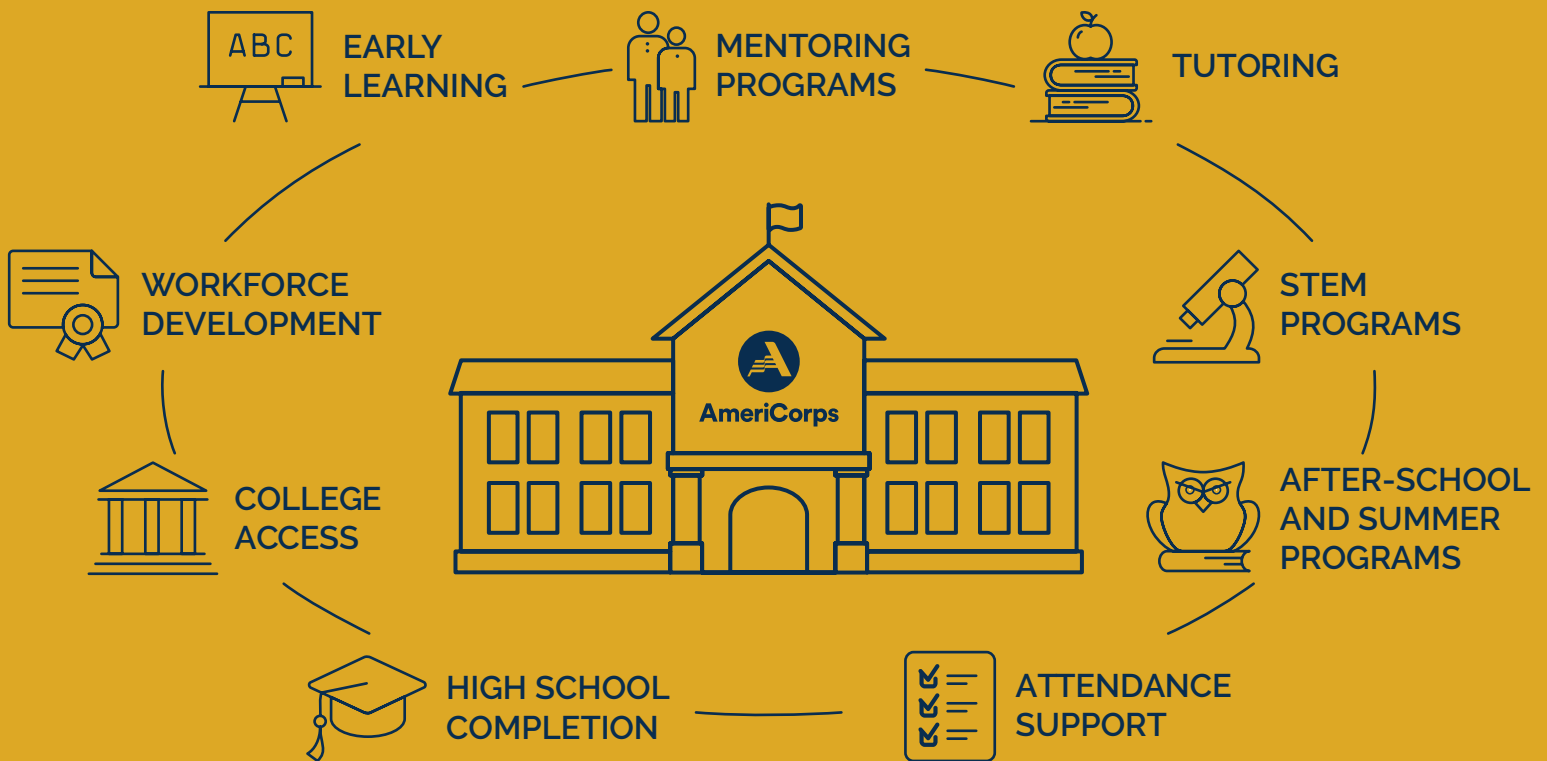


Leveraging National Service in Your Schools

A Superintendent's/Principal's Toolkit to Utilizing National Service Resources



Contents

Introduction.....2

Overview of National Service.....3

Utilizing National Service Resources.....6

- Determining Your District/School Needs.....6
- Selecting a National Service Program.....10
- Requesting National Service Resources/Funding.....15

National Service as a Pathway to Education and Employment for Students.....19

Appendix A: Examples of How School Districts and States are Leveraging National Service.....20



“AmeriCorps members played an integral part in our school support network. They served as relatable mentors and role models for our students and much-needed assistance for our staff. They interfaced seamlessly with teachers, families and other community partners, helping to create a positive and responsive culture in our schools.”



