulthood* 4, no. 6 (2016): 391–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696816630468>.
- "Tufts 1+4 Bridge Year." Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. Tufts University, April 30, 2020. <https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/education/tufts1plus4>.
- Velasco, Kristopher, Pamela Paxton, Robert W. Ressler, Inbar Weiss, and Lilla Pivnick. "Do National Service Programs Improve Subjective Well-Being in Communities?" *The American Review of Public Administration* 49, no. 3 (2018): 275–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074018814883>.

- Waldman, Steven. *The Bill: How Legislation Really Becomes Law: a Case Study of the National Service Bill*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1996.
- Walsh, Matthew, Dan Restuccia, Jikuo Lu, and Scott Bittle. *Rep. Pathways After Service: Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni*. Service Year Alliance and Burning Glass Technologies, December 2018.
<https://resources.serviceyear.org/?mediaId=0372CBA0-5BFA-43B1-803EA47A098D947F>.
- Warnick, Jennifer. “Starbucks Partners Make Deep, Local Impact with ‘Innovative’ Service Program.” Web log. Starbucks Stories & News (blog). Starbucks Corporation, May 28, 2019. <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2019/starbucks-partners-make-deep-local-impact-with-innovative-service-program/>.
- Williamson, Lucy. “France’s Macron Brings Back National Service.” BBC News. BBC, June 27, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44625625>.
- Zaff, Jonathan F., Oksana Malanchuk, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. “Predicting Positive Citizenship from Adolescence to Young Adulthood: The Effects of a Civic Context.” *Applied Developmental Science* 12, no. 1 (2008): 38–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888690801910567>.