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DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE

Tuesday, May 24, 2016
House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce,
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Virginia Foxx [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Foxx, Roe, Guthrie, Curbelo, Stefanik, Adams, DeSaulnier, Davis, Courtney, and Polis.

Also Present: Representatives Kline, and Scott.

Staff Present: Janelle Belland, Coalitions and Members Services Coordinator; James Forester, Professional Staff Member; Tyler Hernandez, Deputy Communications Director; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Nancy Locke, Chief Clerk; Dominique McKay, Deputy Press Secretary; Krisann Pearce, General Counsel; Alex Ricci, Legislative Assistant; Mandy Schaumburg, Education Deputy Director and Senior Counsel; Alissa Strawcutter, Deputy Clerk; Tylease Alli, Minority Clerk/Intern and Fellow Coordinator; Pierce Blue, Minority Labor Detailee; Mishawn Freeman, Minority Staff Assistant; Denise Forte, Minority Staff Director; Carolyn Hughes, Minority Senior Labor Policy Advisor; Brian Kennedy, Minority General Counsel; Veronique Pluviose, Minority Civil Rights Counsel; and Rayna Reid, Minority Education Policy Counsel.

Chairwoman FOXX. The quorum being present, the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training will come to order.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to today's hearing. Ms. Spencer and Ms. Jeffrey, I would like to thank both of you for joining us to address the most recent misuse of taxpayer funds in the AmeriCorps program, or perhaps more accurately, the most recent misuse of taxpayer funds that we know of.

Let me start by providing a little more context for those who are not familiar with this case. The Corporation for National Community Service, or CNCS, is in charge of overseeing the community service activities of more than eight different Federal programs and initiatives. For the current fiscal year, CNCS received more than $1 billion to carry out these programs, one of which is the

AmeriCorps program. As the head of the corporation, Ms. Spencer, you have a responsibility to ensure the Federal funds you receive, which are no small sum, are being spent in full compliance with Federal law. That includes policies that prohibit the use of taxpayer dollars to fund abortion activities.

We are here today because the office of your inspector general has reported one AmeriCorps grantee, the National Association of Community Health Centers, violated the law. As of today this organization is still receiving taxpayer funds. More specifically, this organization, one of the largest to participate in the AmeriCorps program, allowed AmeriCorps members to engage in illegal activity by providing support services during abortion procedures. Regardless of your position on the issue of abortion, the law is the law and it must be followed.

The most recent law reauthorizing CNCS programs explicitly prohibits the use of AmeriCorps resources to provide abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services, end quote. For two years these illegal activities were allowed to continue completely undetected by the very agency meant to oversee these programs in the agency you are in charge of. The investigation that began when you finally did become aware of what had happened confirmed that taxpayer funds were used to support unlawful activities. But it also revealed much more.

The inspector general also found that several AmeriCorps members were regularly tasked with conducting work performed by employees of the centers they supported. This activity is also against the law, but the grantee failed to stop or even report it. AmeriCorps members technically are to serve strictly in volunteer roles and should never perform the same task as employees. But again, that is not the end of it.

It was also discovered that the grantee's senior management chose not to inform the corporation of instances of waste, fraud, and abuse, choosing instead to undermine transparency and avoid reporting information that would make them look bad. This disturbing list of unlawful and dishonest practices really makes you wonder, how on Earth was this allowed to happen? How were these activities allowed to go on for so long? And why is the National Association of Community Health Centers still a grantee?

When the committee learned about this unlawful activity last month, Chairman Kline immediately called on the corporation to cease all future funding of this organization. On behalf of the committee, I am renewing this call today, Ms. Spencer. I sincerely hope you will be able to provide us with a plan of action and describe steps you are taking to address this situation.

Revoking this grant would be a good start, but it is also important to recognize that this is not an isolated incident. In fact, I chaired a hearing back in 2011 examining reports that AmeriCorps members had engaged in other unlawful activity. In response to questioning, the head of CNCS assured us the corporation would be diligent in educating grantees, "helping them to understand the rules," and would require, "all AmeriCorps grantees to annually assure compliance with regulations on prohibited activities." It seems that neither strategy has solved the problem.

That's why today I am also calling on the Corporation to conduct a comprehensive review to ensure all other grantees in the program are complying with the law. Enough is enough. The Corporation needs to be held accountable for the way it spends taxpayer dollars and that's why we are here today.

We have many questions to answer and much to discuss.

So I now recognize Ranking Member Adams for her opening remarks.

[The information follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training

The Corporation for National and Community Service, or CNCS, is in charge of overseeing the community service activities of more than eight different federal programs and initiatives. For the current fiscal year, CNCS received more than $1 billion to carry out these programs, one of which is the AmeriCorps program.

As the head of the corporation, Ms. Spencer, you have a responsibility to ensure the federal funds you receive—which is no small sum—are being spent in full compliance with federal law. That includes policies that prohibit the use of taxpayer dollars to fund abortion activities. We're here today because the office of your Inspector General has reported one AmeriCorps grantee, the National Association of Community Health Centers, violated the law. As of today, this organization is still receiving taxpayer funds.

More specifically, this organization—one of the largest to participate in the AmeriCorps program—allowed AmeriCorps members to engage in illegal activity by providing support services during abortion procedures. Regardless of your position on the issue of abortion, the law is the law, and it must be followed. The most recent law reauthorizing CNCS programs explicitly prohibits the use of AmeriCorps resources to "provide abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services."

For two years, these illegal activities were allowed to continue, completely undetected by the very agency meant to oversee these programs. The investigation that began when you finally did become aware of what had happened confirmed that taxpayer funds were used to support unlawful activities, but it also revealed much more.

The Inspector General also found that several AmeriCorps members were regularly tasked with conducting work performed by employees of the centers they supported. This activity is also against the law, but the grantee failed to stop or even report it. AmeriCorps members are to serve strictly in volunteer roles and should never preform the same tasks as employees. But, again, that's not the end of it.

It was also discovered that the grantee's senior management chose not to inform the corporation of instances of waste, fraud, and abuse, choosing instead to undermine transparency and avoid reporting information that would make them look bad.

This disturbing list of unlawful and dishonest practices really makes you wonder: How on earth was this allowed to happen? How were these activities allowed to go on for so long? And, why is the National Association of Community Health Centers still a grantee?

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That's why today I am also calling on the corporation to conduct a comprehensive review to ensure all other grantees in the program are complying with the law. Enough is enough. The corporation needs to be held accountable for the way it spends taxpayer dollars, and that's why we are here today.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you both for being here today. I would also like to welcome Wendy Spencer, chief executive officer for the Corporation for National and Community Service, and Deborah Jeffrey, the inspector general. And I want to thank you both for joining us today.

We are here today to discuss the critical role that the Corporation for National and Community Service, or CNCS, has in encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement. Service is the rent that we pay for living on this Earth and it is also the foundation of our democracy, and its value to our society cannot be overstated.

Since its founding, CNCS has engaged millions of volunteers in national and community service. These volunteers have served as teachers and tutors and mentors and counselors working with disadvantaged students in high-need schools. In cases of natural disaster, volunteers have helped local communities prepare for, mitigate, respond, and recover from forest fires and floods and hurricanes and tornadoes. Volunteers have assisted our Nation's veterans in adjusting to civilian life, constructed and rebuilt homes for thousands of families, and help our Nation's seniors in maintaining the highest degree possible of independent living and much more. All of us ought to be engaged in national service. So thank you, CNCS, for being a leader on this issue.

You see, my upbringing taught me that we won't be able to celebrate community, nor can we build community if we are not inclusive, if we do not care for the least of these. So as we engage ourselves in trying to improve our community for the better, we must do so remembering that we are thy brother's and thy sister's keepers, and as such, inextricably tied to one another. But in order for the community to be engaged, the community must be involved. And that is exactly what CNCS does. CNCS and the community volunteers that they coordinate enable tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups and schools and municipal agencies to solve tough problems and meet local needs. CNCS also serves and builds and makes an impact that change lives and communities.

Martin Luther King once said that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy. So during the times of challenge, CNCS is there.

During the Flint crisis, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to Flint to support State and local efforts to protect the public health of residents facing challenges from increased lead levels in the Flint water supply. And when tornadoes wreaked havoc in Oklahoma, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to that region.

So needless to say, I could praise the instances of these volunteers helping our Nation's communities in times of need. But I will stop here and say that it is without a doubt that CNCS has improved the quality of life in my home State of North Carolina and communities around this great Nation.

After I was sworn into Congress, I made it a priority to join the Committee on Education and the Workforce and I am glad I am here. And I fought to do that intentionally because I understand the significance of community engagement. And as a member of the Committee, I feel responsible for ensuring that the Corporation has

strong management, monitoring, and oversight as well as the resources necessary to effectively administer its programs and carry out its mission. And while there is always room for improvement, I strongly believe that CNCS is taking this responsibility serious.

So with regard to the recent incidences that occurred with the AmeriCorps program, CNCS discovered and resolved these issues with deliberate action. And I can't help but think that if this were anything other than services related to women's health, that the Corporation would not be called in front of us here today.

So as we proceed with today's hearing, I want to strongly encourage my colleagues on this committee to focus on the vital importance of service to our Nation. And while we must maintain vigorous oversight and enforcement, we must also remember how CNCS engages over a million volunteers, which is something that benefits local communities all across America on both sides of the aisle. So I look forward to hearing more about how we can improve and strengthen National Service programs that are so important to our Nation's success. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The information follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Alma S. Adams, a Representative in Congress from the state of North Carolina

Good morning and thank you, Chairwoman Foxx. I would also like to welcome Wendy Spencer, chief executive officer (CEO) for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and Deborah Jeffries, the Inspector General, for joining us today.

We are here today to discuss the critical role that the Corporation for National and Community Service, or CNCS, has in encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement. I'm a big fan of saying that "service is indeed the rent we pay for living on this earth." Service is the foundation of our democracy, and its value to our society cannot be overstated.

Since its founding, CNCS has engaged millions of volunteers in national and community service. These volunteers have served as teachers, tutors, mentors, and counselors working with disadvantaged students in high need schools. In cases of natural disasters, volunteers have helped local communities prepare for, mitigate, respond, and recover from forest fires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes. Volunteers have assisted our nation's veterans in adjusting to civilian life, constructed and rebuilt homes for thousands of families, helped our nation's seniors in maintaining the highest degree possible of independent living and much more.

All of us ought to be engaged in national service. So thank you CNCS for being a leader on this issue. You see, my upbringing taught me that we won't be able to celebrate community nor can we build community—"if we're not inclusive and don't care for the least of these." As we engage ourselves in trying to improve and better our community, we must do so remembering that we are thy brother's and thy sister's keepers and as such we are inextricably tied to one another. But in order for the community to be engaged, the community must be involved. And that is exactly what CNCS does. CNCS and the

community volunteers they coordinate enable tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and municipal agencies to solve tough problems and meet local needs. CNCS serves, builds, and makes an impact that changes lives and communities.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." During times of challenge, CNCS is there——

* During the Flint Water Crisis, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to Flint, Michigan, to support state and local efforts to protect the public health of residents facing challenges from increased lead levels in the Flint water supply.

* When Hurricane Katrina devastated the South, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to the region.

* And when tornadoes wreaked havoc in Oklahoma, AmeriCorps volunteers were there.

Needless to say, I could praise the instances of these volunteers helping our nation's communities in times of need. But, I'll stop here and say that it is without a doubt that CNCS has improved the quality of life in my home state of North Carolina and in communities around this great nation.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act reauthorized and expanded the national service programs administered by CNCS. After I was sworn into Congress, I made it a priority to join the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I fought to get on this Committee intentionally because I understand the significance of community engagement. And as a member of this Committee, I feel responsible for ensuring that the Corporation has strong management, monitoring, and oversight, as well as the resources to effectively administer its programs and carry out its

mission. While there is always room for improvement, I strongly believe that CNCS is taking this responsibility seriously.

With regard to the recent incidences that occurred with the 1AmeriCorps program, CNCS discovered and resolved these issues with deliberate action. And I can't help but think that if this were anything other than services related to women's health, that the Corporation would not be called in front of us here today.

As we proceed with this hearing, I want to strongly encourage my colleagues on this Committee to focus on the vital importance of service to our nation. While we must maintain vigorous oversight and enforcement, we must also remember how CNCS engages over a million volunteers, which is something that benefits local communities all across America, on both sides of the aisle. And I look forward to hearing more about how we can improve and strengthen national service programs that are so important to our nation's success.

Thank you.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you, Dr. Adams. Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(c), all members will be permitted to submit written statements to be included in the permanent hearing record. And without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow such statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our distinguished witnesses. The Honorable Wendy Spencer is the chief executive officer for the Corporation for National and Community Service here in Washington, D.C. Ms. Spencer began serving as CEO of the Corporation on April 9, 2012. Prior to that, the Corporation, Ms. Spencer served as the CEO of the Florida Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and as the director of the Florida Parks Service.

The Honorable Deborah Jeffrey is the inspector general for the Corporation for National and Community Service here in Washington, D.C. Ms. Jeffrey joined the corporation as inspector general on July 19, 2012. Prior to this, Ms. Jeffrey spent 25 years in private practice of law, including as an in-house counsel on ethics and loss prevention.

I now ask our witnesses to raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairwoman FOXX. Let the record reflect the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Before I recognize you to provide your testimony, let me briefly explain our lighting system. You have 5 minutes to present your testimony. When you begin, the light in front of you will turn green. When 1 minute is left, the light will turn yellow. When your time has expired, the light will turn red. At that point, I will ask you to wrap up your remarks as best as you are able. Members will each have 5 minutes to ask questions.

Now I would recognize the Honorable Wendy Spencer for her opening statement.

TESTIMONY OF WENDY SPENCER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you, Madam Chair, Dr. Adams, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I welcome this opportunity to discuss our commitment to accountability and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Today, 345,000 Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members are serving in 50,000 locations across the Nation. These dedicated Americans serve in tough conditions to meet pressing local needs like tutoring and mentoring at-risk youth, responding to disasters, supporting veterans and their families, and much, much more, all while recruiting millions of additional volunteers to serve alongside them and multiply their impact.

National Service invests in local solutions. It provides human capital support to increase the impact of nonprofits and faith-based organizations and other community organizations. Governor-appointed state service commissions decide where most of the AmeriCorps resources are invested. Local groups recruit, select, and supervise their members. Mayors and county leaders are also an important part of our partnerships at the local level.

Congress created our agency years ago to empower citizens, solve problems, and expand opportunity. Our agency is built on smart, commonsense principles, local control, competition, public-private partnership, and a focus on results. And it's working.

I share the committee's view that our agency has a responsibility to ensure Federal funds are well managed. That has been my priority from day one. We have built a culture of accountability and strong systems of monitoring and oversight. These systems are working.

Misconduct is very rare, but when it happens, we take strong action. Accountability is more than compliance. It also means achieving our mission. We are investing funds more effectively to drive community impact by using evidence, increasing competition, and measuring performance.

My written testimony details our comprehensive risk-based system to prevent and detect issues and enforce our rules. But let me list just a few to highlight.

We start before a grant is ever made by doing a financial scan and reviewing past performance. Every direct grant is monitored for fiscal and programmatic compliance. Every year our staff conducts a risk assessment of our entire portfolio of grants to inform our monitoring plan. Grantees identified as having risk receive site visits, desk reviews, and other types of audits. In fact, 3,200 have occurred in the last 5 years. If issues are discovered, we enforce our rules. That can mean requiring corrective action plans, placing funds on hold, reporting activities to the inspector general, or even suspending or terminating a grant.

In recent years we have strengthened our monitoring and oversight in many ways through expanded grantee and staff training, better use of financial data, increased control on fixed-amount grants, improvements to our grants management system, better communication with our grantees and members, and more.

Several initiatives currently underway, we have just recently hired a chief risk officer; the first in our agency's history and one of only a few positions like it in the Federal Government. This executive will lead an office that oversees all of our risk assessment programs, an integrated coordinated approach to better manage our resources and decision-making. We believe we are ahead of the curve in developing an enterprise risk management program to help us take a holistic view of risk.

We are updating our grant management IT system. A key component will be to enhance and validate our grantee risk model. This will enable us to move from compliance-focused monitoring to a more nimble and targeted risk-based approach.

Given the priority we place on accountability, we are deeply disappointed that a grantee authorized National Service participants to engage in prohibited activities. We immediately referred this matter to the inspector general for investigation. Once the results were known, we suspended the grantee from enrolling new members, directed them to hire an independent oversight monitor, and required them to take several other corrective actions. The inspector general stated our response was robust.

The IG concluded that the noncompliance was extremely limited in scope involving six of nearly 1,600 members serving under this particular grantee over three years. It is important to put that in perspective. That is six members out of more than 1 million National Service positions in the same period. In fact, since this subcommittee's hearing five years ago, there have been nearly 2 million AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps positions granted. Members have served 820 million hours. They have made an extraordinary contribution to our communities and our Nation.

I hope that my testimony today assures the committee of our commitment to accountability and our interest in doing more and making improvements where needed. We look forward to working with you to further strengthen the impact of National Service. And as I always ask members of Congress, I welcome your advice and your guidance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Ms. Spencer follows:]

Written Testimony of Wendy Spencer
Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service
Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
May 24, 2016

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Hinojosa, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the invitation to testify today. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss our commitment to accountability and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars – a key priority of mine shared by the dedicated professionals of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

For the past four years, I have had the honor to lead CNCS, working with outstanding organizations, dedicated civil servants, and passionate citizens across the county to solve local problems, expand opportunity, strengthen communities, and unite our nation. Prior to coming to CNCS, I served for eight years under three Governors as CEO of the Florida Governor's Commission on Volunteerism. I was Director of the Florida Park Service, and have served in professional roles in the private and nonprofit sector including the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, and banking and insurance industries. I share the Committee's view that CNCS has a responsibility to ensure federal funds are well-managed, and have made accountability and fiscal responsibility a priority in my role as CEO.

In my testimony, I explain our comprehensive approach to accountability, the strong action we took in a recent incident involving prohibited activities, and additional steps we are taking to enhance oversight and monitoring practices. This testimony underscores four key points:

- CNCS strives to create a strong culture of accountability and a comprehensive system of risk-based monitoring and oversight to prevent and detect issues and enforce our rules.

- The recent findings related to one AmeriCorps grantee was an isolated incident involving 6 out of more than 1 million national service positions over the same time period and we took swift and robust action to address the matter.

- We have taken multiple steps to enhance grantee training, monitoring, and oversight as part of our larger strategic focus on using federal funds more effectively to strengthen compliance, measure and improve performance, and fund evidence-based programs to maximize our impact in the more than 50,000 locations where we serve.

- Moving forward, we are strengthening oversight systems and taking an enterprise-wide approach to risk management to achieve higher levels of performance and accountability.

CNCS Overview

To understand the systems that CNCS has put in place to ensure accountability, it is necessary to first understand the structure of national service, the principles that underlie it, and how our programs successfully engage millions of Americans in national service.

Since its creation more than two decades ago, CNCS has led the nation's efforts to engage citizens in solving community problems. Our mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement. As the nation's largest grant-maker for service and social innovation, CNCS empowers citizens and invests in community solutions. AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers make an intensive commitment to serve their country. They take on tough assignments, assume leadership roles, and deliver results. From preventing substance abuse in Eastern Kentucky and addressing the water emergency in Flint; to ending veterans' homelessness in Virginia and raising childhood literacy rates in Minnesota, national service is a smart, proven, and cost-effective strategy to get things done.

Last year, 345,000 AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers invested 155 million hours of service to their communities at more than 50,000 locations across the nation:

- 270,000 Senior Corps volunteers served 73.6 million hours at nearly 32,000 locations. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with special needs; Senior Companions help frail seniors and other adults live independently in their own homes; and RSVP volunteers meet a wide range of community needs.

- Nearly 75,000 AmeriCorps members served 81.9 million hours at more than 21,000 sites. They tackled critical community challenges from illiteracy and homelessness to hunger and the dropout crisis, gaining valuable career skills and college scholarships as they served.

- AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers recruited and managed more than 2.3 million volunteers to increase the reach and impact of the organizations they serve.

- Our Social Innovation Fund supports more than 300 organizations serving nearly 600,000 people in 35 states by investing in community solutions, building the evidence base to support those solutions, and helping the organizations scale with matching funds, often from local philanthropy.

- 52 Governor-appointed State Service Commissions performed critical oversight, training, and strategic functions, overseeing three-fourths of AmeriCorps grant funding and ensuring national service resources met state and local priorities.

- Nonprofit and volunteer organizations strengthened their volunteer management practices and increased their impact with grants from our Volunteer Generation Fund, the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, and the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance programs.

- Over the past 5 years, CNCS responded to nearly 200 state and federally declared disasters, deploying more than 15,000 national service participants, including AmeriCorps NCCC and FEMA Corps teams to help communities in need.

Principles of National Service

In the original legislation creating CNCS, Congress designed national service on a set of smart, common sense principles that we faithfully exceute today:

- **Local Control:** Congress determined that the best way to fulfill our mission was to establish a strong partnership between the agency and Governors. A large percentage of CNCS resources are distributed to and administered by Governor-appointed State Service Commissions. Local elected officials also see us as a key partner in tackling tough problems. Last month, 3,539 mayors, county officials, and tribal leaders representing 178 million Americans united to recognize AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.

- **Public-Private Partnership:** Last year CNCS grant and program funding totaling $712 million generated more than $1.26 billion in outside resources from businesses, foundations, public agencies, and other sources. This means that leveraged resources exceeded our federal appropriation. This local investment strengthens community impact, increases the return on taxpayer dollars, and demonstrates great confidence in our programs' abilities to deliver results on some of America's most pressing problems.

- **Community Solutions**: National service operates through thousands of nonprofits, faith-based and groups, and local agencies – organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Teach For America, and Catholic Charities. Members provide an infusion of human capital to help these organizations expand their reach and impact. Through this system, Congress ensured that national service resources are directed to local organizations that are able to identify and meet the specific and often unique challenges that face communities.

- **Funding What Works:** A key goal of Congress is to use national service to drive greater impact on pressing challenges. We are advancing that goal by targeting our resources on a core set of pressing issues, using evidence in grantmaking, strengthening performance reporting, and supporting innovative Pay for Success models.

CNCS Accountability Systems

An overarching priority across all of our work is accountability and strong stewardship of taxpayer dollars. We strive to foster a culture of accountability and compliance both within the agency and among the organizations that receive grant funds. We have consistently conveyed to our grantees that preventing waste, fraud, and abuse is everyone's job. While accountability starts with compliance, it is much more. It also means putting our resources where they will go the furthest and do the most good. It means using data and evidence to improve performance, increasing competition, fostering innovation, and evaluating progress on shared goals.

In most of our programs, the competitive nature of the grant process helps to drive impact and accountability. We are able to select the best-qualified applicants – and by requiring our grantees to compete for funding, we are able to ensure that a grantee that fails to provide the high quality service we demand does not continue to receive funding on an ongoing basis. The AmeriCorps State and National program selects its grantees through a rigorous competitive process and an increasing focus on evidence. Social Innovation Fund applicants must be able to demonstrate at least a preliminary level of effectiveness then take part in a rigorous evaluation to either strengthen the evidence base for the intervention or to verify its effectiveness through a Pay for Success project. And, once a grantee receives funding, it must perform in order to receive future grants. In addition, our agency has requested authority to introduce full competition into all Senior Corps programs to encourage innovation and achieve even better outcomes for the communities we serve.

Grants Oversight and Monitoring[1]

Effective grant management begins even before a grant is awarded. CNCS assesses grant applicant's financial capability, past performance, and future risk in multiple ways to ensure federal funds are awarded to capable organizations from the start. If CNCS identifies concerns, the issues must be satisfactorily resolved before the application is funded. Applicants that are unable to resolve identified issues are denied funding. Before CNCS provides additional funding to existing grantees in continuation, CNCS Program Officers evaluate grantees for deviations from their original grant plan, enrollment and retention of members, and enrollments in the National Service Trust for education awards. In addition, CNCS Grant Officers review the most recent A-133 Audit submissions to ensure that there are no new financial issues or concerns, as well as grantees' Program Progress Reports and Federal Financial Reports, and cash drawdowns during the grant period.

Once a grant is awarded, oversight and monitoring are essential tools that increase accountability. Both program and financial accountability are key to the success of our grantees in meeting community needs. Even with staffing and technology constraints, CNCS maintains an active and increasingly

[1] Rules, regulations, and conditions related to AmeriCorps grants are on the CNCS Managing AmeriCorps Grants web page at http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity-grants/managing-americorps-grants. The 2016 Terms and Conditions for CNCS grant programs are on the CNCS website at http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/terms-and-conditions-cncs-grants

comprehensive risk-based monitoring and oversight program that includes both financial and programmatic monitoring. This program reflects the knowledge and experience the agency has accumulated over the past two decades. We have taken multiple steps to strengthen our monitoring and oversight program, and we have been working on additional enhancements that are detailed later in the testimony.

The primary purpose of our monitoring program is to provide technical assistance and support to grantees and assess grantee compliance to ensure effective stewardship of federal funds and successful implementation of grant awards. Our monitoring protocols vary somewhat based on the design of our programs but share similar goals and purposes. For example, in the AmeriCorps State and National Program, CNCS makes grants to State Commissions and national nonprofits, which in turn make subgrants to local organizations to recruit, train, deploy and supervise AmeriCorps members.

Our oversight and monitoring approach reflects this multi-layered and decentralized structure. CNCS's responsibility lies primarily with the organizations that are direct grantees of the agency. Those grantees, in turn, are responsible for overseeing and ensuring the performance and compliance of the subgrantees and participants. In conducting our oversight and monitoring of direct grantees, we look at both how those organizations perform and how they oversee and monitor their subgrantees.

Each year, CNCS performs a risk assessment of the entire portfolio of direct grant investments. While numbers fluctuate based on the time of year, currently that portfolio consists of 2,234 direct grants supported by FY 2015 funds, plus an additional 23 Social Innovation Fund direct grants funded in previous fiscal years. Each grant is rated against a set of criteria that are used to identify possible issues that may warrant additional oversight and monitoring. The results of the annual risk assessment are used to inform the annual grant monitoring plan. CNCS's monitoring program encompasses a broad range of monitoring activities throughout the life of each grant award.

If identified for review, CNCS monitors grantees through either an onsite or desk review process, depending upon the agency's assessment of the grantee and related risks indicators. CNCS program and grant offices provide additional oversight to grantees through technical assistance, training[2], and support activities. In addition to regularly scheduled grantee monitoring activities, CNCS staff also conduct monitoring visits and oversight activities when issues are identified throughout the year. If serious issues are identified through the monitoring process, CNCS refers the issue to the Office of the Inspector General to determine if an investigation or audit is warranted. It is important to note that willful misconduct or misrepresentation on the part of a grantee is rarely discovered as part of standard monitoring activities.

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[2] For examples of CNCS training and resources related to financial management, monitoring, and the Uniform Guidance, see CNCS Uniform Guidance Resources page (http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/uniform-guidance), the Financial Management Resources page (http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management), the 2015 AmeriCorps Symposium agenda (http://americorps.hb-co.com/pdfs/2015AmeriCorps_Symposium_Program.pdf), and the agenda for 2016 CNCS North Central National Service Training Conference (http://www.nationalservicetraining.org/north-central-agenda1.html) one of four regional training conferences for CNCS grantees in 2016.

Over the last five years, CNCS staff have conducted more than 3,230 site visits or desk reviews as part of financial or program monitoring of direct grantees. In some cases, monitoring identifies concerns that require the grantee to take corrective actions. If monitoring activities disclose inadequate financial management or irregularities that could result in financial risk, CNCS promptly initiates a hold on the grantee's ability to access grant funds or suspends grant activity until satisfactory corrective action is taken. Where CNCS has determined that the grantee is not able to continue to successfully implement or effectively manage the grant award, CNCS terminates the award.

Monitoring Enhancements

As an agency committed to continuous improvement, we are always looking for ways to enhance the effectiveness of our oversight and monitoring. At a 2011 hearing in this Subcommittee, my predecessor shared a thirteen point action plan to improve our monitoring program. Our agency has implemented the action steps in that plan, which included expanded grantee and staff training, additional application information, additional opportunities to report prohibited activity, improved monitoring mechanisms, and expanded communications with grantees and members.
The plan represented a maturation of our monitoring program and also served as a catalyst for current, enterprise-level, risk-based decision making in both awarding and monitoring of our grants. This evolution has resulted in significant enhancements and improvements related to monitoring and oversight. These enhancements include:

- Consolidated current monitoring processes as part of our implementation of the Financial Management Survey and Financial Capabilities review process.

- Subscribed to Guidestar for financial scan data which CNCS now incorporates into all stages of the grant decision and management process. In addition, developed a standard Financial Assistance Management Capacity Opinion review process to complement the financial scan that is used during the pre-award assessment period, and for ongoing monitoring and oversight.

- Since 2014, made enhancements to internal controls and monitoring of fixed-amount grants to strengthen safeguards in response to recommendations made by the OIG. All fixed-amount grants are now subject to cash analysis two times a year to ensure that grantees are only drawing funds for immediate cash needs. If CNCS determines that a grantee has overdrawn funds, CNCS immediately places the grantee on a reimbursement only process to further ensure that the grantee is only receiving funds for actual expenditures. In addition, CNCS has instituted a two-step reimbursement process for all fixed-amount grantees above a certain dollar threshold that requires Grant Officer approval of drawdown requests in order to ensure that grantees do not overdraw.

- Developed and implemented strategy to improve compliance with the National Service Criminal History Check requirements, including routine cost disallowance, improved training resources, and

improved access to the required checks, primarily by using the agency's legal authority to enable our grantees to directly obtain fingerprint-based checks from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

- Updated CNCS's legacy grants management system and planned data modernization to further support performance data collection.

- Made compliance and monitoring training a core focus of Regional Training Conferences[3] and other convenings where CNCS staff and the OIG reinforce how grantees must comply with oversight and monitoring requirements.

- Enhanced training for Grant Officers in an effort to produce the most effective and efficient monitoring of our grantees.

Strengthening Risk-Based Monitoring

In the spirit of continuous improvement, we are implementing additional steps to increase the effectiveness of our oversight and monitoring.

As part of our continued effort to incorporate best practices in risk management, I am pleased to report that we recently hired a highly qualified Chief Risk Officer, one of the few such positions within the federal government. We also established the Office of the Chief Risk Officer to oversee all of the agency's financial and programmatic internal risk assessment programs under one executive, including Internal Controls, Improper Payments, Grants Assessment, and Enterprise Risk Management programs. The office represents an integrated, coordinated, and elevated approach to my agency's effort to use information to better manage our resources and decision-making.

Our agency's ability to oversee its grantees is limited by our current information technology. My agency has been using all available funds, and more are needed, to update our grants management information technology to reflect our current and future needs around grantee and member management, data analytics, improved risk-based grantee profiles, and improved situational awareness of issues within the agency. A key component of this effort will be to enhance and validate our grantee risk model. This new system – including improved risk models, data analytics, and information management – will enable CNCS to move from a compliance-focused monitoring approach to a more nimble and targeted risk-based monitoring approach.

CNCS is eager to build and improve its risk management program. Additional investments in CNCS staff, processes, and technology are required to fully implement these improvements. Given the benefits this approach will provide, we believe such an investment is justified to support the accountability goals we all share.

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[3] Agenda for CNCS North Central National Service Training Conference: http://www.nationalservicetraining.org/north-central-agenda1.html, one of four regional training conferences in 2016 for CNCS grantees.

Prohibited Activities

The laws governing national service participants' activities are important to ensure the mission of national service is fulfilled. CNCS is clear with its grantees about the statutory requirements, including prohibited activities, and we hold our grantees accountable for ensuring that members comply with the law while they are serving. Like all our rules, we have a three-pronged approach regarding compliance: prevention, detection, and enforcement.

Prevention. We make extensive efforts to communicate our rules about prohibited activities, beginning before a grant is ever made, and reiterate them at every stage of the grants process.

- Prospective applicants are informed through the grant application of the laws and rules that apply to CNCS grants. Applicants must describe how they will ensure compliance with the rules on prohibited activities.

- A grant applicant must also provide a detailed description of proposed member activities, which are reviewed during the competitive grant process to ensure that the activities are appropriate for AmeriCorps service.

- Successful applicants receive a grant award notification that includes extensive provisions detailing requirements associated with the grant, including prohibited activities. By accepting the grant, the organization accepts absolute responsibility for complying with all of the requirements. Each grantee agrees to be responsible for ensuring that any organization to which it subgrants CNCS funds or that serves as a placement site for AmeriCorps members is informed of and complies with all of CNCS's requirements.

- Grantees are also responsible for ensuring that each AmeriCorps member supported under the grant receives proper training on prohibited activities. The grantee must require each member to sign a member contract detailing, among other things, prohibited member activities.

- Each grantee is assigned a Program Officer and a Grant Officer who provides guidance and support to the grantee regarding the management of their award. CNCS also maintains the Knowledge Network, a website that contains valuable information on how to manage CNCS grants.

- During the grant's operation, CNCS provides regular training and technical assistance.[4] New grantees are given assistance to develop policies and procedures to support compliance of sub-grantees and placement sites. For new grantees, CNCS often reviews sample position descriptions, member agreements, site agreements, and training curricula to ensure that AmeriCorps members and site locations are instructed on prohibited activities. CNCS also hosts or supports annual

[4] For example, CNCS training on AmeriCorps State and National Prohibited Activities on the National Service Knowledge Network at http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/ole/captivate/asn_prohibited_activities/. Training also occurs through webinars, the annual AmeriCorps Grantee Symposium, the regional training conferences, and other venues.

training events, including the annual AmeriCorps Grantee Symposium and regional training conferences, where grant requirements are discussed[5].

Detection: CNCS staff works diligently to verify that grantees comply with our rules, including using a risk-based approach to monitoring. CNCS conducts an annual review of State Commissions and direct grantees to assess and prioritize our monitoring activity and resources. Staff review materials to see if they raise questions about a grantee's performance or compliance. These reviews inform the monitoring plan that establishes the level of additional monitoring activity to be conducted during the course of that fiscal year.

- A key part of the monitoring protocol is to determine whether the grantee has developed the necessary policies and procedures to assure compliance and is actually implementing those policies and procedures. During site visits, CNCS staff review service activities and often speak directly to AmeriCorps members to check for compliance. Because no system of internal controls is foolproof, when non-compliance is discovered, CNCS works to bring grantees into compliance as quickly as possible and take appropriate enforcement action.

- We require our direct grantees to monitor and review the performance and compliance of their subgrantees.

- In addition to our own efforts to detect whether prohibited activities are taking place, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) plays a crucial role. CNCS requires grantees to contact the OIG and their program officer if they suspect waste, fraud, abuse, or criminal activity. The OIG maintains a hotline for anyone to call if they believe a prohibited activity may be taking place. The OIG also conducts its own audits and investigations of CNCS grantees, and brings the agency findings in specific cases and provides recommendations for improving our accountability measures in general.

Enforcement. CNCS can implement a range of enforcement options if an individual or organization violates the rules, depending on the circumstances and severity of the infraction.

- The range of options include requiring a corrective action plan; disallowing member hours; disallowing member education awards; recovering unallowable costs; placing a manual hold on disbursements; suspending or placing special conditions on the grant; or terminating the grant.

- CNCS may also suspend or debar individuals or organizations from handling federal funds.

- The OIG also has the option of conducting an independent investigation and may refer cases to the Department of Justice for civil action or criminal prosecution.

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[5] Agenda for CNCS North Central National Service Training Conference: http://www.nationalservicetraining.org/north-central-agenda1.html, one of four regional training conferences in 2016 for CNCS grantees.

- State Commissions and direct grantees have the same range of options in dealing with their subgrantees, including reporting prohibited activities to the Inspector General. In case of a subgrantee's failure to comply, the agency may require its direct grantee to take specific actions with respect to the subgrantee.

Recent Compliance Activities

Given the priority we place on accountability, we were deeply disappointed to learn that an AmeriCorps grantee, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), authorized national service participants to engage in prohibited activities.

Once we learned about this matter, we immediately referred the matter to the OIG for investigation and placed the grantee on manual hold, during which period they could not access grant funds without our approval. Once the results were known, we took immediate and robust action. CNCS suspended the grantee's ability to enroll any new national service members under its grant and directed the grantee to engage, at its own expense, a person to serve as its independent oversight monitor to oversee its compliance—a technique commonly used in the private sector. In the case report on the incident[6], the Inspector General concluded that CNCS had undertaken a robust response.

The OIG investigation concluded the non-compliance was extremely limited in scope, involving six of the nearly 1,600 members serving under NACHC's three-year grant cycle at just one subgrantee. To put that in perspective, that represents six members out of a total of 1.06 million AmeriCorps and Senior Corps service positions in the last three years. Over that same period, AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers provided more than 466.2 million hours of service across the country.

While we have no reason to believe that such non-compliance is widespread, we have initiated a process for reviewing current AmeriCorps grantees with regards to the prohibited activities identified in this investigation. Our swift action demonstrates the seriousness with which we treat this issue.

Conclusion

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Hinojosa, thank you for inviting me to come before you today.

This testimony makes clear that that CNCS shares the Committee's concern about the importance of accountability in national service. It underscores how we have taken numerous steps to enhance grantee monitoring and oversight and are implementing comprehensive risk-based monitoring to achieve even higher levels of accountability.

We look forward to working with the Committee to further strengthen the impact of national service on the challenges facing our communities and the nation.

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[6] CNCS OIG Report Case ID: 2016-003; https://www.cncsoig.gov/news/closed-cases

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you very much, Ms. Spencer. Ms. Jeffrey, you are recognized.

TESTIMONY OF DEBORAH JEFFREY, INSPECTOR GENERAL, CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ms. JEFFREY. Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Adams, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify about the work of the Office of Inspector General to strengthen accountability at CNCS. I have had the privilege of serving as the IG for nearly 4 years.

Since early 2013, OIG has been recommending substantial improvements to CNCS's grants management, especially risk assessment and focused monitoring. We have identified new monitoring requirements and encourage CNCS to begin work on them early. Our work has shown that better internal controls and risk management are needed across the organization.

OIG conveys our recommendations in audit and investigation reports, in meetings with CNCS's leaders, and in briefings of the board of directors. We summarize them in our semiannual reports to Congress.

We have also identified other sources of help for CNCS. Following a troubling financial statement audit, we initiated discussions with OMB and CNCS to develop a plan for substantial upgrades to internal controls. We recommended an assessment of information technology and how it could better support the agency's operations and programs. CNCS responded by commissioning a report by The MITRE Corporation which gave rise to the present IT modernization plan.

To jumpstart progress, we introduced the chief operating officer to the Federal Enterprise Risk Management community and its resources. We have long advocated that CNCS hire a chief risk officer whom we recently welcomed.

At our suggestion, the House Committee on Government Reform requested a GAO study of grant monitoring at CNCS which is currently in progress. And to improve criminal history checking, we brought in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to share its expertise in assisting nonprofits.

CNCS has adopted a number of our individual recommendations. There is an increased focus on accountability and the leaders recently brought on board share that priority.