Christopher N. Maher, former Superintendent
Providence Public School District

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused extensive disruption in our nation's schools. Collaborating with AmeriCorps team members can help school districts address the impacts of the pandemic, from supporting physical health and safety to assisting with school-based supports so students get back on track. While AmeriCorps members do not take the place of school staff members or positions, they can help school-based staff stay focused on their core job responsibilities by supporting or taking on non-core responsibilities to help staff provide critical services to students. For example, AmeriCorps members may do some of the additional work that the pandemic has required of schools, whether contact tracing, or supporting COVID-19 testing efforts. AmeriCorps can help promote equity by supporting students who have been the most underserved or hit the hardest by the pandemic. AmeriCorps service can also inspire volunteers to become educators, including in the schools where they serve. See Appendix A for examples.

To help students heal, learn, and grow, the U.S. Department of Education developed a [Return to School Roadmap](#) that highlights key components of safely reopening schools, as shown below. These key components, which education funding from the [American Rescue Plan can support](#), are organized around three landmarks:

1. Prioritize the health and safety of students, school personnel, and families;
2. Build school communities, and support students' social, emotional, and mental health; and
3. Accelerate academic achievement.

AmeriCorps team members can help with all of these landmarks. Throughout this toolkit, we use the related symbol to identify ways AmeriCorps members can support schools in addressing these steps in the Return to School Roadmap.



School health and safety measures are critical to supporting all students and staff. AmeriCorps members can help make sure schools are a safe learning environment, by assisting in implementing strong public health measures that everyone follows. Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic, and AmeriCorps teams can support school-based vaccination clinics. For additional information on COVID-19 prevention in schools, please see [CDC guidance](#) and [Department of Education COVID-19 Handbooks](#), particularly [volume 1](#).

Overview of National Service in Education

AmeriCorps works with community partners to develop and implement after-school or summer learning programs:

- Provides one-on-one tutoring to students to increase academic achievement
- Mentors students to improve attendance and graduation rates
- Works with community partners to develop after-school or summer programs
- Advises students on applying for financial aid for college
- Helps support your work implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act
- Conducts fundraising and outreach
- Creates a pipeline of future teachers



12,000 schools across the country are leveraging national service programs to assist them in these areas and many others. Approximately **65,000** AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are providing cost-effective, high-impact services to address schools' most pressing needs and ensure that all students are ready for college, careers, and full participation in civic life. National service programs support all types of schools, including schools in urban and rural areas, schools with large low-income populations, traditional public schools, public charter schools, and schools with large minority and multilingual populations.

- National service participants are helping **1 out of every 4** low-performing schools nationwide.
- National service programs direct over **\$350 million** in resources to education initiatives annually. In addition, more than **\$150 million** in AmeriCorps Segal Education Awards are issued to national service alumni to help pay for college, technical schools, or repay student loans. Over half of AmeriCorps' budget supports education-related programs.
- AmeriCorps State and National programs served more than **1.4 million children and youth**, and AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent and RSVP volunteers tutored, mentored, or served an estimated **170,000 students**, helping mitigate impacts of school closures and other educational disruptions due to COVID-19.

What is National Service and How Does It Support Schools?

National service is a cost-effective source of human capital to improve student outcomes. More than **28,000** AmeriCorps members and **23,000** AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve students in K-12 programming. Full-time and part-time volunteers and members who receive stipends serve in schools, nonprofits, faith-based groups, local government agencies, and other community organizations to tackle pressing problems, including improving education, at a local level. Funding for national service participants is supported by AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors.

Can School Districts Access these Resources?

Yes! AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs allow schools, local education agencies, state education agencies, nonprofits, state and local government agencies, universities and colleges, tribal nations, and others to request participants to address local challenges they have identified, including education needs. School districts and state education agencies can apply directly; apply in partnership with a city, state, university, or nonprofit organization; or be a service location for other applicants. School districts might consider partnering with existing programs that have demonstrated results.

How Can National Service Programs Support Schools?

Programs support students across the cradle-to-career continuum. With a wide range of programs and flexibility, AmeriCorps works closely with partners to meet local needs, including:

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Early learning | • STEM programs | • Classroom instruction |
| • Mentoring | • After-school and summer school | • School improvement |
| • Tutoring | • Improving attendance | • High school completion |
| • Family engagement | • Social emotional learning | • College access and retention |
| • School climate | • Wraparound services | • Workforce development |

What are the Benefits of Leveraging National Service Programs?

