Open Government Plan

2014

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Introduction

Established in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages 5 million Americans in service through its core programs -- Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund -- and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

As we pursue our goals, we are guided by the following principles:

- Put the needs of local communities first.
- Strengthen the public-private partnerships that underpin all of our programs.
- Use our programs to build stronger, more efficient, and more sustainable community networks capable of mobilizing volunteers to address local needs, including disaster preparedness and response.
- Measure and continually improve our programs' benefits to service beneficiaries, participants, community organizations, and our national culture of service.
- Build collaborations wherever possible across our programs and with other federal programs.
- Help rural and economically distressed communities obtain access to public and private resources.
- Support diverse organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations, minority colleges, and disability organizations.
- Use service-learning principles to put volunteer and service activities into an appropriate context that stimulates life-long civic engagement.
- Support continued civic engagement, leadership, and public service careers for our programs' participants and community volunteers.
- Exhibit excellence in management and customer service.

On December 8, 2009, the White House issued the Open Government Directive which required federal agencies to take immediate, specific steps to achieve key milestones in collaboration, transparency, participation. The Corporation for National and Community Service is committed to achieving its mission and adhering to these three principles of open government:

- Collaboration improves the effectiveness of government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal government, across all levels of government, and between government and private institutions.
- Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the government is doing.

- Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that policies can be made with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society.

On February 24, 2014, the Office of Science and Technology Policy issued guidance for agencies as they update their Open Government Plans for 2014. CNCS's Open Government Plan for 2014 serves as a public roadmap detailing agency progress in integrating the open government principles of collaboration, transparency, and participation into CNCS's core mission, and how CNCS will continue to support these activities.

We believe the principles of CNCS and the principles of open government align. Nearly everything CNCS does is accomplished by working with and through others – including government at all levels, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, schools and higher education institutions, businesses – and ultimately individual citizens.

Open Government Webpage and Feedback

Information regarding CNCS's open government activities can be found at www.nationalservice.gov/open.

Feedback on all CNCS open government activities can be submitted to open@cns.gov.

Collaboration

Collaboration is one of the cornerstones of the Office of Management and Budget's Open Government Directive. Collaboration improves the effectiveness of government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the federal government, across levels of government, and between the government and private institutions and citizens.

Open Government Flagship Initiative – Expanding National Service through Partnerships to Advance Government Priorities

On July 15, 2013, President Obama announced an interagency task force co-led by CNCS. The Presidential Memorandum established a Task Force on Expanding National Service. It includes representatives of 13 cabinet departments, the Peace Corps, National Science Foundation, Office of Personnel Management, Environmental Protection Agency, and the White House. Among other activities, the task force was directed to make recommendations on policies to expand national service opportunities, recommend ways to coordinate volunteering and service programs across the Federal government, develop opportunities for interagency agreements between CNCS and other federal agencies, and identify public-private partnerships to expand national service.

Since the Presidential Memorandum was released, CNCS has laid the groundwork for the expansion of national service through partnerships by educating agencies on the impact of national service, identifying potential issue areas for increased national service activity, and addressing potential barriers to interagency partnerships. CNCS anticipates announcing new national service partnerships in 2014.

In the coming months, CNCS and the Task Force members will seek to implement strategies to address several key challenges related to developing agency partnerships to grow national service:
- Funding: Explore creative ways to support the expansion of national service, coordinate existing grant opportunities to use national service as the preferred resource, and seek private sector support.
- Agency Engagement: Continue efforts to engage all Task Force agencies in aligning their agency's work with a national service solution and prioritizing the added benefit AmeriCorps and Senior Corps provide.

Collaboration Updates and Plans: AmeriCorps State and National

School Turnaround AmeriCorps

In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, CNCS has developed an initiative to improve the nation's persistently low-performing schools. Launched in February 2013, the School Turnaround AmeriCorps program is designed to support the placement of a dedicated cadre of AmeriCorps members in persistently low-performing schools across the country. School Turnaround AmeriCorps members are placed in schools implementing school turnaround interventions. School Turnaround AmeriCorps members keep students on track by increasing student academic achievement, attendance, and high school graduation rates; improving college and career readiness; and providing college enrollment assistance and advice.