But much work remains to be done on basic risk management systems. High turnover in key accountability positions, insufficient resources, and lack of trained leadership have impaired efforts to improve accountability. CNCS lacks bench-strength and grant risk assessments and monitoring, creating appropriate internal controls, and identifying and reducing improper payments.

The agency has repeatedly promised progress, but it continues to struggle. Its grant monitoring depends heavily on risk assessments of unproven reliability. Our preliminary review of 40 seriously troubled grants found that half had not been monitored closely because they were rated as low or medium risk. CNCS was therefore blindsided by the serious problems that occurred.

Our audits and investigations also often find that the staff has missed red flags. That was the case with OIG's recent investigation

of abortion-related prohibited activities. As you alluded to, Chairwoman Foxx, last month OIG reported that the National Association of Community Health Centers allowed a few AmeriCorps members to provide emotional support to women during abortions at three New York City clinics operated by a sub-grantee. The Federal statute authorizing the AmeriCorps program expressly forbids the use of AmeriCorps resources to provide abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services. Among the missed opportunities, from 2009, CNCS was on written notice that one NACHC's sub-grantees was performing abortions and having AmeriCorps members provide pre-abortion assistance. The agency did not ask the identity of the sub-grantee, did not determine whether the pre-abortion support activities were prohibited abortion services, and did not target NACHC or the sub-grantee for particular monitoring. The staff also did not record this key risk-related information in its online grants management system. Important institutional knowledge was therefore lost.

The agency made a considered decision in 2009 not to provide general guidance on the meaning of the abortion prohibitions. Its first interpretive guidance was imbedded in voluntary online training in 2014. There, CNCS stated for the first time that an AmeriCorps member is prohibited from accompanying a woman at a facility for an abortion; precisely what was taking place at the sub-grantee.

The measures that CNCS is now implementing could have been adopted long ago. These include OIG's recommendations, one, to analyze grantees' programmatic activity and clientele in order to identify those that present a heightened risk of a particular prohibited activity. There is a greater risk of abortion-related activities at a clinic that provides women's healthcare than at a program for Meals on Wheels to senior citizens. Second, to expand its repertoire of monitoring activities to include more frequent direct communications with AmeriCorps members, including surveys.

My staff and I see great potential to improve accountability at CNCS and we look forward to working with the Congress and agency leaders to that important objective.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or the other members might have.

[The statement of Ms. Jeffrey follows:]

Testimony of Deborah J. Jeffrey,
Inspector General
Corporation for National and Community Service
Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Education and Workforce Training
United States House of Representatives
May 24, 2016

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Hinojosa, and members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify today about the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to strengthen grant oversight and accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS or the Corporation). As you know, the OIG is an independent and nonpartisan unit charged with detecting and preventing waste, fraud and abuse and improving efficiency and effectiveness at CNCS. I have had the privilege of serving as the Inspector General for nearly four years.

CNCS's challenges to grant oversight and monitoring

Grants account for three-quarters of CNCS's expenditures, and CNCS faces a number of significant grant oversight challenges inherent in its operations:

- CNCS has more than 3,000 active grants.
- The grants range in size from less than $40,000 to $10 million, including a large number of relatively small grants;
- The agency's mission focuses on five disparate areas: education, disaster services; health, veterans and military families and environmental stewardship;
- CNCS operates seven grant programs: AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps National Direct, Foster Grandparents; Senior Companions, Retired Senior

Volunteers, the Social Innovation Fund and VISTA (as well as NCCC, which is not a grant program), with differing requirements;

- A significant share of the grant funds are distributed through State service commissions and through levels of subgrantees, and CNCS relies on the prime grantee for effective oversight.

In addition to those structural challenges, CNCS also must grapple with legacy issues that impede effective oversight:

The first issue is a history of turmoil at the leadership level. As of 2012, when Wendy Spencer was confirmed as CEO, CNCS had had five CEOs or Acting CEOs during the preceding five years. CNCS is now on its fourth Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (including Acting CFOs) since 2012 and its fifth head of grant oversight, accountability and internal controls. It should be no surprise that risk management and accountability have suffered during this prolonged instability.

The second legacy issue is recurrent weaknesses in internal control found by the OIG and by the independent financial statement auditors. Despite repeated commitments to prioritize improvements, CNCS has made little progress and has regressed in certain respects. That weak internal control has caused CNCS to miss serious problems in programs and operations. The weaknesses are so severe that they are classified as a "significant deficiency" on CNCS's financial statements.

The independent financial statement auditors have identified weak governance as a root cause. Executive bodies responsible for internal controls and risk management held only a single administrative meeting in FY 2014. In FY 2015, the leadership body met, but provided little direction and did not fulfill most of the duties in its charter.

The third burdensome legacy has been the lack of bench strength to tackle these issues. I noted earlier that the oversight and accountability function has had five leaders in the past four years. OIG has worked with each of them. Until CNCS hired a Chief Risk Officer (CRO) last month, none of them had sufficient training, experience or expertise. The staff remains under-resourced, inexperienced and untrained. This has led to false starts, wasted effort and delay in addressing foundational problems.

And yet this office is responsible for the critical processes to safeguard the public's investment in national service: developing risk assessments of grants and determining how best to monitor them with limited resources; upgrading CNCS's internal controls over all operations, programmatic and financial; identifying and reducing improper payments; and, now, implementing Enterprise Risk Management. Over the years, CNCS has repeatedly promised improvement but continues to struggle in each of these areas. With all of these urgent priorities, CNCS will need a surge in resources and capabilities, likely involving outside assistance, to make headway.

The fourth legacy burden is outdated and unagile grant monitoring technology. CNCS does not have the capacity to make effective use of data analytics, benchmarking, identifying trends and emerging issues, or detecting outliers. Its monitoring is labor-intensive and inefficient. An Information Technology (IT) modernization effort is underway, which is expected to offer that capacity two to three years from now. When fully implemented and used properly, this can be an enormous force multiplier in risk assessments and ongoing grant management.

Opportunities to improve grant monitoring

This is the second time in five years that this Subcommittee has held a hearing on how CNCS monitors grants, particularly for prohibited activities. In 2011 and again today, CNCS has described a rigorous and risk-based approach to grant monitoring. OIG's work, however, calls into question the reliability of its methodology.

CNCS decides annually which grantees to monitor closely by applying a series of risk indicators. It uses the same risk indicators across the entire grant portfolio, even though its programs and grant types are subject to different risks. The risk model is also incomplete; it omits significant risks identified in OIG audits.

CNCS has never demonstrated that the risk indicators it relies upon so heavily accurately predict bad outcomes. The entire grant monitoring program rests on assumptions that are untested. It is not unusual for our audits and investigations to find

major problems at grantees with low or medium risk scores. We have recommended validating the risk model repeatedly since 2013.

A preliminary analysis performed by my Office suggests that the risk model is not a good predictor of whether a grantee will encounter difficulties. We looked at 40 grants that developed serious or catastrophic difficulties and found that half of the grants had been rated as low or medium risk. This means that CNCS's risk assessments failed to predict the worst outcomes fifty percent of the time. And, because those grants were rated low or medium risk, CNCS did not monitor them closely and was blindsided when trouble materialized.

I am pleased at the CEO's promise that CNCS will undertake the task of validating its risk indicators. I will be interested to hear when that will take place, how it will be performed and by whom. The results of that validation should be of great assistance in developing a new risk model. CNCS began work on a task 18 months ago, but was forced to put it aside for lack of in-house expertise. I hope that CNCS will also gain valuable insight from a study of CNCS grant monitoring currently underway by the General Accountability Office (GAO). The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform requested that study at the suggestion of my Office, to jumpstart improvements to CNCS's grant monitoring.

In addition to *how* CNCS assesses risk, OIG has identified issues about *who* performs the assessments. Having Program Officers and Grant Officers perform the risk assessments for the grants that they personally oversee introduces a strong potential for bias. Objective assessments may be clouded by the personal relationships that a Program Officer often develops with a grantee. A staff member who has invested time and effort may be reluctant to acknowledge that a grantee nevertheless remains risky. Confirmation bias predisposes an individual to focus on information that accords with his preconceived ideas. Assigning a high risk rating to a grantee increases the workload of the responsible Program or Grant Officer. CNCS might counteract these biases by having risk assessments performed independently, by staff not assigned to that grantee, who can view the file with fresh, objective eyes. Reviewing the information

on a blind basis, without knowing the identity of the grantee or the CNCS staff assigned, may also improve objectivity.

Even beyond the accuracy of risk assessments, CNCS has never evaluated the overall effectiveness of its grant monitoring. The independent financial statement auditors noted with concern that CNCS has looked only at paper compliance items, such as whether reports are submitted on time and whether the proper approvals are on file. Whether the Corporation's grant monitoring accomplishes what it is supposed to accomplish or how it could perform better have never been examined. This was a factor in the determination that the Corporation's internal controls are "significantly deficient."

CNCS does not have a systematic process to learn from negative outcomes. In FY 2013, OIG recommended that CNCS examine a number of grant audits and investigations that produced serious findings, in order to develop better ways to prevent or detect those problems. This is a critical step, because in our investigations and audits, OIG often finds that CNCS overlooked red flags presaging trouble and missed its chance to avoid or mitigate bad outcomes.

That takes us to the recent investigation of prohibited activities, which sheds additional light on opportunities to strengthen grant oversight.

Prohibited Activities: Abortion Services and the National Association of Community Health Centers

As we reported last month, between 2013 and 2015, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) allowed a few AmeriCorps members to provide emotional support (doula care) to women during abortion procedures at three New York City clinics operated by the Institute for Family Health (IFH), a subgrantee. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (the Serve America Act or SAA), the Federal statute authorizing the AmeriCorps program, expressly prohibits the use of AmeriCorps resources to "provid[e] abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services." *See* 42 U.S.C. §12584a(a)(9). The same prohibition appears in the regulations governing

the AmeriCorps program. *See* 45 C.F.R. §2520.65(a)(10). NACHC is one of AmeriCorps' largest grantees, receiving $ 30 million over the last five years.

While our investigation report focused on NACHC and its subgrantee, IFH, the investigation also illustrates a number of ways in which CNCS could monitor grants better with more sophisticated risk management.

Here are a few key points:

1. **CNCS was on notice that one of NACHC's subgrantees was performing abortions and involving AmeriCorps members in pre-abortion assistance. Yet neither the Program staff nor the Office of General Counsel asked the identity of the subgrantee, determined whether the pre-abortion support activities were "abortion services" or selected NACHC or its subgrantee for focused monitoring regarding prohibited activities.** In 2009, NACHC relayed a question from a subgrantee as to whether the Serve America Act, then recently enacted, would bar an AmeriCorps member from "acting as a support person for women undergoing abortions." Asked for more detail, NACHC indicated that the member was providing emotional support for women in the waiting room, sitting with them and explaining what to expect during various reproductive health procedures. The Office of General Counsel advised that, as long as the member was not promoting acquisition of an abortion, there should be no problem. The lawyer did not address whether the contemplated activities would constitute "abortion services."

2. CNCS staff did not record in the grant file that NACHC's subgrantee was performing abortions or having AmeriCorps members provide pre-procedure assistance. The email communications were not captured in the online grants management system, known as eGrants, which is the principal repository of information used for risk assessments. (The AmeriCorps Program does not have standards to identify emails that should be incorporated into the grant file, and eGrants does not have the capacity to store large quantities of email.) Due to staff turnover, this institutional knowledge was lost. When a later Program Officer conducted a site visit at NACHC in 2014, she did not know that any of

NACHC's subgrantees were allowing AmeriCorps members to provide assistance immediately before abortions and therefore did not visit that subgrantee or inquire into its risk of abortion-related prohibited activities.

3. Despite questions from grantees, CNCS made a considered decision in 2009 not to provide general guidance on the meaning of "abortion services" or what constitutes a "referral." Instead, CNCS responded to questions from individual grantees, which was not transparent to the grantee community, the public or the Congress. There was no opportunity for other stakeholders to comment or question CNCS's interpretation and application of the abortion restrictions. The Corporation's regulations simply repeat the language of the statute, as did most of the training that it provided to the grantee community.

4. In 2014, CNCS issued its first interpretive guidance, in the form of online, voluntary training. There is no record of which grantees completed it. The training materials prohibit an AmeriCorps member from accompanying a woman at a facility for an abortion, exactly what was happening at the subgrantee's clinics. No one at CNCS recognized the need to update NACHC concerning the new guidance.

OIG has recommended a more granular focus on risk in monitoring for prohibited activities.

By analyzing a grantee's programmatic activity and its clientele, CNCS could identify grantees that present a heightened risk of a particular prohibited activity. For example, a clinic that engages AmeriCorps members in healthcare for women and girls is at greater risk of abortion-related service activities than is a program that provides Meals on Wheels to senior citizens. OIG has long used precisely that example in recommending a more targeted approach to monitoring prohibited activities. Similarly, a faith-based organization is at higher risk of proselytizing, religious instruction or worship than is a secular organization. The risk of certain prohibited activities, such as voter registration, may vary seasonally or based on other events.

Monitoring activities outside CNCS's existing repertoire could better detect prohibited activities. CNCS did not find the prohibited activities in this case through its normal monitoring. That was also the case in 2011, when CNCS learned by happenstance that AmeriCorps members at Planned Parenthood of New York were engaged in prohibited legislative advocacy in support of abortion rights. Direct communication with AmeriCorps members about their ongoing activities is the best way to detect prohibited activities. CNCS has no protocols for this other than site visits, which are required only once every six years. For grantees with a heightened risk of prohibited activities, CNCS could conduct frequent surveys, possibly through the MyAmeriCorps Portal, which every member routinely logs into. A few plain English questions about what the member has done, seen or heard would provide much-needed visibility.

CNCS might also detect prohibited activities by monitoring social media sites. Searching for "AmeriCorps" or "HealthCorps" and "abortion" would have found posts by a number of the individuals who served as abortion doulas at the subgrantee. In fact, in 2013 CNCS recommended to grantees that they conduct such searches to detect prohibited activities, but did not itself do this.

The Office of Inspector General has identified many opportunities for CNCS to strengthen accountability and to sharpen grant monitoring, with respect to prohibited activities and beyond. My staff and I look forward to working with the Congress toward that important objective.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee may have.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you very much, Ms. Jeffrey. I would now like to recognize our subcommittee members for their questioning and I will recognize the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Kline, to ask the first question.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank the witnesses for being here today for your testimony.

I must say, Ms. Jeffrey, listening to your testimony, there are a lot of concerns that you raised and one of them was repeated staff did not, staff did not, staff did not, did not recognize, they didn't take action, they could have, they did not. And that makes me worry about what the culture and the leadership might be and that would be back into Ms. Spencer's box. But I want to come specifically back to you, Ms. Jeffrey, the inspector general, because you talked about some steps that have been taken and could be taken, you hope will be taken. But you also in your testimony highlight the structural challenges to better oversight at the corporation. Can you discuss why these structural challenges pose an issue in whether the corporation can properly oversee the program under its charge, structural?

Ms. JEFFREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The corporation has not invested enough time, attention, and effort in strengthening its structural internal controls. That has been a finding repeatedly in the financial statement audits which are conducted by an independent auditing company that audits a number of Federal agencies.

The corporation often says that it will improve, it makes efforts to do so, but its turnover in leadership of that effort has impeded progress. The staff who are charged with responsibility for this important function are undertrained. They are under-resourced. And until the recent hiring of a chief risk officer, they have not been led by someone who is properly educated, trained, and with sufficient expertise.

The corporation also suffers some structural impediments by virtue of its outdated information technology system and how that impacts grant management. That is a place in which the corporation has made some progress. There is an IT modernization plan. It is underway and I believe it will substantially improve grant monitoring two or three years hence. Until that time however, the monitoring is extremely laborious, conducted by hand, and does not have the benefit of data analytics. We have been urging improvement on that score as well virtually since the day I came to the corporation in late 2012.

Mr. KLINE. It sounds daunting to say the least. It's going to take time. It's going to take real leadership. Is it going to take reorganizing, creation, eliminating some departments and creating new ones? Obviously, you've created a new one when you hired a chief risk management officer. Are there other organizational things that the IG has recommended?

Ms. JEFFREY. We have recommended that the corporation undertake an assessment of what it will take to do these things, real planning with meaningful milestones, meaningful deadlines, and an assessment of the resources that will be required to get to the finish line. I understand that is underway now. We have not yet

seen its results. And of course, the chief risk officer has only been on board for about a month.

Mr. KLINE. It is like an indictment of a lot of people in an oversight role and a management role. I suppose we have to include ourselves in the oversight business. We will be taking a close and continuous look as we go forward because the problems, to listening to the IG, are extensive. I yield back, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman FOXX. Chairman yields back. Mr. Scott, I recognize you for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Spencer, most of this fanfare is over the abortion services. How many employees were involved in that?

Ms. SPENCER. Good day, Mr. Scott. According to the IG's investigation that was very thorough and swift, it illustrated that there were six AmeriCorps members at a limited scope of time. I don't know that we can delineate the exact amount of time, but if we were pressed we would probably say, combined, maybe as much as 10 hours.

Mr. SCOTT. Ten hours, okay. And the hourly rate—

Ms. SPENCER. Total.

Mr. SCOTT. Total aggregate total. And the expense of an AmeriCorps member is about $10 an hour give or take?

Ms. SPENCER. Well, AmeriCorps members' stipends vary. These are full-time members. They receive approximately $12,600 a year. It is a living stipend, not a living wage. And then followed up with a college scholarship of around $5,700 at the close of their commitment.

Mr. SCOTT. Full-time, 2,000 hours—

Ms. SPENCER. Seventeen hundred.

Mr. SCOTT. It is about, in stipend, it is about $10 an hour. So we are talking about somewhere around $100?

Ms. SPENCER. That is correct.

Mr. SCOTT. Uh-huh. What is the total budget for this grantee?

Ms. SPENCER. Around $6 million, approximately 525 full-time AmeriCorps members.

Mr. SCOTT. Were they told by outside attorneys that their activities were legal?

Ms. SPENCER. Were legal?

Mr. SCOTT. Right. Did they consult outside attorneys before they reported it? Before you found out?

Ms. SPENCER. So several things occurred. Several years ago there was dialogue by Email back and forth, but looking back at that, not very clear to me. It talked about reproductive services, other things. I think looking back, both parties, the grantee and our staff, could have been more clear. But yes, they were told that it was against the rules to provide abortion services.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, they were told. Before they were told that, did they seek other counsel that gave them the impression that it was not illegal?

Ms. SPENCER. The inspector general report alludes to in writing that it appeared there was some conversation on their part with outside legal counsel. She might be able to speak to that a little bit better than me.

Mr. SCOTT. All right, let me ask Ms. Jeffrey. Did they seek outside counsel and were told that their activities were not inappropriate?

Ms. JEFFREY. I think that would be something of an overstatement. What we know is that at some point when the grantee learned that an individual AmeriCorps member and a sub-grantee was acting as an abortion doula, they did two things. The national director at NACHC said that he analyzed for himself whether this conduct was permissible. He also said that he spoke to outside counsel. Looking at the documents, it appears that his conversation with outside counsel concerned whether it was permissible to be performing abortions at that clinic, not whether it was permissible to use AmeriCorps members. But he was not very specific about it and sometimes implied—

Mr. SCOTT. Okay, so there was at least some discussion about whether—the legality of this activity. We are talking about $100 out of millions. I mean, we have spent more than that in congressional salaries listening to the opening statements. We have run through $100. I would like to get from the chair how much money has been spent on this subcommittee meeting. If we could provide that for the record so we can put all these numbers in perspective because we are talking about $100 that we are chasing. What has happened to the grantee since then?

Ms. SPENCER. Several things have occurred over the course of several weeks, so allow me just to share the entire picture.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, I only have a couple seconds left. Is it true that they are not being renewed?

Ms. SPENCER. May I continue? I know we are out of time, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman FOXX. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you. So during this time period of this particular grantee, coincidentally, happened to be up for a new grant, the start of a brand new grant. They were notified a few days ago through the regular grant process that they will not receive a new grant in this process based on our regular grant process.

Now, they have an existing grant that is ongoing. It terminates on July 31st. So they have received a letter this morning reminding them that their grant terminates on July 31st and instructing them to end the AmeriCorps member service at the New York site where the inappropriate activity occurred.

Now normally a grantee would ask for a no-cost extension for a year as a normal process. I am not inclined to grant them a no-cost extension. But if they meet all of our demands over the coming days as they close out this grant—hiring a monitor, an ombudsman, not enrolling new members, all of these things; there is a long list of requirements—I am amenable to entertaining the thought of a short-term extension for 90 days. If I did so it would mean that 500 AmeriCorps members get to complete their full term of service.

I want to look at the AmeriCorps members and try to say, should they be completing their terms of service, their commitment they made to our country. Above the actions of one or two individuals at the agency, at the Community Health Corps Administration? So I am amenable to looking into that. So that is the current status at this point.

Chairwoman FOXX. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. Roe, is recognized.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

You know, typically the indiscretions of a few will hurt the many who do good. And there is no question that is true. And many of us feel very strongly about abortion whether you are pro-choice or pro-life. I happen to be an obstetrician. As I spent 31 years doing that, delivering about 5,000 babies, I am strongly pro-life. And I think that the intent of those grants was very clear. I can certainly see why someone who has had an abortion, who has problems emotionally, would feel like you want to help them. I certainly understand that. I have done that. When people had them someone else and came to me, I did offer support for those patients and would continue to do so. But the grants can prohibit that. It's not to be used and I think we feel like if we allow that, you will get on a slippery slope and then people just decided what they want to do. And I think that's the problem I have seen with—I am on the Veteran's Affairs Committee and one of the problems I have with this place is the lack of accountability. People just do what they want to because they think they want to, not the intent of Congress, and then there are no consequences to it.

So what I want to dig into, first of all, were there just six people? What have been the consequences to that? Because if the consequences were in this, we just cut the grant off. And realizing that there are AmeriCorps members out there working hard every day, New York or wherever they may be working that are doing good work, if those consequences were there like that, those grantees would not do that. If there was some accountability like that.

And I think that you as a director, Ms. Spencer, are going to have to say, well, I would like to see these people go on and do all. Well, then there have been nothing for these people. If you think about it, we are having this discussion about not a lot. And what Mr. Scott was talking about, about the amount of money, I do not care about that. It is the principle that is involved. And I think, you know, a billion dollars is a lot of money. It is a thousand million dollars that you oversee every year. And so I want to know had there been more than six, Ms. Jeffrey? Were there more than that? Or how did you determine there were just six people involved?

Ms. JEFFREY. Thank you. We, in fact, know that there were more than six involved.

Mr. ROE. Okay.

Ms. JEFFREY. There are six that we can identify by name. The only way we are able to identify the individuals who served as abortion doulas is if they somehow made a blog post or sent something that is in the public record about their service. We know that there were additional individuals. We do not know how many because typically AmeriCorps members do not keep detailed time records of their activities. And so it is very difficult to quantify the number of people.

That said, it appears that the activity was limited to this one sub-grantee. And it is not given the number of individuals we can identify, we don't think it is orders of magnitude off.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Ms. Jeffrey. What date does the sub-grantees contract basic grant end?

Ms. SPENCER. July 31st.

Mr. ROE. And has not been renewed.

Ms. SPENCER. No.

Mr. ROE. And that they can't apply in some other grant. Would you accept a different grant from these people?

Ms. SPENCER. They just applied for one which was denied, and they just received that. That was a $6 million request, a little over $6 million request, and they were denied that.

Mr. ROE. Let me ask a question. When you are looking at a program, a success or a failure of a program, what is a win? How do you evaluate the success of a program because this one clearly was not? I mean, someone in that shop decided we are going to do this knowing good and well that they should not do it. We will just do it and we probably would not get caught. We will ask for forgiveness if we get cause because there is no risk to us if we do. And the risk, I guess, is not getting another grant, but that is it. You did not stop the grant.

So how do you evaluate a program? In other words, how do you define a win, a success?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you for that question, Congressman. Fortunately, we have an amazing array of successes all over the country with 345,000 National Service participants during a day. I have the joy of seeing those all over the country in rural and cities and travel communities serving in disasters, education. And a success would be something like this. A program meets all of our requirements. They have filed their financial reports on time. They have strong audits. They have proper management and oversight. They have strong outcomes. They are measuring their performance and reporting to us what—that—our larger programs are doing—

Mr. ROE. I am about out of time, but when someone applies for a grant, there are metrics out there, benchmarks that they have to meet.

Ms. SPENCER. Absolutely.

Mr. ROE. Okay, I yield back.

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you, Dr. Roe. Dr. Adams, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am a little bit curious about the review process. If you could talk a little bit more about it. Was it just written? Were there verbal conversations with the applicants? How did that work, Ms. Spencer?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you, Dr. Adams. I am sure you are still referencing the Community Health Corps or just in general review processes?

Ms. ADAMS. Yeah, for this particular—

Ms. SPENCER. For this particular.

Ms. ADAMS. Right.

Ms. SPENCER. They did have a desk audit in 2014. So they are assigned a program officer as soon as they receive a grant from us. In this particular case, it is a direct grant that we are managing. It is not going through one of our Governor's Commissions on Volunteerism, which two-thirds of our grants are AmeriCorps grants, are managed through Governor's Commissions on Volunteerism.

But this one is not. This is a direct grantor agency, so they are assigned a program officer.

That program officer reviews all of the terms and conditions with them. They provide direction to them to trainings, to opportunities to find information like on our Knowledge Network. We host nationwide trainings and regional trainings. They attend those. They do monthly check-ins. So it is a regular communication all the time. In this particular case, this grantee knew the rules.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay, so—

Ms. SPENCER. That's what is unfortunate.

Ms. ADAMS. Yeah, okay. So as a follow-up, in the discussions, did they talk about abortion?

Ms. SPENCER. It happened and I read a string of Emails where there was communication back and forth. But if you look back today as sort of hindsight armchair quarterbacking, the language between the parties was sort of evasive. I think the parties should have just picked up the phone and say, what are you trying to do? Let us give you direct guidance. You may not do abortion services. That is not allowed according to the Serve America Act of which Congress has given us those rules.

So it looked like they were dancing around words and it was hard to understand. But they were told you could not perform abortion services.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay, let me ask. You mentioned no-cost extension, that they could ask for that.

Ms. SPENCER. Uh-huh.

Ms. ADAMS. Have they asked for a no-cost extension?

Ms. SPENCER. No.

Ms. ADAMS. And so you did say you would consider it. So when did you make a decision and would you approach them about doing it? I mean, since we are talking about, maybe you are talking about some misconduct, but not everybody was responsible for it and not wanting everybody to suffer. So what is your thought about that?

Ms. SPENCER. Well, I think Congressman Roe makes a good point. You do have to look at the intent of an organization and how they are being managed. So I am concerned. What would guide my decision in the coming weeks would be are they following our demands? Are they meeting all of the requests that we have asked them to do of which the IG also made recommendations to us which we have adhered to? So I would watch and see. Are we working in good faith with one another? Are they being responsive? There are many things they could do to try to convince us that they will adhere to the rules.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay, so since there is not much time, you mentioned that the grant is up in July. But let me just move on and ask, what exactly were the volunteers doing? I mean, did they perform the abortions that you are talking about?

Ms. SPENCER. Oh, no, ma'am.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay.

Ms. SPENCER. As I understand it, an abortion doula. And this is things that I am learning about, too, but was seated with these women during the—

Ms. ADAMS. Okay, and finally before I run out of time, I wanted to ask you, you know, if there were some things that you think that

were inappropriate, but what would reduced funding for CNCS mean for communities around the country if you had to do that?

Ms. SPENCER. I am sorry, what would—

Ms. ADAMS. What would reduced funding do? What would it mean for communities around the country if their funding was reduced, eliminated?

Ms. SPENCER. Well, you know, I looked at all of the other things that the Community Health Corps does. They do diabetes screenings. They do breastfeeding courses. They do well-baby care education. They do support to veterans, support for seniors. They do obesity prevention. You know, this is why it is a mystery to me why they had to focus on this particular issue. There are so many other things: financial literacy, helping people figure out what kind of healthcare is affordable and available to them. There is so many other avenues they could be serving in.

And in 2011, I was a grantee of this agency. I was receiving funds from this agency running the Florida Governor's Commission on Volunteerism. And I remember, Madam Chair Foxx, this hearing and watched with interest. It was no secret what was allowed and what was not allowed to any of us as a grantee. So, it was very clear at that time that they made the decision to change the wording for the member contract that allowed this activity to go on. So I am perplexed by that because all of us in the field understood the rules clearly.

Ms. ADAMS. Yes, ma'am. Well, it sounds like it would have a devastating impact in terms of the services overall that are provided if the funding was not there. And I yield back, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you very much, Dr. Adams. I believe, Mr. Courtney, we are going to recognize you for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Spencer, I just want to drill down a little deeper in terms of just who the program was in New York that was the subject of the IG report. Again, it was not the National Association of Community Health Centers that operated that program. It was a subgrantee of the National Association of Community Health Centers, isn't that correct?

Ms. SPENCER. Yes, sir.

Mr. COURTNEY. And so the total grant for the community health centers group nationally, again, the 535 volunteers that are funded, I mean, those are all across the country.

Ms. SPENCER. That is correct.

Mr. COURTNEY. Not just in New York City. So for example, in Connecticut, where I come from, there are 21 individuals that are funded through that National Association grant. There are four in my district in Norwich, Connecticut, who I am, you know, a frequent flyer at that community health center. They don't provide anything remotely close to abortion services. So the four volunteers that are funded through that grant, I mean, do things like schedule flu shots, you know, help with monitoring patients who are high emergency room utilizers, you know, help with medication management. I mean, they are doing this sort of blocking and tackling of primary care. And in many instances, our young individuals who later on end up going to medical school or advanced practice nurs-

ing, I mean, it is really a launching pad for people in terms of a healthcare career that has benefits that exceed even, sort of, the metrics of what you were talking about in terms of program success.

So I guess, you know, I think it is important sometimes right now, to put this in perspective here. I mean, if we cancel a contract across the country, you are hitting community health centers that, again, are not even close—

Mr. COURTNEY.—to the activity that was the subject of the complaints. And you are really just depriving low-income patients, elderly patients. Actually, in Norwich, Connecticut, they provide services to some veterans in terms of dental care that are not covered by the VA.

So, I mean, let's not shoot the bystander here in terms of, you know, overreacting to this problem that was identified. And I hope you keep that in mind as you sort of evaluate the next steps here.

Again, the surgical remedies that have been put into place are totally appropriate and that's your job. But, again, sort of an across the board chainsaw through, you know, community health centers I think really undercuts the mission of the AmeriCorps law. I do not know if you want to react to that, but I really think we got to put this in perspective.

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you for that input and I concur. Hopefully, in the future we will find more organizations like this agency that is interested in our grants. So you make fine points on it. I agree.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. And I would just say that, again, stepping back even further in terms of just the scope of AmeriCorps as far as its, you know, value to the taxpayer, we have an RSVP program up in northeastern Connecticut that organizes veterans' coffeehouse. It sounds kind of small potatoes, but actually it has become a gathering point for the most rural part of the State for veterans who, as a result, are now getting VA benefits that they did not know they were entitled to because of, you know, the good information that is shared at that coffeehouse. We have medal recoveries for World War II vets, Korean War vets that never would have happened. And, you know, you are talking, Greg Kline's the director of it. I mean—

Ms. SPENCER. Yeah.

Mr. COURTNEY. You know, this is really, at best, you know, part-time pay that is happening. But again, the ripple effect in terms of the value to people who wore the uniform of this country is, you know, far excess in terms of whatever small investment the taxpayer makes.

Ms. SPENCER. I recently saw Greg at a training we did, a regional training. And he gave me an update on that vet coffeehouse because he had told me about his plans over a year ago. And I am very pleased that you recognize them. We are leaning in on veterans and military family members heavily because there is great need there.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. Madam Chairman, I have an article from the Hartford Current which describes the AmeriCorps program for veterans which we discussed here and I have asked that it be made part of the record.

Chairwoman FOXX. Without objection.

Mr. COURTNEY. And again, I think what's—you know, again, get some perspective here about what happened and what is an appropriate remedy and not throw the baby out with the bathwater. I yield back.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you very much. That is an interesting analogy you would use.

Mr. Guthrie, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you for being here.

And my question, actually, kind of focuses on veterans as well. And to Ms. Jeffrey, in your second fiscal year 2014 semiannual report to Congress you detail an investigation in which you determine a grantee was supposed to use grant funds to support veterans and military families, improperly disbursed about 140,000 of Federal funds and improperly certified another 61,000 education awards. The grantee acknowledged the findings and offered to refund the corporation the entire amount you recommended. Unconscionably, the corporation not only requested reimbursement for only about a third of the funds you recommended, but the corporation retroactively expanded the range of service activities of the grant in order to justify the move. Is there any justification for the corporation to retroactively approve over 12,000 National Service hours under this grant to non-veterans fundamentally changing the purpose of AmeriCorps' member service?

Ms. JEFFREY. In my view, there is not. And not only did that happen with respect to this one veteran services grant, a very similar thing happened at around the same time with two other grants where the grantee unilaterally changed the objective of service, did not ask the corporation for approval. And then, when they were caught, sought forgiveness rather than permission. I think strong accountability requires the opposite. Grantees should be encouraged to ask first so the corporation makes the decision about the proper allocation of resources. Now, I believe there has to be accountability when a grantee exceeds its authority in that fashion.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Yeah, well, what reforms are possible when the corporation does not want to have the inclination to move forward in that? What kind of reforms can you have if the corporation changes the scope?

Ms. JEFFREY. Well, what I can do is report on it. That is the limit of my authority.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Okay, well, thank you. So, Ms. Spencer, on that, what are the steps to terminate a grant for failure to comply with the Federal law or the conditions of the grant?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you, Congressman Guthrie. I wanted to point out that we looked at all of the grants over the last couple of years and what actions we have been taken. And I made a short list for the committee if it's helpful. We have had 26 debarments, two suspensions. We have recovered $2 million in grant funds and we have had 52 mutually agreed terminations. So it is certainly something we don't take lightly. You know, we are co-investing with these organizations who start out well-meaning. Many of them are faith organizations, veterans' organizations, local nonprofits, charities, local governments, education, schools. And we start out with a good plan together and we review them to see if

they are worthy of a Federal investment. And we go through a lot of criteria to see if they are.

So when we find, and these generally, there are exceptions, but generally for AmeriCorps we are looking at 3-year commitments. So we go into a relationship for 3 years. When we find that the grantees are not performing at the highest level, that's when we start interventions. That is when you do the desk audits. That is when you do more monitoring. On occasion, if needed, we will ask for our annual audit report. We will put them on the list for the inspector general to audit. Unfortunately, the inspector general does not have all the resources to audit all of our requests, but they do a very good job of doing what they can with what resources they have.

So we want them to succeed.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Absolutely.

Ms. SPENCER. I mean, we are in this together,—

Mr. GUTHRIE. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER.—but when they do not and after we have really tried—and I have been in a position to have to terminate grants from Florida when I was there directly managing about 45 AmeriCorps grants on behalf of the governor, of three different governors in Florida. It's a tough decision. It is not always popular. But we are not in the popularity business. We are in the outcome business. And we chase problems and we have solutions for those.

And so, I just say this—

Mr. GUTHRIE. And in your audit, so some of them you said were mutual because I am about out of time.

Ms. SPENCER. Yes.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mutual, but if they were not mutual and you have had the audit and you say, hey, this is not—what do you actually have to—

Ms. SPENCER. I would say—

Mr. GUTHRIE. What process do you have to follow to—

Ms. SPENCER.—without looking at a list, and I could certainly provide that of these 52 mutually agreed terminations, that's a good way to end it—

Mr. GUTHRIE. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER.—but I am probably certain that if it was not mutually agreed it would have been terminated. That's the best way to end a relationship, but—and sometimes grants find out they just are not suitable to manage a Federal grant. We do have a lot of requirements, as we should. It is the taxpayers' money.

Mr. GUTHRIE. I think that was the case on the matter of this situation. They said we thought we were going to have a more bigger group of veterans to serve. We didn't. Therefore, we diverted to try to do some other things and admitted—I do not think it was intentional to begin with, but it became that. I—

Ms. SPENCER. That was a tough one because they did provide services to local residents, but they were not in the original agreement for veterans.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Right.

Ms. SPENCER. So the fact they did provide services is one thing, but that was a tough one.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you and I am out of time. I yield back.

Chairwoman FOXX. The gentlemen's time has expired. Ms. Davis, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DAVIS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you both for being with us today.

Ms. Spencer, one of the things that I think strikes me is that you all have really exhausted multiple resources, time, effort, everything in following up on this situation.

Ms. SPENCER. Yes, ma'am, we have.

Ms. DAVIS. Do you have any sense in terms of what was required to do that? I think what I am trying to see here because we need to have some way of being aggressive as I think you have been and at the same time not having a chilling effect on the ability to use resources to actually improve programs, to make sure that everything is working as it should. What is your sense of that?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you very much. When we have a grantee that does not follow the rules, it does take a lot of energy of the organization, sadly, at some of the highest level personnel, including our general counsel, including our chief of grants, including our AmeriCorps director. But that's our job—

Ms. DAVIS. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER.—and we will continue to be forthright and—

Ms. DAVIS. And as I understand it, too, I mean, this started out as a media post, a social media post in terms of how it was picked up initially, but that you all took the steps to bring the Inspector General into it. And so, it seems to me that, you know, you are moving ahead in the way that is required. And that what we need to do and what I think we all need to do is to be sure that if we believe that community service—and I happen to believe and would love to see it expanded. I think that in this country, we know there are other countries that do this. You know, I would love to see every 18-year-old give at least 18 months of their time in community service. If we had the infrastructure in this country to do that, it would be great. And I think we need to think about what that would take in order to do that.

Clearly, in this kind of a situation, you have to be very aggressive about those grants. You have to be very aggressive that people are doing what they are expected to do. And occasionally, and out of 345,000 or so volunteers today, there were a few people who in trying to do the right thing and perhaps not getting the direction that they obviously should have gotten, they erred. Geez, I do not know. (Laughs) I do not know if we have very many organizations in the country that can say that. So I think we need to be clear about that.

But I also wanted to know from you, as well, Madam IG, what do you see in terms of resources? I think you have spoken to this a little bit, but if we had a way of crafting additional help and support, would it be more monitors? Is that what you think is required here? Is it more training, more education? We are short on the resources that we're providing.

Ms. JEFFREY. It is a very good question and I do have some thoughts on it. To a considerable extent, the corporation needs to think outside the box about how it monitors.

As things stand now, roughly one of the few ways that a corporation employee has contact with members is when that person does

a site visit. Site visits may not happen but once every six years. That is not an effective way to know whether there are prohibited activities taking place at a grantee. So I think there need to be avenues for more frequent contacts with AmeriCorps members.

Ms. DAVIS. Uh-huh.

Ms. JEFFREY. In the experience of the OIG, if you want know what is really going at a grantee, the members will tell you. They are vocal when they see something they don't like.

Now in this case, the grantee reported this to us, to the corporation. But I do think that the more contact there is with members, and it could be done with some simple survey questions, the better the monitoring would be without investment of tremendous resources.

Ms. DAVIS. And are you all monitoring the social media as well to pick up problems?