- National service programs make a sustained investment in students, schools, and communities.
 - AmeriCorps grants typically last three years or more, and many AmeriCorps members serve full-time for 10-12 months, contributing up to 1,700 hours annually. Members can also serve for shorter terms, for example, two months in summer programs.
 - AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in the Foster Grandparent program serve in schools from 5 to 40 hours a week. The flexible AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP, can mobilize older adult volunteers to support short- and long-term projects. In both programs, volunteers typically return to the school for multiple years. The average length of service for an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer is eight years.

Programs are cost-effective and have a significant return on investment. [A Columbia University study](#) found that every dollar invested in national service provides a 2-to-1 return on investment and a nearly 4-to-1 social return.

- National service programs deliver results. Rigorous independent evaluations have demonstrated that programs can improve school readiness, increase reading and math achievement, improve school attendance and behavior, and increase access to college and careers.
- Many students from low-income backgrounds need additional support and assistance. National service is a cost-effective human capital strategy that provides the personalized support students need to succeed.
- Programs are responsive to local needs and allow districts to determine how to use resources most effectively.
- National service participants are mission-driven. Participants join national service programs because they are passionate about serving the community and improving education.
- National service creates a pipeline of teachers. Participants gain first-hand experience working with youth and may go on to pursue careers in teaching.



AmeriCorps Seniors Tutoring

The Interfaith Tutor Program is a partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools and the Interfaith Milwaukee RSVP. The program is volunteer driven and comes at no cost to the school. Through this collaboration, RSVP connects older adults (age 55+) with students to improve academic performance and engagement.

Is This Toolkit Relevant for State and Local Officials?

Yes! While the primary users of this toolkit are principals and superintendents, most of the information is relevant to State Education Agencies, state boards of education, governors, mayors, state legislators, and others interested in improving education and ensuring young people succeed in school and life. State and local government agencies, including State Education Agencies, are eligible recipients of AmeriCorps resources. As states work to implement their Every Student Succeeds Act plans, they should consider national service as a cost-effective strategy to reduce chronic absenteeism, improve reading by third grade, increase high school graduation rates, and support low-performing schools. For specific examples of how states have leveraged national service, please see the Minnesota and Colorado profiles in Appendix A.

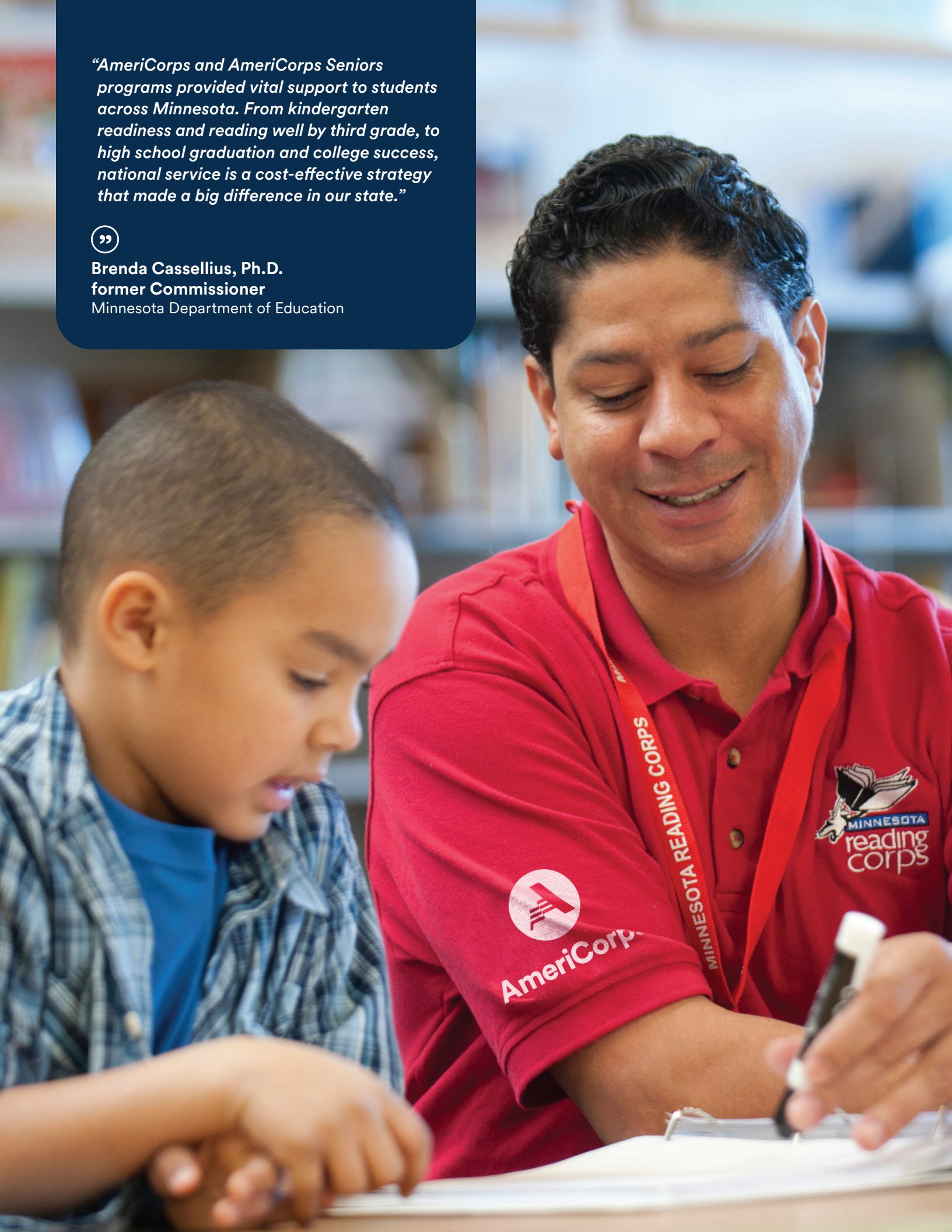
Want Help Accessing these Resources?