The School Turnaround AmeriCorps partnership reflects both agencies' mutual commitment to increasing opportunities for students in disadvantaged communities by providing a high-quality education. The program supports organizations that serve low-performing schools around the country, including those in rural areas, and builds on the efforts of Together for Tomorrow, a CNCS partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

In its first year, this initiative made grants for hundreds of School Turnaround AmeriCorps members to support a variety of intervention efforts aimed at addressing the unique needs of each School Improvement Grant and Priority school. The 13 School Turnaround AmeriCorps grantees have placed AmeriCorps members in approximately 70 schools in urban and rural communities across the country. Members will support turnaround interventions in 14 states and the District of Columbia. School Turnaround AmeriCorps will be supported by an investment of $7.5 million from each agency, for a total of $15 million over a span of three years.

VetSuccess

CNCS programs also engage more than 27,000 veterans in service through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, tapping their skills and experiences to meet challenges on the home front. As part of our support for the military community, CNCS launched VetSuccess AmeriCorps in FY 2013, a new partnership that brings the resources, expertise, and infrastructure of AmeriCorps to the Department of Veterans Affairs' VetSuccess on Campus program. VetSuccess AmeriCorps partnered AmeriCorps members with VA Vet Success on Campus counselors working on college campuses across the country to meet the many diverse needs of student veterans.

Collaboration Updates and Plans: AmeriCorps NCCC

FEMA Corps

Building on AmeriCorps NCCC disaster work and a 19-year history of working together on disaster response and recovery efforts, the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and CNCS launched an innovative five-year partnership in 2012 to further strengthen the nation's ability to respond to and recover from disasters while expanding professional disaster management opportunities for young people.

FEMA Corps is a new unit of AmeriCorps NCCC whose members are devoted solely to disaster response and recovery efforts. The program provides for a corps of 1,600 members annually.

FEMA Corps was launched to:
  • Enhance the federal government's disaster capabilities.
  • Increase the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce.
  • Expand education and economic opportunity for young people.
  • Achieve significant cost savings for the American taxpayer.

In FY 2012-2013, FEMA Corps teams provided vital services to survivors of Hurricane Sandy, including the distribution of more than 24,000 educational and preparedness kits in New York and New Jersey. FEMA Corps teams assisted more than 13,300 people in Moore, OK affected by an EF5 tornado that devastated the city on May 20, 2013. In total, FEMA Corps teams have served in 74 cities across 32 states and have completed more than 6,500 damage or needs assessments, answered more than 28,000 registration or helpline calls, and conducted more than 65,000 case reviews for disaster survivors.

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation in Youngstown, OH, is a citywide multifaceted neighborhood development organization launched to catalyze

strategic reinvestment in neighborhoods throughout the City of Youngstown, OH. Starting in 2012 and continuing through 2013, AmeriCorps NCCC members have worked in partnership with the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation to create green space for the city by cleaning and clearing vacant lots of former homes and buildings. AmeriCorps NCCC members removed more than 12 tons of debris and trash and started eight community gardens. NCCC's support ensured community gardens would provide affordable and accessible food to low-income neighborhoods while empowering residents to grow their own food.

The Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia

The Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia conducts projects and programs that strengthen and revitalize communities by building self-esteem, providing educational enhancements, and identifying employment opportunities through meaningful work experiences for young people. In the summer of 2013, after two years of joint planning, the Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia, AmeriCorps NCCC, the Boy Scouts of America, and other organizations launched The Initiative, a large-scale community service effort in which 16 AmeriCorps NCCC teams from the Atlantic and Southern Regions took part. AmeriCorps NCCC members assisted the Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia with preparation, development, and logistical planning for 320 Boy Scout community service projects. The Initiative projects engaged more than 40,000 volunteers in nine counties. AmeriCorps NCCC played a key organizing role coordinating the volunteers, with other AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs pitching in. AmeriCorps NCCC's collaborative effort increased community members' access to recreational areas, made schools and community centers safer, and restored historic sites' aesthetic appeal.