Ms. JEFFREY. Interestingly enough, that was a recommendation that CNCS made to grantees, that they monitor social media.

Ms. DAVIS. Uh-huh.

Ms. JEFFREY. Had they done that, that is how the grantee found it in this case.

Ms. DAVIS. Yeah.

Ms. JEFFREY. Now CNCS, as far as I know, does not take its own advice and do that even on an intermittent or selective basis. That may be something that it is considering now.

Ms. DAVIS. Thank you. Well, I looked at so many of the organizations, certainly from San Diego, and the amount of work the Catholic Charities is doing and many others, and, quite frankly, in a number of situations, of course they are providing emotional support. So, I think we want to be careful how we use those words and how that relates to other issues and other concerns that we have. And, perhaps, we need some way of better defining what that means, under what circumstances. I think that some of that has already been done, perhaps. But again, let's be really clear with the people who are engaged in this and let's not have a chilling effect on the young people in this country who are doing such fabulous work.

Thank you so much. I see that my time is up. I am sorry. Thank you.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you, Ms. Davis.

Chairwoman FOXX. Excuse me, I am sorry. Mr. Polis is next. I apologize.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you. I really appreciate it. Thank you both for being here today and I want to highlight some of the contributions the Corporation for National Community Service has made in my district as an example.

As my colleagues know, Colorado declared a state of emergency in the fall of 2013 after experiencing the most damaging floods in our State's history. Many homes, businesses, roads, bridges were destroyed. There was loss of life. Thanks to CNCS, though, volunteers were immediately deployed to Colorado to help in the aftermath of our floods. And in total, over 700 National Service members came to our State. Their work involved volunteer donations, management, staffing call centers, coordination of medical mobility rides, community relations activities, meal services. I got to visit a

number of them as they were working to help feed some of those who had lost their homes, and mucking and gutting and debris removal as well.

I want to thank you, first of all, for CNCS's quick response. And I was hoping you could talk a little bit more, Ms. Spencer, about the important role CNCS has when a natural disaster occurs, like ours.

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you so much, Congressman. After some of those disasters I actually toured in your district to see the work of our National Service participants and I appreciate you calling out their success. We have responded over the last several years to 200 natural disasters and some manmade disasters across the country. So we are very busy. We have individuals deployed right now in communities across the country.

This is an area that is very personal to me. I led the volunteer and donations response for Governor Bush in 2004 and 2005, when we had eight major disasters over a 2-year period and about 250,000 volunteers, including thousands of National Service participants who were leading the way there. So this is very personal to me.

We have a robust disaster program. We have trained virtually every governor's commission on how to be engaged with their State emergency manager using National Service participants in their response and volunteers working closely with their local volunteer organizations active in disasters, their faith-based organizations that are working in disasters. We have trained a cadre of individuals all over the country. At any given time, we have got over 3,000 AmeriCorps members ready to respond, ready to be deployed, redeployed, mobilized across the country. We worked with the private sector on this. And during Hurricane Sandy we actually had Southwest Airlines move AmeriCorps members quickly across the country so they could get in and be deployed along with about 400 AmeriCorps members.

We have FEMACorps now who are serving, young people 18 to 24, who are serving alongside FEMA professionals. They are doing amazing work and they are learning now how to become professional disaster responders. And they are moving into careers in government and in nonprofits with disaster response. So we are not only helping the individual communities. We are training a new cadre of Americans to serve in this area. And emergency managers both local and State and Federal across the country have told me this is a gap that they have in professionals, and they have a lot of professionals retiring, like many sectors, and they need young people pursuing disaster response as a career and many of our young people are pursuing technology, but we need more in this area of public service.

So I am very excited about this. Whenever we have a major disaster, I generally go personally, stop what I am doing, travel to that district within 10 to 14 days so that I can speak with local authorities and make sure that we are responding swiftly and see what else we can do. I meet with elected officials in the area. I have been all over the country in disasters and I bring with me the experience I brought from Florida and all of the service we did and how to train individuals to respond with appropriate volunteer and

donations response. So thanks for pointing them out. We are doing a lot. We have a robust program and we want to do more.

Mr. POLIS. Well, thank you. And it was a great opportunity to interact with that, with many of your members in the field and in so many important roles in our State. And as you indicated during your visit to our district, it was—there were tens of thousands that were temporarily homeless. Many thousands lost their homes. And really, the community came together. But truly, the help with the managing, the outpouring of support from the untrained volunteers in our community is why we needed the trained volunteer and donations management. So many people wanted to help with goods and with time, but without the structure that CNCS provided with folks on the ground, we really wouldn't have been able to take advantage of that, and I just want to thank you.

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you for those remarks.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Polis. Now, Mr. DeSaulnier, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and no apology necessary.

I just really want to commend you both on the work you do. What you do is so important. I do not think often enough we give enough attention to programs, the volunteer programs that you oversee and also the challenge of doing them properly. And I am reminded sitting here today, whether it was de Tocqueville to David Brooks recently talking about the importance of community and the breakdown of community in the United States and how important these nonprofits, community groups are to the fabric of America. So thank you for what you do.

I want to talk little bit about—well, first I want to follow what Mr. Polis said. In California, of course, we had similar instances where your services and your grantee services have been very helpful in natural emergencies and now with the drought. With wildfires, I hear the same thing. So thank you for that.

But I want to talk about both proportionality that Mr. Courtney brought in, that all the good things you do and, you know, this might go in one of those categories where no good deed goes unpunished in terms of your proper oversight given the overall proportion of good work that most of your grantees are doing and your oversight, but also sort of the right investment.

So, Ms. Spencer, you mentioned in your comments under strengthening risk-based monitoring, "In the spirit of continuous improvement, we are implementing additional steps to increase the effectiveness of our oversight and monitoring,"—and I want to sort of emphasize that word "effectiveness"—then you go on to say, "as part of our continued effort to incorporate best practices in our risk management." So there is, coming from the private sector—I know that industries, whether it's their insurance or just good management practices, you know, for instance in the construction industry, a certain proportion of your overall budget is going to be waste or theft. I was in the restaurant business. You did not want anybody stealing from you, but you did know that there was a point where there was diminishing returns on what you spent to make sure you bring it to zero.

So that is what wanted to ask you. As you look at your risk management and, sort of, industry best practices, given that you are dealing with nonprofits, given that you are dealing with nonprofits who do not have a lot of administrative overhead, and you are trying to encourage volunteerism, is there sort of an accepted—or do you—knowing that particularly in areas where you know that there is going to be a certain amount of public and political consequences if you don't get it to zero, what is appropriate?

And I think back at my time in the California legislature wherein the previous governor spent so much time on waste and abuse in the food stamp program, we actually found out that we were spending too much and it was affecting our participation rates. So somewhere in there, it is sort of the right porridge. Is there a best practice when you come to your profession/industry?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you so much, Congressman. I think it would be too strong to say that there should be an accepted amount of risk. And I come from this from my experience in Florida managing about 45 AmeriCorps grants all over the State, about 1,800 AmeriCorps members at any given time and we had strong grantees. We had, during my watch, no fraud. I can't recall any waste. Did we—we were focused on are we investing the resources in the right areas? For example, I had a grantee, a long-term grantee, that was providing education programs in an area that was improving in their education success. So we moved those resources to another area that was struggling. So as you see success, right, you shift your resources.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER. That is not fraud, waste, or abuse. That is just smart management.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER. So I would not be able to say that there is some kind of accepted risk. I do not think that is a path that we should consider. The inspector general and I agree on—

Mr. DESAULNIER. If I could—

Ms. SPENCER.—much more than we—

Mr. DESAULNIER. Yeah, I am sorry to interrupt, but since I have limited time, I did want to suggest that you want to get to zero and I think you have done a great job of that.

Ms. SPENCER. Uh-huh.

Mr. DESAULNIER. But at some point from a business model, there is diminishing returns where you are spending so much, where you, sort of, have to go upstream, which I think you have done.

Ms. SPENCER. I see.

Mr. DESAULNIER. So it is more—less on the subjective point. We are more of the objective. We are spending X-amount of dollars to capture this much of fault.

Ms. SPENCER. And I think that—I was going to say and this pertains to this, the inspector general and I agree on a lot more than we disagree on.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Uh-huh.

Ms. SPENCER. And she is right. We need improvements in our IT. We need improvements in our internal controls. We hope Enterprise Risk Management is going to help us. We hope that our new chief risk officer, our first in our agency's history, is going to lead

us and guide us. We need to take this advice and counsel. We are down, quite frankly, a lot of this comes to money, We are down $6 million over the last six years in our salaries and expenses line. So at some point, we have got to look very hard at where we are shifting our resources. So it's an important to make. You have to make best decisions and the most cost-effective decisions. And I think that was where you were going.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.

Ms. Spencer, I am glad to hear you make—in response, that you don't want to accept waste and abuse. You did make a very bold statement that in your programs in Florida you had absolutely no fraud and no waste. That is a pretty strong statement to make, but I appreciate—

Ms. SPENCER. During my time.

Chairwoman FOXX. Would you please tell me what specific steps you are now taking to ensure that your grantees and every participant in the programs are—every participant is clear about what conduct is and is not allowed. And I don't want you to use up my whole 5 minutes outlining every single one, but give me some as specific as you can and then I am hoping to do a follow-up later to get more details from you.

Ms. SPENCER. Can I ask for clarification?

Chairwoman FOXX. What are you doing to ensure your grantees and every participant is clear about what conduct is and is not allowed?

Ms. SPENCER. Thank you. I think we are really leaning in hard on our training of all of our grantees across the country. We have implemented some regional trainings just at the last couple of years that we have gotten excellent feedback from. And virtually all of our medium to large grantees are attending. Even small grantees are attending. This year we will probably see over 2,000 grantees in four trainings. I attend all of these and I address all of the participants. The inspector general sends her staff there. This is one way. We now have—

Chairwoman FOXX. Just to clarify. All 2,000 go to four events each?

Ms. SPENCER. So there is four regional. So we try to spread them out so travel costs are reduced. In this case, this year, four regional conferences. And we will see about 2,000 grantees. And these are the leaders. These are the people running the programs. It is important. They are listening to the rules. They are hearing what our expectations are. They are learning about accountability and oversight. The Inspector General brings her staff there. Their sessions are full. I have looked in on them.

We are talking about criminal history checks. We are talking about oversight to its fullest. We are talking about performance measures.

So we also now, and the Inspector General makes a good point about, can we do more to reach out directly to members? She makes an excellent point. I want to find more ways that we can do that. Since your last hearing, one of the things that—a good thing that came out of it, several good things, but one was that

every AmeriCorps member receives a communication from us that stipulates very clearly what the prohibited activities are.

Chairwoman FOXX. Do they sign anything acknowledging that they have received that?

Ms. SPENCER. I will get back to you on that.

Chairwoman FOXX. Okay, and you said 2,000 grantees. Who is left out of that? I mean, how many are not participating in those regional programs?

Ms. SPENCER. I would have to get back to you on that to find out—

Chairwoman FOXX. And why not everyone?

Ms. SPENCER. Well, that is a good point. In fact, in California, I went to the training conference with the Southwest United States, and I asked—California, of course, being our largest state. And the California commission director, who serves at the pleasure of the governor there, said all of her grantees in the entire State of California under her watch, except one, attended that training. And she was going to make sure that one received all the materials and instructions that the others received during their—now that is just one option. You know, each State commission—

Chairwoman FOXX. I am—we are about to run out of time.

Ms. SPENCER. Okay.

Chairwoman FOXX. And I have one more question. I am going to ask you to detail tell me what steps you are taking. So is an annual assurance that a grantee is in compliance with regulations on prohibited activities currently part of the monitoring protocols? And if so, did the National Association of Community Health Centers make this assurance? If so, what good is the assurance if the grantees and sub-grantees are not faithfully adhering to the requirements of the law?

Ms. SPENCER. We will certainly get back to you on that so that we can be assured of the correct answer. Absolutely.

Chairwoman FOXX. Okay, well, thank you very much. Ms. Jeffrey, I am going to submit some questions to you afterwards related to the Improper Payments Elimination Recovery Act and how the agency is not complying with that. And I know you have given us some information on this, so I would want to get back to you with that, okay?

Ms. JEFFREY. We look forward to responding.

Chairwoman FOXX. All right, great. My time has expired and I believe all members have had an opportunity to ask their questions. Therefore, I would ask Ms. Adams if she is ready to make closing remarks?

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am and I want to thank both of you for your participation today.

Since its creation more than 20 years ago, the Corporation for National and Community Service has been a strong pillar in our community. Across this Nation, CNCS has engaged millions of Americans in service. It's AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund program. CNCS has been a leader in alleviating the role of national service, which is important to those involved. Madam Chair, I have a letter I wanted to submit. I am trying to figure out where it is right now. Oh, here it is.

Chairwoman FOXX. Without objections.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay, thank you. So let me just move on to say last year, CNCS provided 345,000 volunteers who served over 155 million hours through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps in more than 500,000 locations. And it's clear that our continued support is absolutely necessary. Tackling issues like literacy and homelessness and hunger have been continued priorities for CNCS, as well responding to national disasters and helping seniors reenter the workforce to improving student academic achievement, CNCS is making a real difference and we appreciate that.

But, you know, I guess I didn't come prepared today to hear so much about the use of government funds and what appears to me to be somewhat attacks on a woman's right to determine what to do with their bodies. But CNCS did, from what I hear, what they were supposed to do, address the issue at hand, but yet it continues to come up in this Congress about women and what we ought to do concerning reproductive rights. So while the hearing is—was—I did not believe it was supposed to be about reproductive rights, I just wanted to just comment that I think that we wasted a lot of time with baseless attacks.

For instance, the Select Panel on the Planned Parenthood has been nothing more in my opinion than a political theater. But we, my colleagues, have pushed for 21 anti-women's health votes, introduced 51 anti-women's health bills, and we have had 8 anti-women health hearings. And I just think that we need to be talking about misuse of some of those funds.

But again, let me just applaud you for the hard work that you have done over the past two decades and I know that what you do will continue to engage more citizens and more volunteers in a productive way. And I just think that the work that CNCS has done and continues to do has made significant contributions and I certainly hope that you will continue to do that and that we will support those efforts.

Thank you very much. Madam Chair, I yield back.

Chairwoman FOXX. Thank you very much. Ms. Adams and I have worked together over many years when we were both in the North Carolina legislature and I will have to say I very much disagree that this is only a hearing about women's reproductive rights. This hearing has come about because there is an agency in Federal Government that is not being held accountable properly in terms of how it spends money in many different ways.

I am home every weekend and I come in contact with hardworking citizens who do their jobs and they pay their taxes. They volunteer and they do not get paid for it. They are true volunteers. And I see those people struggling every day to make ends meet and do work in their fire departments as volunteers, the Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. And they want their money spent well. They do not begrudge helping their fellow citizens. We are the most generous people in the world. But they want their money spent well. And this agency does not spend its money well in many cases.

You mentioned, Ms. Spencer, that you had a $6 million reduction over six years. Well, you are just talking to the wrong folks because our congressional offices over the past eight years have had a 20 percent reduction in the money allowed to us to serve a lot of peo-

ple, over 700,000 people. And all of us are struggling very hard to continue the level of service that we gave before our funds were cut. So I am sorry, that argument does not go very far with this group.

Your idea of a culture of accountability and mine and Dr. Roe's and the folks on our side of the aisle are two very different things. You can say you have a culture of accountability, but I am sorry to say you have not described that very well today in my opinion. If people had worked for me who had broken the law, I'd have no tolerance for them whatsoever. Zero tolerance. And many members of Congress have exhibited that.

You talk a lot about intentions. We need to be talking about metrics and true accountability here. Maybe Dr. Roe and I are a little old-fashioned in what we think, but we think you ought to be measuring real things. What kind of outcomes are you actually getting? What skills are the people in these programs truly getting? Do they get any certifications? You know, we demand that kind of accountability in certain areas and then in other areas where our colleagues want to measure only intentions, we don't get that.

Now, it is true that the law has been broken by people, by agencies, and groups you have funded. The law is clear. The Federal Government is not going to support abortion services. So while this hearing was not about that particular issue, I don't think we can close it without making it very clear. You seem to have a lack of concern about the violation of the law. Your consideration of a no-cost extension is very troubling to me.

We have said it before, I said it at the beginning of the hearing, and I am going to say it again, this grant should be pulled immediately and under no circumstances should it be extended. And I hope we will get back from you a report that will fulfill that because when you allow the violation of law in whatever category that it is, then we start down a slippery slope in this country. We are governed by the rule of law and we should all want to uphold that.

There being no further business, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Additional submissions by Ms. Adams follows:]

www.corpsnetwork.org

May 23, 2016

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott,

We write in regard to the upcoming hearing being held on May 24th by the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training entitled "Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)." As a long-time CNCS AmeriCorps grantee, we respectfully urge your support for community-based organizations like Virginia Service and Conservation Corps based in Richmond and hope you will attend the hearing to express your support for AmeriCorps, and your local organization(s) that provide high-quality opportunities for youth and veterans to serve the nation and help to improve communities. We are happy to provide more information on high-quality service projects in your state if you would like specifics to reference during the hearing.

We support strong oversight and management of federal funds, and strongly support strict adherence to the letter and spirit of the authorizing law and prohibited activities. It is our understanding that the situation that resulted in this hearing involved a small number of members, the offending members and their parent organization have been disciplined, and CNCS took swift action in response to the Inspector General's report. AmeriCorps enables our Member-Corps to engage thousands of youth and veterans in high quality service projects each year and nearly 80,000 around the nation through other organizations. A few bad actors should not be determinant or detrimental to the programming at other organizations or tarnish our Corpsmembers' dedicated service to the country and their communities.

Through AmeriCorps, our Corps provide matching funds to accomplish a wealth of conservation, disaster response, recreation, and infrastructure improvement projects identified as critical by local communities, states, and partners. Most recently, 45 AmeriCorps members with Washington Conservation Corps were deployed in response to flooding in Grays Harbour County, WA and conducted damage assessments, debris removal, and volunteer support. Another instance of severe weather in Van, Texas led to the engagement of AmeriCorps members from Texas Conservation Corps in the set up and management of a volunteer reception center that deployed more than 1,000 volunteers.

Corps like Virginia Service and Conservation Corps, and others around the country, work on projects that provide better access to public lands and recreation opportunities for sportsmen and families, transportation and water infrastructure, and engage veterans in a variety of programming like our Veterans Fire Corps which help to prevent and respond to wildfires. Other Corps provide energy conservation services, including weatherization, help to combat the spread of harmful plant and insect invasive species across the country, and ensure Corpsmembers are receiving industry-recognized certifications and credentials that put them on a pathway to success.

1275 K St. NW, Suite 1050 | Washington, DC 20005 | p: 202.737.6272 | f: 202.737.6277

www.corpsnetwork.org

CNCS has worked for many years in communities around the country and with non-profit organizations like ours to address the most pressing national challenges with significant buy-in from states, locals, and private entities. AmeriCorps grantees leverage significant additional private funding and resources, and save the government money in the long run. A recent study put the return on investment in AmeriCorps at 4:1. It's also important to note your colleagues on the Appropriations Committee had the confidence in AmeriCorps and its grantees to increase funding for the program in the FY16 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

While we appreciate the need to conduct oversight of CNCS and its program within the jurisdiction of the full committee and subcommittee, we know that there is a vast body of outstanding work being done by dedicated youth and veterans on AmeriCorps-supported service projects important to your local communities and state. Their service should not be tarnished or impacted by the inappropriate actions of a few and future opportunities to serve should not be diminished.

We again respectfully urge your attendance at this hearing in order to support AmeriCorps and your local service organization(s) that provide high-quality opportunities for youth and veterans to serve the nation and help to improve communities across your state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Sprenkel

Mary Ellen Sprenkel
President & CEO

1275 K St. NW, Suite 1050 | Washington, DC 20005 | p: 202.737.6272 | f: 202.737.6277

May 24, 2016

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Subcommittee Hearing "Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service"

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Hinojosa:

The undersigned organizations submit this letter for the record of today's hearing, "Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service." We oppose further restrictions on women's health care for those served by AmeriCorps members.

This hearing follows a recent investigation[1] by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which reported that a few AmeriCorps members provided emotional support to women during abortion procedures at several New York City community health centers. CNCS OIG came to the flawed conclusion that the support in question violated the Serve America Act's (SAA) restriction on "providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services."[2]

We oppose abortion restrictions wherever they exist. Unfortunately, in this case, a harmful restriction has been exacerbated by an overly broad OIG interpretation. The SAA should not be read to restrict AmeriCorps members from supporting, accompanying, or comforting patients receiving any health care service, including an abortion. The law's legislative history demonstrates that Congress intended to include only a narrow and specific restriction. In fact, in adopting the final bill on a bipartisan basis, Congress rejected an earlier version of the bill that included a broader restriction.[3] The OIG's misinterpretation of the SAA's restriction is not only harmful to women, it also stigmatizes abortion care and threatens the underlying goals of the program.

Unfortunately, the fact that a few AmeriCorps members provided compassionate emotional support to women seeking abortion is now being used to justify broad restrictions on

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[1] Major AmeriCorps Grantee Allowed Members to Provide Abortion-Related Services Prohibited by Law; CNCS Management Undertakes Robust Actions in Response, Apr. 26. 2016, https://www.cncsoig.gov/sites/default/files/nache.pdf.

[2] 42 U.S.C. § 12584(a)(9).

[3] An early version of the bill that became the SAA prohibited members from placement at "organizations that provide or promote abortion services, including referral for such services." In the final SAA, that language was deleted and replaced with the much more limited prohibition on members "providing" or "referring for" abortion services. *Compare* H.R. 1388, 111th Cong. (2009) and 42 U.S.C. § 12584(a)(9).

reproductive health care.[4] AmeriCorps members serve in clinics that provide care to underserved patient populations with a high need for quality reproductive health information and services. Restricting care to these patients hurts women and undermines the important role of AmeriCorps.

We urge members of the subcommittee to stand up for the communities that AmeriCorps serves. We oppose the OIG's misconstruction of the law and urge members of the subcommittee to ensure that these communities do not face additional obstacles to getting the health care they need.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Civil Liberties Union
Catholics for Choice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Women's Law Center
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Religious Institute
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

cc: Members of the Subcommittee

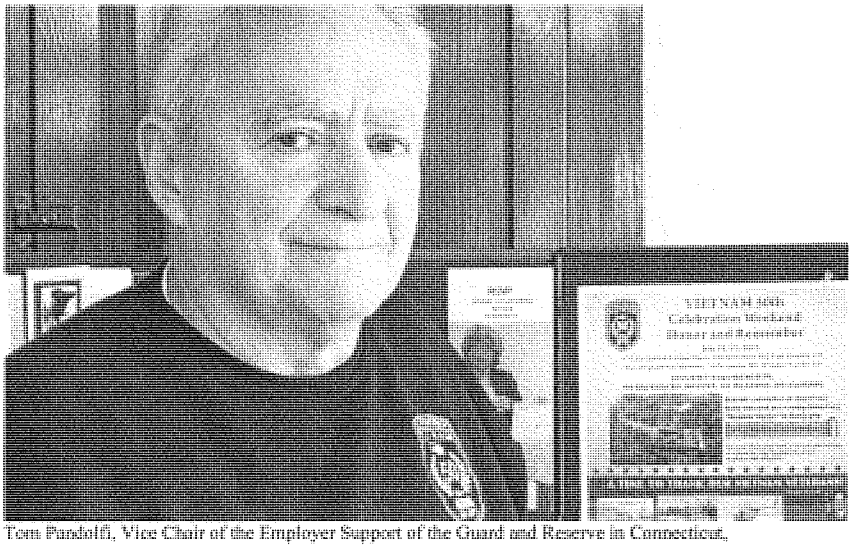
[4] In response to the CNCS OIG investigation, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) recently updated contract language and training materials for AmeriCorps members to include restrictions that improperly go far beyond the scope of what Congress intended and what the statute actually prohibits, including a ban on providing services to patients seeking or considering abortion, even if the services are unrelated to the abortion, as well as on providing neutral, non-directive counseling and information regarding abortion to patients.

[Additional submission by Mr. Courtney follows:]

Hartford Courant article: http://www.courant.com/community/killingly-edition/rnw-kp-p3-danielson-veterans-coffeehouse-0424-20150420-story.html

Courant Community Killingly Edition

Veteran's coffeehouse opens in Danielson



Tom Pandolfi, Vice Chair of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in Connecticut, was on hand at the opening. Photo by D. Coffey.
Denise CoffeyReminder News
Veterans' coffeehouse opens in Danielson

The Killingly Community Center cafeteria was packed on April 14 for a veterans' coffeehouse. Sponsored by the Thames Valley Council on Community Action, the coffeehouse will be held twice a month in Danielson. It will be open to all veterans as a place to gather, socialize and get information or assistance on the benefits they're entitled to.

The coffeehouse is just one of the programs sponsored by the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, which falls under the TVCCA umbrella. RSVP Coordinator Greg Kline said the service project for veterans came about after a conversation he had with Marylou Underwood,

TVCCA's CEO. "She asked what we could do for a veterans' project in this area," Kline recalled. "She asked what I thought about sponsoring a coffeehouse. But it's much more than that."

The event will be held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month from 9 a.m. to noon. Vets will be welcome to socialize, enjoy board games, watch television, and also to get access to information. Eventually volunteers will be available to answer specific questions. Kline envisions it as a clearinghouse of sorts, where veterans, family members and caregivers can get information or at least get pointed in the right direction.

The location will be moved from the cafeteria to a private space currently occupied by resident troopers. That space has a private area where counseling could potentially take place. Kline hopes to arrange office hours for Veterans Service Office Jeannie Gardiner, an Afghan vet employed by Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sen. Mae Flexer attended the opening. "It's important for a few reasons," she said. "It gives veterans the opportunity to get together. Camaraderie is important. It's also nice to have a space where vets can talk about the needs they have that aren't being met and to learn about services that are available to them."

Pomfret's Municipal Agent for Veterans' Affairs Garry Brown sees the coffeehouse as a outreach service for veterans. "There's no place they can go for questions or guidance on VA issues and benefits," he said. "The people in the VA are fantastic, but when you call with questions, it can be frustrating." It can be difficult to find someone who can answer your questions, or you might get passed from one department to another, he said. "Most guys don't want to go through that," he said.

The problem is, there are many benefits veterans just don't know about. And some of those benefits come with very specific restrictions. Take WW II vets for instance. There's a possibility that some are eligible for a monetary pension if they served in an occupied country between 1941 and 1953. The benefit is income limited, but Brown estimates nine out of 10 veterans don't know it exists.

Brown has spent a lot of time explaining the advantages and disadvantages of coordinating Medicare and VA benefits. "A lot of guys have income limitations," he said. "I explain the pluses and minuses of paying for Medicare if they're over 65. It's their decision. It's a choice they make based on their personal situations. If they don't have to pay $104 for Medicare, that's $104 they can spend on something else."

While the medical benefits can be excellent, there are glitches to the VA system. Lab results haven't always been shared between facilities in different states. And for vets in northeastern Connecticut, that poses a particular problem. Transportation is an issue. The nearest Connecticut VA clinic is not in Windham County, so it's not serviced by the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District. Passengers would have to transfer to the Windham Rural Transit District.

"I can't see old guys getting out of a bus on Route 6 in Chaplin to transfer to another bus," Kline said.

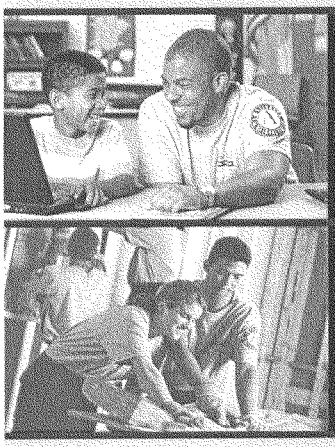
Dennis Richards came to the opening to get information on benefits for which he might be eligible. Richards started his military career with the Army in 1966 but transferred to the Coast Guard in 1969. He went back into the Army's Active Guard Reserve and served from 1983 to 1987. Those transfers came with classification changes that complicate matters.

Edgar Muniz served with the Marines from 1966 to 1978. "You can meet other vets here," he said. "Even though people are going through different situations, you can appreciate one another. A vet might feel more secure about talking. Some don't want to talk with people who have never been in their shoes."

Maurice Labrecque, who served on the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. during WW II, came to the opening to meet other vets. "It just brings back a lot of nice memories," he said.

[Additional submissions by Mr. Scott follows:]

May 2008
Executive Summary



Still Serving:
Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni

AMERICORPS

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

This report was co-authored by the Corporation for National and Community Service and Abt Associates Inc.

The Corporation for National and Community Service
The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

AmeriCorps
Each year AmeriCorps provides opportunities for more than 75,000 Americans to give back to their communities and country through intensive service. AmeriCorps members recruit, train and supervise community volunteers, teach, tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit groups to become self-sustaining, among many other activities. Since 1994, more than 540,000 Americans have served in AmeriCorps.

AmeriCorps State and National
AmeriCorps State and National provides funding to a large network of public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country. AmeriCorps State members serve through a network of community-based service organizations receiving Corporation funding through Governor-appointed State Service Commissions. AmeriCorps National provides grants directly to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs across two or more states. Currently, over 75,000 State and National members provide valuable services such as tutoring and mentoring youth, building affordable housing, and coordinating after-school programs. AmeriCorps members also recruit and manage other community volunteers to multiply their efforts to serve their communities.

AmeriCorps NCCC
The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps is a team-based, full-time residential program for individuals aged 18 to 24. Members are based at regional campuses organized by teams of 10 to 12, and take on a series of six to eight week projects throughout their respective regions. Service activities are diverse and include environmental preservation, youth development, building and renovating low income housing, and disaster response and relief. All NCCC members are trained in CPR, first aid, and other disaster services, and approximately 15 percent of members are also trained as fire-fighters. NCCC teams can be deployed rapidly to meet the nation's public safety and disaster response needs and can nimbly respond to other national priorities. Since 2005, more than 3,100 NCCC members have served in the Gulf Coast on more than 650 separate disaster-related services projects. Currently, there are 1,100 members serving with the NCCC.

Suggested Citation
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CEO Message

It is a great pleasure for the Corporation for National and Community Service to present the most definitive longitudinal study ever on the long-term effect of AmeriCorps service on former members. *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* compares AmeriCorps members who served in 1999-2000 with a like group who expressed interest in joining AmeriCorps but did not enroll, providing scientifically rigorous data that illuminates the powerful and lasting impact of a single year of AmeriCorps service. And there's big news: it turns out that AmeriCorps is not only a conduit to intense service, it is also America's pipeline to public service careers. In short, a year of AmeriCorps service influences many to pursue careers as teachers, nonprofit managers and government employees – this at a time that America is bracing for crisis-level workforce and leadership shortages in the nonprofit and government sectors.

Since its inception in 1994, more than 540,000 individuals have served in AmeriCorps. These members, who most of whom gave at least a year of dedicated, intensive service, have tackled some of our nation's toughest problems, including illiteracy, homelessness, gang violence, and drug abuse. AmeriCorps members remain on the front lines of service every day, and have in recent years stepped up their role in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds — they supported 1.7 million community volunteers in 2007 alone. Together, AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they mobilize serve with more than 4100 organizations nationwide, from national nonprofits like Boys and Girls Clubs, Red Cross, Teach for America and Habitat for Humanity to small, local faith-based groups. Increasingly they are part of organizations that are at the forefront of social entrepreneurship, serving and producing the next generation of nonprofit leaders. In all these ways, AmeriCorps members are "getting things done" and making a difference in communities from coast to coast.

When we embarked on this study eight years ago, we believed it was important to determine the impact of AmeriCorps service on individuals who serve. While those who join AmeriCorps are already active in their communities prior to service, one of the most remarkable findings of the study confirms the intuitive belief that community service given in a dedicated, intensive way changes the person serving – not just for a day or during their period of service – but in a way that has lasting effects on their lives and behavior. We are now able to demonstrate for the first time that one year of service in AmeriCorps creates long-term positive impacts on AmeriCorps alumni eight years later. These alumni continue to be highly civically engaged in their communities whether as public servants, volunteers, or in a variety of community activities.

In fact, sixty percent of AmeriCorps State and National alumni work in a nonprofit or governmental organization, continuing to solve their communities' most pressing needs. Nearly half (46 percent) pursue careers in specific fields such as education, social work, public safety, government or military service. These results are significant as our nation attempts to fill millions of nonprofit and public sector jobs, and counter critical shortages in areas like education and nursing. Nonprofit employers also look to alumni as a valuable source for employees, hiring many alumni who first served in their programs as AmeriCorps members. And AmeriCorps is a clear entrée to public service for minority alumni and alumni from disadvantaged circumstances, as both groups are significantly more likely to choose public service careers than their non-AmeriCorps peers.

The results of this study suggest that AmeriCorps has the potential to make an even more profound difference in our country in the future. Not only does AmeriCorps provide individuals with immediate opportunities to serve, but AmeriCorps service also spurs these individuals to be agents of positive change in their communities after their service is complete. Equipped with the leadership skills and "can do" spirit gained through AmeriCorps, these alumni to continue to be models and catalysts for civic engagement, working with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other individuals to create a stronger and more equitable society for all Americans.

David Eisner, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service

Introduction

AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages more than 75,000 individuals in intensive, results-driven service each year. AmeriCorps programs address the needs of communities in education, the environment, public safety, disaster relief, and other human needs. AmeriCorps also increases the capacity of nonprofits to serve their communities by mobilizing volunteers, expanding services, raising funds, and creating sustainable programs.

Since 1994, more than 540,000 Americans have served in the program. This report is the culmination of an eight-year rigorous study to investigate if and how AmeriCorps has an impact on alumni. This was achieved by comparing the post-service habits and attitudes of alumni with those of others who did not serve in the program.

The purpose of the study is to assess the longer-term effects of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, employment and careers, education, and life satisfaction. The study follows a group of members who participated in AmeriCorps in 1999-2000. In order to assess the effects of participation, outcomes for members in the study are compared to a similar group of individuals who demonstrated both awareness of AmeriCorps and interest in national service, but ultimately did not serve. They were surveyed in four phases:

1) Before they began their service (1999-2000);
2) When they completed their term of service (2000-2001);
3) Four years after they first enrolled in the program (2003); and
4) Eight years after enrollment (2007).

The first phase of the study provides baseline data. The *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps* report was released in 2004, after the third phase, and is available online at: http://www.nationalservice.gov. *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* is the fourth phase of the study, and it provides a longer-range view of the impacts on members of the program, years after they have completed their service.

The study was conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service in partnership with Abt Associates, Inc., an independent, nonpartisan research firm. It includes more than 2,000 members from 108 AmeriCorps State and National programs and three of five AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) campuses. Researchers controlled for factors which may influence study participants' life outcomes such as demographic characteristics, economic status, and prior service and volunteering. Generally, in this type of longer-term evaluation, any positive impacts tend to fade over time. However, the findings in this study show that several positive, significant differences between the AmeriCorps alumni and the comparison groups still exist.

The study reveals the following:

- AmeriCorps generates alumni who are more engaged in their community;
- AmeriCorps is a pipeline to public service;
- AmeriCorps alumni from racial and ethnic minority groups and from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely to go into public service careers; and
- AmeriCorps alumni are more satisfied with their lives eight years later than others who did not serve in the program.

This report sheds light on the potential the AmeriCorps program has to make a difference in our country. Not only does AmeriCorps provide individuals with opportunities to help address their communities' most pressing needs, but the program also spurs individuals to be agents of positive change in their communities long after their AmeriCorps service. As public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and individuals work together to achieve healthy communities, AmeriCorps alumni will continue to be key players in making that a reality in communities across the country.

Long-term Impacts of AmeriCorps Participation

Civic Engagement

The strength of our nation and the health of our democracy depend upon individuals who assess and reflect on the challenges facing their communities, who feel that they are able to make a difference, and who take action to make a positive change. AmeriCorps is designed to strengthen these civic capacities in many and build it in others. At a time when our country has seen significant declines in community participation, evidenced by a 30 percent reduction in public meeting attendance over the past 30 years and a membership rate for civic organizations that has been cut in half, it is encouraging to see that AmeriCorps alumni alternatively exhibit strong connections to their communities and commitment to making a difference because of their national service experience.

To measure the levels of community participation among AmeriCorps alumni, researchers investigated attitudes and behaviors, including members' sense of connection to their community, participation in community meetings and events, sense of duty to their neighbors, volunteering and voting habits, and feelings of social trust. While some early effects faded over time, there are several significant differences between AmeriCorps alumni and their comparison group eight years after the study began.

AmeriCorps alumni are more connected to their communities.

AmeriCorps State and National alumni and AmeriCorps NCCC alumni exhibit stronger connections to their communities, including higher awareness and stronger commitment, because of their participation in the program. Effects on community connection are particularly pronounced among alumni from disadvantaged circumstances and Black/African-American alumni who participated in AmeriCorps State and National. This feeling of connection to community goes hand-in-hand with a sense of duty for alumni of AmeriCorps NCCC, who are significantly more likely to appreciate the importance of neighborhood participation than their comparison group.

AmeriCorps alumni feel more empowered to work for the betterment of their community.

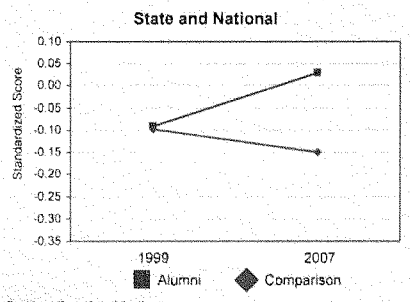
AmeriCorps gives members a long-lasting sense that they are able to work with local governments and others to make positive changes in their communities. Members were asked about specific issues, such as getting potholes fixed, building additions to community centers, and getting an important issue on a state-wide ballot. Forty-one percent of State and National alumni and 41percent of NCCC alumni believe they would definitely be able to get the pothole fixed, compared to 38 percent and 34 percent of their respective comparison groups. Alumni from both programs are also more confident in their ability to get projects, such as after-school programs for kids, underway with the help of other community members. It is clear that by participating in various projects to meet community needs during their year of service, AmeriCorps members gain a sense of empowerment to continue their participation long after they complete the program.

AmeriCorps alumni continue to take action in their communities.

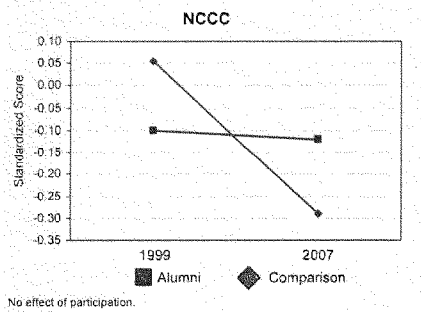
Alumni from both AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC continue to work to bring about positive change, but in different ways. AmeriCorps State and National members are more likely than their comparison group to be active in community activities such as public meetings and are more likely to publicly express their opinions. For example, 69 percent of State and National alumni participate in community meetings, events, and activities compared to 63 percent of their comparison group. On the other hand, AmeriCorps NCCC alumni are more likely to volunteer in their communities as a result of their service; 64 percent of NCCC alumni volunteer

compared to only 51 percent of the comparison group. NCCC alumni also show a higher degree of social trust than their comparison group with 85 percent of alumni reporting that they believe other people can be trusted, and only 71 percent of the comparison group reporting the same. Impacts in some measures of community action are positive especially for alumni of AmeriCorps State and National from disadvantaged circumstances, for example they are much more likely than their comparison group to have expressed their opinions on a local or national issue to a public official.