Most states have a Governor-appointed State Service Commission who can help you think about how to leverage national service in your school, district, or state. AmeriCorps also has regional offices with staff to serve every state. They are an excellent resource for technical assistance as well as identifying partners. In addition to this toolkit, you may want to contact your regional office or Commission to discuss what program best meets your needs.

“AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs provided vital support to students across Minnesota. From kindergarten readiness and reading well by third grade, to high school graduation and college success, national service is a cost-effective strategy that made a big difference in our state.”

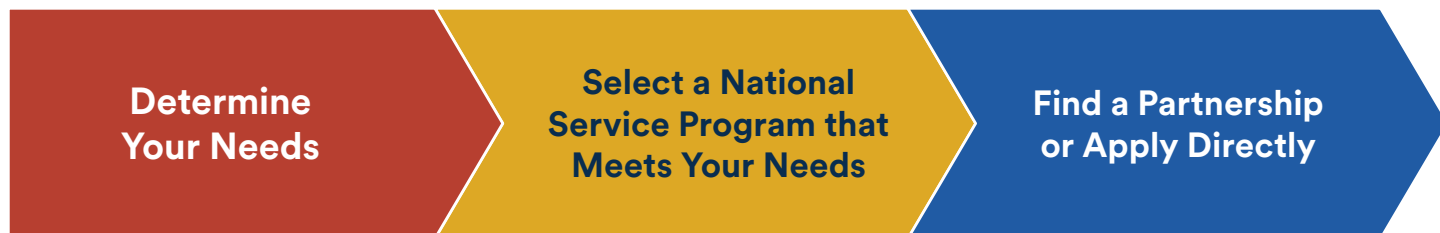


Brenda Cassellius, Ph.D.
former Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education



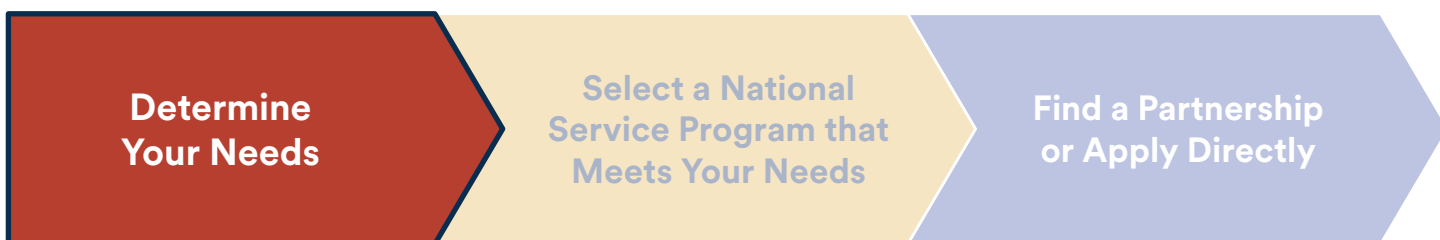
Utilizing National Service Resources

More than half of AmeriCorps' budget is devoted to education-related programs, making it a larger funder of education than many education foundations.



Steps to strategically leverage national service in your schools/district:

1. **Determine Your Needs:** Identify the services that your schools and students need, and the role that national service members could play in meeting those needs. National service resources must be directed to high-need schools and/or underserved student populations.
2. **Select a National Service Program:** Match your needs to an AmeriCorps program. The types of services members and volunteers provide vary slightly by program.
3. **Find a Partnership or Apply Directly:** In many cases, schools request national service members from an external partner like a community organization, city, or university, that is already receiving AmeriCorps resources. These intermediaries assist in the management of participants. Districts can also apply directly.