Collaboration Updates and Plans: AmeriCorps VISTA

Building on its long history of public-private partnerships, AmeriCorps VISTA created and expanded collaborations with federal agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector in FY 2013. Examples of the types of public-private partnerships AmeriCorps VISTA have recently developed and will continue to develop in the future are described below.

Hunger Alleviation

Since August 2010, AmeriCorps VISTA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service to support hunger alleviation efforts in communities spanning 30 states. By building and strengthening coalitions of corporate, government, and community-based anti-hunger groups, AmeriCorps VISTA members raised $490,000, $3.5 million and $5.5 million in cash resources during fiscal years 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively. Building upon each previous year's successes, the AmeriCorps VISTA members have raised $9.5 million dollars, despite fundraising being only a small part of each AmeriCorp VISTA member's capacity-building assignment. In addition, AmeriCorps VISTA members met and exceeded project goals to create sustainable community resources that will outlive the initial investment resources provided by CNCS

and the USDA. Between August 2010 and August 2013, 364 AmeriCorps VISTA members and AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates improved access to affordable farmers markets and created community gardens, volunteer-recruitment systems, nutrition workshop curriculums, and nonprofit fundraising templates. As a result of AmeriCorps VISTA's efforts in FY 2013, 342 local anti-hunger community organizations nationwide received capacity-building services from AmeriCorps VISTA members and ended FY 2013 in a stronger and more sustainable position than they began the year.

Together for Tomorrow

Together for Tomorrow, an initiative developed by CNCS, the U.S. Department of Education, and the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, engages AmeriCorps VISTA members to expand community partnerships to improve some of our lowest-performing schools. Together for Tomorrow was launched in FY 2012 with six pilot projects that engaged 60 AmeriCorps VISTA members in five states. In FY 2013, Together for Tomorrow expanded to include 39 projects with a total of 215 AmeriCorps VISTA members in 33 states. These AmeriCorps VISTA members fostered local community partnerships to focus on student outcomes such as attendance, behavior, course performance, and college access.

Financial Opportunity Corps

In partnership with Bank of America and the Points of Light Institute, AmeriCorps VISTA launched the Financial Opportunity Corps to support low- and moderate-income households. This initiative will place 20 AmeriCorps VISTA members at local nonprofit, public, and faith-based organizations throughout the country. The AmeriCorps VISTA members will build local capacity at their sites by launching and supporting proven financial coaching programs to help low- and moderate-income households achieve financial stability.

HandsOn Tech

AmeriCorps VISTA has also partnered with the Points of Light Institute and Google to create HandsOn Tech, an initiative designed to increase the nonprofit sector's effective use of technology. AmeriCorps VISTA placed 28 HandsOn Tech AmeriCorps VISTA members in eight cities across the country to advance the anti-poverty work of nonprofit organizations serving low-income communities. This project builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to effectively use technology to support mission-driven strategies. AmeriCorps VISTA members also recruit local, skills-based volunteers who continue to serve in the community. This sustainable model not only provides community-based technology training, but also provides vital employment skills and connects local community organizations to technological resources. The more effective use of technology will provide for greater efficiencies in the service delivery of the nonprofit organizations and lead to greater impact on issues facing low-income individuals and families in urban centers.

Promise Zones

In the 2013 State of the Union Address, the President announced the creation of Promise Zones to establish opportunities for the middle class and put people back to work. In early 2014, the President named the first five Promise Zones, located in San Antonio, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Southeastern Kentucky, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Each of the five has put forward a strategic plan on how they will partner with local business and community leaders to make investments that reward hard work and expand opportunity. Five full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members will be made available to each Promise Zone. These AmeriCorps VISTA members will recruit and manage volunteers and strengthen the capacity of Promise Zones to expand economic opportunity.

Transparency

Transparency is one of the cornerstones of the Office of Management and Budget's Open Government Directive. Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the government is doing.

Participation in Transparency Initiatives

Data.gov: CNCS has submitted three datasets regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Regulations.gov: For a major rule concerning provisions relating to the National Service Trust, AmeriCorps applications, and Senior Corps, CNCS uses Regulations.gov, which allows visitors to both post comments and read what others are saying.