Exhibit 1: Active in Community Affairs



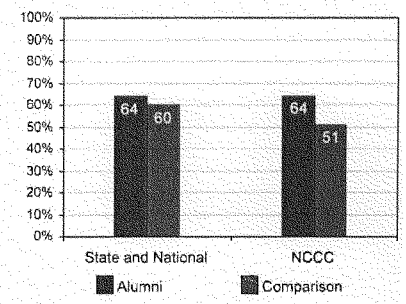
Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.18, p>0.05 level.

While it is clear that many positive impacts are apparent even after eight years, there are some outcomes for which positive impacts originally noted in the 2004 early findings briefing have faded.

Exhibit 2: Percentage Reporting Volunteering in Past 12 Months



For State and National, no effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.07, p>0.05 level.
For NCCC, positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.28, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

About half of the impacts observed in 2004 persist into 2007, although some of these impacts are not as strong. For example, although impacts on alumni's connection to their community are apparent in 2007 as they were in 2004, the strength of that impact has decreased for State and National alumni. Also, alumni from both programs are now no more likely than the comparison group to emphasize the importance of fulfilling civic obligations, an effect that was strong and positive in 2004 for State and National alumni. In 2007, one negative impact shows: AmeriCorps State and National alumni are slightly less likely to have voted in the 2006 mid-term election than their comparison group.

At the same time, other impacts appear to take several years to emerge. For example, in 2004, the effect of AmeriCorps NCCC participation on alumni's confidence in their ability to lead a successful community-based movement was not significant. Today, the study finds a large, significant effect for this outcome. In 2004, AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC alumni were more likely to have confidence in their ability to work with local government officials than members of the comparison groups; today, these program effects are still significant and even stronger.

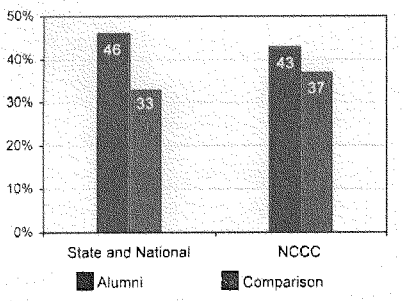
Employment

Many members continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to their community in their career choices. AmeriCorps service gives members the chance to explore different career paths, gain job-related skills, develop leadership capabilities, and network with community leaders while gaining hands-on experience in such vital fields as healthcare, education, and social services.

AmeriCorps is a pipeline for careers in public service.

AmeriCorps State and National members are significantly more likely to be employed in careers that are focused on serving the public good because of their service in the AmeriCorps program. Forty-six percent of State and National members are employed in education, social work, public safety, arts, religion, government, or full-time military service compared to 33 percent of their comparison group. Altogether, about 60 percent of AmeriCorps alumni in this study are employed in either government or nonprofit jobs. At a time when both these sectors are facing serious workforce shortages and the coming retirement of tbe Baby Boomer generation, this pipeline of new employees who are passionate about making a difference and have experience in the sectors is absolutely critical.

Exhibit 3: Percentage of Respondents Employed in Public Service Field



For State and National, positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, Statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.
For NCCC, no effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.14, p>0.05 level.

AmeriCorps alumni also feel that they personally benefit in their careers from their time spent in service. Seventy-nine percent of State and National and 83 percent of NCCC alumni report that AmeriCorps gave them exposure to new career options. In addition, alumni report that their service gave them an advantage in trying to find a job (67% for State and National and 70% for NCCC), and to a lesser extent that their service provided them connections with people who helped them find their job (47% for State and National and 30% NCCC).

Employment impacts for racial and ethnic minority alumni and alumni from disadvantaged circumstances are even more pronounced.

Alumni from racial and ethnic minority groups and from disadvantaged circumstances, specifically those from low-income backgrounds, are much more likely to be employed in public service careers, with 44 percent of minority and 46 percent of disadvantaged alumni employed in public service careers versus only 26 percent of their comparison groups. Not only are they much more likely to have public service careers because of their service in AmeriCorps, they are also much more likely to report that it is important to them that they have a service-oriented career. This finding is particularly interesting because the general alumni group did not show any significant impact in this regard.

Education

Recognizing the value that higher education provides to individuals and society, AmeriCorps programs are designed to support the pursuit of post-secondary education in several ways. National service programs often include components that increase members' understanding of the importance of education, their beliefs in their ability to pursue education, and their confidence that they can successfully earn a college degree. In addition, the

Corporation offers each member who completes their term of service an education award. The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is $4,725 for full-time service, and is prorated for members who serve less than full time. The award can be used for education or training with qualified institutions (such as accredited community colleges, universities, and colleges), or to repay qualified student loans, for a period of seven years after completing service. It is often reported by members that the Segal award was an important factor in their decision to serve.

The study finds no significant difference between alumni and their comparison group in regards to educational achievement. However, about a quarter of alumni and a quarter of the comparison group are still enrolled in higher education; it is possible that effects will be seen with more time. The fact that we do not see effects at this point also indicates that even though AmeriCorps members take a year off from school, they are not put at a disadvantage in completing their education compared to other similar individuals who did not serve in AmeriCorps.

Life Satisfaction

Medical, economic, and other researchers have associated volunteering and service with a feeling of satisfaction termed the "helper's high." In fact, studies have shown that regular volunteers are less likely to experience depression and are more likely to be satisfied with their lives. Researchers investigated the life satisfaction levels of AmeriCorps members to determine if the same could be true for alumni of the programs.

The findings of the report show that eight years after service AmeriCorps alumni are more satisfied with their lives than the comparison group. Service in AmeriCorps had a significant impact on overall life satisfaction for both AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC. In fact, AmeriCorps members are not only satisfied— they are more likely to be *very* satisfied with almost every aspect of their lives than their comparison group.

Conclusion

This report demonstrates that AmeriCorps has a significant, long-term impact on those who decide to give a year of service to their country. At a time when 37 million Americans live in poverty, about 800,000 youth are in gangs and 15 million children could benefit from having a caring adult in their life, recovery from disasters in the gulf is still not complete, and environmental degradation continues to eat away at our natural resources, it is clear that our country needs engaged citizens to make a difference in their communities throughout their lifetime. This report suggests that AmeriCorps can be a key strategy for building strong citizens who are ready and willing to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow as highly active members of their neighborhoods and as dedicated career public servants.

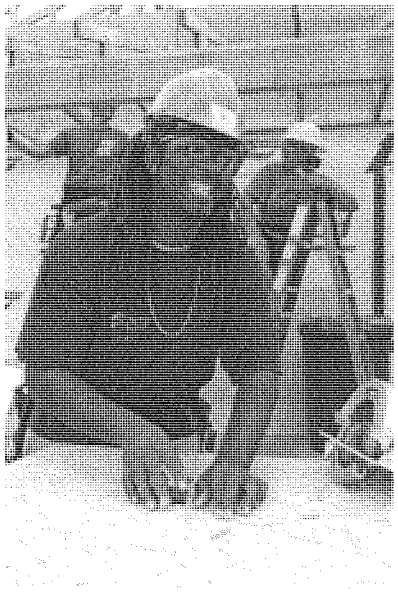


Exhibit 4: Effects of Participation in AmeriCorps State and National by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison group). In the 2004 column, results are presented from Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps.

Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes	2004	2007
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	+	+
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	+	+
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	+	NS
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	+	NS
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	+	+
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	+	+
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	NS	NS
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	NS	NS
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	NS	NS
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	+	NS

Exhibit 4: Effects of Participation in AmeriCorps State and National by Outcome
Continued

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	+	NS
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	+	+
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	NS	NS
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA	NS
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	NS	NS
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude): Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	NS	NS
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	+	+
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	NS	NS
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA	+

\+ Indicates positive, significant findings, which means that alumni experienced a greater increase (or smaller decrease) than individuals in the comparison group.

\- Indicates negative, significant findings, which means that alumni experienced a greater decrease (or smaller increase) than individuals in the comparison group.

NS Indicates "Not Significant" because this outcome had no significant findings.

NA Indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.

Exhibit 5: Effects of Participation in AmeriCorps NCCC by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison group). In the 2004 column, results are presented from Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps.

Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes	2004	2007
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	+	+
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	+	NS
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	NS	+
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	NS	NS
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	+	+
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	NS	+
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	-	NS
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	NS	NS
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	NS	NS
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	+	NS

Exhibit 5: Effects of Participation in AmeriCorps NCCC by Outcome Continued

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	NS	+
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	+	NS
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	NS	NS
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA	+
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	+	+
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude): Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	NS	NS
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	NS	NS
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	NS	NS
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA	+

\+ Indicates positive, significant findings, which means that alumni experienced a greater increase (or smaller decrease) than individuals in the comparison group.

\- Indicates negative, significant findings, which means that alumni experienced a greater decrease (or smaller increase) than individuals in the comparison group.

NS Indicates "Not Significant" because this outcome had no significant findings.

NA Indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.

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May 2008

Still Serving:

Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni

AMERICORPS

NATIONAL SE
COMMUNITY
SERVICE

This report was co-authored by the Corporation for National and Community Service and Abt Associates Inc., under contract number ABT03T004.

Corporation for National and Community Services
Office of Research and Policy Development

May 2008

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

The Corporation partnered with Abt Associates Inc., an independent and non-partisan research firm, to conduct the study.

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Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities. This report is also available on the Corporation's Web site at http://www.nationalservice.gov.

CEO Message

It is a great pleasure for the Corporation for National and Community Service to present the most definitive longitudinal study ever on the long-term effect of AmeriCorps service on former members. *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* compares AmeriCorps members who served in 1999-2000 with a like group who expressed interest in joining AmeriCorps but did not enroll, providing scientifically rigorous data that illuminates the powerful and lasting impact of a single year of AmeriCorps service. And there's big news: it turns out that AmeriCorps is not only a conduit to intense service, it is also America's pipeline to public service careers. In short, a year of AmeriCorps service influences many to pursue careers as teachers, nonprofit managers and government employees – this at a time when America is bracing for crisis-level workforce and leadership shortages in the nonprofit and government sectors.

Since its inception in 1994, more than 540,000 individuals have served in AmeriCorps. These members, most of whom gave at least a year of dedicated, intensive service, have tackled some of our nation's toughest problems, including illiteracy, homelessness, gang violence, and drug abuse. AmeriCorps members remain on the front lines of service every day, and have in recent years stepped up their role in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds — they supported 1.7 million community volunteers in 2007 alone. Together, AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they mobilize serve with more than 4,100 organizations nationwide, from national nonprofits like Boys and Girls Clubs, Red Cross, Teach for America and Habitat for Humanity to small, local faith-based groups. Increasingly they are part of organizations that are at the forefront of social entrepreneurship, serving and producing the next generation of nonprofit leaders. In all these ways, AmeriCorps members are "getting things done" and making a difference in communities from coast to coast.

When we embarked on this study eight years ago, we believed it was important to determine the impact of AmeriCorps service on individuals who serve. While those who join AmeriCorps are already active in their communities prior to service, one of the most remarkable findings of the study confirms the intuitive belief that community service given in a dedicated, intensive way changes the person serving – not just for a day or during their period of service – but in a way that has lasting effects on their lives and behavior. We are now able to demonstrate for the first time that one year of service in AmeriCorps creates long-term positive impacts on AmeriCorps alumni eight years later. These alumni continue to be highly civically engaged in their communities whether as public servants, volunteers, or in a variety of community activities.

In fact, sixty percent of AmeriCorps State and National alumni work in a nonprofit or governmental organization, continuing to solve their communities' most pressing needs. Nearly half (46 percent) pursue careers in specific fields such as education, social work, public safety, government or military service. These results are significant as our nation attempts to fill millions of nonprofit and public sector jobs, and counter critical shortages in fields like education and nursing. Nonprofit employers also look to alumni as a valuable source for employees, hiring many alumni who first served in their programs as AmeriCorps members. And AmeriCorps is a clear entrée to public service for minority alumni and alumni from disadvantaged circumstances, as both groups are significantly more likely to choose public service careers than their non-AmeriCorps peers.

The results of this study suggest that AmeriCorps has the potential to make an even more profound difference in our country in the future. Not only does AmeriCorps provide individuals with immediate opportunities to serve, but AmeriCorps service also spurs these individuals to be agents of positive change in their communities after their service is complete. Equipped with the leadership skills and "can do" spirit gained through AmeriCorps, these alumni continue to be models and catalysts for civic engagement, working with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other individuals to create a stronger and more equitable society for all Americans.

David Eisner, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni

May 2008

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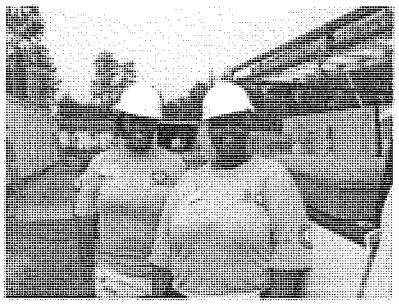
Introduction and Study Overview

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is a longitudinal study that assesses the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on individuals who serve in AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The objective of the study is to identify the effects of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement and volunteering, employment and careers, educational attainment, and life satisfaction. The findings in this report reflect a longer-term assessment of the impact of participation in AmeriCorps approximately eight years after enrollment in the program. The study includes a nationally representative sample of more than 1,700 AmeriCorps members who served in 108 AmeriCorps State and National programs across the country, and 475 AmeriCorps members in three (of then, five) NCCC regional campuses enrolling in 1999–2000, and similar numbers of individuals in State and National and NCCC comparison groups. The Corporation partnered with Abt Associates Inc., an independent and non-partisan research firm, to conduct the study.



AmeriCorps: A Program Overview

AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages 75,000 individuals in intensive, results-driven service each year. AmeriCorps programs address the needs of communities in education, the environment, public safety, disaster relief, and other human needs. AmeriCorps also increases the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve their communities by mobilizing volunteers, expanding services, raising funds, and creating sustainable programs. Since the program's inception in 1994, more than 540,000 Americans have served with tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide. In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that they can use to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans.

AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation), an independent government agency, the mission of which is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps encompasses three distinct programs, including AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

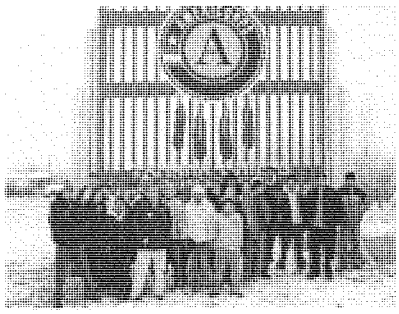
AmeriCorps has its roots in our nation's long tradition of service, civic engagement, and citizen action to address community needs. It emerged out of a national service movement that began with Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and early 1940s and was furthered by the creation of the Peace Corps, VISTA, Foster Grandparents, and other national service programs in the 1960s.

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 funded new and existing community service initiatives at the state and local levels, providing them with a unified structure and national focus. In 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service was established to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. It merged the work and

staff of two predecessor agencies, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service. In 1994, the first class of 20,000 AmeriCorps members began their volunteer service in more than 1,000 communities (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008a). Under the Clinton Administration, AmeriCorps grew to support 50,000 members per year.

In his State of the Union Address following the September 11, 2001 attacks, President Bush proposed expanding AmeriCorps to 75,000 members per year; this was implemented in 2004. The critical role of national service in disaster response and rebuilding was demonstrated in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005. In response to these hurricanes, more than 10,000 AmeriCorps members have provided 3 million hours of volunteer service and mobilized or managed 229,000 volunteers to help Gulf Coast communities recover and rebuild (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a, 2007b).

This study focuses on the impacts of service in the AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC programs on members who served during the 1999–2000 program year. Both programs improve the nation's communities through intensive community service using different program structures and delivery mechanisms.[1]



State and National

AmeriCorps State and National programs support a broad range of local service programs that engage Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. AmeriCorps State and National provides funding to a large network of public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including thousands of faith-based and other community organizations, higher education institutions, Indian tribes, and public agencies. These groups recruit, train and oversee AmeriCorps members to meet critical community needs in education, the environment, public safety, health, and other human needs. The year this study began, program year 1999–2000, the AmeriCorps State and National programs enrolled approximately 36,000 members. Currently there are over 67,000 members annually (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006b). Members serve with thousands of community- and faith-based organizations, providing valuable services such as tutoring and mentoring youth, building affordable housing, and coordinating after-school programs. More importantly, AmeriCorps members recruit and manage other community volunteers to multiply efforts to serve communities.

NCCC

The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps is a team-based, full-time residential program for individuals aged 18 to 24. Members are based at regional campuses organized by teams of 10 to 12, and take on a series of six to eight week projects throughout their respective regions. Service activities are diverse and include environmental preservation, youth development, building and renovating low income housing, and disaster response and relief. All NCCC members are trained in CPR, first aid, and other disaster services, and approximately 15 percent of members are also trained as firefighters. NCCC teams can he deployed rapidly to meet the nation's public safety and disaster response needs and can nimbly respond to other national priorities. Since 2005, more than 3,100 NCCC members have served in the Gulf Coast

on more than 650 separate disaster-related services projects. Currently, there are 1,100 members serving with the NCCC.

In exchange for a year of full-time (1,700 hours) service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of $4,725 that can be used toward higher education, or to repay qualified student loans. Members who serve part time receive a partial Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Many educational institutions now match the amount of the award. Members also receive a modest living allowance, health benefits, training, and deferment of student loans during service.

Research Design

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is designed to assess the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on members who served in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC, eight years after enrolling in 1999–2000.

The study is designed to address the following research questions:

- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' careers?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' educational attainment?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' life satisfaction?

The research uses a quasi-experimental design, where a nationally representative sample of individuals who participated in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC in 1999–2000 are compared to a similar group of individuals who did not participate in the program (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). This type of research design has a treatment group (AmeriCorps members) and a matched comparison group (individuals who did not participate in AmeriCorps).[2]

In selecting comparison groups for this study, the goal was to identify individuals who demonstrated both an awareness of AmeriCorps and an interest in service. The State and National comparison group is composed of individuals who had indicated knowledge of, and interest in, AmeriCorps by contacting the Corporation's toll-free information line and requesting information about the program, but who did not actually enroll during the study period. For reasons of comparability, the comparison group was limited to those contacting the information line during roughly the same period as did individuals in the program group—summer to fall of 1999.

The NCCC comparison group was selected from the pool of individuals who applied for entry into the NCCC during the spring 1999 recruitment selection process,[3] met the program's eligibility requirements, and either did not enroll because of a limited number of slots in the program or declined an invitation to enroll.

Survey data were collected from AmeriCorps and comparison group individuals at four time points. The baseline survey was administered in 1999, after application for entry, but prior to program participation for AmeriCorps participants. A post-program survey was administered a year later in 2000 when AmeriCorps participants completed or were near completion of their program. A third survey was administered in 2004 to obtain supplemental information. The fourth wave collected survey data in 2007.

As documented in the baseline report for this study,[4] in general, the treatment and comparison groups for each

Exhibit 1: Data Collection

Instrument	Timing[a]	Focus
Baseline Survey (1999–2000)	**Members:** Within days of enrolling **Comparison Group:** 3–4 months after inquiring about AmeriCorps (roughly when they might have enrolled)	• Prior service experience • Other background characteristics • Attitudinal information related to outcomes
Post-Program Survey (2000-2001)	**State and National Members:** 1–2 months after completing service (approximately 1 year after baseline survey) **NCCC Members:** During final 1–2 weeks of service (approximately 10 months after baseline survey) **Comparison Group:** 12–15 months after baseline survey	• Attitudinal information related to outcomes • Information on AmeriCorps program experience (members only)
Post-Program Supplemental Survey (PPSS) (2003-2004)	**Members:** 3 years after baseline survey (approximately 2 years after most members completed their service) **Comparison Group:** 3 years after baseline survey	• Additional background information to model probability of program participation • Social networking behavior • Additional information on program experience (members only) • Limited data on post-program activities
Follow-Up Survey (2007)	**Members:** 8 years after baseline survey (approximately 7 years after most members completed their initial year of service) **Comparison Group:** 8 years after baseline survey	• Attitudinal and behavioral information related to outcomes • Limited data on post-program activities • Information about the Segal AmeriCorps Education award usage (members only)

[a] A note on survey timing: The duration of AmeriCorps programs was generally between 10 and 12 months. Cases were released for the post-program and post-program supplemental interviews at 12 and 36 months after baseline interview. Most respondents were interviewed within a few weeks of survey release. In some instances, it took longer (up to five months) to locate and interview respondents.

AmeriCorps program were similar in age and in outcomes measured at baseline. Appendix C presents descriptive statistics that show the comparison of measures for individuals in both State and National and NCCC by treatment and comparison status.[5] To mitigate the threat of selection bias, propensity score analysis (PSA) was incorporated into the design of this analysis (Becker & Ichino, 2002; Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). PSA estimates treatment effects by comparing treatment cases with comparison group cases that are about as likely to be selected into the treatment group based on their observable characteristics. The study collected a great deal of information about background and motivational characteristics that might affect both selection into treatment and the outcomes of interest. Examples of these characteristics include exposure to service during childhood and prior participation in service. This information was used, along with participants' baseline characteristics, to create a measure of each respondent's likelihood to join AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps NCCC—i.e., their propensity score. The effect of participation in AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps NCCC was estimated by comparing AmeriCorps members with individuals from the comparison group who had similar likelihoods of enrolling in AmeriCorps. This approach is described in more detail in Appendix I.

In the 1999–2000 program year, from which the study sample was drawn, total enrollment in State and National, NCCC, and VISTA programs was over

40,000 members. From the State and National and NCCC programs, a nationally representative sample of full-time, first-year members enrolling in program year 1999–2000 was selected for inclusion in this study. The sample consisted of 1,717 individuals who served full-time in one of 108 AmeriCorps State and National programs and 475 individuals who served full-time in AmeriCorps NCCC in three, of the then five, NCCC regional campuses. The comparison group for the State and National program consisted of 1,524 individuals, and the comparison group for the NCCC program consisted of 401 individuals.

Two previous reports were included as part of this longitudinal study on the impacts of AmeriCorps participation. The baseline report, *Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps, A Profile of AmeriCorps Members at Baseline*, was released in June 2001, and provides a description of AmeriCorps participants and programs. The follow-up report, *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps, Early Findings,*[6] released in December 2004, found that AmeriCorps had positive short-term impacts on members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, participation in community-based activities, and personal growth in the years following their service when compared to the comparison group of non-participants.

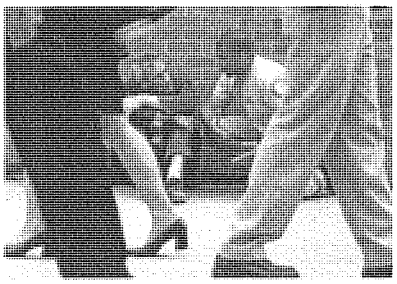
Methodology

Results from two types of analyses are presented in the report. The first type consists of descriptive analyses of characteristics of AmeriCorps participants in the 1999–2000 program years. These analyses utilize data from the 2007 follow-up survey, and use sampling weights such that a reported mean (e.g. mean age) represents an estimated average of the population of State and National or NCCC participants in the 1999–2000 program year.

The second type of analysis is a quasi-experimental impact analysis that is used to make inferences about the effects of AmeriCorps program participation in 1999–2000 on outcomes measured eight years later in the 2007 follow-up survey. The impact analysis estimates the effects of participation by comparing the outcomes for AmeriCorps members with outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using propensity score analysis to address possible selection bias. The use of a comparison group enables the study to describe the average effects of treatment on the treated.

As in the 2004 report (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004), several of the civic engagement outcomes are constructed from groups of related survey questions.[7] The study analyzes these program outcomes in terms of *changes*—the changes between baseline and post-program values of the same measures. These changes (which could be negative as well as positive) are then compared between program members and comparison group members. The study estimates the effects of treatment (participation in AmeriCorps) separately for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC programs.[8] The impact estimates are thus conceptually *difference in differences*: the difference between the change from baseline to post program experienced by the treatment group (members), and the analogous change experienced by the comparison group (similar non-members).

For these civic engagement outcome measures, the study also estimates separate impacts for subgroups of the treatment and comparison groups. In many cases, the study finds the estimated impacts of AmeriCorps participation are different for



Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and individuals from disadvantaged circumstances. For further insight into these outcomes, the researchers also examine differences in responses to the individual questions used to construct these outcomes between the program and comparison group members, overall and within subgroups. The researchers perform similar analyses for the employment, education, and life satisfaction categories, looking at differences in responses to the questions used to measure these outcomes.[9]

Limitations

Certain methodological limitations are inherent to this study. The findings reflect the outcomes of members approximately eight years after they enrolled in AmeriCorps. Finding significant long-term effects is often much more difficult than short-term effects as impacts tend to fade over time. Participants in both the treatment group and comparison group may have experienced many other important life events that have influenced them during the follow-up period.

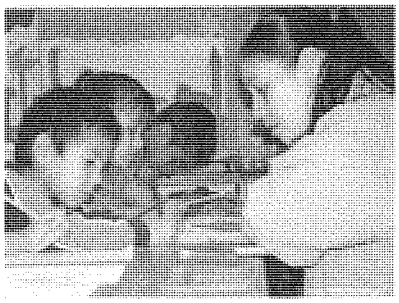
The evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design where the outcomes of AmeriCorps members in the treatment group are compared to those of individuals in a matched comparison group. While the evaluation does not use an experimental design to randomize treatment assignment, researchers applied rigorous statistical procedures, such as propensity score analysis, to help mitigate selection bias and support causal inferences (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). The effects of quasi-experimental research may be sensitive to the analytic techniques selected, and researchers attempting to replicate these results using different analytic techniques and assumptions may find that results differ.[10] Furthermore, like all longitudinal studies, maintaining the study sample over a period of eight years is often challenging and requires significant resources and time (Groves, 2006). The response rate for the *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* report is 71 percent, when calculated based on the respondents to the previous wave of the study. When calculated based on all respondents from the 1999 baseline survey, the response rate is 58 percent. Response rates and non-response variation over time may also affect the representativeness of participants used for the analyses.[11]

Exhibit 2: Characteristics of AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC Programs, 1999–2000 Program Year

	State and National	NCCC
Enrollment	36,000	1,000
Locations	700 grantees[a]	5 regional campuses
Age range of members	17+	18–24
Operated by:	Local, state, and national nonprofits, government agencies	The Corporation
Recruitment	Local[b]	National
Type	Primarily non-residential	Residential
Participation	Both full-time and part-time	Full-time only
Number of service projects per member	Generally one primary project, often with smaller short-term projects	4–6 projects

[a] Some grantees operate in more than one location.

[b] During the 1999–2000 program year, some applicants to AmeriCorps State and National were identified through a national recruitment effort implemented by the Corporation. Those applicants were referred to local programs based on their geographic and service interests for consideration as part of those programs' standard selection and enrollment process.



In addition, this report is based on the AmeriCorps program and its members during the 1999–2000 program year. Since that time, the program has continued to evolve and there are some important differences between AmeriCorps programs today and the program nearly a decade ago. During the 1999–2000 program year, slightly more than half of all members (56%) served in full-time AmeriCorps programs. The study's treatment group only included first-year full-time members. Today, many AmeriCorps members serve less than full-time in part- or reduced part-time programs. During the 2005–2006 program year, 44 percent of members served in full-time AmeriCorps programs, and 56 percent served part- or reduced part-time (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008b). In addition, during the study year, the primary issue area addressed by AmeriCorps was the provision of services to children and youth. While the majority of AmeriCorps programs continue to serve children and youth, the Corporation has also increased its focus on promoting public safety and disaster relief following the tragedy of September 11, 2001 and the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Organization of this Report

The report begins with a description of the characteristics of AmeriCorps members, and is followed by four sections assessing the impacts of AmeriCorps on members':

- Civic Engagement;
- Employment;
- Education; and
- Life Satisfaction.

Each section focuses on the longer-term impacts of the AmeriCorps experience on members eight years after enrollment. Members are compared to a similar group of respondents who expressed interest in the AmeriCorps, but did not enroll. Also included in this report are comparisons between members and national averages or benchmarks, using data from national population surveys.

Characteristics of Study Participants

In this section the study provides a description of the population of State and National and NCCC AmeriCorps members for the 1999–2000 program year. The results are intended to serve as a backdrop for all other analyses through this report.

Age

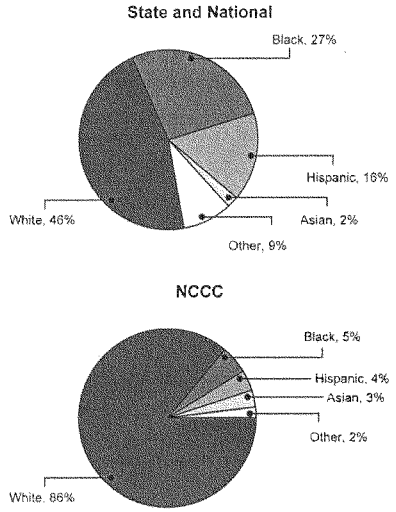
Participation in AmeriCorps State and National is open to U.S. citizens 17 years of age or older, and most State and National members in the study sample joined when they were between the ages of 17 and 24. Not surprisingly, enrollment in State and National often occurred at transition periods in young peoples' lives—age at enrollment peaked at around 18 and then again at around 22, roughly corresponding to traditional graduation points from high school and college. However, State and National programs enrolled older members as well, suggesting that participation in full-time national service is an attractive option for individuals throughout their lifetimes. The average age at enrollment was 28 years for State and National sample members, with a median age of 23.8. Members' ages ranged from 17 to 79 at baseline. Since the results in this report assess impacts eight years following member enrollment, the average State and National member is now approximately 36 years old, with a median age of 31.

Participation in AmeriCorps NCCC is limited to individuals between 18 and 24 years of age. Given NCCC's narrower age range, the mean age at enrollment for study participants was 21.5 years old. The median age at enrollment was 22.1. Now eight years later, the mean age for an NCCC member is 29.5 years old, with a median age of 30.1.

Race

The Corporation encouraged AmeriCorps programs to recruit a diverse set of members, a policy that contributed to a racially and ethnically diverse group

Exhibit 3: Race and Ethnicity of Members in 1999



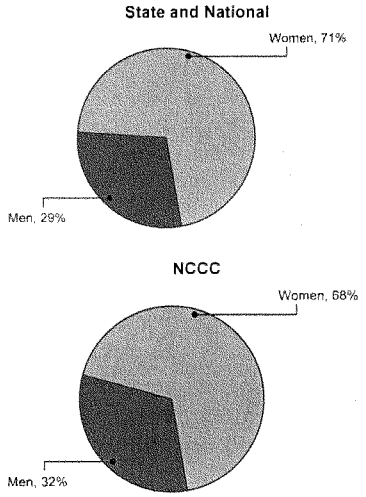
of participants. At baseline, slightly less than half (46%) of State and National sample members were white, compared to the majority of NCCC sample members (86%), and compared to 75 percent of the national population that were white in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000). Blacks/African Americans represented a quarter of State and National members (27%), while Hispanics/Latinos represented another 16 percent. At baseline, five percent of the NCCC members were Black/African American and four percent were of Hispanic/Latino origin.[12]

Gender

Particularly noteworthy was the predominance of women in the sample, who accounted for over two-thirds of the membership of both the State and National

programs (71%) and NCCC (68%) at baseline. In comparison, 65 percent of employees in the nonprofit sector are women (Odendahl & O'Neill, 1994).

Exhibit 4: Gender of Members in 1999



Disadvantaged Circumstances

One of the goals of AmeriCorps is to provide service opportunities for those from economically disadvantaged circumstances. Study participants were asked whether in their youth or in the year prior to joining AmeriCorps, they received public assistance, such as welfare, food stamps, or Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) assistance; lived in public housing or other project-based housing; or received other housing assistance such as Section 8 or housing vouchers. Since these assistance programs are generally means-tested, individuals from economically disadvantaged circumstances were defined as respondents receiving public assistance from any of these government programs.

Overall, 36 percent of AmeriCorps State and National sample members and 18 percent of NCCC sample members received public assistance or lived in public housing either during their youth or in the year before applying to AmeriCorps.

While growing up, more than a quarter of the State and National members (26%) lived in households receiving public assistance, 10 percent lived in public housing, and 5 percent received other housing assistance. For NCCC members, 17 percent received public assistance as youth, 3 percent lived in public housing, and 2 percent received other housing assistance.

In the year before applying to AmeriCorps, 15 percent of State and National members were on public assistance, 5 percent lived in public housing, and 5 percent received other housing assistance. For NCCC members, only one percent received public assistance in the year prior to serving in AmeriCorps, and less than one percent received public housing and other housing assistance.

Educational Attainment

Overall, at baseline, AmeriCorps members had more formal education than the general population. Ninety-two percent of State and National sample members had at least a high school diploma or GED when they enrolled in AmeriCorps, compared to 82 percent of Americans over the age of 18. Thirty percent of the State and National members had earned a bachelor's degree before enrolling in AmeriCorps, which is 8 percentage points higher than the national average of 22 percent in 1999–2000. Eight years later, 70 percent of State and National members have college degrees. NCCC sample members were similarly more educated than the rest of the nation at baseline. Ninety-nine percent of NCCC members had graduated from high school or attained a GED when they started their term of service, and 50 percent had their bachelor's degree at baseline in 1999–2000. After eight years, 85 percent of NCCC members have a college degree.

The Impacts of AmeriCorps

This section presents the longer-term impacts of AmeriCorps service on members' civic engagement, employment, education, and life satisfaction. As described in the methodology section of this report, impacts are measured by comparing the results reported by AmeriCorps members to the results reported by the comparison groups. Findings are reported separately for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC. When available, national benchmarks are included to provide additional context for the results.

To facilitate interpretation, the study uses several approaches in describing findings. First, line graphs, displaying the mean baseline (1999) and 2007 scores[13] for treatment and comparison groups, are presented for each outcome. These graphical representations present a clear picture of the changes in outcomes over time. Exhibit 5 displays a sample graph, which illustrates the changes experienced by the State and National treatment and comparison groups for a hypothetical outcome.

The hypothetical outcome, like several of the outcomes in the report, is constructed from a series of related survey questions. The slight upward slope on the red line indicates that, on average, State and National members experienced a slight gain for this outcome over the eight-year period following enrollment. During the same time period, as shown by the blue line, the comparison group experienced a decrease for this outcome. Based on this chart, the study would conclude that the estimated effect of program service is positive.

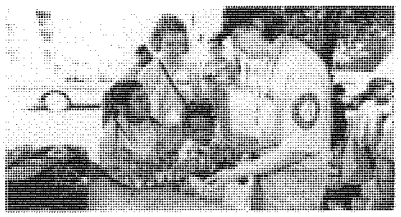
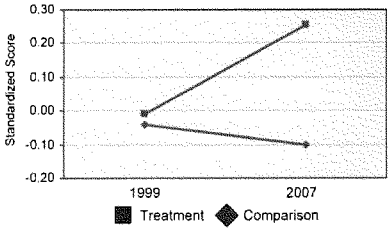


Exhibit 5: Sample Effect Size Graph



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.24, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

The study also uses statistical significance and effect sizes to interpret the impacts. In fact, the difference in the sample chart[14] is statistically significant,[15] and the estimated effect size would be called "medium-sized," using standards conventionally employed by policy researchers. Effect size is a standardized measure of the treatment (AmeriCorps program) effect, which can be used to compare the results across outcomes. The effect size represents the magnitude of the average treatment effect for each outcome relative to the amount of natural variation in that outcome. Effect sizes are increasingly used in educational research where conventional guidelines suggest interpreting an effect size of .20 as a small effect, .50 a medium effect, and .80 a large effect (Cohen, 1988; Lipsey, 1990). For the purposes of assigning descriptive labels to the effect sizes in this report, the researchers have adopted the following guidelines: small effect = 0 < effect size < 0.34; medium effect = 0.35 < effect sizes < 0.64; large effect = 0.65 < effect size < 1. The study estimated the effect sizes illustrated in these graphs with the same method used in the 2004 report. This enables the researchers to compare the impacts of service in AmeriCorps on outcomes in both 2004 and 2007.

Exhibit 6: State and National Effect Size by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison group), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes	2004	2007
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	0.51**	0.24**
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	0.30**	0.26*
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	0.27**	0.03
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	0.16*	0.06
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	0.21**	0.28**
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	0.33**	0.25**
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	0.03	0.04
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	0.06	0.26
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	0.02	0.23
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	0.31**	0.04

Exhibit 6: State and National Effect Size by Outcome Continued

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	0.38**	0.02
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	0.16**	0.19*
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	0.01	-0.05
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA[b]	-0.02
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	0.07	0.07
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude)[a]: Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	0.10	0.21
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	0.07*	0.26**
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	-0.01	-0.07
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA[b]	0.26*

** Indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level.
* Indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.
[a] Outcome is modified for 2007 analysis. See Appendix G for a more detailed explanation of the outcome.
[b] NA indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.

Exhibit 6: NCCC Effect Size by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

Civic Engagement Related Outcomes	2004	2007
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	0.39**	0.37**
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	0.29*	0.10
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	0.08	0.26*
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	0.09	0.19
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	0.34*	0.42**
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	0.21	0.53**
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	-0.39**	0.19
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	-0.16	0.09
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	-0.12	0.16
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	0.58**	0.10

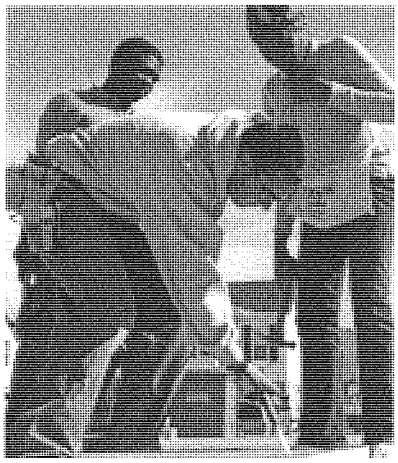
Exhibit 6: NCCC Effect Size by Outcome continued

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	-0.03	0.51*
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	0.44**	0.18
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	0.10	-0.06
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA[b]	0.36**
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	0.16**	0.28*
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude)[a]: Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	-0.20	0.22
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	0.08	0.14
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	-0.02	-0.01
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA[b]	0.39**

** Indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level.
* Indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.
[a] Outcome is modified for 2007 analysis. See Appendix G for a more detailed explanation of the outcome.
[b] NA indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.

Civic Engagement

Political scholars and researchers have advanced many arguments regarding the value of engagement in civic and political affairs (Bennett & Resnick, 1990; Habermas, 1984-1987; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1993). Generally speaking, civic engagement is a fundamental requirement for a healthy democracy (Barber, 1984; Hutchins, 1952), and where participation rates are too low, democracy may no longer be viable (Powell, 1982). Widespread civic participation guarantees that all voices and viewpoints are heard in the public sphere, which may not happen if fewer people participate (Piven & Cloward, 1988; Schlozman, 1984). Civic engagement also has positive benefits for the active participant, including the development of civic skills that encourage more effective participation (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Finally, civic engagement can promote "bridging" social capital, which leads to stronger, more diverse social networks (Briggs, 2003) and ultimately a healthier society.