Section 1: Determine Your Needs

National service is a versatile resource that can help support your schools in a variety of ways. Given the breadth of services provided by national service programs, in order to find the right program for your schools, it's helpful to understand what your needs are and how national service programs can address those needs.

1. Review or conduct a data-driven needs assessment

The first step in the process is to identify your school or district needs. Most schools and districts will already have multiple sources of information they can draw from. Gather and review existing sources of information to fully understand and prioritize your needs. Student achievement data, attendance data, school climate and safety data, educator equity data, and teacher and community survey data can be used to determine where to implement national service as a solution. Early warning indicator systems can be a great source of information. Teachers and school staff, district staff, partner organizations, parents, students, and other community members can also provide important perspectives on areas of need.

Districts that have recently conducted a needs assessment or strategic plan can reference them during this process. Common school district plans include Title I Schoolwide Plan/Needs Assessment, School Improvement Plan, Local Education Agencies or State Education Agencies Strategic Plan, State Every Student Succeeds Act Plans, and American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund State and local plans.

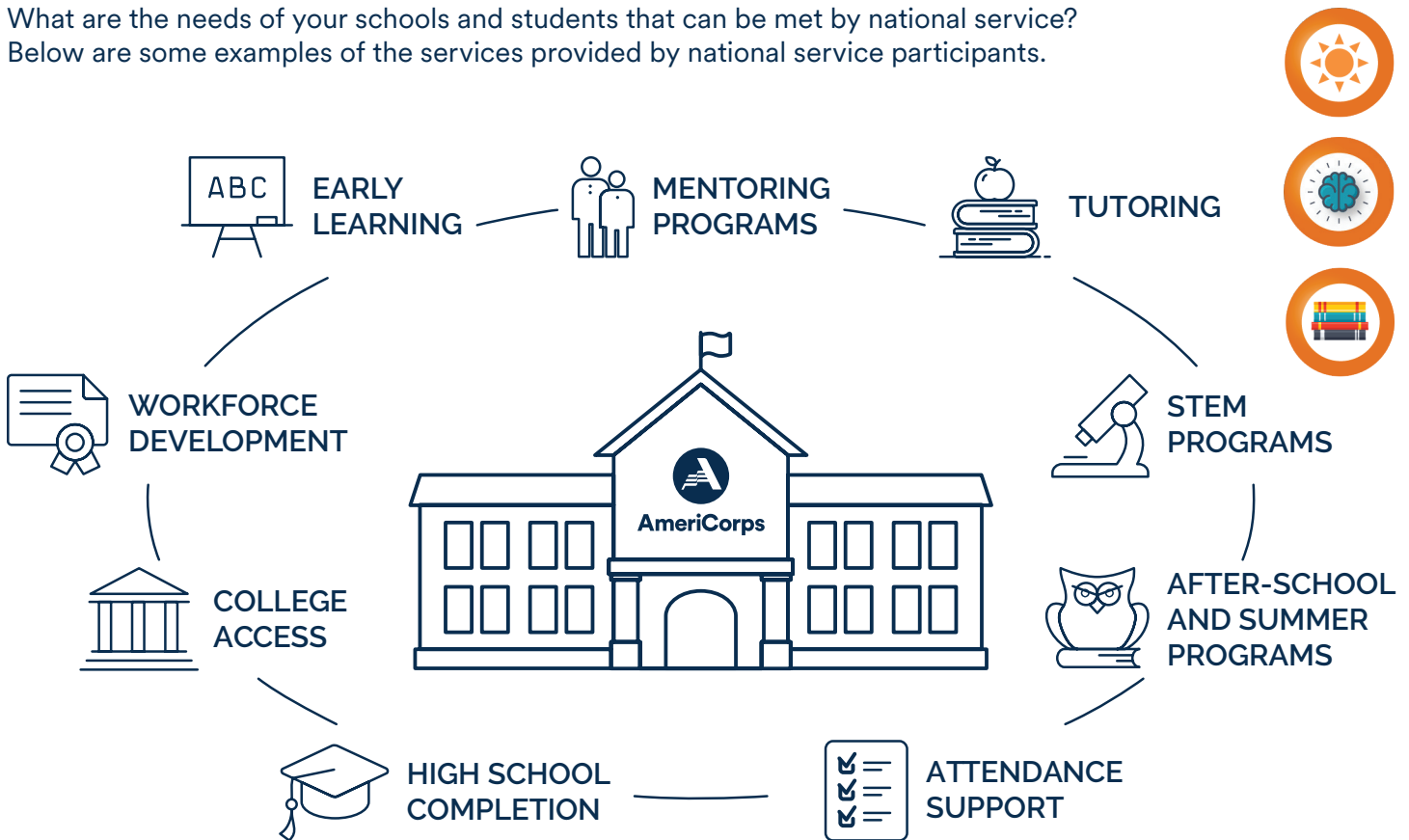
As part of the needs assessment, it will often be important to identify the schools and students that need the most support. National service programs promote equity across the district by directing resources to the schools and students who need them the most. Underserved students face a variety of challenges and often need additional supports. National service can help provide the human capital to give these students the resources they need to succeed.