Recovery.gov: CNCS's agency profile can be found at http://www.recovery.gov/arra/Transparency/RecoveryData/pages/AgencyProfile.aspx?agency_code=95

CFDA.gov: CNCS's agency information can be found at https://www.cfda.gov/index?s=agency&mode=form&id=317da2a985978b59413a263fa685da95&tab=programs&tabmode=list&subtab=list&subtabmode=list&

SAM.gov: All vendors and grantees doing business with CNCS must be registered with SAM.

USAspending.gov: CNCS's agency information can be found at http://usaspending.gov/?q=explore&tab=By%2BAgency&fromfiscal=yes&typeofview=detailsummary&maj_contracting_agency=9577&maj_contracting_agency_name=CORPORATION+FOR+NATIONAL+AND+COMMUNITY+SERVICE&fiscal_year=2014

Open Data – Updates and Plans

IT Modernization Plan

CNCS's Office of Information Technology has developed a three-year IT Modernization Plan and began implementation in FY 2014. This effort will transform business operations through improved access to data to support decision making and streamlined system work flows that are aligned with core business principles. Objectives of modernization include:

- Increase data quality and transparency
- Increase grant program effectiveness
- Increase staff productivity
- Decrease the burden on CNCS grantees
- Facilitate public engagement

As part of this plan, several high-priority IT modernization initiatives will ultimately deliver a modern, more flexible IT platform. These initiatives are:

- Grants Application and Review Process (GARP) Automation – GARP is both central to CNCS's primary grantmaking mission and a key capacity factor in supporting the partnerships created through CNCS's Open Government Flagship Initiative (Expanding National Service through Partnerships to Advance Government Priorities). This project will implement new IT services and capacity in support of the streamlined GARP process resulting in a more efficient CNCS external grant reviewer experience. CNCS regularly uses external professionals and peers from the field as reviewers to read competitive applications, provide an analysis of the quality of each application, and rate them based on published criteria. CNCS in turn considers these peer review comments and ratings along with other information, in determining which program applications to fund.
- Improved Analytical Support - This initiative includes a series of projects that will enable staff to have self-service access to data and reports from across CNCS programs to support evidence-based policies and decision making. New data management and analytical services will enhance stakeholder communication and information sharing, and enable CNCS to more effectively manage agency data. This project will add a new organizational layer to CNCS's Data Warehouse to simplify how users can access agency data directly. This will result in timely, accurate, and consistent data outputs for reports, program decision making, oversight, and agency outreach. This project will also apply new data edits and validations to ensure that data is accurate and contributes to high-quality agency data products as well as developing new dashboards and reports to improve overall business intelligence.

- Streamline Member Management Systems – This initiative will streamline the member management process and move supporting IT services to a common, modern IT platform. As a result, this effort will improve data quality, mitigate risks and inefficiencies associated with current member management processes, and offer member and sponsors access to 21st Century E-Government services.

The above modernization initiatives will apply the framework of OMB Memorandum M-13-13, as many of the goals of CNCS's modernization efforts align to the goals of promoting efficiency and producing value found in the memorandum. OMB Memorandum M-13-13 part III, sections 1 and 2, applies to all new information collection, creation, and system development efforts as well as major modernization projects that update or re-design existing information systems. CNCS is modernizing information systems in a way that maximizes interoperability and information accessibility, to the extent practicable and permitted by law.

CNCS Research Clearinghouse

CNCS is planning to initiate a "what works" clearinghouse repository that will provide wider access to the agency's research and evaluation reports. CNCS will make accessible the empirical findings associated with AmeriCorps, SIF, and any other CNCS sponsored work. This repository will be pursued in close coordination with the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to leverage the knowledge and infrastructures of those agencies. CNCS is proposing a phased approach to the design and launch of its repository with FY 2015 representing a pilot phase to follow the FY 2014 planning phase and that would precede a public release. A resource such as this will provide easier grantee access to research-based programs and practices. As this resource is still being planned, CNCS has made it easier to find our current research and reports, by creating a dedicated link to them: http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/research-and-reports.