Unfortunately, there is some indication that Americans may be less involved in their communities than in the past, turning into passive observers rather than active participants (National Conference on Citizenship, 2006). Over the past 30 years, Americans have reduced public meeting attendance by 35 percent and their participation in civic organizations has decreased by half (Putnam, 2000). As civic engagement diminishes, so do the social networks, norms, and institutions that strengthen the civic health of the country (National Conference on Citizenship, 2006).

AmeriCorps recognizes the importance of community participation and is designed, in part, to provide civic engagement and leadership opportunities for all program members. Participation in AmeriCorps helps members realize that they are able to make an impact in their communities in addressing some of our country's most pressing needs (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008c).

At its core, civic engagement is about a person's understanding of problems in the community, willingness to address the problems, and level of involvement designing solutions to the problem (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). These attributes can be measured across several stages of involvement. First, does one actively reflect on and assess the status of one's community? In doing so, does one perceive the challenges the community faces? Second, does one believe that one has the ability to successfully work for change? Third, does one leverage observations and a sense of empowerment with a corresponding responsibility for the wellbeing of one's community? Does this result in direct action on behalf of the community? Applying learning and motivation theory (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the researchers on this study created a three-stage framework for assessing civic engagement—Assess, Empower, and Act.

The study measures several aspects and dimensions of civic engagement by developing a series of outcomes that represent themes. Each outcome is composed of a set of related questions. For example, one aspect of civic engagement is an

individual's *connection to community*, which is measured by a series of questions including: "Do you have a strong attachment to your community," "Are you aware of what can be done to meet important needs in your community," and "Do you feel you have the ability to make a difference in your community?"

The civic engagement outcomes assessed in this section follow the three stages of involvement—Assess, Empower, and Act. In the first stage of assessing the needs of the community, the study examines:

- Connection to community;
- Identification and understanding of problems in the community; and
- Importance of neighborhood participation and civic obligations.

For the second stage of becoming empowered as a force for change, the study assesses:

- Confidence in ability to work with local government;
- Confidence in ability to organize community activities;
- Constructive personal behavior in groups, constructive interaction in groups, and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity; and
- Personal growth and effectiveness through community service.

For the third stage, direct action of civic engagement was measured by:

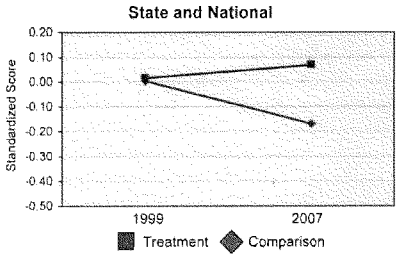
- Participation in community affairs and voting;
- Social trust;
- Volunteering; and
- Donating to charitable causes.

Assess

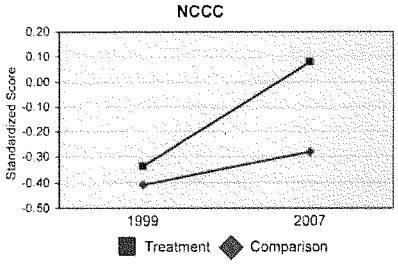
Eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, State and National and NCCC members are more likely to assess and reflect on the needs of their community.

State and National and NCCC members are significantly more likely than the comparison group to have a strong ***connection to community***, as characterized by their level of commitment and attachment to their communities and awareness of the social issues facing their communities. For State and National members, there is a small effect size for connection to community (effect size = 0.24). State and National members score higher on measures of their level of connection to community (mean = 0.07) than

Exhibit 7: Connection to Community



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.24, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.37, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

the comparison group (mean = -0.17). While the effect size is statistically significant, it is smaller than the 0.51 effect size measured in 2004. For NCCC members, there is a medium effect for connection to community (effect size = 0.37), as NCCC members score higher on connection to community (mean = 0.08) than the comparison group (mean = -0.28). The effects for NCCC have persisted since 2004, and are approximately as large (effect size = 0.39).

The effects of program participation are particularly pronounced for some subgroups of members. Both Blacks/African Americans (effect size = 0.48) and members from disadvantaged circumstances (effect size = 0.36) who participated in State and National have statistically significant differences compared to similar individuals in the comparison group. When individual components of connection to community are analyzed, Blacks/African Americans who participated in these programs are 10 percentage points more likely to have an understanding of how to meet the needs of their community than Black/African American members of the comparison group (77% compared to 67%). In addition, 79 percent of Black/African American State and National members indicate they have the ability to make a difference in their communities, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. Of members from disadvantaged circumstances, 61 percent say they are connected to their communities, versus 54 percent of individuals from the disadvantaged circumstances comparison group.

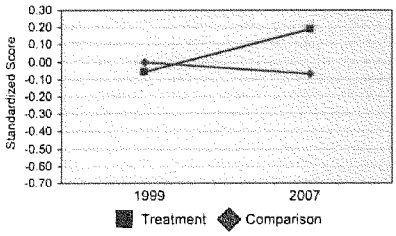
State and National members are also significantly more likely to be able to ***identify and understand problems in their community***. Among the specific problems facing communities are illiteracy, crime, lack of civic involvement, public health issues, and environmental issues. State and National members are more likely to identify and understand social problems in the community (mean = 0.19), than the comparison group (mean = -0.07). There is a small effect of participation (effect size = 0.26), which is slightly smaller than in 2004 (effect size = 0.30).

For NCCC members, there is no significant difference between the treatment and comparison groups on identifying and understanding social problems in the community (effect size = 0.10), although NCCC members score higher (mean = -0.20) than the comparison group (mean = -0.30). In 2004, there were statistically significant differences between NCCC members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.29).

When responses to specific questions are analyzed, State and National members report that they understand the local environmental (59%) and literacy (59%) issues more than their peers in the comparison group (52% and 49%, respectively). For NCCC, members and their comparison group report their understanding of local environmental (55% and 57%) and literacy (35% and 37%) issues at similar rates. Within demographic subgroups, Hispanic/Latino State

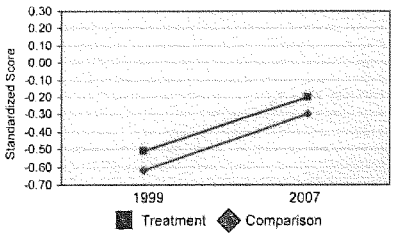
Exhibit 8: Identify and Understand Problems in Their Community

State and National



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.

NCCC



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.10, p>0.05 level.

and National members (mean = 0.14) are significantly more likely than the comparison group (mean = -0.56) to be able to identify and understand problems in their community. At 0.71, the effect size is large.

Hispanic/Latino State and National members are more than twice as likely to indicate that they understand the problems associated with the lack of civic engagement in their communities, as Hispanic/Latino members of the comparison group (42% to 17%). Fifty-five percent of Hispanic/Latino State and National members indicate that they understand local public health problems facing the community, while only 36 percent of the comparison group shares these perceptions.

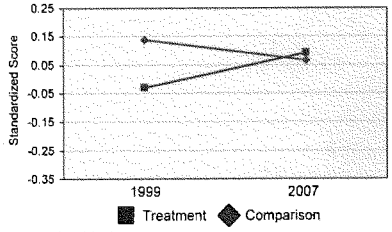
Another aspect of assessing community needs, as a stage of involvement, is the importance of being a responsible citizen. These neighborhood obligations may include reporting crimes, participating in neighborhood organizations, helping to keep the neighborhood clean and safe, and helping others who are less fortunate. Overall, State and National members are not significantly different from the comparison group in reporting on the ***importance of neighborhood participation***. State and National members score negligibly higher on the importance of neighborhood participation (mean = 0.09 vs. comparison group mean = 0.07). The non-significant effect size is 0.03, compared to the statistically significant effect size of 0.27 in 2004.

For NCCC members, however, the effects of service appear for the first time. NCCC members are significantly more likely to understand the importance of neighborhood participation (mean = -0.02), than the comparison group (mean = -0.29). There is a small effect of participation (effect size = 0.26), which exceeds the non-significant effect size in 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.08; p = 0.40).

Hispanic/Latino State and National members (mean = 0.26) are significantly more likely than their comparison group (mean = -0.15) to report the importance of neighborhood participation (effect size = 0.43). Almost 96 percent of Hispanic/Latino State and National members report that keeping the neighborhood safe is a

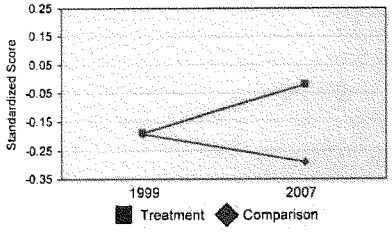
Exhibit 9: Importance of Neighborhood Participation

State and National



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.03, p>0.05 level.

NCCC

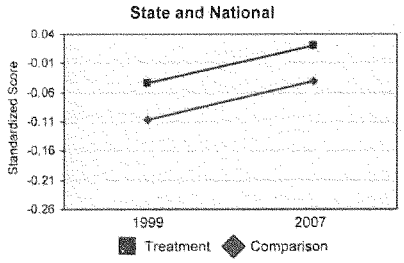


Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.

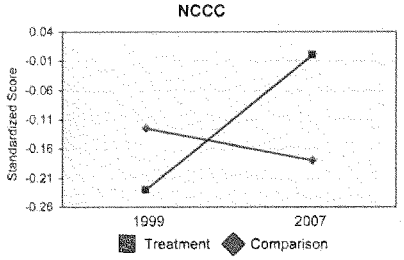
very important obligation, compared to 83 percent of the comparison group. Likewise, 57 percent of State and National members of Hispanic/Latino origin report that participation in neighborhood organizations is very important compared to 35 percent of Hispanics/Latinos in the comparison group.

Neighborhood obligations are closely related to ***civic obligations***. The study asked respondents about the importance of serving on juries, voting in elections, and keeping informed about news and public issues. For both State and National and NCCC members, results are not statistically significant. State and National members (mean = 0.02) score higher than the comparison group (mean = -0.04), but the difference is not significant. Similarly, NCCC members (mean = 0.00) score higher than the comparison group (mean = -0.18), but the difference is not significant.

Exhibit 10: Civic Obligations

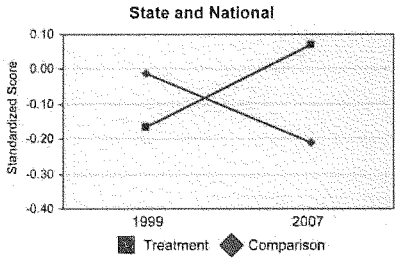


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.06, p>0.05.

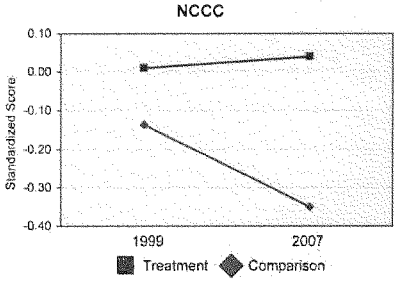


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, p>0.05.

Exhibit 11: Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.28, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.42, statistically significant at the p<0.001 level.

Empower

State and National and NCCC members are more empowered to work for the betterment of their community than the comparison group.

The most important civic impact of AmeriCorps on members is, perhaps, a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy–a strong belief that they can make a difference. Both State and National and NCCC members have greater ***confidence in their ability to work with local government*** to address community needs. Examples of community needs include fixing a pothole, building an addition onto a local community center, and getting an important issue on a statewide ballot. State and National members score higher on local civic efficacy (mean = 0.07) than the comparison group (mean = -0.21). There is a small effect for self-reported confidence in members' ability to work with local government (effect size = 0.28) that has increased since 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.21).

For NCCC members, there is a medium effect size for self-reported confidence in ability to work with local government (effect size = 0.42). NCCC members score higher (mean = 0.04) than the comparison group (mean = -0.35). The effects for NCCC have increased and continued to be statistically significant since 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.34).

When responses to individual questions are analyzed, 41 percent of State and National members indicate that they believe that they definitely would be able to get the local government to fix a pothole on their street, compared to 38 percent of individuals from the comparison group. Forty-one percent of NCCC members believe they definitely would be able to get the local government to fix a pothole on their street, compared to 34 percent of individuals from the comparison group.

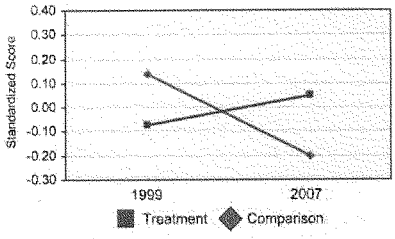
Within subgroups, when asked about their level of confidence in their ability to work with local government to build an addition onto a local community center, non-white State and National members are twice as likely as their comparison group to have confidence. Twenty percent of minority State and National members could work with local government, compared to nine percent of the comparison group. Similarly, State and National members from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely as individuals from the comparison group to believe they could definitely work with local government to get an addition built. Fourteen percent of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances could work with local government, compared to seven percent in the comparison group.

Respondents were also asked about their level of confidence in starting a community-based movement to address a community need. Meeting a community need included organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization, starting an after-school program for children whose parents work, and organizing an annual clean-up for a neighborhood park. Participation in AmeriCorps has a statistically significant impact on members' views of their ***ability to lead a successful community-based movement*** to address challenges facing their community.

For State and National members, there is a small effect size for self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (effect size = 0.25). State and National members score higher on self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (mean = 0.05) than the comparison group (mean = -0.20). While the effect size is statistically significant, it is smaller than the statistically significant 0.33 effect size from 2004.

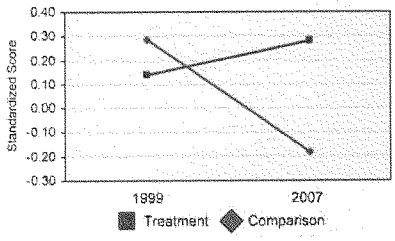
Exhibit 12: Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement

State and National



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.25, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

NCCC



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.53, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

For NCCC members, there is a medium effect for self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (effect size = 0.53). NCCC members score higher on self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (mean = 0.28) than the comparison group (mean = -0.18). In 2004, the effect of NCCC on members' self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement was not significant, indicating that NCCC's program effects may require several years to be realized.

Respondents were asked about their ability to start an after-school program with others in their community. Fifty-nine percent of State and National

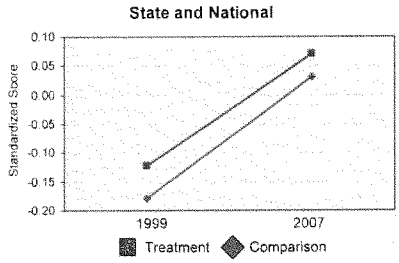
members and 60 percent of NCCC members believe they would definitely be able to collaborate with others in their community to start an after-school program for children, compared to 52 percent and 52 percent in their respective comparison groups.

In addition to empowerment and efficacy, individuals must also be able to connect with others to build social networks that generate "social capital." Social capital is defined as the collective value of social networks and the inclinations of individuals in them to do things to help each other (Saguaro Seminar, 2008). Bridging social capital "requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves" (Putnam, 2000). To assess the impact of AmeriCorps participation on members' connections to others, the study asked respondents about their behaviors and interactions in groups, and their appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity.

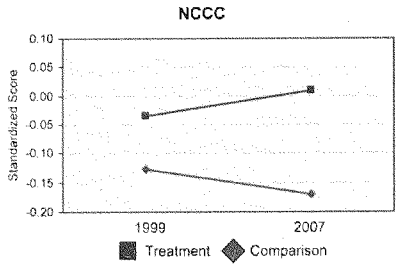
The study finds that there are no significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group on ***constructive personal behavior in groups*** (effect size = 0.26), ***constructive group interactions*** (effect size = 0.23), or ***appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity*** (effect size = 0.04). These findings are similar to the 2004 findings for State and National members, which were also not significant.

Similarly, there are no significant findings for NCCC members and their comparison group on constructive personal behavior in groups (effect size

Exhibit 13: Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

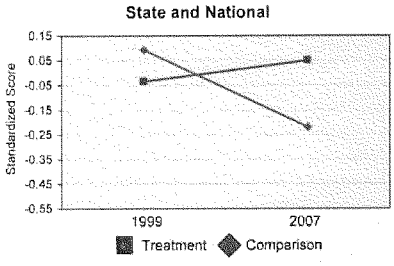


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.04, p>0.05 level.

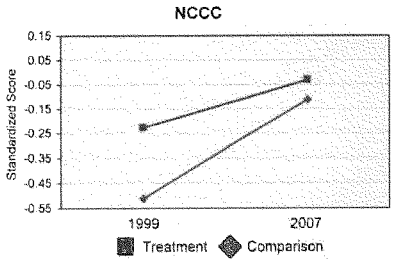


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, p>0.05 level.

Exhibit 14: Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, p>0.05 level.

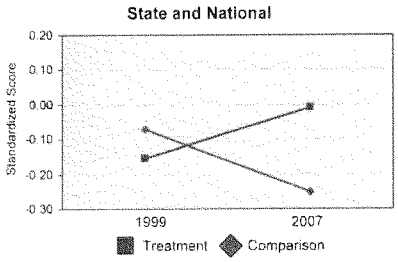


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.09, p>0.05 level.

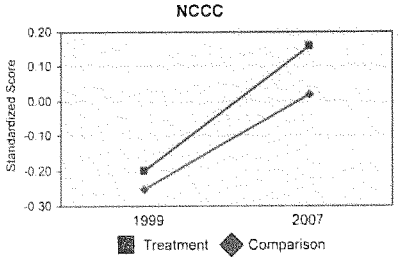
= 0.09), constructive group interactions (effect size = 0.16), or appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity (effect size = 0.19). In 2004, constructive personal behavior in groups and constructive group interactions were also not significant for NCCC members. Appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity, however, was significant and negative in 2004. Thus, the short-term negative significant finding for NCCC members, for appreciation of diversity, appears to have dissipated over time.

Researchers also assessed the effects of AmeriCorps participation on members' ***personal growth through community service*** and ***personal effectiveness of community service***. Personal growth through community service is measured as whether respondents feel that their community service activities led to changes, such as a re-examination of their beliefs and attitudes, exposure to new ideas, and learning about the "real world." There are no significant differences for State and National members (effect size = 0.04) on personal growth through community service. In 2004, there was a statistically significant effect (effect size = 0.31). Similarly, there are no significant differences between NCCC members and the comparison group (effect size = 0.10). In 2004, there was a statistically significant medium-size effect between members and the comparison group (effect size = 0.58). Clearly the effects of service on both State and National and NCCC members' personal growth through community service have faded over the past eight years.

Exhibit 15: Constructive Group Interactions

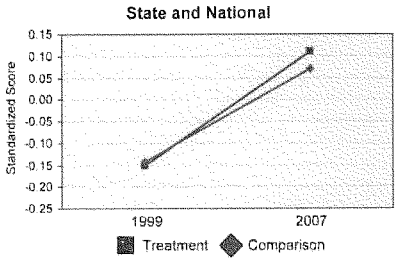


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.23, p>0.05 level.

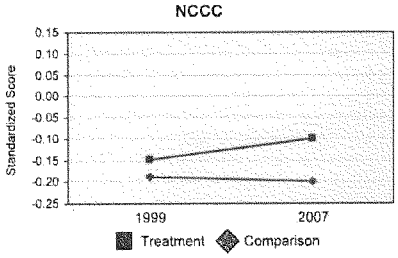


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.16, p>0.05 level.

Exhibit 16: Personal Growth Through Community Service



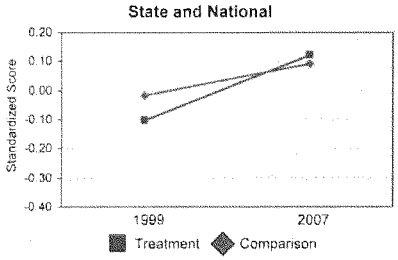
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.04, p>0.05 level.



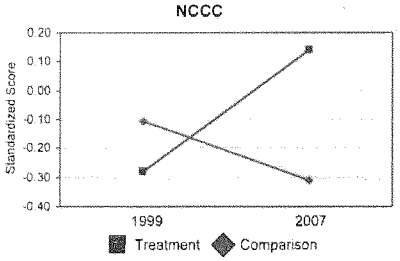
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.10, p>0.05 level.

Personal effectiveness of community service is measured as whether respondents feel that their community service made a contribution to the community, made a difference in the life of at least one person, or made the respondent feel like part of the community. There are no significant differences for State and National members with respect to personal effectiveness (effect size = 0.02). In 2004, however, there was a statistically significant effect (effect size = 0.38). For NCCC members, there is a statistically significant medium effect (effect size = 0.51). In 2004, there were no significant differences between NCCC members and their comparison group on personal effectiveness of community service (effect size = -0.03), which may indicate that NCCC program effects take time to be realized.

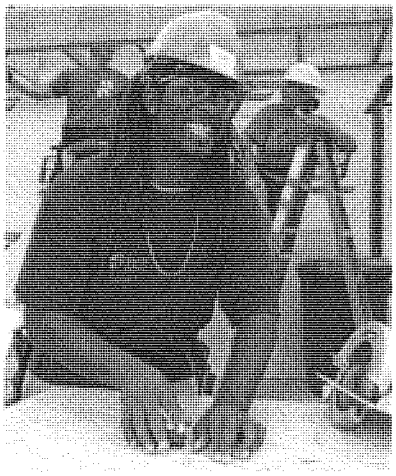
Exhibit 17: Personal Effectiveness of Community Service



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.02, p>0.05 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.51, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.



Act

Once individuals have assessed and are empowered to improve their communities, they have the necessary tools to turn their attitudes into behaviors; that is, they can turn their knowledge into action. AmeriCorps service is intended to instill and reinforce active behaviors in its members. Recognizing that there are many ways for members to act on behalf of their communities, the study measured members' community activities, voting, volunteering, donating, and social trust. These activities are among the most critical for civic engagement because they are measures of actual behaviors.

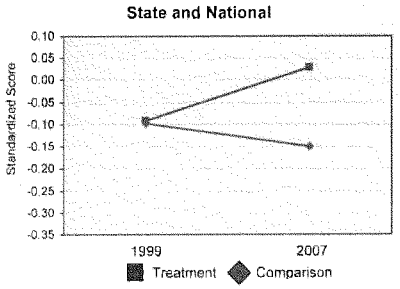
Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, State and National members continue to be especially active in community affairs; there are no impacts on NCCC members.

State and National members are significantly more likely to be ***active in community affairs*** as measured by attending community meetings, supporting organizations and issues they find important , and publicly expressing their opinions. Results indicate

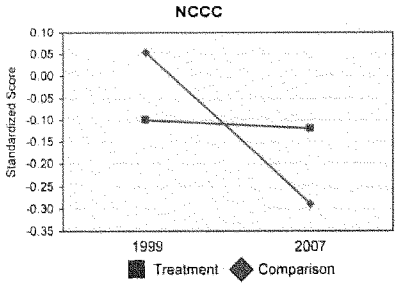
that State and National members are significantly more likely to be active in their communities. State and National members exhibit a small effect (effect size = 0.19), scoring higher on community-based activism (mean = 0.03) than the comparison group (mean = -0.15). The effect is slightly larger than the 0.16 effect size from 2004.

Subgroup analyses of State and National members reveal that AmeriCorps has a medium effect (effect size = 0.37) on Black/African American's likelihood of being engaged in the political process (mean = 0.16) when compared to Blacks/African Americans in the comparison group (mean = -0.21). Furthermore, non-white State and National members, taken as a whole, report a small effect (effect size = 0.28) of service on measures of community participation (mean = 0.02), when compared to non-white individuals in the comparison group (mean = -0.25).

Exhibit 18: Active in Community Affairs



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.18, p>0.05 level.

Participation in AmeriCorps has no significant effect on NCCC members' level of community engagement (effect size = 0.18), although members score higher (mean = -0.12) than the comparison group (mean = -0.29). This is a considerable change from 2004, when NCCC members were significantly more likely to be active in community affairs (effect size = 0.44).

Analysis of responses to specific questions indicates that State and National members are slightly more likely than individuals in the comparison group to participate in community meetings, events, and activities (69% compared to 63%). Similarly, when NCCC respondents were asked how often they participate in community meetings, events, and activities, 20 percent of NCCC members reported that they participated, compared to 17 percent of the comparison group.

AmeriCorps had no impact on State and National and NCCC members' voting rates in the 2004 Presidential election. Voting rates for State and National members in the 2006 Congressional mid-term election were lower than for the comparison group, while there were no differences for NCCC members.

Voting in national elections is one of the most recognizable forms of civic engagement and is fundamental to democracy. Although members are prohibited from engaging in any political activities during their service, AmeriCorps provides many members with their first exposure to addressing the issues facing communities and their first opportunity to work with community organizations and government officials.

To assess members' level of voting eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, the study measures whether State and National and NCCC members:

- Are registered to vote;
- Voted in the 2004 Presidential election; and
- Voted in the 2006 Congressional mid-term election.

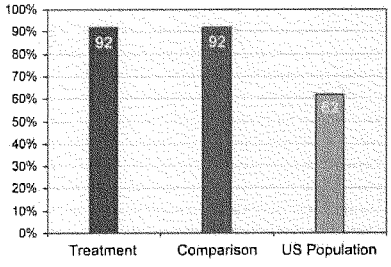
Registering to vote is the essential first step in participating in our nation's democratic process. The study finds that there are no statistically significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group in registering to vote. Nearly all State and National (92%) members were registered voters in 2007, the same percentage as the comparison group. Both groups exceeded the national voter registration rate of 62 percent in 2006 (U.S. Census, 2008). Similarly, there were no significant differences between NCCC members (94%), and their comparison group (95%), but both groups exceeded the national population in voter registration.

From 2000 to 2006, the percentage of registered voters across the nation declined. However, during the same time period, the percentage of State and National and NCCC members registering to vote increased. In 2000, 64 percent of Americans over the age of 18 were registered to vote. In 2006, 62 percent of eligible Americans were registered to vote (U.S. Census, 2008). In comparison, 84 percent of State and National members were registered to vote in 2000, while 92 percent are currently registered to vote. Similarly for NCCC, 87 percent of members were registered to vote in 2000, while 94 percent are currently registered to vote.

A stronger indication of civic engagement is participating in our democracy by voting in elections. In the 2000 Presidential election, 77 percent of State and National and 78 percent of NCCC members reported voting. In comparison, 76 percent of the State and National comparison group and 67 percent of the NCCC comparison group voted in 2000. The voting rates for both

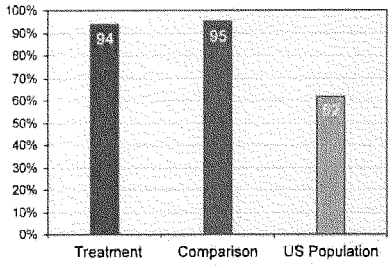
Exhibit 19: Percent Registered to Vote

State and National



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.01, p>0.05 level.

NCCC



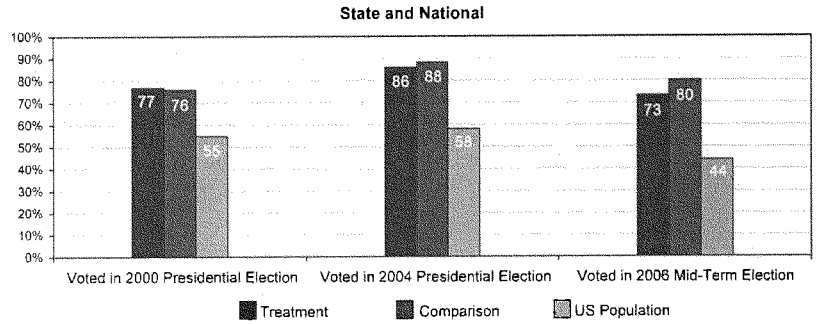
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.07, p>0.05 level.

AmeriCorps members and the comparison group are significantly higher than the 55 percent of eligible Americans who voted in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2008).

More recently in the 2004 Presidential election, 86 percent of State and National members voted, compared to 88 percent of their comparison group. NCCC members were also slightly less likely to vote than their comparison group (91% compared to 93%) The differences for both State and National and NCCC were not statistically significant. When compared to the voting rates for the national population in the 2004 Presidential election, both State and National and NCCC members, and their comparison groups, voted at significantly higher rates than the average of 58 percent (U.S. Census, 2008).

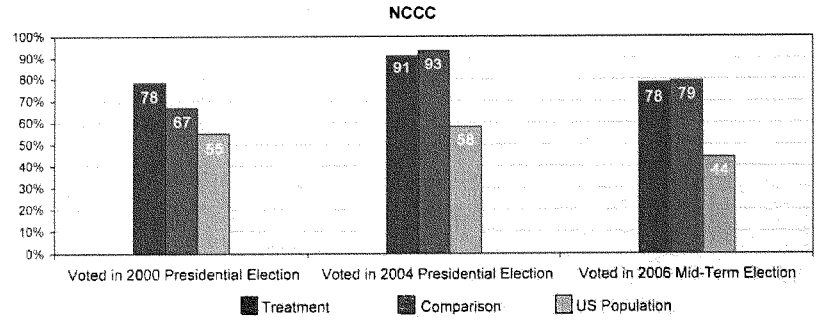
Historically, fewer people vote in Congressional mid-term elections than in presidential elections (Born, 1990; U.S. Census, 2008a; 2008b). The 2006 election was no exception, attracting fewer voters than even pre-election forecasts predicted (McDonald, 2006). Mid-term elections may have decreased participation either because Congressional elections mainly attract more committed voters while Presidential elections attract less committed voters (Campbell, 1966) or because presidential supporters may be turned off by negative campaign messages in mid-term elections (Kernell, 1977). Mid-term Congressional elections tend to revolve more around local issues, especially the level of constituency service provided by elected officials (Ansolabehere, Snyder, & Stewart, 2000; Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987). Thus, participation in mid-term elections is an important indicator of engagement with local civic issues, perhaps even more so than participation in Presidential elections.

Exhibit 20: Percentage of Population Who Voted in National Elections



For "Voted in 2004 Presidential Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.07, p>0.05 level.

For "Voted in 2006 Mid-Term Election", negative effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.15, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.



For "Voted in 2004 Presidential Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.06, p>0.05 level.

For "Voted in 2006 Mid-Term Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.03, p>0.05 level.

This study finds that similar to national trends, voting rates among study participants were lower in the 2006 Congressional mid-term elections compared to the 2004 Presidential election. In the 2006 Congressional mid-term elections, 73 percent of State and National members and 78 percent of NCCC members voted, compared to 80 percent and 79 percent of their respective comparison groups, and 44 percent of adults nationally (U.S. Census, 2008). The differences between State and National members and their comparison group are significant ($p = 0.03$) and negative. The differences between the NCCC members and their comparison group are not significant.

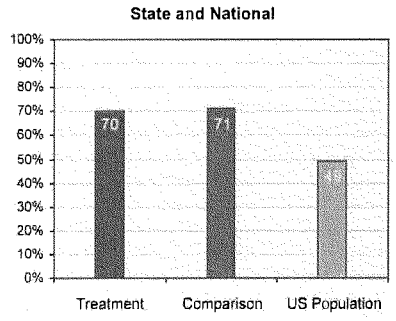
In addition to voting, respondents were also asked about several other forms of political activity, including contacting a government official to express an opinion, working as a volunteer for a political party or candidate on a campaign, or talking to people regarding voting for a specific candidate or party. For these measures of political engagement, results are not significant for either State and National or NCCC. These sustained longer-term effects are not surprising, since AmeriCorps programs and AmeriCorps members are prohibited from engaging in political activity during their service. Results are also not significant within subgroups, with one important exception. State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely than disadvantaged individuals in the comparison group to have contacted a government official to express an opinion on a local or national issue (effect size = 0.39).

AmeriCorps has no impact on State and National members' social trust and a positive impact on NCCC members' social trust.

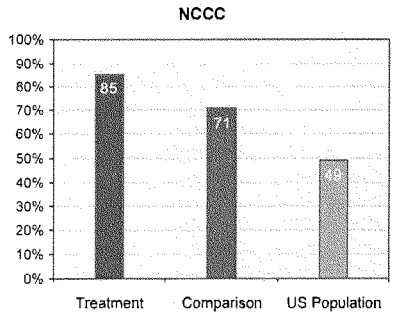
A large and growing body of research has suggested that communities with higher levels of trust in others also tend to enjoy a wide variety of positive social outcomes (Knack & Keefer, 1997). When individuals report that "people can generally be trusted," they tend to act in a more trustworthy manner themselves (Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman, & Soutter, 2000), which allows norms of cooperation to emerge or grow in strength (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Orbell & Dawes, 1991). Under such circumstances, people find it easier to trust one another even when they do not share a history of positive experiences.

As a result, in places where trust is high, it is easier and less costly to engage in economic transactions. Trust reduces the need for government intervention to prevent exploitation and allows entrepreneurs to spend more time innovating and creating (Knack &

Exhibit 21: Social Trust



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.02, p>0.05 level.

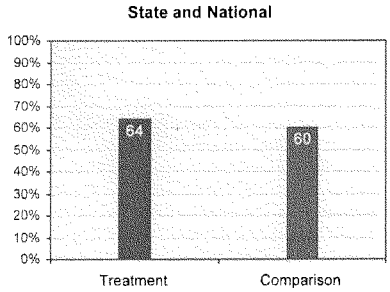


Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.36, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

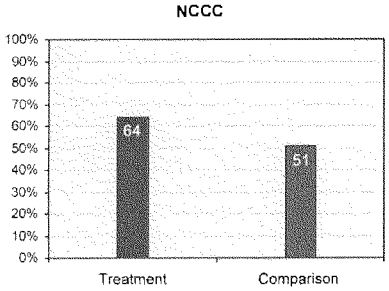
Keefer, 1997), which stimulates economic performance. Such an atmosphere also promotes the production of a variety of collective social goods (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993), such as reduced income inequality (Galor & Zeira, 1993; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997), better public education (La Porta, 1997), better public health (Kawachi, Kim, Coutts, & Subrahmaniam, 2004), and less violent crime (Galea, Karpati, & Kennedy, 2002).

Collective action in communities is dependent on the ability of individuals to trust each other. This social trust enables neighbors to come together to address community problems. For the first time in the Longitudinal Study, respondents were asked about their level of ***social trust,*** or the extent to which they believe that other people can be trusted. Seventy percent of State and National members believe other people can be trusted, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. Although the difference between the treatment and comparison groups is not significant, both groups are well above the national average of 49 percent (General Social Survey, 2004). Differences within subgroups are also not significant.

Exhibit 22: Percentage Reporting Volunteering in Past 12 Months



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.07, p>0.05 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.28, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

NCCC members are significantly more likely to report that other people can be trusted. Eighty-five percent of NCCC members believe that other people can be trusted, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. NCCC members are 14 percentage points higher than their comparison group in reporting that others can be trusted, and 36 percentage points higher than the national average (49%). This significant impact on social trust for NCCC members may result, in part, from the program's residential design and focus on team-based service. Reliance on one's team members, and successfully collaborating with others to meet community needs, may have provided the foundation for subsequent high levels of trust.

AmeriCorps has no impact on State and National members' volunteering rates, while NCCC members are significantly more likely to volunteer than the comparison group.

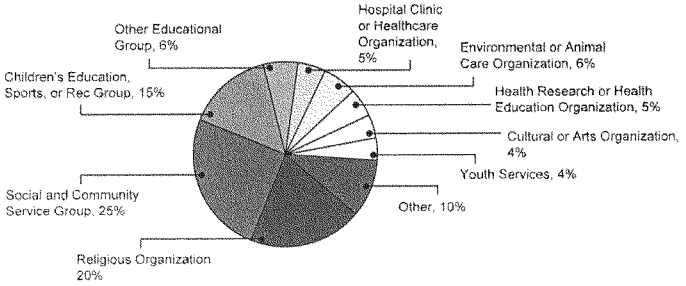
Volunteer service is one of the most important ways that an individual demonstrates one's commitment to the community. In 2007, 64 percent of State and National members report volunteering through or for an organization during the prior 12 months. The comparison group volunteering rate is 60 percent, rendering the effect not statistically significant.

Similarly, volunteering rates within State and National subgroups also are not significant. Sixty-five percent of non-whites report volunteer work through or for an organization during the past 12 months, compared to 59 percent of the comparison

group (percentage point difference = 6.42%; not significant). Sixty-six percent of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances report volunteer work through or for an organization during the past 12 months, compared to 53 percent of disadvantaged members from the comparison group (percentage point difference = 12.41%; not significant). Although the volunteering rates are not significant within subgroups, the fact that the subgroup rates are as high, if not higher, than the volunteering rates for whites (63%) and those from non-disadvantaged circumstances (63%) in State and National, is counter to national trends. Generally in the United States, non-whites tend to have lower volunteering rates (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007c). In this study, the results suggest non-whites who serve in AmeriCorps volunteer at rates similar to whites. The same is true for members from disadvantaged circumstances. Although generally individuals from disadvantaged circumstances have lower volunteering rates, the study finds that State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer at higher rates than those from non-disadvantaged circumstances.

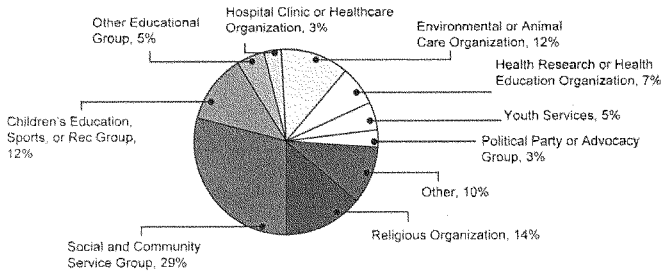
Exhibit 23: Types of Organizations Where Respondents Volunteer

State and National



Note: Other includes all responses that received less than three percent of responses: Immigrant/refugee assistance, Labor Union, Public Safety, International Organization, Sports or Hobby Group, Government Organization, or Political Party.

NCCC

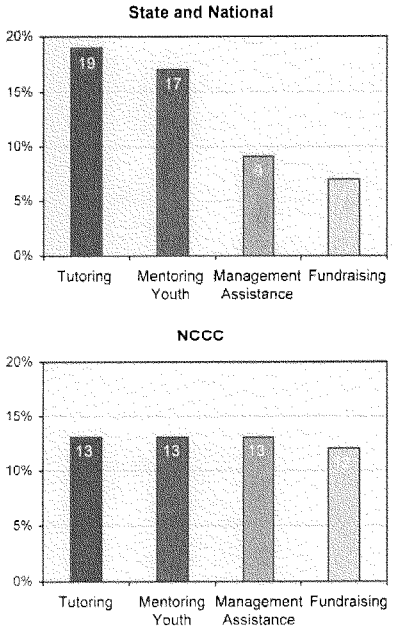


Note: Other includes all responses that received less than three percent of responses: Cultural or Art Organization, Hospital Clinic, Non-Profit Organization, Sports or Hobby Group, Immigrant Refugee Assistance, Civic Organization, Labor Union, Government Organization, or Public Safety Organization.