2. Prioritize needs that can be met through the people power of national service

Review the results generated by the needs assessment and consider what your priorities are for current and upcoming years. Offer stakeholders an opportunity to define priorities. Through conversations with multiple stakeholder groups, schools can more effectively prioritize needs that can be met through additional resources and partnerships.

What are your goals for the year? What are you hoping to accomplish that you just don't have the people or resources to do? How will you reach the goals established in your State Every Student Succeeds Act plans? The following questions can help determine if national service can help:

What are the needs of your schools and students that can be met by national service? Below are some examples of the services provided by national service participants.



- Early learning
- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Family engagement
- School climate
- Service learning
- STEM programs
- After-school programs
- Improving attendance
- Social emotional learning
- Wraparound services
- Reading by third grade
- Classroom instruction
- School turnaround
- High school graduation
- College access
- Workforce development
- Summer school
- Community partnerships
- Fundraising
- Volunteer recruitment
- Drug use prevention
- Healthy habits (food and fitness)
- Teacher training
- Vaccine clinics and contact tracing

Are you facing human capital challenges? Do your needs require one or more of the following?

- A sustained investment of time and resources that staff are not able to provide.
- Tasks that are outside the scope of staff's responsibilities or would pull them away from other activities.
- Additional in-classroom support for teachers and students.
- Individualized support for students to meet the goals established by Every Student Succeeds Act.
- Development of partnerships, fundraising, or outreach.
- Expansion of student services in a particular area such as STEM or college access.

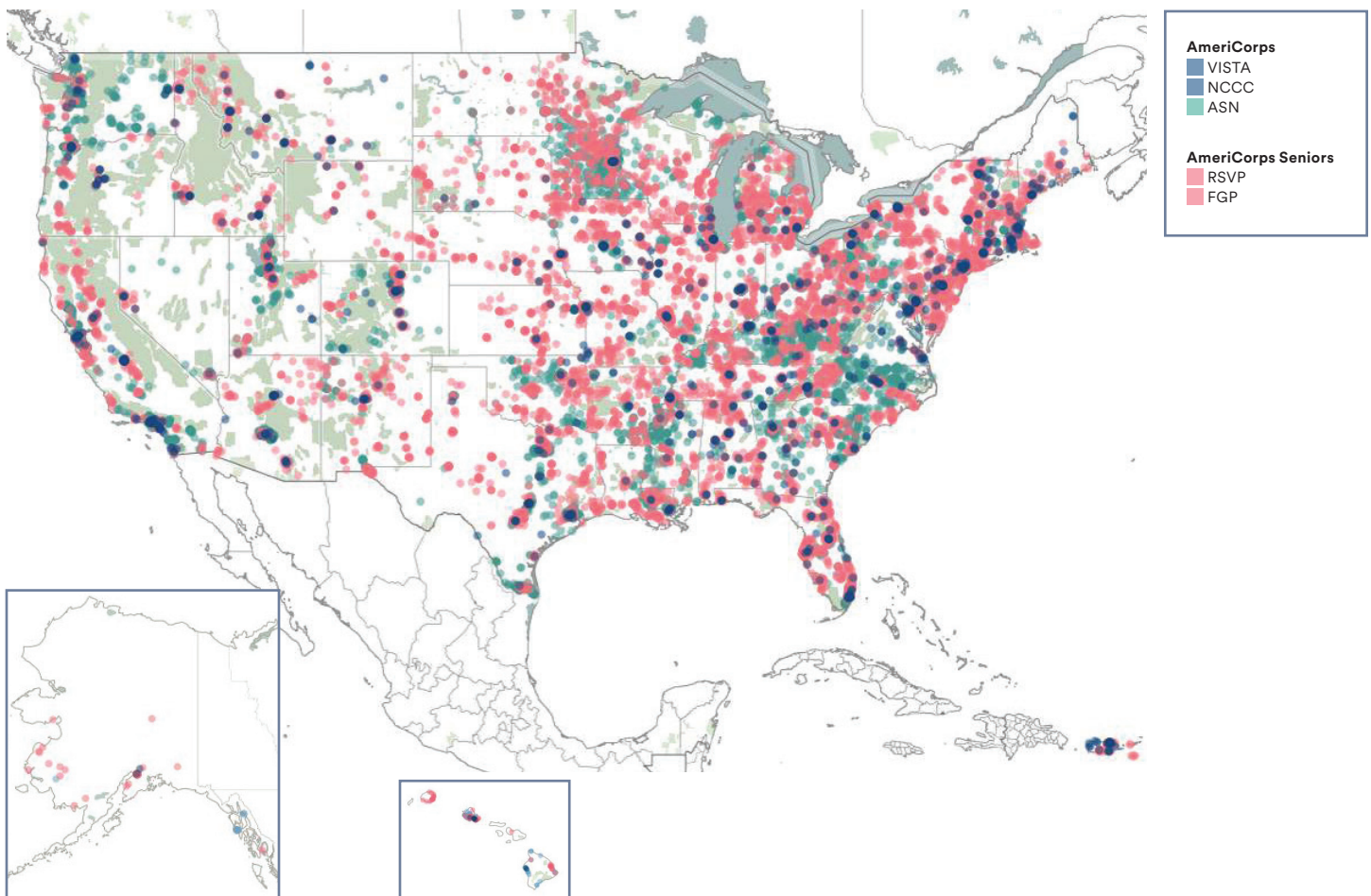
If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, your schools may benefit from national service. Please see Appendix A for examples of national service programs. These examples will give you an idea of how national service resources have been used to support these activities. There is flexibility and programs should be designed to meet your specific needs. Please keep in mind that, by law, national service members cannot be used to duplicate or displace staff.