Searchable National Service State Profiles

CNCS has developed an interactive map at http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/state-profiles that provides state specific information on national service programming in a PDF format. To enable site visitors to better analyze the data, CNCS is developing searchable and downloadable extracts of state profile data that we expect to make available to the public within the next two years.

Results of Grant Competitions

CNCS has developed a tool that displays information pertaining to the CNCS grant application review process (http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition). This tool includes a list of compliant applications submitted to CNCS, executive summaries for compliant applications, and a list of successful applicants. CNCS is working on updating this transparency tool to make it easier for users to access information on grant competitions.

Social Innovation Fund Map

In FY 2014, the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) launched a searchable map (http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund/social-innovation-fund-map). The SIF makes grants to experienced grantmaking "intermediaries" that are well-positioned within communities to identify the most promising programs and guide them towards greater impact and stronger evidence of success. This map enables users to search the locations of all SIF Grantmaking Intermediaries and the communities in which selected nonprofits are addressing pressing challenges. Search results provide detailed information on the services provided, the award amount, and the nonprofits involved.

Proactive Disclosures

The bulk of CNCS's public disclosure is accomplished through close coordination between the Office of External Affairs (OEA) and other offices. OEA meets frequently with the grant program directors, the Office of Government Relations, the Office of Research and Evaluation, Freedom of information Act (FOIA) personnel in the Office of General Counsel, and senior advisors to the CEO to discuss posting material to CNCS's external website and releasing information via social media.

As a result of this collaboration, for example, CNCS's Open Government page lists the results of our grant competition. The FOIA logs for previous years are posted as well, and the logs for the current fiscal year are updated at the end of each month. When CNCS receives three or more requests for substantially the same material, FOIA personnel post these to the FOIA reading room.

In FY 2013, CNCS posted more-detailed state service profiles than we have in the past. CNCS's website now lists every service location in every state. This constitutes hundreds of pages of detailed information. Elected officials, the media, state service commissions, CNCS partners, and the general public all use these profiles. CNCS also enhanced the grantee and program information that is posted. For example, CNCS now shows the matching dollars for agency grants, CNCS lists all the assignments and deployment dates for our National Civilian Community Corps, and CNCS state at-a-glance profiles provide detailed endnotes about the data contained in them. Here is an example of a state service profile. It contains sub-links to the various kinds of data: http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/state-profiles/ca. As noted previously, CNCS is planning to make the data on these pages easier to examine by switching from a PDF format to a more searchable format.

CNCS uses several means to publicize or highlight important proactive disclosures for public awareness. The agency conducted conference calls to introduce state service commissions to the new website and all the new data available through it. CNCS routinely announces information about programs, events, grant funding availability, major initiatives, and research results in press releases and through GovDelivery. We also

disseminate information and seek feedback via our blog, a strong Facebook and Twitter presence, and Flickr and YouTube sites. Here is a link to our social media resources: http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/social-media.

CEO Wendy Spencer has charged CNCS's senior staff to constantly think of ways the agency can improve its communication with the public. Ms. Spencer uses agency-wide staff meetings to promote a culture of transparency and information-sharing, and leads by example as she tweets, writes blog posts, and actively encourages agency communication initiatives. Here is a sample blog post in which Ms. Spencer promotes a key CNCS initiative, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service: http://www.nationalservice.gov/blogs/2014-01-17/mlk-day-2014-start-year-citizen-action

Privacy

CNCS is required to prepare the following privacy compliance report: the Senior Agency Official for Privacy report required under the Federal Information Security Management Act.

Whistleblower protection

CNCS has completed the U.S. Office of Special Counsel's (OSC) Whistleblower Protection Act certification program. This certification will remain in effect through May 2016, provided that CNCS meets its ongoing information obligations under the OSC's certification program.

Websites

CNCS understands the importance of providing clear, accessible, and up-to-date information on our web platforms. Transparency, participation, and collaboration are guiding principles for all of our work, and are reflected in our digital strategy. We use our websites and other digital properties to share data and information with the public, seek input about policies and initiatives, encourage collaboration with nonprofit, public, and private sector organizations, and promote civic participation by Americans.