NCCC members are significantly more likely than the comparison group to have volunteered through or for an organization during the past 12 months. On average, 64 percent of NCCC members volunteered, 13 percentage points higher than the NCCC comparison group (51%). This significant impact on volunteering rates for NCCC members may result, in part, from the program's residential design and focus on team-based service.

The study also analyzes a subgroup of respondents who had not volunteered in the five years prior to joining or inquiring about AmeriCorps. A short-term analysis of this subgroup in 2004 found positive and significant effects on volunteering, suggesting AmeriCorps has the ability to increase volunteering of individuals who have not been previously engaged in service. By 2007, the positive effects are not significant for this subgroup. Sixty-one percent of State and National members who had not volunteered in the five years prior to joining AmeriCorps did volunteer during the past 12 months, compared to 50 percent of the comparison group (percentage point difference = 11.12%).

Exhibit 24: Most Frequent Activities Performed While Volunteering



The median number of hours volunteered by State and National members and their comparison group counterparts were both 40 hours each, in the past year. Among the subsets of those currently between the ages of 25–34 the median number of volunteer hours is 30 and 32, respectively. For NCCC members and their comparison group counterparts, all of whom are in the 25–34-year age range, the medians are 40 and 32 hours, respectively.

In general, the primary organizations with which State and National members volunteer are social and community service organizations, which receive 25 percent of their volunteer service. The second and third most frequent organizations are religious organizations (20%), and children's educational, sports, or recreational groups (15%). NCCC members volunteer for social and community service organizations (29%), followed by religious institutions (14%), and children's educational, sports, or recreational groups (12%).

The activities that former State and National members most frequently engage in while volunteering are tutoring (19%), mentoring (17%), providing professional or management assistance, including serving on a board or committee (9%), and fundraising (7%). Similarly, NCCC members spend the greatest proportion of their service hours tutoring (13%), mentoring youth (13%), providing professional or management assistance, including serving on a board or committee (13%), and fundraising (12%).

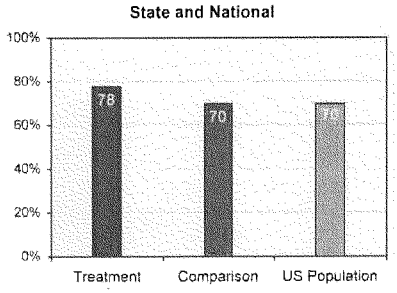
AmeriCorps has no effect on the rate at which State and National and NCCC members donate to nonprofit organizations and social causes.

In addition to being active citizens and volunteers, Americans provide important support for social causes by donating goods and financial resources. In 2006, Americans made donations of money, clothing, food, and other items valued over $295 billion (Benevon, 2007). These donations supported the work of more than one million non-profit organizations (Troy, 2005), many of which might not be sustained at their current levels if not for the support of private citizens.

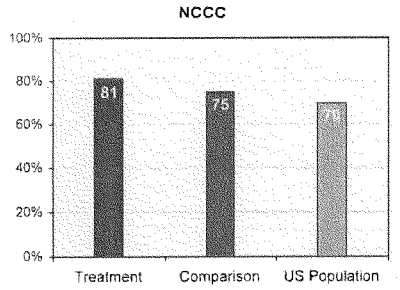
To assess donating behaviors, State and National and NCCC members were asked whether they or anyone in their families donated money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than $25 in the past 12 months. A follow-up question asked the dollar value of the members' donations. Members were also asked whether they donated money, blood, time, clothes, food, or professional skills for Hurricane Katrina or other recent disaster relief efforts.

The results indicate that State and National members make donations of money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than $25 very frequently,

Exhibit 25: Percentage of Individuals Making Donations to Organizations or Causes

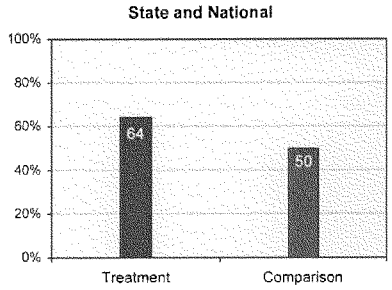


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.19, p>0.05 level.

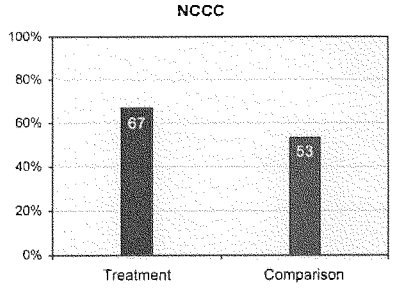


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.14, p>0.05 level.

Exhibit 26: Percentage of Individuals That Donated to Hurricane Katrina Relief



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.29, Statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.29, Statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.

and at rates similar to their comparison group and the nation overall. Although the donating rates are not statistically significant, 78 percent of State and National members donated to at least one cause in the past 12 months. In comparison, 70 percent of the State and National comparison group donated money, assets, or property in the past 12 months, while overall, 70 percent of Americans made donations in the past 12 months (Panel Study of Income Dynamics, 2006).

Results are similar for NCCC members. Although there are no statistical differences between members and the comparison group, a higher percentage of NCCC members donated money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than $25. Eighty-one percent of NCCC members donated to at least one cause in the past 12 months. In comparison, 75 percent of the NCCC comparison group donated money, assets, or property in the past 12 months, while overall, 70 percent of Americans made donations in the past 12 months.

AmeriCorps programs play a key role in organizing volunteers to help communities recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Since Hurricane Katrina, 10,000 AmeriCorps members have volunteered three million hours of service in the Gulf Coast region and mobilized or managed more than 229,000 volunteers (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a). This same institutional commitment to help Hurricane Katrina survivors holds true for State and National and NCCC members who served in AmeriCorps eight years ago.

The study asked respondents whether they had made donations in response to Hurricane Katrina, and if so, the form of their donation. Over one-third of both former State and National members and the comparison group donated money (38% and 34%, respectively), or clothes and food (35% and 33%, respectively) in response to Hurricane Katrina. For NCCC, 41 percent of NCCC members and 40 percent of the comparison group donated money for Hurricane Katrina. Almost a third contributed clothes and food (30% of NCCC members and 26% of their comparison group). State and National (18%) and NCCC (20%) members also report donating time to charitable organizations in response to Hurricane Katrina. In comparison, 14 percent of the State and National comparison group, and 8 percent of the NCCC comparison group, report donating time to charitable organizations in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Employment

AmeriCorps service provides members with the opportunity to explore different career paths, gain job-related skills, develop leadership skills, and network with community leaders, while engaged in activities that strengthen communities. For example, during their year of service, many members develop teaching skills as they teach or tutor students. Other members may be required to obtain Red Cross certification in order to serve through hospitals and healthcare organizations or provide disaster relief. Still other members learn how to manage projects and work in teams as they build homes or clear trails.

While these job training and experiential learning techniques are proven methods for workforce development, engaging in these activities through national service provides an added benefit that goes beyond merely preparing members for employment. Members are exposed to parts of society that they might not otherwise have encountered (Sagawa, Connolly, & Chao, 2008), and are introduced to careers they might not have considered. These career opportunities may have been perceived as unattainable, or may have simply been unknown had a member not served. In addition, while national service prepares members for the workforce, it can also be a conduit to careers that serve the public good. Members have the opportunity to serve in fields such as healthcare, education, and social services—fields that need visionary leaders (Sagawa et al., 2008), but are currently facing a severe shortage of qualified employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008).

In recent years, a decline in the number of people entering public service careers, related to an increase in competition from the private sector for talented staff, has led to a drying up of the government's "replacement stream" (National Commission on Public Service, 2003; Partnership for Public Service, 2007). Experts predict that 60 percent of the federal government workforce, and 90 percent of its senior executive service will be eligible to retire by 2017, thereby exacerbating the shortage (Council for Excellence in Government & The Gallup Organization, 2007). State and local government are not immune. They are predicted to lose more than 30 percent of their workforce to retirement, private-sector employers, and alternative careers (Carroll & Moss, 2002).

Similarly, the field of nonprofit management is facing shortages. Experts estimate that by 2016, more than 80,000 new senior managers will be needed each year to lead America's nonprofit organizations (Tierney, 2006).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008), more than three of every ten new jobs will be in healthcare, social services, or education. However, these fields are already facing significant employment shortages. U.S. hospitals are currently experiencing nursing shortages, and hospitals need more than 100,000 registered nurses to fill current vacancies. The United States will need 1.2 million new nurses (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007) and an additional 250,000 public health workers by 2020 to meet the nation's health care needs (Association of Schools of Public Health, 2008). In education, the National Education Association predicts that the United States will need 2 million new teachers in the next decade.

In view of the dire need for those serving the public good, the study focuses on whether service in AmeriCorps has an impact on the career choices of members, including:

- Employment in a public service career; and
- Effects on the importance of service-oriented careers.

AmeriCorps is a pipeline for careers in public service.

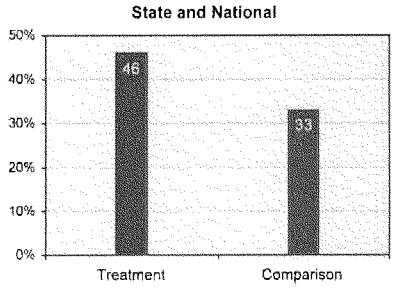
Throughout this evaluation, it is evident that not only are AmeriCorps members aware of, and empowered to meet, the needs of their communities, but members are pairing their convictions and observations with action. State and National members believe in working for the good of the community, with a statistically significant number of members pursuing careers in fields such as education, social work, public safety, arts, religion, government, or military service. Forty-six percent of State and National members are employed in these public service fields, compared to 33 percent of the comparison group. Although the difference is not significant, 43 percent of NCCC members are employed in a public service field, compared to 37

percent of the comparison group. One possible explanation for the different findings between State and National and NCCC may be a reflection of the different program models. For example, the majority of members in State and National have placements in public agencies and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country. While engaging in service, these members are also exposed to many aspects of working directly in a public agency or nonprofit organization. In comparison, NCCC members are based at NCCC regional campuses and work in teams to complete short-term service projects of 4–6 weeks in duration for several different sponsoring organizations during their year of service.

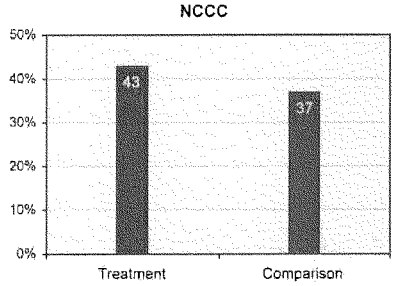
AmeriCorps has an even greater impact on the career choices of non-white members and those from disadvantaged circumstances. Non-white State and National members are significantly more likely to have a career in public service than members of the comparison group (44% compared to 26%). State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are 20 percentage points more likely to be employed in a public service field (46% compared to 26%).

The study also examines employment sector. Employment sectors, which differ from employment fields, include government, for profit, nonprofit, and self-employment. For example, an individual working as a teacher in a public elementary school would be included in the education field and the government sector. State and National members are significantly more likely to be employed in the government sector than the comparison group. More than a third (37%) of State and National members are working for federal, state, or local governments, compared to 28 percent of the comparison group. Thirty-six percent of NCCC members report that they work for the government, compared to 33 percent of the NCCC comparison group, but these differences are not significant. Nonprofit organizations often have the most direct and consistent contact with those who are in the greatest need of social services. Twenty-four percent of State and National members and 22 percent of

Exhibit 27: Percentage of Respondents Employed in Public Service Field



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, Statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.



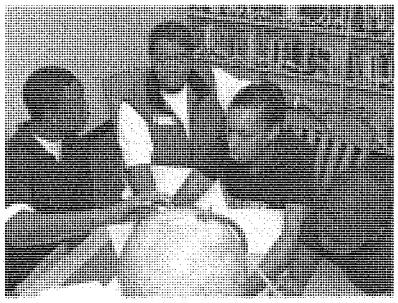
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.14, p>0.05 level.

NCCC members report that they work for nonprofit organizations. These figures are not significantly different from those of either comparison group; 23 percent of the State and National comparison group and 21 percent of the NCCC comparison group work in the nonprofit sector. When results for the government and nonprofit sectors are combined, the findings show that 61 percent of State and National members are currently employed in either government or nonprofit sectors, compared to 51 percent of the comparison group. Fifty-eight percent of NCCC members are currently employed in the government or nonprofit sectors, compared to 54 percent of the comparison group.

Members were asked about the ***importance of having a service-oriented career***. The importance of a service-oriented career was measured as the respondent's opinion about whether their current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others. There are no significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.21), nor NCCC members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.22).

Within State and National subgroups, however, the impacts of service in AmeriCorps on members' opinions of the importance of having a service-oriented career are fairly large. Non-white State and National members are significantly more likely to report the importance of a service-oriented career (effect size = 0.45). State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are also significantly more likely to emphasize service-oriented careers than their peers (effect size = 0.67).

A member's network of colleagues and peers can serve as a bridge to professional opportunities. Employment results reveal that AmeriCorps creates an environment conducive to connecting members to careers. Both State and National and NCCC members report that service in AmeriCorps introduced them to job connections, and made them aware of and helped them take advantage of opportunities. Forty-seven percent of State and National members, and 30 percent of NCCC members say that AmeriCorps gave them connections that helped them find a job. Seventy-nine percent of State and National members, and 83 percent of NCCC members report that their AmeriCorps experiences in the 1999–2000 program year gave them exposure to new career options. Sixty-seven percent of State and National members report that their AmeriCorps experiences in the 1999–2000 program year provided them with an advantage in finding a job. Seventy percent of NCCC members say that AmeriCorps gave them an advantage in finding a job.

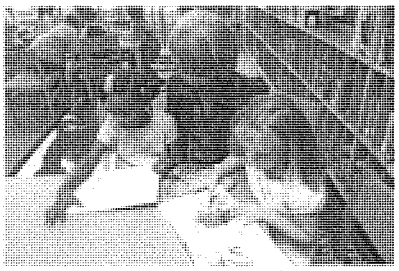


Education

Higher levels of education are correlated with positive outcomes for both individuals and society. For example, for the individual, higher education typically results in higher earnings and greater job stability, regardless of gender or racial differences (Stoops, 2004; U.S. Census, 2007). The average annual income for a college graduate with a bachelor's degree was $56,788 in 2006, while the income for a high school graduate with a high school diploma was $31,071 (U.S. Census, 2007). For society, a higher level of education keeps our nation competitive in the global market, results in higher tax revenues from increased wages, contributes to lower poverty rates, and results in fewer families dependent on publicly funded programs (Jamison, Jamison, & Hanushek, 2007; National Center on Education Statistics, 1995; Sandefur & Cook, 1998).

At the same time, higher education helps to nurture the next generation of civically minded citizens (Dewey, 1923; Honeywell, 1931; Lee, 1962). College graduates are typically more civically engaged and tend to make a greater contribution to the public good. For example, they are more likely to vote, volunteer, and engage in other civic behaviors (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003).

Recognizing the value that higher education provides to the individual and to society, AmeriCorps programs are designed to support the pursuit of postsecondary



education in several ways. National service programs often include components that increase members' understanding of the importance of education, beliefs in their ability to pursue education, and confidence that they can successfully earn a college degree.

In addition, the Corporation offers each member who completes a year of service an education award. The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is $4,725 for full-time service, and is pro-rated for members who serve less than full time. The award can be used for education or training with qualified institutions (such as accredited community colleges, universities, and colleges), or to repay qualified student loans, for a period of seven years after completing service. Many AmeriCorps members join State and National programs in order to receive the education award. At baseline, 70 percent of State and National members reported that the education award was quite or very relevant in motivating them to join. Fifty-three percent of NCCC members said the education award was quite or very relevant in motivating them to join.

To determine the effects of participation in AmeriCorps on members' educational progress, the study measures a variety of changes to State and National and NCCC members' educational attainment and interests when compared to their respective comparison groups. It is important to note, however, that members participated in service full-time for a year. Therefore, the comparison group had an additional year to engage in educational pursuits or employment.

The study focuses on several different educational outcomes, including level of education achieved and changes in members' personal educational goals. AmeriCorps' impact on the level of education actually achieved is measured by:

- The highest level of education completed.

Changes in personal educational goals of members are measured by:

- Effect on members' personal educational goals;
- Effect on recognizing the importance of education;
- Effect on level of education members expect to complete; and
- If the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award helped members continue their education.

Eight years after AmeriCorps, State and National and NCCC members have achieved the same level of education as the comparison group.

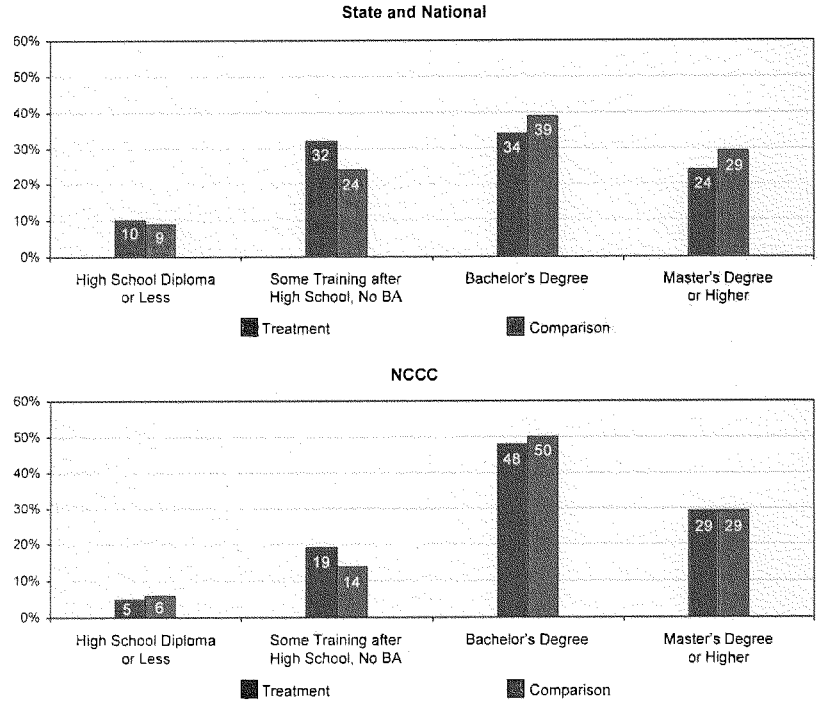
The study finds that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of education achieved for State and National and NCCC members and their respective comparison groups. Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison groups have achieved similar levels of education. More than half of all study participants have either a bachelor's or master's degree. Thirty-four percent of State and National members have earned a bachelor's degree and 24 percent report having a master's degree or higher. In comparison, 39 percent of the State and National comparison group have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. Forty-eight percent of NCCC members have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. In comparison, 50 percent of the NCCC comparison group have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. Since members dedicate at least a year of their life to service, their educational progress may have been postponed for a year, yet State and National and NCCC members have achieved the same level of education as the comparison group.

It is worth noting that eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, many former State and National and NCCC members are still in school pursuing a bachelor's, master's or higher degree. Currently, 24 percent of State and National members, and 18 percent of the comparison group, are still attending educational institutions. Twenty-five percent of NCCC members, and 21 percent of the comparison group, are still attending school. Results are not significant for either State and National or NCCC. With nearly a quarter of former State and National and NCCC members currently enrolled in higher education institutions, additional time may be needed to understand the long-term effects of AmeriCorps on members' educational attainment.

Within the State and National subgroups, 27 percent of Blacks/African Americans, 32 percent of Hispanics/Latinos and 24 percent of members from disadvantaged circumstances are currently pursuing a bachelor's, master's, or higher degree. Comparison group percentages are 24 percent, 2 percent, and 17 percent, respectively. Similar to the results for the overall group, these subgroup results are not significant.

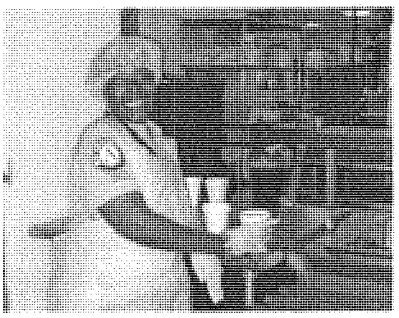
One explanation for the large number of former AmeriCorps members and individuals in the comparison group enrolled in school pursuing a degree program eight years after baseline may be found in the recent literature on transitions to

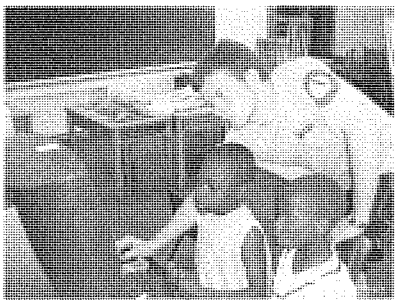
Exhibit 28: Current Level of Education Attained



adulthood. A general trend noted by scholars of the transition to adulthood is that young adults are taking longer to complete their college education (Fitzpatrick & Turner, 2006). Compared to young adults in the 1970s, about the same proportion of college students earn their degrees in four years at or around age 22, but the number of nontraditional or older undergraduate students has nearly doubled since 1970. Further, high school students today are expressing more reluctance to take on adult responsibilities, with an increasing number saying they "feel hesitant about taking a full-time job and becoming part of the 'adult' world" (Briddle, Flanagan, Osgood, Syvertsen, & Wray, 2006). As a result, additional time may be needed to determine the effects of AmeriCorps on educational attainment.

A second explanation may be the declining purchasing power of the Segal AmeriCorps Educational Award. The amount of the education award has been fixed at $4,725 since the program began in 1993, and has not been adjusted to reflect inflation and the rising costs of education that have occurred over the past 15 years. Adjusting for overall inflation between 1993 and 2007, the real value of the education award has declined from $4,725 to $3,303 in constant 1993 dollars, a decline of approximately 30 percent. At the same time, the costs for attendance at public and private higher education institutions have increased significantly. During the period from 1993 to 2005, the annual





cost of attendance at four-year public institutions increased by almost 80 percent (from $6,365 to $11,441 in public institutions, and from $15,904 to $26,489 in private institutions). Today, the award purchases less than one semester of tuition at a public higher education institution, not including room and board or other educational expenses. In addition, since the AmeriCorps education award is taxable, the value of the award is reduced by the amount of taxes paid on the award. The results suggest that while the AmeriCorps education award is an important part of members' motivation for joining AmeriCorps and has provided support for many members to further their education, the value of the award in relation to the increasing costs of education may not be sufficient to make members more likely to complete a degree program than similar individuals in the comparison group.

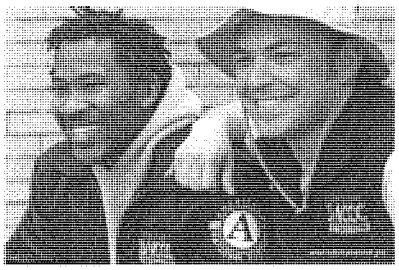
State and National and NCCC members were also surveyed about whether their experience in AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. For State and National members, almost two-thirds of members (66%) report that serving in AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. Fifty-seven percent of NCCC members report that AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. Within the State and National subgroup of Hispanics/Latinos, Blacks/African Americans, and members from disadvantaged circumstances, the percentages are 82, 72, and 74, respectively.

Life Satisfaction

In recent years, social scientists have devoted a great deal of attention to the measurement of life satisfaction or overall happiness with one's life. The growth of such research is particularly apparent in the literature of behavioral economics and psychology, where many studies examine the relationships between self-reported life satisfaction and a variety of positive outcomes. The most common self-reported measure—a simple, "global" assessment of one's overall life satisfaction—has been shown to affect, and be affected by, responses to more specific questions about satisfaction with various "life facets" (Lance, Mallard, & Michaelos, 1995). Dozens of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have suggested that overall life satisfaction, and its components, are positively associated with such outcomes as marriage, friendships, income, work performance (Diener, Lyubomirsky, & King, 2005) and physical health (Pressman & Cohen, 2005).[16]

Volunteering and being active in one's community may be a way to stimulate these positive effects. Many recent studies (Post, 2007) have suggested that volunteering and working on behalf of others can improve life satisfaction and also provide physical and emotional benefits to volunteers. For example, recent research indicates that volunteers, particularly older volunteers, have lower mortality rates than non-volunteers with similar backgrounds (Brown, Consedine, & Magai, 2005). Emotional benefits include lower expression of depression (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005) and higher rates of satisfaction with one's life (Li & Ferraro, 2006). Research also indicates that lower levels of depression and despair may directly impact physical health (Sullivan & Sullivan, 1997). Therefore, good overall health and volunteering appear to be part of a "self-reinforcing cycle" of well-being (Grimm, Spring, & Dietz, 2007).

Following these ideas, this study assesses whether AmeriCorps had an impact on members' self-reported levels of life satisfaction eight years following their AmeriCorps enrollment. The



researchers are interested in describing how the emotional benefits of AmeriCorps service accrue to members themselves, including how members feel about their physical state of being.

The impacts of AmeriCorps service on ***overall life satisfaction*** are assessed by asking study participants if they are satisfied with several aspects of their lives, including:

- Work or career;
- Personal financial situation;
- Physical health;
- Personal relationships with family and friends;
- Religious or spiritual life; and
- Leisure activities.

Eight years after service, State and National and NCCC members are more satisfied with their lives than the comparison group.

Service in AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC has significant positive effects on the ***overall life satisfaction*** of members when compared to their respective comparison groups. For State and National members, there is a small effect for life satisfaction (effect size = 0.26). State and National member score higher on overall life satisfaction than the comparison group. Similarly, for NCCC members, there is a medium effect for overall life satisfaction (effect size = 0.39), as NCCC members score higher on life satisfaction than the comparison group.

When individual questions that form the life satisfaction construct are analyzed, State and National members generally report being more satisfied than the comparison group. Members are very satisfied, compared to the comparison group, in their careers (46% compared to 41%), physical health (46% compared to 39%), relationships with family and friends (70% compared to 62%), religious or spiritual lives (54% compared to 44%), and leisure activities (43% compared to 33%). The comparison group (21%) surpasses the State and National members' (18%) response to satisfaction with their personal financial situation.

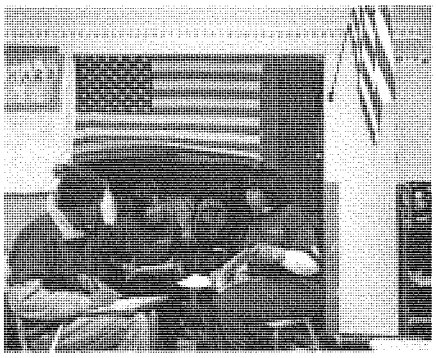
NCCC members show greater overall life satisfaction than their comparison group as well. NCCC members report being very satisfied, compared to the comparison group, with their careers (56% compared to 50%), physical health (54% compared to 48%), religious or spiritual lives (43% compared to 40%), personal financial situation (22% compared to 19%), and leisure activities (51% compared to 44%). Seventy-eight percent of individuals from the NCCC comparison group report being very satisfied with their relationships with family and friends, compared to 77 percent of NCCC members.

Exhibit 29: Percentage Reporting Very Satisfied with Aspects of Life Satisfaction

	State and National		NCCC	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
Work or Career	46	41	56	50
Financial Situation	18	21	22	19
Physical Health	46	39	54	48
Relationships with Friends and Family	70	62	77	78
Religious/ Spiritual Life	54	44	43	40
Leisure Activities	43	33	51	44

Conclusion and Implications

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is a longitudinal study designed to assess the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on individuals who served in the AmeriCorps State and National and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The objective of the study is to assess the impact of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, employment and careers, educational attainment, and life satisfaction. The findings in this report reflect a longer-term assessment of the impact of participation in AmeriCorps approximately eight years after enrolling in the program.



There are three important considerations for interpreting the findings in this study. First, in 1999 when this study began, AmeriCorps was a relatively new federal program and the majority of young people had very little knowledge of or experience with AmeriCorps. Therefore, those individuals who were interested in AmeriCorps in 1999—regardless of whether they were in the treatment or comparison group—were generally a more select group of individuals. In general, both the AmeriCorps members and the comparison group had high rates of volunteering, voting, and other civic behaviors prior to applying to AmeriCorps. It is not surprising, therefore, that eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison group continue to exhibit high levels of civic engagement, and both groups continue to be engaged at levels well above the general public. As a result, the high levels of engagement among both the treatment and comparison groups may make it difficult to find significant effects of participation.

For example, while there is no impact of AmeriCorps State and National on volunteering or voting, both State and National members and the comparison group are much more likely to participate in these civic activities than the general public.

Second, the follow-up survey analyzed here shows that some of the short-term program effects observed in 2004 have remained strong, or even increased in strength, in 2007, while others have diminished in strength. In general, finding significant longer-term effects are often much more difficult than finding shorter-term effects, since the impacts of a single year of intensive service could be expected to fade over time. Although about half of the impacts observed in 2004 persist into 2007, some of the effect sizes are decreasing, suggesting that program effects may fade over time. For example, connection to community has been significant in both 2004 and 2007 for both State and National and NCCC members, but the effect size has decreased for State and National. Meanwhile, in 2004, both State and National and NCCC members were more likely than the comparison group to understand community problems, but while the program effect is still about as large in 2007 for State and National members as it was in 2004, the program effect for NCCC is no longer detectable. Also, for both programs, AmeriCorps members are no more likely than individuals from the comparison group to emphasize the importance of fulfilling civic obligations, an effect that was strong and positive in 2004 for State and National.

At the same time, other impacts appear to take several years to develop and emerge. For example, in 2004, the effect of NCCC participation on members' ability to lead a successful community-based movement was not significant. Today, the study finds a large effect for this outcome. In 2004, both State and National and NCCC members had more confidence in their ability to work with local government officials than did members of the comparison groups; today, these program effects are still significant and even stronger. Similar results are found for the NCCC, where program members are more likely to have confidence in their ability to organize community-based efforts, a program effect that was not observed at all in 2004.

Third, perhaps one of the most interesting conclusions from the study is that the results suggest different programmatic models in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC may contribute to different types of longer-term impacts on members. State and National supports members serving directly in nonprofit organizations. These members work for organizations like the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Teach for America, City Year, and hundreds of local nonprofit and community-based organizations and public agencies. As a result, the work experience and job connections these members gained during their service may have contributed to the impacts on entering careers in public service and working in the government and nonprofit sectors. At the same time, NCCC's residential design and focus on team-based service may have contributed to the impacts on social trust and other forms of civic engagement. Dependence on one's team members, and successfully collaborating with others to meet community needs, may foster the high levels of trust among NCCC members. NCCC members also engage in several different service projects across many communities during their term of service, which may partially explain the positive effects on volunteering for NCCC members.

There are interesting differences based on member characteristics. For example, AmeriCorps service continues to have long-term impacts on the civic engagement and employment of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances. For these members, AmeriCorps influences their commitment to volunteer service, their service to others in the community, and their feelings of connection to their community. For Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino State and National members, their experience has had a significant long-term impact on civic engagement which continues seven years after service. For example, as compared to the comparison group, Black/African American members have higher levels of engagement in the political process and feeling connected to their community. Hispanic/Latino members have higher levels of feeling connected to their community and neighborhood at large. However, Black/African American and

Hispanic/Latino State and National members' levels of voting and volunteering are similar to their respective comparison groups.

This study also reveals some areas where the impact of AmeriCorps may be in need of additional consideration. For example, the study finds that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of education achieved for State and National and NCCC members and their respective comparison groups. Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison groups have achieved similar levels of education. While the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award does not appear to have an effect on degree attainment, the education award continues to be an important motivator for individuals to join AmeriCorps, and consistently is identified by members as one of the main reasons for joining. Additionally, the award appears to help members further their education, particularly for disadvantaged members, although it does not always result in degree attainment. On the other hand, it is important to note that one-quarter of members are still enrolled in school seven years after serving in AmeriCorps, and the longer-term effects on educational attainment may not be realized for several more years.

Another topic for future study could be changes in the typical service experience of AmeriCorps members since 1999–2000. The *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* report has followed State and National and NCCC members who entered service in 1999–2000; since then, both programs have undergone considerable change. For example, in 1999, the researchers selected only full-time members from State and National because, at the time, a majority of members served full time. Currently, however, slightly more than half of State and National members serve in part-time or reduced part-time programs. For the NCCC, service efforts in 1999–2000 were largely focused on conservation, such as cleaning parks, and construction, such as repairing and building parks and other public spaces. Currently, the NCCC program focuses on disaster

relief, in addition to a range of other activities to meet the needs of communities across the country. As a result, a study of a new cohort of AmeriCorps members could measure the effects of the current AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC programs, and could assess the effects of different amounts of service on member outcomes.

This report sheds light on the potential the AmeriCorps program has to make a difference in our country not only by providing service that produces community outcomes, but also by giving individuals the opportunity to be agents of positive change in communities across the nation. At a time when 37 million Americans live in poverty, about 800,000 youths are in gangs, 15 million children lack a caring adult in their lives, recovery from disasters in the Gulf of Mexico is still not complete, and environmental degradation continues to erode our natural resources, it is clear that our country needs engaged citizens to make a difference in their communities throughout their lifetimes. Moreover, numerous groups indicate that our country will face a sizeable shortage of public service professionals in the coming decades. This report suggests AmeriCorps can be a key strategy for not only building stronger communities, but also for building stronger citizens who are ready and willing to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow as highly engaged members of their neighborhoods and through careers in public service.

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Endnotes

[1] AmeriCorps includes a third major program, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). VISTA was not included in this study. VISTA is a highly decentralized program; its members serve individually or in small groups and focus primarily on building capacity in local communities. In contrast, AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC members focus on the provision of direct services. Since the VISTA experience and member profiles differ appreciably from the other programs, the effects of service participation may be different from those for State and National and NCCC members. Additional information about AmeriCorps programs and structure can be found at www.AmeriCorps.org.

[2] The ideal strategy for assessing program impacts is to employ an experimental design in which program applicants are randomly assigned into two groups: treatment (enrolled in the program) and control (excluded from enrollment in the program). However, during the 1999–2000 program year, when this study was implemented, AmeriCorps was still in the process of building national awareness and many local programs were working to recruit qualified candidates to fill their enrollment targets. Therefore, the Corporation determined that implementation of random assignment would not be feasible.

[3] Candidates are recruited and selected during the spring for subsequent enrollment in the NCCC during the fall and winter.

[4] The baseline report (Jastrzab et al, 2001), released by the Corporation in 2001, provided detailed information on characteristics of the study participants. The report can be accessed at http://www.nationalservice.gov or http://www.abtassoc.com.

[5] For additional discussion of the comparability of the AmeriCorps and comparison groups, see Chapter 4 in Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004.

[6] Corporation for National and Community Service (2004). Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps. Washington, DC. The report can be accessed at http://www.nationalservice.gov.

[7] Details of the construction of these variables can be found in Appendix G.

[8] Appendix J presents a detailed description of the analytic methods used to generate impact estimates.

[9] Appendix J contains complete results for all outcomes studied.

[10] Appendix K presents findings from the sensitivity analysis.

[11] Appendix E presents findings from a series of non-response analyses.

[12] It is important to note that the baseline survey was created prior to Census' change in asking about race and ethnicity. Therefore, for the AmeriCorps survey, the category "Hispanic" was treated as a racial category, the same as Black/African American and Asian.

[13] These graphs represent *regression-adjusted* values of each outcome measured at baseline (1999) and in 2007. The outcome was rescaled so that the baseline score has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The outcome value for each group was estimated using a multivariate regression model that controlled for key demographic variables, as well as variables that had different distributions for the program and comparison groups even after propensity score analysis was performed. The same regression model was used to estimate regression-adjusted values, both at baseline and in 2007, of each outcome. Appendix J contains a more complete discussion of the regression-adjustment method.

[14] The size of the sample plays a large role in determining whether an observed difference between former AmeriCorps members and comparison group members is statistically significant. In general, it is easier to detect differences with the full State and National sample, since it is the largest. For the NCCC sample, as well as the subgroups of the State and National sample, statistical power is diminished because the sample size is smaller.

[15] The p-value indicates the probability of observing the sample value for the outcome merely by chance if it is true that there is no impact from AmeriCorps participation. For example, a p-value of less than 0.01 indicates that there is less than a 1 percent chance of observing such a difference in the sample in the absence of any true treatment effect. For each outcome, we indicate whether the impact is positive or negative, if the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we indicate that there is no impact. For all outcomes, there are no statistically significant differences between the AmeriCorps and comparison groups on baseline scores.

[16] Many studies draw a distinction between the concepts of "satisfaction" and "happiness," arguing that satisfaction is more stable and less susceptible to changes in circumstances (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Pressman and Cohen (2005, p. 925) draw a similar distinction between two types of positive affect (PA): "trait PA," which is more stable, and more similar to satisfaction, and "state PA," which is more context-dependent and transitory. They note that changes in state PA are easier to induce in experimental and clinical study settings, which makes it easier to detect a causal effect, but that the physiological effects of these changes are not always beneficial.

AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes

Summary Report Executive Summary

October 2015

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE

AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes
Summary Report Executive Summary

October 2015

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Executive Summary and Key Findings

Do national service experiences encourage AmeriCorps members to stay civically engaged and pursue service-oriented careers? This question is central to this report, which examines survey results for former members of the AmeriCorps State and National (ASN) program, the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) program, and the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

The purpose of this study was to understand and document long-term outcomes for AmeriCorps alumni, particularly in four outcome areas: development of career-oriented soft skills, career pathways, sense of community, and civic engagement. By comparing results for cohorts of AmeriCorps alumni who completed their service in 2012, 2009, and 2004 (two, five, and 10 years before the survey project began), the study also identified outcomes at different life stages.

The study addressed the following three research questions:

- In what ways does participating in a national service program influence members' a) development of career-oriented soft skills, b) career pathways, c) sense of community, and d) civic engagement?
- In what ways, if any, do member outcomes vary by the six Serve America Act focus areas (disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families), and by the particular type of service programs (ASN, NCCC, VISTA) and program experiences?
- In what ways, if any, do member outcomes vary by life stage?

Research Methods

An online survey was fielded using the Dillman (2000) approach,[1] which involved sending alumni a pre-survey announcement, an email invitation, and a series of phased reminders delivered by email, phone, and mail. Alumni who did not respond online were offered the option to complete the survey by telephone or mail back a paper survey. The survey drew largely on the exit survey AmeriCorps administers to all members at the completion of their service, and was modified and pilot tested prior to widespread administration. The questionnaire items asked about demographics, life stage information, AmeriCorps service experience, development of career-oriented soft skills, career pathways, sense of community, civic engagement, AmeriCorps branding, service focus area, and willingness to participate in a follow-up survey.

The sampling frame consisted of all eligible alumni in the AmeriCorps Data Warehouse, an administrative data system that contains records of all members who enrolled for a term of service. Eligible alumni were full-time, half-time, and reduced half-time former AmeriCorps members from ASN, NCCC, and VISTA, whose most recent service experience ended in 2012, 2009, or 2004. Analysis of the data showed that there were 85,777 alumni who met the survey's eligibility criteria. JBS drew separate equal probability samples from each sampling stratum. Ultimately, 7,199 sample members were contacted, from which 1,468 alumni provided usable survey results, for an overall response rate of 20 percent. Response rates varied by sampling stratum, program, and alumni year.