3. Determine where national service participants are already serving in your area

To see where participants are serving in your state, refer to [AmeriCorps' state-specific national service resources](#), which include a list of service locations. For each state, the Service Locations show a comprehensive list of places where national service participants serve, including specific schools and grantees/sponsors. This will help you to identify what services are already available in your community and allow you to reach out to organizations hosting national service participants for guidance or potential partnerships.

AmeriCorps also has [regional offices](#) with staff to serve every state and a [State Service Commission](#) that can also be helpful in identifying existing programs and resources. Visit our [contact page](#) for additional help.

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors Education-Related Sites Across the United States



Key questions to ask at each stage of the process

Stage of Determining Your Needs	Questions to Ask/Items to Consider
<p>1. Review or conduct a comprehensive assessment of school and district-wide needs and assets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your goals/priorities for this year and beyond? ● What goals are you having trouble meeting? ● What goals are you seeing improvement in but would like to continue identifying innovative ways to accomplish? ● What services does your school need? ● Which are your highest need populations? ● What partners do you currently have, and what services do they provide?
<p>2. Prioritize needs that can be met through national service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which of your needs align with the people power provided by national service? ● Do any of your needs require one or more of the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A sustained investment of time and resources that staff or volunteers may not be able to provide? ○ Tasks that are outside the scope of staff's responsibilities or would pull them away from other activities? ○ Additional in-classroom support for teachers and/or individualized support for students? ○ Development of partnerships, fundraising, and/or outreach? ○ Expansion of student services in a particular area? ● How can national service programs help you meet your needs?
<p>3. Determine the presence of national service participants in your area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there national service participants in my school district? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What services are they providing? Where? ○ Can we expand the partnership to other schools? ● Are there national service participants in a nearby district? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can we bring those programs into our district? ○ Can we gather feedback/advice from that district on how to implement national service programs? ● Are there national service participants in my state? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is there an opportunity to leverage statewide or multi-district national service projects? ○ Does the State Education Agency have any opportunities for multi-district national service projects?



Determine
Your Needs

Select a National
Service Program that
Meets Your Needs

Find a Partnership
or Apply Directly

Section 2: Select a National Service Program that Meets Your Needs

All of the national service programs mentioned in this toolkit have a footprint in education, but the services that participants typically provide vary by program. It's possible to apply for, and receive services from, more than one program. Use the resources in this section to help choose the right program(s) based on your needs. Review brief descriptions of the programs, examples of the education services they provide, and the project requirements and eligibility criteria.

What AmeriCorps Programs can help support Students and Schools?

There are three types of AmeriCorps programs and two specific AmeriCorps Seniors programs that support youth and education.

AmeriCorps State and National: members, 17 and older, are engaged in direct service and capacity building. Members typically provide services such as:

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Classroom instruction
- Improving attendance
- Providing college access support
- Increasing graduation rates

Grantees range from local organizations to large nonprofits.