CNCS maintains websites that offer a wide range of information and services to the public. Visitors can search for volunteer opportunities, apply for funding, join a national service program, get news and updates, access research, connect to peers, learn about effective practices, get training and tools to strengthen their service program, and more.

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve communication and customer service, we have undergone a complete redesign of our agency website over the past year. The goals of this project were to:

- Consolidate multiple websites into one

- Improve the way our websites look, function, and communicate to our stakeholders
- Strengthen online services to better meet our agency goals and improve customer service
- Provide intuitive, user-friendly navigation
- Improve branding Increase transparency, participation, and collaboration as part of open government goals
- Better incorporate social media, interactive tools, and video
- Improve search functionality and search engine optimization
- Stand up a content management system to involve more staff in updating content

The website redesign accomplished these goals, and transitioned the agency from a static web presence to a dynamic content management system (Drupal) that is utilized by staff across our agency on a daily basis. In the summer of 2013, CNCS's media team trained each office at the agency in how to use the new site's software. Each office can now keep its material up to date and has a mandate to do so.

The agency's website contains several features that make data accessible to the public, including:

- National Service State Profiles: These pages display detailed information on CNCS programs, participants, funding, and service locations in every state
- Results of Grants Competition: As part of our commitment to fair, consistent, and effective grant application review processes. CNCS begun posting detailed information about the grant application review process and results of all CNCS grant competitions.
- Data Sources: On our Open Government page, CNCS displays a variety of datasets, along with links to CNCS social media sources where users can get real-time information on news, information, grant competitions, and other subjects.

One of the ways that we have strategized around usability is by understanding analytics. We analyze our data each week and incorporate analytics from social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr to develop a picture on what worked in terms of content delivery and what did not. If content did not reach the point that we expected, we make appropriate adjustments. This approach allows us to keep connected with our users and provide them what they are looking for.

We also utilize our social media platforms to connect our community to our website. For instance, just recently we launched a social media blitz across our platforms to send users to a specific press release and other information for our annual AmeriCorps grant release. In just one day, we drove nearly 2,000 users to these two webpages on NationalService.gov. Following digital trends and understanding today's best practices allows us to draw users in from several popular social media platforms.

Our Drupal website also uses an effective interactive slideshow on the homepage and several other landing pages, which allows us to feature content that we deem important for

our user base. We frequently update these slideshows (on a weekly or sometimes daily basis) in addition to other feature areas on our homepage and high traffic interior pages.

Digital engagement is one of our top priorities as an agency. We have successfully implemented various platforms that allow us to directly communicate with Americans in a very unique way. Our open rates for messaging are double the average of federal agencies and our social campaigns are climbing to new heights.

Finally, we maintain a philosophy that our website is to evolve overtime. The look and feel of our website morphs based on our analytics reports, user feedback, and usability studies. We are constantly finding new ways to update our site to maintain an effective and modern web presence for our audiences.

By advancing transparency, participation, and collaboration, the CNCS digital strategy is helping create a more open and citizen-centric agency.

For more information please visit NationalService.gov/DigitalStrategy.

Public Notice

As part of CNCS's new website, CNCS provides a section called Newsroom (http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom#menu-newsroom-dropdown-area) to support public notice of CNCS activities. In this section, CNCS lists all press releases, media advisories, proclamations, and official statements from the agency. Along with this page, CNCS also has a Federal Register Notices page (http://www.nationalservice.gov/site-policy-and-notices/federal-register-notices) which provides a list of all notices published in the Federal Register by CNCs. Notices on this page are made available on the same day that they are made available in the Federal Register. This includes Sunshine Act notices.

Another example of the cost-effective use of technology includes CNCS's use of a centralized email communication system, GovDelivery. The system unified the multiple contact lists of the 500,000 Americans who have signed up to receive information from CNCS and enables timely delivery of information to grantees, project sponsors, and other key audiences. This centralization allows for coordinated communication and avoids duplicative messages, thus increasing the efficiency with which CNCS communicates with its stakeholders.