Nonresponse bias analysis was conducted to determine if nonresponse was random or biased due to

[1] Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

systematic differences in characteristics between respondents and non-respondents.[2] Among the variables examined, the relative bias was as low as three percent of the sample mean for age and 2009 alumni but was 23 percent for VISTA alumni and 2012 alumni, 24 percent for alumni who used their education award and 27 percent for ASN alumni. Two steps were taken to adjust for nonresponse: 1) nonresponse weights were applied to each sampling cohort to correct for nonresponse bias across programs and years, 2) regression analyses were used for assessing outcomes, which held constant the effect of demographic and service characteristics.

Research Question One: Influence of National Service on Key Outcomes

Research Question 1 asks, *"In what ways does participating in a national service program influence members' a) development of career-oriented soft skills, b) career pathways, c) sense of community, and d) civic engagement?"*

Table 1: Key Outcome Definitions and Measures

Outcome	Measures
Career-oriented Soft Skills: The wide range of skills and abilities needed to succeed in the workplace. Essential personal attributes needed for success in almost every job.	• Cultural Competency scale (α= .85 pre and .83 post) • Self-efficacy scale. (α=.90) • Career-specific Skills (self) scale (α=.89)[3] • Career-relevant Skills (others) scale (α=.96)
Career Pathways: The extent to which AmeriCorps members maintain a service orientation in their choice of careers, and whether serving with AmeriCorps helped to define and shape an individual's professional goals.	• Career Pathways scale (α=.90) • Item asking how service fit into the alumnus' career pathway • Two items asking what the alumnus had done in the six months immediately following AmeriCorps, and whether the alumnus obtained a job directly related to AmeriCorps service in the six months after his/her service ended • Item asking about the alumnus' current career activities
Sense of Community: The formation and maintenance of strong bonds with communities and investment in the community's welfare.	• Item related to trust in community members. • Three items asking about confidence in corporations, the media, and public schools • Sense of Community scale (α=.80)
Civic Engagement: Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors consistent with active involvement in civic and community life, such as participating in community organizations or voting in national and local elections.	• Civic Participation in the last 12-months scale (α=.68) • Political and Community Engagement in the last 12 months scale (α=.71) • AmeriCorps Effect on Civic Participation scale (α=.90) • Civic Self-efficacy scale (α=.91) • Voting Behavior index with items on registration and voting • Item measuring boycotting behavior

Career-oriented Soft Skills: AmeriCorps alumni report having high levels of career-oriented soft skills including cultural competency, self-efficacy, and career-specific skills for interacting with others and for self-management. In each skill area, alumni reported that their skills had increased from before AmeriCorps service or that AmeriCorps service had helped build these skills.

- Nine out of ten alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed exploring differences with others and interacting with different people, respected others' values, and were confident

[2] Researchers used a relative nonresponse bias measure that is derived by dividing a measure of the effect of the response rate on the difference in respondent and non-respondent means by the mean of the entire sample. Assessing Nonresponse Bias in the Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey King SL, B Chopova, J Edgar, J M Gonzalez, DE McGrath, and L Tan. Paper Presented at the Joint Statistical Meetings 2009 accessed at http://www.bls.gov/osmr/pdf/st090220.pdf

[3] The career-specific skills scale consists of two factors, one pertaining to managing self and another pertaining to interacting with others.

interacting with diverse people. Alumni showed gains in all these areas compared to before service, with the largest gains in confidence interacting with diverse people.

- Nine out of ten alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they could solve difficult problems, persist when opposed, accomplish goals, handle unexpected events and unforeseen situations, remain calm, cope with difficulties, and identify multiple solutions. Alumni rated their current skills as higher than at pre-service, with the greatest gains being in their abilities to deal with unexpected events and unforeseen situations.
- Most alumni rated themselves as having good or excellent career-specific skills, including written and oral communication, teamwork, collaboration with diverse individuals, professional conduct, independence, planning, time management, prioritization, conflict management, adaptability, persistence, and goal orientation. On average, 85 percent of alumni reported good or excellent skills in interacting with others and 95 percent reported good or excellent skills in self-management. On average, alumni said that AmeriCorps helped somewhat or a great deal in building their skills in interacting with others (85 percent) and in self-management (95 percent).

Career Pathways: While there was some diversity in career pathways, most alumni were students prior to AmeriCorps (63 percent), and of those who were engaged in education six months prior to AmeriCorps, analysis shows that 44 percent were working in the government or nonprofit sector six months after AmeriCorps and 56 percent are working in the government or nonprofit sector now.

Other alumni attended school after AmeriCorps, furthering their education goals. At the time of the survey, more than half of alumni reported working in the nonprofit (33 percent) or government sector (25 percent). Following service, approximately one quarter of participants (27 percent) obtained a job directly connected to the organization or agency in which they served. Fifteen percent are currently in a position related to their service. A majority of alumni (80 percent) indicated their service experience was worthwhile in furthering their careers. Most alumni responded that AmeriCorps service either aligned with their existing career path or directed them towards a service-related field, with 34 percent indicating that their career path turned in the direction of service-related work following AmeriCorps. After service, 43 percent of alumni stayed in their community of service.

Sense of Community: Overall, alumni reported having a strong sense of community, with an average of 82 percent of alumni agreeing that they felt a strong personal attachment to their community, were aware of community needs, felt an obligation to contribute to their community, planned or were actively involved in community issues, and voted in elections. Alumni reported a stronger sense of community at the time of the survey compared to before service, with an average of 22 percent more alumni having agreed or strongly agreed they were involved in the community. The strongest gains were in alumni who agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware of the important needs in their community and that they have a personal attachment to their community. Two thirds of alumni reported that they can trust most or all of the people in their neighborhood. At the same time, less than half of alumni reported some or a great deal of confidence in corporations (40 percent), or the media (42 percent), while a large majority (83 percent) reported some or a great deal of confidence in public schools.

Civic Engagement: AmeriCorps alumni reported high levels of civic engagement and civic self-efficacy and indicated that their AmeriCorps experience influenced their civic engagement. Almost 80 percent of alumni indicated that they definitely or probably had civic self-efficacy, defined as the ability to deal with community problems by taking a range of actions that include creating a plan to address an issue, getting others involved, organizing and running a meeting, identifying individuals or groups who could help, or contacting an elected official. More than half of alumni noted that their service experience had made them more likely to engage in civic activities such as volunteering for or donating money to a cause they cared

about. Almost all alumni (94 percent) are registered to vote and 89 percent reported voting in the last presidential election.

Research Question Two: Variation in Key Outcomes by Focus Areas, Programs, and Experience

Research Question 2 asks, *"In what ways, if any, do member outcomes vary by the six Serve America Act focus areas (disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families), and by the particular type of service programs (ASN, NCCC, VISTA) and program experiences?"*

Overall, there were no strong patterns between outcomes and service area focus or service program. Generally, in each outcome area, small numbers of service focus areas or program cohorts were significantly associated with a few outcomes. Similarly, no set of focus areas or service program cohorts was significantly related to all of the outcome areas or to all of the outcomes within an outcome area.

Service experience variables were more often significantly related to outcomes. To measure the effect of program experience on outcomes, the survey asked alumni about several aspects of their service experience: how many terms they had served, in which programs they served, whether their final service term was full-time, whether they had completed it, and whether they had used their education award. Alumni also responded to questions about satisfaction with their AmeriCorps experience, as well as questions asking them to rate several aspects of their service experience, which were used to derive a positive service experience scale and a negative service experience scale. The most consistent association was between a positive service experience and more positive outcomes in all outcome areas. Other measures of service experience were significantly related to several outcomes, but there were no consistent patterns across outcome areas or measures within an outcome area.

Career-oriented soft skills were strongly related to having a positive service experience. Alumni that reported having a more positive service experience had significantly higher levels of each of the career-oriented soft skills, including cultural competency, post-AmeriCorps self-efficacy, and career-specific skills, both for managing self and for interacting with others. A positive service experience also increased alumni's likelihood of attributing the gains in their career-specific skills to AmeriCorps, as did alumni's greater satisfaction with their service experience.

A positive service experience and greater overall satisfaction with AmeriCorps were also significantly related to higher career pathways scale scores. Additional variables influencing career pathways included having multiple terms of service, having a job with an organization related to service both six months after service and at the time of the survey, and completing the last term of service, which was associated with greater frequency of alumni listing AmeriCorps on their resume and with currently having a job with an organization associated with the alumni's service.

As with career-oriented soft skills and career pathways, the most consistent predictor of sense of community and civic participation outcomes was having a positive service experience. A more positive service experience was significantly related to increased sense of community post-AmeriCorps, trust in neighbors, trust in corporations, trust in the media, attributing changes in civic engagement to AmeriCorps service, increased discussion and thinking on civic issues, and increased likelihood of boycotting a service or product.

Research Question Three: Variation in Key Outcomes by Life Stage

Research Question 3 asks, *"In what ways, if any, do member outcomes vary by life stage?"* The answer to this research question focuses on alumni's personal characteristics obtained from survey questions about

demographics, life stages, and the skills and abilities that alumni brought to their AmeriCorps service.

In general, demographics, life stage, and pre-service skills had little effect on most alumni outcomes. Demographics had little effect on career-oriented soft skills, sense of community, and civic engagement. Alumni with less than a four-year degree were more likely to encourage civic engagement among others. With regard to career pathways, alumni who had less than a four-year degree at the time of the survey were more likely to be currently unemployed and less likely to be currently working at a public service job. They were also less likely to be serving in a position at or directly connected to the agency that sponsored the AmeriCorps program in which they served. Alumni's life stage did have an effect on self-efficacy, with those who were unemployed, working in the public sector, at a nonprofit, or at a government agency, prior to service reporting higher post-service self-efficacy. Alumni's ratings of their self-efficacy also decreased with age. Alumni employed in the private sector prior to service were more likely to be employed in the private sector post-service. Alumni who were older, in school before AmeriCorps, or parents or caregivers at the time of service were more likely to be currently engaged in service. Alumni's post-service sense of community and civic engagement was largely independent of alumni's life stage. As expected, alumni's pre-service skills were significantly associated with their corresponding post-service levels. Career pathways outcomes were independent of pre-service skills. Higher pre-service sense of community predicted higher civic engagement, and higher pre-service cultural competency and self-efficacy predicted higher career-specific skills.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, respondents indicated that there were substantial benefits to participation in AmeriCorps programs, including AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA. Across all alumni, a vast majority stated that they felt they made a contribution to the community (92 percent), gained an understanding of the community they served (93 percent), and were exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world (87 percent). Due to participation in AmeriCorps, a majority of respondents stated that they were more likely to volunteer and to participate in community organizations. In terms of the impact of service on alumni's careers, respondents reported that participation in AmeriCorps helped them figure out the next steps of their career and increased their ability to work with others and to respond to unexpected challenges. In open-ended responses, AmeriCorps participants stated that their experience helped them to define their values, made them more likely to pursue a career in service, and had a positive impact on their life even after their term of service ended. Positive outcomes, on the whole, were largely consistent across AmeriCorps participants and independent of their service programs, focus areas, or personal characteristics. The key consistent driver of successful outcomes in developing career-oriented soft skills, having a career pathway that led to work in the government or nonprofit sector, and maintaining a sense of community and civic engagement after AmeriCorps was a positive service experience. There were also some differences in outcomes related to other service experience factors, but no strong patterns.

The association between satisfaction and positive service experience with successful later outcomes provides support for the usefulness of measures of satisfaction and service experience quality in post-service surveys. Support for an association between satisfaction immediately following service and later satisfaction and positive outcomes would be strengthened by a longitudinal study following a cohort of AmeriCorps members. Support for survey findings may also be substantially strengthened by an impact evaluation using a benchmarking or comparison group that matched alumni on key characteristics.

Link:https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR—CNCS—Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Executive%20Summary.pdf

[Questions submitted for the record and their responses follows:]

MAJORITY MEMBERS:

JOHN KLINE, MINNESOTA, *Chairman*

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June 29, 2016

Ms. Deborah Jeffrey
Inspector General
Corporation for National and Community Service
250 E St. SW Suite 4100
Washington, D.C. 20525

Dear Inspector General Jeffrey:

Thank you for testifying before the Committee on Education and the Workforce at the hearing entitled "Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service" on Tuesday, May 24, 2016. I appreciate your participation.

I have enclosed my additional questions for inclusion in the final hearing record. Please provide a written response **no later than Wednesday, July 20, 2016.** Responses should be sent to James Forester on the Committee staff, who can be contacted at (202) 225-6558.

Thank you for your important contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Virginia Foxx

VIRGINIA FOXX
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Training

Subcommittee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC)

1. In your recent performance audit, you stated the Corporation's Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Agency Financial Report did not comply with the *Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010* (IPERA) . What issues cause the Corporation to be out of compliance, and why is compliance with IPERA a good indicator to ensure a federal agency is a good steward of federal taxpayer funds? What recommendations do you have for the Corporation to improve compliance?

2. How often have you recommended the Corporation terminate a grant or debar a grantee? What other forms of corrective action are used, and how would you assess the effectiveness of those various actions?

3. Do prohibited activities occur more frequently at the grantee or subgrantee level? What is the most common instance of waste, fraud, and abuse committed within the Corporation? How can the Corporation reduce and eliminate these wasteful practices?

4. How many calls or other communications has the inspector general's office received alleging prohibited activities are taking place in the last calendar year?

5. When the Corporation discovers AmeriCorps members have engage in prohibited activities, how often is the discovery the result of effective monitoring by the Corporation rather than self-reporting by the grantees or subgrantees?

6. Does the Corporation provide adequate guidance to grantees concerning prohibited activities? What reforms are needed to ensure the Corporation provides effective guidance to grantees?

7. Since the hearing, your office released its Semiannual Report to Congress for the first half of FY 2016 (October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016). In the report, you state the Corporation "struggles to provide effective oversight of $750,000,000 that it devotes annually to grants" leaving these funds "unnecessarily vulnerable to waste, fraud, mismanagement and abuse." Please detail your concerns with the Corporation's ability to provide effective oversight. What steps can the Corporation take to assure you and the Committee those taxpayer dollars are not vulnerable to waste, fraud, mismanagement, and abuse?

8. Please provide the Committee with all documents related to your investigation into prohibited activities at a NACHC subgrantee (Case ID: 2016-003).

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June 29, 2016

The Honorable Wendy Spencer
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service
250 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20525

Dear Ms. Spencer:

Thank you for testifying before the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training at our May 24, 2016, hearing entitled "Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service."

Since the hearing, the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released its Semiannual Report to Congress for the first half of fiscal year 2016 (October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016). This report is scathing in its assessment of the Corporation's ability to effectively manage grants and conduct oversight of grantees, precisely the issue addressed before the Committee in the hearing.

Specifically, the Inspector General states the Corporation "struggles to provide effective oversight of $750,000,000 that it devotes annually to grants." This represents 75 percent of the Corporation's appropriated funds, and I share the concerns of the Inspector General who has stated that these funds are "unnecessarily vulnerable to waste, fraud, mismanagement and abuse." The Corporation should have taken steps to improve the "basic gaps in grant management and other internal controls" cited in the report. Instead, it seems these concerns have been largely dismissed by your agency.

Not only are there growing concerns with the Corporation's use of taxpayer dollars, there are also concerns with its ability to protect vulnerable individuals. As you know, the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009* (*Serve America Act*) clearly requires criminal background checks for individuals who receive a living allowance, stipend, national service award, or salary from a program receiving assistance under national service laws. However, the OIG's report highlights two grant audits that both found grantees did not conduct criminal history checks in compliance with the law. Incredibly, the Corporation has trivialized the failure of these grantees

to follow the law—referring to one grantee as "essentially flawless" and the other as having no "mismanagement of CNCS's investment."

As I stated during last month's hearing, "the Corporation needs to be held accountable for the way it spends taxpayer dollars." The Committee's continued oversight of the agency is an important part of that effort. In order to address these critical issues raised in the hearing and OIG report, I have enclosed my additional questions for inclusion in the final hearing record. Please provide a written response no later than July 20, 2016. Responses should be sent to James Forester on the Committee staff, who can be contacted at (202) 225-6558.

Sincerely,

Virginia Foxx

VIRGINIA FOXX
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Training

1. What steps are you now taking to ensure your grantees and every participant in the Corporation's programs are clear about what conduct is and is not allowed?

2. Given the flagrant violation of the law regarding a subgrantee of the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), why did the Corporation not immediately terminate the grant to NACHC? Does the Corporation plan to continue to let NACHC receive federal funds without any regard for this violation of federal law and grant mismanagement?

3. Given that prohibited activities occurred undetected over a two year period, what is the Corporation doing to ensure other grantees are not engaging in illegal activity?

4. During the hearing you said each AmeriCorps member receives a list clearly stating which activities are prohibited under the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009* (*Serve America Act*). Does the Corporation have any documentation to ensure that every AmeriCorps member actually receives this list? Do AmeriCorps members sign a statement acknowledging they received this list?

5. During the hearing you stated many, but not all, grantees attended one of four regional conferences that included training sessions on grant management in compliance with the *Serve America Act*. How many grantees currently receive a grant from the Corporation? How many of these grantees have attended one of these regional conferences in the last year? Are subgrantees invited or encouraged to attend these regional conferences? How many subgrantees currently receive a grant from the Corporation? How many subgranttees have attended one of these regional conferences in the last year? Considering the importance of administering grants in compliance with the law, have you considered making this training compulsory?

6. Is an annual assurance that a grantee is in compliance with regulations on prohibited activities currently required and a part of your monitoring protocols? If so, did NACHC make this assurance?

7. In March, the Corporation entered into an agreement with United States Veterans Initiative (U.S. VETS) to repay $640,000 in disallowed costs from an AmeriCorps grant. These costs stem from a 2007 inspector general report, in part because it took the Corporation six years to review the grantee's appeal. Please describe how "CNCS strives to create a strong culture of accountability" when it takes six years to review an appeal when the investigative work has already been done? What steps is the Corporation taking to improve its oversight and management to resolve issues with disallowed costs quickly and fairly to ensure taxpayer dollars are used in compliance with the law?

8. How often does the Corporation conduct a comprehensive review of all grantees? If a comprehensive review has never been initiated, when do you plan on conducting such an analysis?

8. How often does the Corporation conduct a comprehensive review of all grantees? If a comprehensive review has never been initiated, when do you plan on conducting such an analysis?

9. Please detail the Corporation's monitoring plan. What key elements of this monitoring plan help identify problems before they occur and what part of the process helps you catch improper activity quickly?

10. When the Corporation becomes aware of alleged improper activity, what steps do officials at the Corporation follow? When are allegations referred to the inspector general for investigation, and who makes the decision to send it to the inspector general?

11. What are the steps to terminate a grant for failure to comply with federal law or the conditions of the grant?

12. During the hearing, you highlighted the hiring of a new chief risk officer. Is this a new position or did this replace a senior executive administrative slot? Does this add new cost to the Corporation? How does the chief risk officer fit into the larger monitoring scheme? Please detail the responsibilities of the chief risk officer position.

13. The *Serve America Act* clearly sets requirements for criminal history checks. Since the hearing, the Corporation's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released its Semiannual Report to Congress for the first half of fiscal year (FY) 2016 (October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016). The report highlights two grant audits both of which found grantees did not conduct criminal history checks in compliance with the *Serve America Act*. What steps is the Corporation taking to ensure criminal history checks are conducted in accordance with the law? What steps does the Corporation take to hold grantees accountable when they fail to comply with this important provision?

14. During the hearing, the inspector general recommended the Corporation improve its monitoring by increasing its contact with individual AmeriCorps members. She indicated currently the Corporation could have contact with individual members at a particular grantee as infrequently as every six years. What steps is the Corporation taking to increase its contact with individual AmeriCorps members to improve grant monitoring and oversight?

15. During the hearing you discussed emails between NACHC and the Corporation relating to the prohibited activities. Please provide the Committee with all documents relating to communications between NACHC and the Corporations between April 21, 2009 and the fulfillment of this request.

16. Please provide an electronic, readable list of all grant applications since FY 2010 containing similar information that is including in the "Database of Submitted Applications" on the Corporation's website.

[Responses to questions submitted for the record follows:]

Deborah J. Jeffrey
Inspector General

August 5, 2016

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6100

Re: Responses to Questions for the Record

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, at the hearing about *Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service* on Tuesday, May 24, 2016. My staff and I greatly appreciate your interest in oversight of the programs, activities and operations of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The hearing brought much needed visibility to a number of opportunities for improvement.

Attached are my responses to the questions that you have posed for inclusion in the hearing record. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Respectfully,

Deborah J. Jeffrey

Deborah J. Jeffrey

Enclosure

Cc: The Honorable Ruben Hinojosa, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training (w/encl.)

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Responses of Deborah Jeffrey, Inspector General of the Corporation for National and Community Service, to Questions for the Record Following the Hearing *Demanding Accountability at the Corporation for National and Community Service,* before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, on May 24, 2016.

1. ***In your recent performance audit, you stated the Corporation's Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Agency Financial Report did not comply with the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (IPERA). What issues cause the Corporation to be out of compliance, and why is compliance with IPERA a good indicator to ensure a federal agency is a good steward of federal taxpayer funds? What recommendations do you have for the Corporation to improve compliance?***

Improper payments—payments that should not have been made, are unsupported by documentation or were made in incorrect amounts—present a continuing challenge to the effective use of taxpayer funds throughout the Federal government. Without an effective way to prevent, identify and reduce improper payments, government agencies must instead divert their time and money to attempting to recover funds, leaving the public to bear the costs and risks associated with that "pay and chase" approach. According to a recent report from the General Accountability Office, improper payments across the government since 2003 may exceed $1 trillion.

CNCS represents only a small fraction of that total, but its inability to quantify the level of improper payments in most of its susceptible programs leaves it unable to assure taxpayers that their funds are being spent properly. For years, CNCS has struggled unsuccessfully to determine which of its programs and activities are at risk of more than $10 million in improper payments annually, to detect improper payments in programs deemed to be susceptible, to estimate and report the rate and amount of those improper payments, and to reduce and recapture them. The Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) annual evaluations have consistently found significant flaws at every stage of the agency's IPERA process.[1] As with many of the challenges that dog grants management and monitoring, CNCS lacks sufficient expertise and has never devoted the level of resources necessary to develop and execute proper sampling and testing to detect and reduce improper payments.

[1]In its FY 2011 Agency Financial Report (AFR), CNCS estimated that it made less than $4,000 of improper payments, a result inconsistent with OIG audit findings and not credible on its face The FY 2012 assessment relied on stale information and excluded from its analysis grantees' use of approximately $ 750million in grant funds, representing 75 percent of the agency's budget. In its FY 2012 AFR, management promised to complete a new statistical analysis of payments within each of its programs in FY 2013, perform a new risk assessment, quantify the results for the AmeriCorps Program and report the results in the FY 2013 AFR. CNCS was unable to live up to these commitments in 2013, and promised again to fulfill them in 2014. That year, CNCS concluded that AmeriCorps, the Foster Grandparents Program (FGP) and the Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP) are each susceptible to more than $10 million of improper payments annually, but could provide an estimate only for AmeriCorps, which it estimated to have made $12.4 million of improper payments. OIG found a number of fundamental flaws in the analysis, and we recommended that it be re-performed *ab initio* the following year.

Despite modest improvements in FY 2015, OIG found that CNCS remained out of compliance with IPERA, as your question noted. The Corporation could report the necessary information for only one program, AmeriCorps, and the results were startling. According to CNCS, AmeriCorps made an estimated $14.5 million of improper payments, representing 6.5 percent of its total expenditures. Because, as OIG found, these results were not statistically valid, complete or accurate, the actual figures may be higher. Once again, CNCS could not produce estimates for the Foster Grandparents Program (FGP) and the Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP), each of which it had determined to be susceptible for more than $10 million in improper payments. Moreover, CNCS likely underestimated the susceptibility of the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and the Senior Companion Program (SCP), calling into question their omission from IPERA analysis.

As OIG found, CNCS continued to rely upon and refine a sampling and testing methodology that had proven unsuccessful in the past and which it lacks the resources to execute. Instead, OIG recommended developing a more practical approach:

> The methodology chosen by CNCS requires more resources than CNCS can spare to execute it. CNCS must either abandon that approach in favor of an alternative that can be timely executed with the available resources, or marshal sufficient additional resources to bring this methodology to completion, working with Congress and OMB if necessary.

Performance Audit of the Corporation for National and Community Service's Compliance with the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (IPERA) for Fiscal Year 2015, OIG Report 16-04, at p. 2, available at http://www.cncsoig.gov/sites/default/files/16-04.pdf.

We are now in the fourth quarter of FY 2016, and CNCS only recently decided on its IPERA approach and began this year's testing. Not surprisingly, CNCS will once again be unable to comply with IPERA, due to: the delayed start; lack of planning; insufficient expertise until April 2016, when the new Chief Risk Officer came on board; and decreased resources devoted to this effort. OIG sees some promise in the approach being tested this year and hopes for greater progress in FY 2017. Realistically, however, it will be two years or more before CNCS manages to meet its obligations under IPERA.

Far more than money is at stake. The overwhelming majority of improper payments identified at CNCS stem from the failure of grantees to complete thorough and timely Criminal History Checks (CHCs) for national service participants and grant-funded staff. Grantees must determine that those individuals are not murderers or registerable sex offenders, checking specific sources prescribed in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009. For members or staff that work with children and youth, the elderly or persons with disabilities, the grantee must check the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW), the criminal history repository of the state where the potential member/staff member resides and the state in which s/he will serve, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 12645g. CNCS requires that the NSOPW check be *completed* before the member/staff member begins service; the other checks must be *initiated* at that time, and the member/staff member must be accompanied until the grantee receives the results with no disqualifying criminal history. 45

C.F.R. § 2540.203. Living allowance, stipend or salary payments to an individual are improper if the required checks were not performed or during any period of untimeliness.

Failure to execute timely and complete CHCs exposes the beneficiaries of CNCS programs to unnecessary risk from potentially violent predators. Such people can do incalculable harm, and they seek out opportunities to interact with vulnerable persons. Vigilance in conducting CHCs is a moral, as well as legal, imperative.[2]

The IPERA process has demonstrated a significant level of noncompliance with this important safety measure. CNCS is undertaking a number of measures to improve CHC compliance. Without a robust IPERA process, it will be difficult to gauge the effectiveness of these measures.

Quite apart from criminal history checks, CNCS's FY 2015 IPERA results show two further points of concern. The first relates to what CNCS has described as "the agency's substantial nonresponse rates across programs, which resulted in CNCS's failing to test enough samples to reach the required statistical confidence interval . . . ." In other words, grantees did not cooperate with CNCS's requests for information, making it impossible for CNCS to complete its work. That high nonresponse rate is itself cause for concern. CNCS believes that its data requests were not clear and that this contributed to the level of nonresponse. In its Agency Financial Report for FY 2015, it promised a number of improvements. Given the late start and limited IPERA testing that the Corporation will do this year, the impact of these improvements, assuming that they occur, will be very difficult to measure.

The second area of concern is the fact that certain grantees could not reconcile their internal accounting records (general ledger) to the reports that they submitted semiannually regarding their expenditures (Federal Financial Reports, or FFRs). A discrepancy between the general ledger and the FFR suggests a possible misapplication of Federal funds. Multiple OIG audits have found grantees whose internal records showed lower spending on grant-funded activities than the amounts that they drew down from the grant and reported on their FFRs. In some cases, the discrepancy has been significant. Moreover, if the grantee cannot and does not routinely reconcile these records, then its capability to manage Federal funds is called into question.

2. ***How often have you recommended the Corporation terminate a grant or debar a grantee? What other forms of corrective action are used, and how would you assess the effectiveness of those various actions?***

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) does not hesitate to recommend that CNCS debar a grantee or an individual associated with a grantee whenever necessary to protect the public interest, and to ensure the integrity of Federal programs by conducting business only with responsible parties. Except in the case of a criminal conviction, a proposal to debar an entity

[2] Until recently, CNCS wavered in its willingness to impose financial accountability on a grantee that failed to perform criminal history checks. Now, it is more willing to do so, but the financial penalties are low and not commensurate with the serious harm that these checks are meant to prevent.

is typically resolved through the entity's agreement to institute reforms to prevent and detect misconduct, with specific monitoring to assure compliance. Because debarment is remedial and not to be used as punishment,[3] the debarment process across the Federal government reflects a strong preference to return the grantee to "present responsibility" if possible.

Since October 1, 2014, CNCS has debarred two individuals at OIG's recommendation.[4] The debarments arose from the submission of false timesheets by an employee of a subgrantee, which allowed her granddaughter to receive $2,464 in unearned funds from the AmeriCorps program during a four-month period. OIG found no evidence that the subgrantee was aware of the scheme. Both the grandmother and the granddaughter were debarred for a period of one year.

Two other debarments are now pending before CNCS's Debarring Official as a result of OIG's investigations. The first matter involves of the Georgia Center for Nonprofits (GCN), in Atlanta, GA. By letter dated July 8, 2016, CNCS gave notice of its intent to debar GCN for a period of three years for misuse of the resources of the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program. OIG's investigation found that GCN repeatedly and systematically misused the labor of VISTA members for GCN's own benefit and financial enrichment in a variety of ways, including charging a fee for their services, requiring them to complete personal errands for GCN management, impermissibly assigning them administrative and staff duties and directing them to perform service activities unrelated to the eradication of poverty, which is the exclusive purpose of the VISTA program. The proposed debarment was in addition to requiring GCN to repay all funds associated with the misuse of VISTA members' time and discontinuing CNCS's relationship with GCN.

The second matter involves the proposed debarment of a grantee staff member who improperly certified 97 Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, totaling more than $117,000. The director of the AmeriCorps program at Synergy, Education, and Empowerment (SEE) of West Monroe, in Monroe, LA, certified the awards, knowing that the members had not completed the requisite number of service hours and/or based on insufficient evidence of their service. CNCS gave notice of its intent to debar this individual on July 20, 2016, and is working with Volunteer Louisiana to recoup the funds from SEE of West Monroe.

Certain features of debarment, however, limit its use and effectiveness. Debarment is prospective only; it does not affect any existing grants. And, while debarments based on conviction of a crime can be implemented very quickly and with minimal effort, those that require fact-finding on the part of the debarring agency often take substantial time to complete and may demand considerable resources.

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[3] *See* 2 CFR 180.125(c), *What is the purpose of the nonprocurement debarment and suspension system?*

[4] Under government-wide debarment regulations, a debarred individual may not serve as an officer, director, owner, partner or in any other management or supervisory capacity of an entity with respect to a Federal grant (2 CFR 180.130 and 180.995). As a result, debarring executives and/or program leaders requires the entity either to sever its relationship with those culpable individuals or to become ineligible for future grants.

As a result, CNCS has adopted other corrective and protective measures that it can take when a grantee presents programmatic or financial problems. These include: technical assistance, tailoring actions to address individual issues, imposing special conditions on the grantee's operations or expenditures, "manual holds" (requiring the grantee to obtain authorization in advance of any expenditure of Federal grant funds),[5] withholding payments, suspension of the grant, or termination of the grant. In complex cases, CNCS may also request audit assistance from OIG and is required to report timely waste, fraud or other criminal activity or abuse.

Without formally terminating a grant, CNCS in many cases has the discretion not to fund successive years of a three-year grant term, and it may also encourage a grantee to relinquish a grant in order to avoid more formal adverse actions. In some cases, particularly with Senior Corps programs and VISTA, CNCS may locate another grantee or sponsor to assume responsibility, so that the community may continue to receive services.

While, as noted, CNCS also has authority under certain circumstances to terminate or suspend a grant, the procedures can be lengthy and cumbersome. As a result, it is often more convenient to decline to continue a grant for successive years, rather than to initiate suspension or termination. Corporation management has at times expressed reluctance to terminate or decline to continue VISTA and Senior Corps grants because the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1972 creates a presumption of renewals of funding, grants more extensive hearing rights and imposes high standards for denial of refunding, suspension or termination. As a practical matter, these requirements, plus the absence of a competitive grant award process for certain Senior Corps programs, leave CNCS hesitant to enforce grant terms and conditions strictly.

OIG has not done sufficient analysis to provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the Corporation's corrective actions. In one area, however, those actions have been ineffective: criminal history checking. Despite years of training, an extraordinary amnesty, self-assessment and self-correction period and other measures, an unacceptably high percentage of grantees do not properly and timely check the criminal histories of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members and grant-funded staff, to ensure that they are not convicted murderers or registered sex offenders. This jeopardizes the safety of the communities served by CNCS programs, including such vulnerable groups as children and youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Historically, CNCS has not effectively enforced the background checking that Congress has mandated. When they discovered non-compliance, program officers generally assisted grantees to complete the checks but often took no further action. As long as no currently

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[5] Ordinarily, a grantee may withdraw ("draw down") grant funds at will, subject to a rule, enforced on the honor system, that funds should be withdrawn only for immediate programmatic needs. Under a manual hold, release of funds is conditioned on the grantee's demonstration that it has corrected (or is in the process of correcting) a deficiency that called into question its ability to manage Federal funds or otherwise perform its obligations in compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant. When OIG discovers a problem that requires immediate attention pending completion of our work, we recommend a manual hold, to protect the integrity of public funds and/or Federal programs as an interim measure. CNCS has acted favorably on our requests. The agency also initiates its own manual holds, often simultaneously with reporting a matter to OIG for investigation. By definition, a manual hold involves close supervision of a grantee's operations.

serving members or staff were murderers or sex offenders, CNCS required little accountability and did not disallow costs for the prior failure to perform criminal history checks when and as required. In 2011, CNCS adopted a policy of disallowing all costs associated with service during incomplete or untimely checks, but did not consistently enforce it. This informal "no harm, no foul" policy rewarded grantees for being lucky, and excused their recklessness with the safety of the people served by their programs. As a result, many grantees have continued to place a low priority on critical measures intended to protect public safety.

Following two years of IPERA data that showed substantial failures to perform the necessary criminal history checks, CNCS has adopted more active measures. One, which OIG endorses enthusiastically, is CNCS's contract with a vendor that is expert in conducting these background checks to perform them for certain grantees. CNCS worked hard to accomplish this, and the public would be well served if this service were more widely available. We are also pleased that CNCS undertook a special initiative of having program officers reach out personally to grantees and conduct a meaningful spot-check of their compliance.

OIG is far less happy with another "innovation": a recently adopted system of fines that CNCS characterizes as "risk-based," but which will have *de minimis* impact on large grantees, includes features that burden small grantees disproportionately and, overall, creates perverse incentives that undervalue the importance of protecting the most vulnerable among us from dangerous predators. In one recent case, where an experienced grantee did not perform fundamental elements of the required criminal history checks for certain AmeriCorps members and grant-funded staff, CNCS imposed a fine of three-tenths of one percent (.003) of the grant funds. This result trivializes the harm that would result to individuals, to the grantee and the community that it serves, and to the AmeriCorps program if an identifiable sex offender were to use a CNCS grant as a means of access to vulnerable persons. OIG has made its views clear to CNCS's leadership, including its Board of Directors, and we look forward to much-needed modifications of this approach.

3. ***Do prohibited activities occur more frequently at the grantee or subgrantee level? What is the most common instance of waste, fraud, and abuse committed within the Corporation? How can the Corporation reduce and eliminate these wasteful practices?***

Where prohibited activities occur

It is difficult to state categorically the level at which prohibited activities occur, because CNCS's monitoring is not well suited to detecting those violations. However, since the vast majority of service activities take place at the subgrantee level[6], it seems likely that the majority of prohibited activities likewise occur there.

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[6] *See* Written Testimony of Wendy Spencer, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, May 24, 2016, at p. 3 ("A large percentage of CNCS resources are distributed to and administered by Governor appointed State Service Commissions"). Many direct grantees, such as the National Association of Community Health Clinics (NACHC), also distribute all or a portion of their grant funds to subgrantees, as do the intermediaries awarded funds through the Social Innovation Fund.

That is consistent with OIG's experience. In the matters that have come to our attention, all of the prohibited activities occurred at the subgrantee level. In the case of the National Association of Community Health Clinics (NACHC), the abortion-related prohibited activities in question occurred at a subgrantee, the Institute for Family Health (IFH), where AmeriCorps members provided emotional support during abortions. NACHC was aware of the activities and authorized IFH to continue them.

In an unrelated matter, OIG has investigated an allegation that an AmeriCorps member serving at a subgrantee of a State Commission was directed by a supervisor to transport a domestic violence victim to a clinic for an abortion.[7] The member complied, and the supervisor told investigators that she was unaware that this was prohibited. Several years ago, OIG learned that a faith-based subgrantee of another State Commission regularly included worship in its service hours until directed to cease that practice.

Most common instances of waste, fraud and abuse

The more common instances of waste, fraud and abuse found by OIG include:

- Failure to timely complete checks of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOWP) and other Criminal History Checks, which are required by statute for grantee staff and national service members. Allowing individuals to serve without the proper background checks jeopardizes the safety of the communities served by CNCS programs, including such particularly vulnerable groups as children, persons with disabilities and the elderly;

- Grantees' use of national service members as cheap labor, to perform staff and administrative tasks, rather than serving the public. The national service laws expressly prohibit a grantee from using national service members to duplicate the work of employees and/or displace them. *See* 42 U.S. Code §§ 12584a(c) and § 12637;

- Fundamental deviations from the approved purpose and intent of the grant, without informing CNCS, which I discussed in my testimony and which are described at length at pages 22-29 of our Semiannual Report for the period ended September 30, 2014, available at http://www.cncsoig.gov/sites/default/files/2_sar_14-02_3.pdf;

- Lack of documentation to demonstrate that members actually performed service;

- Improper certification of partial education awards for members who exited AmeriCorps early for reasons other than the "compelling personal

[7] The clinic in question was not a subgrantee of NACHC.

circumstances" defined in AmeriCorps regulation 45 C.F.R. § 2522.230, and are therefore ineligible;

We have also found some notable instances of fraud. Most recently, a civil fraud case investigated by OIG settled in FY 2015, yielding $4,083,304 in compensatory damages, penalties and interest, the largest recovery in the history of CNCS. In that case, AmeriCorps issued grants to an Arizona community college from 2007 through 2010 to fund a variety of services by students. The students were enrolled in specialized academic programs (e.g., nursing and dental hygiene) that required a combination of classroom study and clinical hours. Upon successful completion of their AmeriCorps service, the members would earn an education award of up to $4,725, which could be used to pay tuition or student loans.

OIG investigators found that the Executive Director gave students AmeriCorps credit for completing their pre-existing clinical requirements, work-study, academic courses and study abroad. She then fraudulently certified that they had performed the AmeriCorps service hours required to earn education awards. In fact, the students performed little or no community service beyond their degree requirements. Creating the illusion of a large and active AmeriCorps program generated administrative funds, enhanced the position of the program's Executive Director, and allowed students to use their unearned education awards to pay their tuition or repay their student loans. The community, however, received no additional services and thus no benefit from the taxpayers' investment in this AmeriCorps grant.

To educate CNCS staff and grantees about preventing and detecting fraud and waste, OIG investigators and auditors conduct briefings on common audit and investigation findings several times per year. Those presentations suggest certain best practices and measures that grantees can adopt to avoid encountering these problems.

Within the Corporation and throughout the Federal government, the procurement process is particularly vulnerable to waste, fraud and abuse. Our 2014 audit of service contracts issued under blanket purchase agreements revealed serious weaknesses within CNCS's procurement function, including waste of $900,000 for five projects that CNCS never used.[8] The audit also found that program officials exceeded their authority and violated Federal procurement requirements with impunity by directing consultants to deviate from contract terms. CNCS agreed that the weaknesses found in our audit existed throughout its procurement function and adopted certain changes, including recruitment of experienced leadership and new staff. CNCS management regards the procurement function as improving.

Measures to reduce and eliminate waste, fraud and abuse

CNCS and the individual grant programs that it oversees need a more sophisticated and granular understanding of the risks to which their activities and operations are subject, including the extent to which those risks vary by the type of grantee. Then, the agency and its staff must determine what data/indicators provide useful insight to identify and measure

[8] *See* Audit of Blanket Purchase Agreements for Professional Consulting Services, OIG Report 14-09, available at https://www.cncsoig.gov/sites/default/files/14-09.pdf

those risks. That risk-based approach should inform every stage of the grant lifecycle, including:

- Grant competition—what information CNCS should solicit in its grant applications and how that data is assessed in the award process, and willingness to deny funding if CNCS, whether for lack of resources or for any other reason, cannot manage the risks appropriately;

- Special conditions—whether, in addition to the terms generically applicable to all CNCS grants, the risks of an individual grant warrant requiring particular measures to mitigate certain risks;

- Expansion of CNCS's repertoire of monitoring activities and customizing them to the risks presented by a particular grant, to avoid wasting resources monitoring *de minimis* risks;

- Smart design of IPERA testing to complement and cross-check grant monitoring;

- Recruiting, training and assigning responsibilities to a workforce based on the type of risks presented—including (a) transforming a longstanding culture at CNCS that has excused substantial deviations from grant terms and regarded financial enforcement of those terms as inherently punitive[9], (b) differentiating between programmatic and financial risks and assigning the latter for active monitoring by trained grant officers/financial staff; and (c) to minimize confirmation bias, having risk assessments conducted by someone other than the program and grant officers responsible for the particular grantee;

- Better use of technology and ready access to data analytics for routine monitoring and to identify anomalies, outliers and trends that warrant greater attention;

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[9] CNCS's refusal to disallow costs for significantly noncompliant or unauthorized activities, and its decisions in egregious cases to authorize the conduct retroactively, have encouraged grantees to believe that they do not need to seek permission because they can confidently expect forgiveness. The grant terms and conditions expressly require authorization in advance for changes to grant scope, objectives and goals. Consistent enforcement of that requirement would allow CNCS to determine when to permit a change of plans. The elaborate grant competition conducted annually by CNCS is pointless if a grantee can depart from the grant terms at will.

We are encouraged to see greater willingness by the Office of Grants Management to enforce the grant terms and to disallow and recover improperly incurred costs. I was therefore disappointed that the CEO did not state unequivocally at the May 24 hearing that CNCS would make very different decisions today than it made in 2014, when it ratified the misconduct of three grantees, as described at pages 22-29 of our Semiannual Report for the period ended September 30, 2014.

- Formal assessment of bad outcomes, to identify systemic gaps, red flags, human errors and necessary improvements;
- Updating grantee risk assessments for consideration at continuation-of-funding decisions in the same three-year grant cycle;
- Continuous validation of the risk approach and risk indicators, to be sure that what they measure actually relates to outcomes and results;
- Better use of audit and investigation findings to identify risks and improve risk modeling;
- Adopting and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to the most consequential risks and/or legal violations;
- Real accountability for individuals, offices and programs, both for positive accomplishments at risk identification and management and for poor performance in those areas;
- Decisive and prompt action when a grantee cannot or will not live up to its important obligations.

Creation of the Chief Risk Officer (CRO) position is an important first step in the right direction, which will bring much needed expertise and experience to CNCS. OIG has long advocated this change and was heartened to see the position filled in April 2016. With the myriad responsibilities of the CRO—Enterprise Risk Management, IPERA, grant monitoring, internal controls—and the challenges that each of these has historically posed for the Corporation, that Office must be well resourced if it is to have any impact. The statement in the House Appropriations bill and report emphasizes that point. We hope that this is the beginning of an effort that will be sustained through the next Presidential Administration, because the necessary improvements will not occur overnight, or, indeed, in a single year.

Increasing the resources of the OIG, as the House Appropriations bill contemplates, will likewise enable our Office to identify, recommend and press for implementation of additional measures to reduce and eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. Many of the accountability enhancements described by CEO Spencer orally and in her written testimony originated specifically from OIG recommendations. I am confident that our work will continue to pay dividends to American taxpayers.

4. ***How many calls or other communications has the Inspector General's office received alleging prohibited activities are taking place in the last calendar year?***

Within the last calendar year, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received three complaints alleging prohibited activities within the meaning of 42 USC § 3. 12584a, which identifies eleven categories of activities that cannot be performed by an individual in a national service position.[10] The first of these related to NACHC, and you are familiar with the allegations and the findings of that investigation.

The second complaint arose from the termination of an AmeriCorps member serving at a subgrantee of one of the State Commissions. In the termination proceedings, the member alleged that, at the direction of her immediate supervisor, she had transported a client who was the victim of domestic violence to a clinic for an abortion. The clinic was not a subgrantee of NACHC, and the member was terminated for reasons unrelated to the abortion activity relating to noncompliance with other program grantee rules. Per our procedures and practices, OIG will report on the matter when CNCS notifies us of its management action.

The third complaint arose from an AmeriCorps member serving in a school who took a pregnant student to a clinic for an abortion, at the student's request. Because the member was not acting at the direction or with the knowledge of any grantee staff, and the conduct occurred on a weekend, outside of AmeriCorps service hours, the activity was beyond the scope of the AmeriCorps prohibitions. The grantee terminated the member from the AmeriCorps program because the grantee's rules prohibited members from having contact with students outside their service hours.

5. ***When the Corporation discovers AmeriCorps members have engaged in prohibited activities, how often is the discovery the result of effective monitoring by the Corporation rather than self-reporting by the grantees or subgrantees?***

In our experience, prohibited activities are discovered through a self-report by a grantee or subgrantee, a complaint by a member who objects to the activity, or allegations submitted directly to the OIG, *e.g.*, via a call or written communication to our hotline. I am not aware of any prohibited activities that have come to light through the routine monitoring activities of CNCS, including the measures that CNCS promised to implement in 2011 to enhance its detection capabilities.

CNCS's routine monitoring activities are not well designed to detect prohibited activities, nor are they targeted towards those grantees at heightened risk of specific prohibited activities. Desk reviews are virtually guaranteed to be ineffective, because there is no requirement that AmeriCorps members keep itemized reports of their daily activities. Likewise, the Position Descriptions that grantees create, and which CNCS sampled for a brief period, are generic

[10] As amended by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, the statute authorizing the AmeriCorps program bars AmeriCorps members and grant-funded staff from, among other activities, legislative lobbying; partisan political activities; voter registration; political or legislative advocacy; religious instruction, worship or proselytizing; benefiting a for-profit business; and abortion services or referrals.

in nature. No paper review can detect whether a grantee is in fact allowing members to deviate from a benign job description into service activities that are forbidden.

It would be far more effective to monitor for prohibited activities by determining which grantees, by virtue of their programmatic activities and their clientele, are at heightened risk of a particular prohibited activity and to prioritize those grantees for focused monitoring on that subject. CNCS should also expand its repertoire of monitoring activities, to require more frequent contact with members. Site visits, which may take place only once every six years, are too infrequent to be effective at detecting prohibited activities. For those grantees at heightened risk, OIG has suggested that CNCS conduct regular surveys of members about their specific activities; the surveys should be in plain English and should be reviewed and followed up on promptly. Similarly, OIG recommends that, for those high-risk grantees and activities, CNCS conduct routine searches of members' public postings on social media sites. That is how NACHC discovered prohibited abortion doula activity in 2015, and that is how OIG was able to identify at least some of the members who participated in this conduct at the subgrantee's service sites.

6. ***Does the Corporation provide adequate guidance to grantees concerning prohibited activities? What reforms are needed to ensure the Corporation provides effective guidance to grantees?***

Since 2009, and more vigorously since 2011, CNCS has repeatedly taken steps to acquaint members and the grantee community with the restrictions on prohibited activities. At regional grantee meetings following disclosure of the NACHC investigation, members of my senior staff repeatedly heard grantee leaders express their shock that a CNCS grantee had foolishly undertaken such obviously impermissible activities. On this and other occasions, OIG has found most grantees to be conscientious about prohibited activities.

Nevertheless, there are many opportunities to improve both the manner and the substance of the guidance that CNCS provides to its grantees. CNCS needs to convey information about prohibited activities in a prominent manner commensurate with the importance of the subject, rather than merely to include it in the large volume of dense materials pushed out to grantees and to members. The communications need to distinguish prohibited activities as a high-priority and high-risk subject, warranting special care and vigilance beyond routine regulatory requirements. This is particularly true as to communications with members, who may be easily overwhelmed at the quantity of information that they are expected to absorb. We have seen several grantees that orient members with PowerPoint presentations consisting of more than 60 slides, with prohibited activities somewhere in the middle, sandwiched between routine compliance matters or general information.

Further, CNCS should offer guidance proactively and not await inquiries. As I testified at the May 24 hearing, CNCS made a considered decision in 2009 not to issue general guidance regarding what activities would constitute prohibited "abortion services" and what a prohibited "referral" for receipt of such services would entail. One reason for this decision seems to have been a desire to address questions case by case, in the hope that CNCS would know in advance what specific activities a grantee contemplated for AmeriCorps members, rather than

offering general, abstract explanations that could be misunderstood or misapplied. However well intentioned, the strategy was flawed, both in its theory and in its execution.

Similarly, CNCS's regulations regarding prohibited activities merely repeat verbatim the statutory language forbidding AmeriCorps members to provide abortion services or referral for such services, 45 C.F.R. § 2520.65(a)(10). Those regulations do not assist grantees or the public in understanding how CNCS will interpret and apply the statutory requirements. Instead, providing individual guidance informally, via email consultations, eliminated public scrutiny, risked inconsistent interpretations and made it more difficult to hold grantees and CNCS staff accountable. When CNCS did issue more general guidance, it did so in the form of voluntary training, with no record of which grantees completed it and little warning that the training contained new applications of key requirements. To this day, CNCS has not informed the grantee community and the public in a clear and prominent way how it interprets and applies the abortion restrictions. Nor has CNCS helped grantees and members by anticipating common situations and directing them how to respond.

This experience illustrates a number of ways to improve the guidance that CNCS provides about prohibited activities. Using the abortion prohibitions as an example, OIG recommends:

- CNCS should develop guidance concerning what activities constitute "abortion services" and "referrals" within the meaning of the statutory prohibition. OIG believes that "abortion services" should include all service activities related to an abortion procedure, whether before, during or after. This includes activities prior to or in anticipation of an abortion (such as escorting patients to clinic, making appointments, providing information about what to expect during and after the procedure, and emotional support or administrative assistance) as well as after-care or follow-up services.

- The guidance should make clear that a grantee proceeds at its peril if it undertakes any activities that potentially implicate "abortion services" or "referrals," without first obtaining authorization in writing from CNCS.

- The guidance should be public and transparent, issued through rulemaking to adopt regulations that provide meaningful detail on how CNCS interprets and applies the prohibition.

- CNCS should actively direct the new guidance to the grantees most likely to encounter issues regarding abortion, such as those that operate in the healthcare space and those involved with children and youth of middle school age and above.

- Program officers should make personal contact with grantees whose programmatic activities place them at high risk of encountering these issues, to ensure that they are aware of CNCS's guidance and their responsibilities.

- The guidance should state clearly that strict compliance with the abortion prohibitions is of the utmost importance, and that it should be a top priority for all grantees.

- Grantees should be told what to do if they believe that a prohibited activity has occurred and that any such event must be reported immediately to CNCS and to the OIG.

- In addition to explaining the rules, CNCS should provide specific responses that members and grant-funded staff may give if they are asked for assistance that they are not allowed to render. For example, if an AmeriCorps member at a health clinic is asked where a patient can obtain an abortion, may that member refer the questioner to another clinic worker who is not subject to the AmeriCorps prohibition on referrals? How should the AmeriCorps worker respond? Providing a script so that an AmeriCorps member knows how to respond when put on the spot is very important. Similarly, AmeriCorps members should be told what actions to take if directed by a supervisor to perform an activity that the member believes is forbidden.

- CNCS should develop online mandatory training for all programmatic grantee staff and for AmeriCorps members, with an audit trail to demonstrate who has completed the training. The training should include a quiz to ensure mastery of the key points.

7. ***Since the hearing, your office released its Semiannual Report to Congress for the first half of FY 2016 (October 1, 2015- March 31, 2016). In the report, you state the Corporation "struggles to provide effective oversight of $750,000,000 that it devotes annually to grants" leaving these funds "unnecessarily vulnerable to waste, fraud, mismanagement and abuse." Please detail your concerns with the Corporation's ability to provide effective oversight. What steps can the Corporation take to assure you and the Committee those taxpayer dollars are not vulnerable to waste, fraud, mismanagement, and abuse?***

CNCS does not have a rigorous, tested, risk-based approach to grant monitoring. Until hiring a Chief Risk Officer in April of this year, CNCS had virtually no one trained and experienced in risk management.[11] As a result, it cannot deploy effectively the limited grant monitoring resources at its disposal or determine what additional resources might be needed. I discussed in my testimony a number of legacy burdens that have impeded the necessary progress. Better and more sophisticated risk management offers a significant opportunity to improve stewardship at CNCS.

[11] Similarly, in the last 18 months CNCS has brought in leaders from other Federal agencies with experience in grants management. This infusion of new perspectives has improved accountability.

Although grants represent three-quarters of CNCS's annual appropriation, CNCS has never evaluated the effectiveness of its own grant monitoring and oversight. The current risk model, on which CNCS relies heavily, is based on untested assumptions and has never been validated against results. As noted in my testimony, a preliminary analysis undertaken by OIG several years ago showed that the risk model does a poor job of predicting which grantees will produce catastrophic outcomes, such as going bankrupt while owing CNCS money, shutting down in the midst of a grant, or requiring CNCS to terminate a grant for cause. The model also omits certain known risks and disregards critical differences among CNCS's programs that bear directly on risk. OIG has repeatedly offered suggestions based on our audits and investigations that would materially improve the risk model in the short term, as well as longer term refinements.

Virtually all of CNCS's grant monitoring, like most of its other internal controls, is performed manually. Manual processes are subject to human error and are easily disrupted due to overwork or conflicting priorities. As I testified, when we conduct an audit or an investigation, OIG commonly finds red flags were that overlooked in the routine monitoring process. Moreover, having the same program officers who assist grantees responsible for risk assessments and monitoring introduces a strong potential for bias, something that I also discussed in my testimony.

CNCS collects a wealth of information from its grantees, but its outdated information technology systems do not support the kind of data analytics that other agencies use effectively for early detection of fraud and mismanagement. Grant-making agencies that have invested in technology can use data analytics to perform many routine monitoring tasks, thereby allowing staff to focus on solving problems that require human judgment. This vital tool is not yet available at CNCS, because its technology is ill-adapted to its current business needs. A modernization effort is underway, but it may be years before CNCS is able to make effective use of analytics to conduct benchmarking, to spot outliers and anomalies or to identify trends and emerging issues, much less look for patterns that suggest fraud or mismanagement. At present, CNCS cannot readily compare information across the grant portfolio or for subsets of grants or grantees; for example, although high member attrition/turnover is often a strong indicator of trouble, CNCS cannot easily benchmark the average attrition among successful grantees or identify those grantees whose attrition exceeds a pre-determined level.

OIG has long championed adoption of a true Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) approach to help CNCS leaders focus their resources where they will do the most good. This will require a multi-year effort and the sustained commitment of substantial resources. One of the priorities should be the development of a new, more rigorous, targeted approach to grant monitoring, with a risk model that will be tested, validated and continuously improved. CNCS needs to inventory and understand its risks and then reinvent its grant oversight to focus on those risks and their indicators. The Corporation can begin by moving quickly to implement the Framework for Managing Fraud Risk in Federal Programs, published by the General Accountability Office one year ago.

Once it identifies the risks, CNCS leaders must develop new means of monitoring them. For reasons cited in my testimony and in my responses above, the existing monitoring repertoire

is ill-suited to find prohibited activities or to accurately gauge their extent. As part of this process, CNCS should also revisit whether certain risks, such as prohibited activities and the failure to screen participants for disqualifying criminal histories, are so significant that it should monitor them directly, rather than relying solely on primary grantees to oversee their subgrantees.

Differentiating programmatic risks from financial and compliance risks is also essential. Our audits frequently find that monitoring has failed to identify serious financial irregularities that call into question a grantee's ability to manage and account for Federal funds. But the Program Officers, who perform most of the direct monitoring, cannot be expected to have the skills, training or experience to recognize those issues and intervene effectively before a problem ripens into a crisis. CNCS will need to assess whether it needs a different workforce and/or a different allocation of responsibility within its existing workforce, to monitor financial risks effectively.

A cultural shift regarding risk and accountability is also needed. For many years, CNCS has exaggerated the quality and rigor of its existing systems, understated risks and overestimated its ability to support grantees that lack the systems and know-how to manage Federal funds. That complacency and denial have inhibited progress. All agency personnel, from the leadership on down, must be committed to holding themselves, one another, and grantees accountable for the appropriate use of Federal resources and compliance with all applicable requirements. This means an end to condoning or retroactively approving violations of grant requirements and terms. *See, e.g.,* Semiannual Report for the period March 31 through September 30, 2014, describing at pp. 22-29 CNCS's unwillingness to hold grantees financially accountable for waste, misuse and diversion of resources and fundamental deviations from grant purpose. It also means an end to viewing the disallowance of costs as punitive. Encouraging grantees to seek authorization in advance, and not to expect forgiveness after the fact, is essential.

CNCS must also develop better methods to detect waste, fraud and mismanagement. While most grantees are conscientious, this is not universally the case. I was shocked when a former member of the senior leadership told me repeatedly that CNCS "has no fraud risk, because our grantees are honest," and on another occasion expressed sympathy for a grantee leader who had gone to prison for essentially embezzling CNCS grant funds. Until CNCS grapples with the reality that *some* grantees, leaders and individual staff members are not honest, trustworthy, skilled or careful, it will never be sufficiently vigilant.

In part to break out of this denial, and as an essential risk assessment tool, CNCS should be compiling information about how frequently particular problems occur within and across the agency's programs. For example, CNCS for years maintained that its grantees did an excellent job of completing criminal history checks. Only when required to test compliance as part of its IPERA process was the agency forced to acknowledge the substantial incidence of failure to perform timely and complete criminal history checks, and only then did it begin developing strategies for improvement. Without better information about the results of rigorous monitoring, CNCS cannot know whether it has successfully managed and mitigated risks or whether new and emerging risks require attention.

8. ***Please provide the Committee with all documents related to your investigation into prohibited activities at a NACHC subgrantee (Case ID: 2016-003).***

OIG appreciates the Subcommittee's willingness to defer submission of the documents briefly, until we complete certain work connected to the NACHC investigation. We will work with the Subcommittee staff to facilitate the prompt submission of those documents.

Questions for the Record (QFRs)
Corporation for National and Community Service
Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training

1. **What steps are you now taking to ensure your grantees and every participant in the Corporation's programs are clear about what conduct is and is not allowed?**

   Answer: CNCS communicates all grant rules before a grant is ever made through our application process. We reiterate the rules through application instructions, grant provisions, member contracts, grantee trainings and direct-to-member outreach and trainings (including pre-service orientations, web training, and in-service training). Many of these measures are detailed in Ms. Spencer's written testimony, and grantee training is discussed further below. CNCS has taken numerous other affirmative steps to make the grant rules clear and accessible. For instance, CNCS's Office of Grants Management has established a consolidated resource for all grant terms and conditions. That office has also sent out a series of grants management information bulletins and Uniform Guidance updates to all grantees. For example, earlier this year the CNCS Chief Grants Officer sent a series of six messages to 15,000 recipients addressing individual rules within the OMB Uniform Guidance and what the rules mean to CNCS grantees. The topics were Conflict of Interest; Internal Controls; Procurement; Requirements for Pass-Through Entities; Audit Requirements; and Indirect Costs. AmeriCorps program officers also review grantee progress reports to assess performance and identify potential compliance challenges and provide feedback to grantees that includes required corrective actions when necessary. Program officers also conduct monthly check-in calls with grantee staff to provide technical assistance and training, as well as to discuss compliance and performance issues. Periodically, agency staff sends reminders to grantees and participants related to particular issues to reinforce related rules. CNCS's Senior Corps program is also concluding a months-long process of updating its program operations handbooks. These are a few examples of the multi-faceted efforts that the agency takes to ensure grantees and participants are aware of the rules governing their programs.

2. **Given the flagrant violation of the law regarding a subgrantee of the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), why did the Corporation not immediately terminate the grant to NACHC? Does the Corporation plan to continue to let NACHC receive federal funds without any regard for the violation of federal law and grant mismanagement?**

   Answer: CNCS did terminate activity at the New York organization where the prohibited activity occurred and took multiple steps to ensure accountability, minimize risk, and safeguard federal funds related to the NACHC grant. The grant to NACHC supports AmeriCorps members in approximately 18 states and the District of Columbia in providing services at community health centers, including diabetes prevention, financial literacy, pre-natal, post-natal, and breastfeeding support, and outreach for homeless families. The decision not to immediately terminate the entire grant included consideration of the appoximately 400 AmerCorps members who are nearing the end of their year of service at

other NACHC-affiliated sites and were not involved in any prohibited activities identified in the OIG's investigation.

As the OIG's report made clear, we took swift and robust action with this grantee. Once we learned about potential misconduct, we immediately referred it to the OIG for investigation, directed the costs and member service hours to be disallowed, and placed the grantee on manual hold. Then we required the grantee to adopt meaningful organizational reforms—including hiring an independent outside compliance monitor at the grantee's own expense—to provide added assurance that the grantee abides by all requirements. We directed the grantee to immediately suspend enrolling any new members on the grant and to suspend all activities at the location where the prohibited activities occurred.

The original period of performance of NACHC's grant ends on July 31, 2016. Should the grantee continue to implement the remediation measures and organizational reforms we required and execute the grant in accordance with its terms and conditions, CNCS may extend the period of performance of the award until October 31, 2016 to allow most of the approximately 400 remaining AmeriCorps members the OIG determined were not involved in these prohibited activities to conclude their terms of service. NACHC was unsuccessful in the Fiscal Year 2016 AmeriCorps grant competition.

3. **Given that prohibited activities occurred undetected over a two year period, what is the Corporation doing to ensure other grantees are not engaging in illegal activity?**

Answer: CNCS has a comprehensive system of risk-based monitoring in place to provide reasonable assurance that CNCS prevents and detects issues, and enforces its rules. We communicate the rules through numerous channels over the lifecycle of a grant, including before a grant is ever awarded. Every year, our staff conducts a risk assessment of our entire portfolio of direct grants to inform our annual monitoring plan. Grantees identified as having heightened risk may receive site visits or desk reviews – more than 3,200 of these reviews were conducted in the last five years. In turn, we require grantees to similarly oversee their subgrantees. In cases of noncompliance, we enforce our rules by instituting corrective actions and take other appropriate steps to ensure accountability.

Over the past three years, CNCS has supported more than one million AmeriCorps and Senior Corps positions, and individuals in these programs have provided more than 466 million hours of service across the country. CNCS expects that all grantees overseeing these individuals be accountable to the national service laws. The OIG investigation concluded the noncompliance was extremely limited in scope, involving six of the nearly 1,600 members serving under NACHC's three-year grant cycle at just one subgrantee. Nonetheless, while we have no reason to believe that such non-compliance is widespread, in addition to continuing our extensive training and outreach to grantees and members, CNCS has initiated a process to review current AmeriCorps grantees in an effort to reduce the risk of noncompliance. Other steps already underway to improve risk-based monitoring include reviewing and validating our grantee risk model, updating our grants management IT system, benchmarking our model and monitoring processes against other similar grant making agencies, and evaluating innovative ways to identify issues more efficiently. As discussed in the agency's written testimony and at the hearing, CNCS is also in the process of

reviewing the monitoring policies and procedures, including the OIG's prior recommendations related to grantee risk assessment and grants monitoring, to identify strategies to more efficiently and effectively identify compliance issues.

4. **During the hearing you said each AmeriCorps member receives a list clearly stating which activities are prohibited under the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009* (*Serve America Act*). Does the Corporation have any documentation to ensure that every AmeriCorps member actually receives this list? Do AmeriCorps members sign a statement acknowledging they received this list?**

   Answer: CNCS has a comprehensive approach to educating grant applicants, grantees, and AmeriCorps members about prohibited activities and enforcing our rules. It is the grantees' responsibility to ensure participants comply with the rules governing their service.

   Prospective applicants are informed through the grant application of the laws and rules that apply to CNCS grants, and applicants must describe how they will ensure compliance with the rules on prohibited activities. Successful applicants receive a grant award notification that includes extensive provisions detailing requirements associated with the grant, including prohibited activities. CNCS's grant terms and conditions require that grantees have each member sign a member service agreement detailing, among other things, prohibited member activities, and is responsible for maintaining copies of them. By accepting the grant, the organization accepts absolute responsibility for complying with all of the requirements, meaning that grantees are responsible for ensuring that each AmeriCorps member receives proper training on prohibited activities and complies with those restrictions.

   CNCS also directly communicates via email with enrolled AmeriCorps State and National members about the list of prohibited activities through a letter generated from the My AmeriCorps portal from the Director of AmeriCorps.

5. **During the hearing you stated many, but not all, grantees attended one of four regional conferences that included training sessions on grant management in compliance with the *Serve America Act*. How many grantees currently receive a grant from the Corporation? How many of these grantees have attended one of these regional conferences in the last year? Are subgrantees invited or encouraged to attend these regional conferences? How many subgrantees currently receive a grant from the Corporation? How many subgrantees have attended one of these regional conferences in the last year? Considering the importance of administering grants in compliance with the law, have you considered making this training compulsory?**

   Answer: Currently there are 1,514 unique organizations that directly receive CNCS grants, based on Employer Identification Number. In addition, there are an additional 884 organizations that receive subgrants that are not direct grantees. (Some organizations may receive more than one grant from CNCS.) All CNCS grantees and subgrantees are invited to attend the annual regional training events hosted and organized by Governor-supported State Service Commissions. In 2016, based on the best information we have available, 1,867 staff from AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, and Senior Corps grantees; Governor-appointed State Service Commissions; and other organizations attended the four regional training events that took place in Reno, NV; Montgomery, AL; Springfield, MA; and Indianapolis,

IN. Given their critical role in overseeing three-quarters of AmeriCorps grant funding, Governor-appointed State Service Commissions were central in developing the content and hosting these trainings, and staff from nearly every State Commission participated in the events.

The regional training conferences focus on compliance with grant requirements, criminal history check requirements, performance measures, evaluation strategies, financial management, improper payment compliance, and other topics, using a peer-to-peer approach to leverage the knowledge of the field to advance the mission of national service. The OIG also presents at each session on grant oversight and fraud awareness. Mandatory in-person training conferences are infeasible due to budgetary constraints, which is why CNCS provides multiple other web-based and telephonic training and technical assistance opportunities throughout the year. For instance, new grantees are given assistance to develop policies and procedures to support compliance of subgrantees and placement sites. CNCS also provides numerous webinars and eCourses where grant requirements are discussed, including a required course on the National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) requirements. Additionally, CNCS hosts an annual AmeriCorps Grantee Symposium, which is required for all State Service Commissions and AmeriCorps national direct grantees.

6. **Is an annual assurance that a grantee is in compliance with regulations on prohibited activities currently required and a part of your monitoring protocols? If so, did NACHC make this assurance?**

   Answer: As organizations apply for AmeriCorps grants, and as existing AmeriCorps grantee requests funding for the second and third year of their grants, the grantee organizations make certain specific certifications and assurances. Accordingly, each year AmeriCorps grantees assure CNCS that they "[w]ill comply with all rules regarding prohibited activities, including those stated in applicable Notice, grant provisions, and program regulations, and will ensure that no assistance made available by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will be used to support any such prohibited activities." NACHC last executed these assurances and certifications on January 21, 2015 when they requested funding for their final operating period, which runs from August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2016. As noted elsewhere in CNCS's response, CNCS monitors for awareness of and compliance with the prohibited activities restrictions.

7. **In March, the Corporation entered into an agreement with United States Veterans Initiative (U.S. VETS) to repay $640,000 in disallowed costs from an AmeriCorps grant. These costs stem from a 2007 inspector general report, in part because it took the Corporation six years to review the grantee's appeal. Please describe how "CNCS strives to create a strong culture of accountability" when it takes six years to review an appeal when the investigative work has already been done? What steps is the Corporation taking to improve its oversight and management to resolve issues with disallowed costs quickly and fairly to ensure taxpayer dollars are used in compliance with the law?**

Answer: CNCS has made significant improvements in regards to our audit resolution and debt collection processes that have significantly improved our timeliness in responding to requests for review of debts. These improvements are marked and notable. Senior leadership made deliberate decisions to hire leaders with significant Federal experience in managing grants, addressing review requests, and facilitating audit resolution. Grantee audits vary significantly in regards to complexity and scope. On average, over the last 3 years, CNCS has been able to resolve less complex audits in six months or less, well below the twelve months required by regulation. Many factors contribute to delays in resolution of more challenging complex audits, which often consist of layers of subgrantees and questioned costs. For example, although not required by regulation, CNCS provides the OIG an opportunity to review and comment on CNCS's final management decision prior to issuance. While we believe this is helpful to the review, it does extend the length of the process as CNCS collaborates with the OIG to address areas of concern. On average, the length of time to resolve these complex audits during the last three years has been seventeen months. CNCS is encouraged to report that we have recently engaged in an audit resolution pilot process with the OIG to further expedite the resolution of all audits and initiate debt collection efforts. CNCS is current on all new audits that have been released by the OIG during the last 14 months including OIG audit responses, debt review requests, and debt collection efforts. In addition, as part of our monitoring and oversight efforts, CNCS has disallowed more than $2.7 million in debt in FY 2016. The U.S. Veterans Initiative review took substantially longer than most due to a number of reasons, including the amount of the debt.

8. **How often does the Corporation conduct a comprehensive review of all grantees? If a comprehensive review has never been initiated, when do you plan on conducting such an analysis?**

   Answer: CNCS conducts a comprehensive review of all direct grantees on an annual basis. This review is performed on all active grants in the portfolio at a point in time. The results of this annual assessment inform the annual monitoring activities that will be administered throughout the fiscal year.

9. **Please detail the Corporation's monitoring plan. What key elements of this monitoring plan help identify problems before they occur and what part of the process helps you catch improper activity quickly?**

   Answer: Each year, CNCS conducts an agency-wide effort to assess the risk of the entire active grant portfolio. This practice will be continued and enhanced by the Chief Risk Officer this year. CNCS's monitoring plan consists of two primary components – an annual risk assessment of the agency's grant portfolio, as well as its annual monitoring activities. In support of this effort, staff in the program and grants management offices review each grant against nineteen criteria that help the agency determine the overall organizational, programmatic, financial, and compliance health of grantees and their performance in administering their grants. The criteria include questions related to managerial and key staff changes; progress toward meeting performance goals; changes in program scope or design; financial competence; grantee responsiveness to reporting deadlines and CNCS inquiries; and

engagement or concerns about a grantee's potential for engaging in prohibited activities. In addition to the established criteria, staff are required to identify any issues or challenges they observe in their interactions with the grantee that can also inform the risk assessment process. The results of this annual assessment inform the annual monitoring activities that will be administered throughout the fiscal year, such as which grantees may receive site visits or desk reviews.

During the year, CNCS staff conduct these site visits and desk reviews, focusing on programmatic and financial compliance, and other topics. For instance, during on-site compliance visits, AmeriCorps program officers routinely review performance results, data quality, member management, organizational management, and conduct reviews on sample of member files to ensure compliance with laws and regulations including criminal history check requirements. Grant officers also conduct site visits and desk reviews to assess grantee's financial capabilities and the effective management of grant funding.

As discussed in the agency's written testimony and at the hearing, CNCS is in the process of reviewing the monitoring policies and procedures, including the OIG's prior recommendations related to grantee risk assessment and grants monitoring, to identify refinements in an attempt to more efficiently and effectively identify issues.

Further, program and grants staff regularly communicate with grantees and review periodic programmatic and financial reports which provide timely insight into grantees' activities, including expenditure and draw down reports and performance in meeting programmatic targets.

10. When the Corporation becomes aware of alleged improper activity, what steps do officials at the Corporation follow? When are allegations referred to the inspector general for investigation, and who makes the decision to send it to the inspector general?

Answer: CNCS Program and Grants Officers are primarily responsible for following up on alleged improper activity and resolving the issues in conjunction with program and grants management and other CNCS staff. Related to agency operations, responsibility falls to supervisors in the office where the allegations occurred to be resolved in conjunction with other CNCS staff under supervision from agency management. Related to equal opportunity matters, CNCS's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusion handles allegations in this area consistent with its practices and federal law.

Matters are referred to the Inspector General pursuant to CNCS Policy 102, "Reporting Waste, Fraud, and Abuse and Cooperating with Office of Inspector General (OIG) Inquiries". CNCS personnel and grantees are encouraged and required to report matters to the OIG via phone, email, or in person. In part, the policy states, "All CNCS personnel are required to report to the OIG, without delay, any reasonable or actual suspicion of, or information or evidence that suggests, waste, fraud, or abuse in connection with CNCS operations, programs, activities, contracts, or grants at any level." Matters referred to the OIG for

investigation are handled by CNCS with appropriate deference to that office's investigatory activities.

11. **What are the steps to terminate a grant for failure to comply with federal law or the conditions of the grant?**

Answer: Termination of a federal grant is regulated by the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR Part 200 and CNCS's supplemental regulations at 45 CFR 2540.400. 2 CFR 200.338 identifies several legal remedies for agencies to consider, including first considering imposing special conditions on the grant. If the other remedies identified in 2 CFR 200.338 and 2 CFR 200.207 are ineffective, agencies may suspend or terminate the grant in whole or in part consistent with 2 CFR 200.339–200.342 and CNCS's supplemental regulation. Termination actions follow the due process requirements contained therein.

12. **During the hearing, you highlighted the hiring of a new chief risk officer. Is this a new position or did this replace a senior executive administrative slot? Does this add new cost to the Corporation? How does the chief risk officer fit into the larger monitoring scheme? Please detail the responsibilities of the chief risk officer position.**

Answer: The Chief Risk Officer (CRO) position replaces the former position of the Director of the Office of Accountability and Oversight. The CRO position was elevated to a senior executive position to ensure better integration of the agency's risk management framework into daily business operations and adds no additional cost to CNCS due to staffing changes in other areas. CNCS has prioritized funding of this position and the Office of the Chief Risk Officer to carry out the important accountability-focused mission of this office.

The CRO's duties include managing the agency's four risk programs: internal controls, improper payments, enterprise risk management, and grants monitoring oversight. In addition to the managerial and functional oversight duties of the CRO, the position also provides leadership and guidance to senior management on all aspects of risk identification, management, and mitigation through its role on corporate wide governance bodies.

The CRO joined CNCS in April 2016 and she is working with other federal agencies to gather best practices, which are informing a comprehensive evaluation of the agency's monitoring assessment tool and the agency's review of its monitoring policies and procedures.

13. **The *Serve America Act* clearly sets requirements for criminal history checks. Since the hearing, the Corporation's Office of Inspector General (OIG) released its Semiannual Report to Congress for the first half of fiscal year (FY) 2016 (October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016). The report highlights two grant audits both of which found grantees did not conduct criminal history checks in compliance with the *Serve America Act*. What steps is the Corporation taking to ensure criminal history checks are conducted in accordance with the law? What steps does the Corporation take to hold grantees accountable when they fail to comply with this important provision?**

Answer: The criminal history check requirements in the Serve America Act require grantees to perform several specific checks from several different state and federal record systems for each staff member or national service participant that receives assistance from CNCS.

Over the past several years, CNCS has made grantee compliance with the criminal history check requirements a priority. The multi-part strategy CNCS is executing includes: (1) elevating the importance of criminal history check compliance with an agency-wide policy, (2) consistent messaging from our Chief Executive Officer and other agency leaders, (3) reducing barriers to compliance for grantees, (4) improving and expanding grantee training and technical assistance, (5) expanding CNCS staff capacity and engagement with external stakeholders such as the FBI and state agencies, (6) incentivizing compliance with financial consequences, and (7) a renewed focus on prevention.

Since January 2016 alone, CNCS has secured a contract to offer FBI background checks directly to our grantees, many of whom were unable to access this important fingerprint-based federal check previously due to state law restrictions; unveiled a new mandatory eCourse on the criminal history check requirements; developed a library of video trainings on compliance; and provided live training and technical assistance to more than 1,000 grantee and agency staff responsible for criminal history check compliance. CEO Wendy Spencer and other agency leaders reiterate the importance of performing the required criminal history checks on time and every time in correspondence sent to all grantees. These are examples of the ways CNCS is seeking to ensure grantees perform, and document that they performed, these important checks in compliance with the law.

CNCS identifies noncompliance through various means, including its monitoring protocols, OIG audits and investigations, improper payment reviews, and other means. When noncompliance is identified, consistent with its policy, CNCS imposes a financial consequence on the grantee commensurate with the degree of noncompliance and requires prompt corrective action to perfect any incomplete checks.

14. **During the hearing, the inspector general recommended the Corporation improve its monitoring by increasing its contact with individual AmeriCorps members. She indicated currently the Corporation could have contact with individual members at a particular grantees as infrequently six year. What steps is the Corporation taking to increase its contact with individual AmeriCorps members to improve grant monitoring and oversight?**

Answer: CNCS is looking at several ways to increase direct contact with AmeriCorps members to help strengthen our monitoring efforts. In the near term, we are planning for direct-to-member communication in line with the OIG's recommendations. Additionally, we are considering ways to improve our monitoring assessments, such as assigning a higher priority to grantees that have highly distributed management structures. Because monitoring activities are based on the priority designation, higher priority grantees would receive more frequent monitoring, including contact with individual AmeriCorps members. Over the longer-term, as part of the new online member management system that is being developed

by CNCS, pending the availability of funding to do so, we have requested that as part of the enrollment process, enrolled members would continue to receive a list of the prohibited activities, and would additionally be required to affirm that they reviewed and understood the content.

15. **During the hearing you discussed emails between NACHC and the Corporation relating to the prohibited activities. Please provide the Committee with all documents relating to communications between NACHC and the Corporation between April 21, 2009 and the fulfillment of this request.**

    Answer: Attached is the email correspondence referenced at the hearing.

16. **Please provide an electronic, readable list of all grant applications since FY 2010 containing similar information that is included in the "Database of Submitted Applications" on the Corporation's website.**

    Answer: The attached report includes seven years of data. Please note that for 2016, we have only included data for the three grant competitions that have closed. For the rest of the 2016 competitions, final funding decisions have not been made; therefore the information is not available at this stage.

[Extensive material was submitted by Ms. Spencer. The submission for the record is in the committee archive for this hearing.]

[Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]