Records Management

In recent years CNCS has implemented new processes and technology to support the transition to managing records in electronic formats. For example, two years ago, CNCS implemented a new electronic document management capability within its core Grants/Member management Application (i.e., eSPAN/eGrants/My AmeriCorps Portal) to enable program staff to upload documents within this system of record. Similarly, the Office of Procurement and the Office of Budget now require all procurement records to be

uploaded and maintained within Momentum, our financial management and procurement system of record. This year the Office of Accounting also implemented use of the Department of Treasury's Invoice Processing Platform which transitioned all invoicing and payment processing from paper to an electronic format thereby enabling electronic records management.

CNCS also subscribes to a number of Federal transparency initiatives (e.g., eRulemaking, Grants.gov) and relies on these services to manage records electronically. Finally, CNCS has implemented basic scanning capabilities and shared network storage throughout the enterprise to enable the overall transition to electronic records storage.

While CNCS doesn't have an agency-wide initiative planned at this time to convert historic permanent hardcopy records into electronic format, many individual programs have sponsored digitization projects to preserve these records and make them accessible. For example, The National Service Trust has converted old Trust forms and actively converts new member correspondence into electronic records stored in the Indicium Document Management System, an upgrade to the former Keyfile system. Also, AmeriCorps VISTA initiated a project to digitize historic records to support the development of anniversary publications and promotional materials.

In FY 2013, as part of an effort to reduce paper and improve service to employees, CNCS, in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), implemented an electronic official personnel folder system. This transition reduced costs associated with storage, maintenance, and retrieval of records and maintains compliance with OPM and federally-mandated employee record management regulations. As electronic records management processes continue to mature and budget resources become available, the Office of Information Technology, in conjunction with the CNCS Records Officer, will work to expand electronic records management capabilities and convert additional permanent record archives to electronic formats.

Over the next five years, CNCS plans on implementing new business processes, technology, and records management awareness training and guidance to achieve the goal of managing all permanent records in an electronic format by the end of calendar year 2019. CNCS will take a phased approach in meeting this requirement.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

CNCS does not have a significant backlog of FOIA requests. At the end of FY 2013, we had four backlogged cases and no backlogged administrative appeals. We sent interim responses for one of these. Of the remaining three, one case was on consultation, one was involved in litigation, and one was backlogged for only 17 days before we sent the complete response. Once a vacant CNCS staff position was filled mid-way through FY 2013, the average rate of response to simple requests was 16 days.

CNCS has posted FOIA logs from 2010 to the present, and updates the current year logs at the end of each month. These logs, and CNCS's Annual FOIA Report, Chief FOIA Officer Report, and quarterly reports are all accessed through this link on CNCS's Open Government page: http://www.nationalservice.gov/site-policy-and-notices/foia-and-privacy-act.

CNCS's Chief FOIA Officer and FOIA Public Liaison contact information, as well as information on how to submit a FOIA, and a link to agency FOIA regulations, are all found through this link on our Open Government page: http://www.nationalservice.gov/site-policy-and-notices/foia-and-privacy-act. CNCS uses a dedicated email box (foia@cns.gov) to receive requests and make responses, and uses electronic means of communication whenever possible.

Participation

Participation is one of the cornerstones of the Office of Management and Budget's Open Government Directive. Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that policies can be made with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society.

Mayors Day

The nation's mayors are increasingly turning to national service as a cost-effective strategy to address city challenges. By unleashing the power of citizens, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs have a positive and lasting impact – making our cities better places to live. The Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service was launched in 2013, and is co-sponsored by Cities of Service, the National League of Cities, and the National Conference of Mayors. This day is designed to recognize the positive impact of national service in our cities and encourages citizens to give back to their communities. In 2013, 832 Mayors representing nearly 100 million citizens participated by hosting events at City Hall such as roundtable discussions, recognition events, and service projects.

CNCS continues to focus on growing this event which promotes the Open Government tenants of participation and collaboration. In 2014, as a result of our efforts, the number of mayors participating doubled to over 1700 mayors. CNCS officials, including program leaders and the Senate-confirmed members of the agency's board of directors, and leaders of partner organizations joined mayors of cities in multiple towns and cities. Below is a list of some of these events:

- Boston: Mayor Marty Walsh hosted a meet-and-greet for Senior Corps volunteers. He also led a social media chat with AmeriCorps members.
- Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven, Conn.: The mayors of these three cities—Pedro Segarra, Bill Finch, and Toni Harp— held recognition ceremonies and thanked local

national service participants. Social Innovation Fund Director Michael Smith participated.

- Denver, Colo.: Mayor Michael Hancock joined representatives from Serve Colorado, AmeriCorps VISTA, and Senior Corps at a local high school to thank national service members and volunteers for their service.
- Geneva & West Chicago, Ill.: The mayors of these cities visited AmeriCorps VISTA members serving at Northern Illinois Food Bank. Board member Matthew McCabe represented CNCS at these events.
- Oklahoma City and Moore, Okla.: Mayor Mick Cornett spoke about the impact of national service and presented a proclamation during a City Council meeting. Mayor Glenn Lewis of Moore led a recognition ceremony for national service participants who assisted in tornado disaster response and recovery. Chief of Staff Asim Mishra represented CNCS at both events.
- Philadelphia, Pa.: Mayor Michael Nutter presented a Mayor's Award for Distinguished National Service to former AmeriCorps VISTA Director Mary Strasser. Myung J. Lee, executive director of Cities of Service, also participated.
- Salt Lake County, Utah: Mayor Ben McAdams convened all mayors in the county for a recognition event.
- Spokane, Wash.: Mayor David Condon participated in three site visits and presented a proclamation and a Mayoral Service Award. AmeriCorps Director Bill Basl represented CNCS at the event.
- Tucson, Ariz.: Mayor Jonathan Rothschild presented the Tucson Mayor's National Service Award during a press conference at City Hall. National service members who earned Presidential Volunteer Service Awards were also recognized. Acting AmeriCorps VISTA Director Erin Dahlin represented CNCS at the event.

Public Ideas

Beyond Mayors Day, CNCS actively seeks input and ideas from the public in a variety of ways.

CNCS is governed by a bipartisan Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Board sets policies and direction for CNCS, reviews and approves the strategic plan, makes recommendations on programming, evaluation, and other operational issues, advises the President and the Congress concerning developments in national and community service and carries out other duties. The Board holds public meetings three times a year, during which time members of the public have an opportunity to make public comments, and minutes of the meetings are shared on our websites. Board members also hear directly from members of the public in other events they participate in, such as service projects, conferences, and site visits. The AmeriCorps NCCC program has an Advisory Board, which advises the National Director on issues concerning the administration of the NCCC and helps to further the mission of the program.

CNCS regularly seeks public input on proposed rules, publicizing the existence of proposed rules and offering the public multiple ways to comment including conference calls, in-

person sessions, fax, mail, email and online. For a major rule concerning provisions relating to the National Service Trust, AmeriCorps applications and Senior Corps, CNCS uses Regulations.gov, which allows visitors to both post comments and read what others are saying.

In FY 2013, CNCS made great strides in beginning to measure the value of training programs and understand grantee training needs. For example, CNCS launched an important effort to collect knowledge gains on grantee training related to performance measures, financial and grants management, and program compliance for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. Pre- and post-test questions were developed to survey training knowledge gains. The surveys were piloted at the Regional Training and Technical Assistance Conferences and at the AmeriCorps Symposium. The pilot data will be available in FY 2014.

As in past years, CNCS continued to provide training to and receive feedback from its Senior Corps network through a Virtual Conference in FY 2013. More than 1,900 unique registrants focused on impact and performance measures. This conference supports applicants for the upcoming Senior Corps competitions and trains Senior Corps program staff on performance measures.

Also during FY 2013, CNCS introduced communities of practice and related forums addressing disaster services and the Senior Corps and AmeriCorps communities. The design of these interactive groups was adopted from the very successful veterans and military families (VMF) community of practice.

CNCS will continue exploration of a mobile application and other new engagement tools for Serve.gov, the online home for The President's Call to Service, to help Americans track their volunteering hours and/or share their volunteering experiences. This new technology would be especially useful in communicating with the 130,000 Americans who pledged to volunteer in their communities as part of the 2013 National Day of Service. CNCS will also continue to use the Challenge.gov website to sponsor contests and challenges to support agency initiatives.