[Learn more about AmeriCorps State and National programs](#)



Sample Project: Through a collaborative partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's SPARK Early Literacy Program utilizes AmeriCorps members to boost the literacy skills of K4-third grade students who have been identified by their classroom teachers as struggling readers. Members provide one-on-one tutoring or small group reading activities during and after-school at eight locations and also develop strong relationships with families.

AmeriCorps members in the **VISTA program** provide capacity-building services to strengthen and support efforts to alleviate poverty and poverty-related problems. AmeriCorps VISTA members serve as short-term resources to build long-term sustainability: projects typically last three to five years and are developed with a goal to phase out the need for AmeriCorps VISTA members and have project activities continue.

- Recruiting and training mentors and tutors
- Creating STEM projects for underserved youth
- Establishing college access centers
- Mobilizing partnerships to support wraparound services
- Supporting expanded learning time initiatives, including summer programs
- Developing drug use prevention programs to educate youth about their dangers
- Leveraging cash and in-kind resources and developing new programs



[Learn more about the AmeriCorps VISTA program](#)



Sample Project: As part of The Education Alliance STEM Hub Schools project, AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program at eight West Virginia schools developed partnerships with STEM-related businesses, wrote a STEM curriculum, provided training for teachers in STEM education, and created opportunities for STEM businesses and students to learn more about opportunities for future employment.

The **AmeriCorps NCCC** program engages teams of 18-24 year olds in service projects that often last from six to eight weeks. Members typically provide services such as:

- Education on recycling, sustainability, and energy conservation practices
- Disaster-preparedness workshops/education
- Tutoring
- Running summer school/camp programs



[Learn more about the AmeriCorps NCCC program](#)



Sample Project: AmeriCorps members in the NCCC program supported Washington Elementary School, a high-poverty school located in Sacramento, CA. Members helped provide much needed in-classroom support and individual tutoring and mentoring for students. Members also helped develop a school garden, painted murals and implemented school-wide events.

The **AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program** provides caring and experienced tutors and mentors to children and youth, serving on average 15 to 40 hours per week. Volunteers work one-on-one with students for a year or longer. Volunteers typically provide services such as:

- Helping children to read and providing one-on-one tutoring
- Mentoring underserved teenagers and youth
- Reviewing school work to help children improve their academic performance



[Learn more about the AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent program](#)



Sample Project: AmeriCorps Senior volunteers with the CA Department of Developmental Services Foster Grandparent program mentored special needs students in centers across Orange County, Fla. Volunteers provided one-on-one mentoring to encourage attendance and improve academic performance.

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP is one of the largest senior volunteer organizations in the nation. The program engages more than 145,000 people age 55 and older in a diverse range of volunteer activities and services:

- Tutoring and mentoring disadvantaged or disabled youth
- Assisting students from low-income backgrounds prepare for college
- Engaging underprivileged youth in STEM projects and exposing them to STEM professionals



[Learn more about the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program](#)



Sample Project: The RSVP of Montgomery County PA AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program serves public and charter schools in Chester and Montgomery counties, Penn. Volunteer tutors support two STEM initiatives: STEM Career Exposure Presentations in which professional engineers, scientists, and others hold interactive demonstrations on the kind of careers that result from a science and math education; and My Free Tutor, an online, interactive math tutoring program. In the program, volunteers exclusively serve students who are from low-income families.

To better understand the difference between the programs, it can be helpful to use an example of a hypothetical tutoring program:



- If you want a large number of people to tutor through direct service either full- or part-time over an extended time period, then AmeriCorps State and National could be a good fit.
- If you want a few people to serve full-time to recruit, train, and manage other volunteers to be tutors, then the AmeriCorps VISTA could be a good fit.
- If you need a team of tutors for a six week summer program (short-term service projects), then the AmeriCorps NCCC program could be a good fit.
- If you want experienced volunteers age 55+ to tutor students one-on-one, four or five times a week, then the AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent program could be a good fit.
- If you want experienced volunteers age 55+ to help tutor students a few times a week, then the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program could be a good fit.



Here is detailed information on each program, including eligibility and other criteria:

Program	Project Criteria	Length of Project	Eligibility	Other Criteria
AmeriCorps State and National	<p>Single-state applicants must meet the grant selection criteria specified by State Service Commissions (which vary by state). Some states may require applicants to include a minimum number of members per grant. Applicants must have the capacity to manage a grant, manage funds, and supervise members. Programs must address compelling needs, have demonstrable, measurable goals, and have a plan for program oversight and monitoring.</p>	<p>Grants provide funding and AmeriCorps member positions for periods of 1-3 years, with the option to apply for renewal. Members serve in terms of up to 12 months at the grantee organization or at host sites selected by the grantee.</p>	<p>Grant applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state, local, and tribal governments.</p>	<p>Programs follow state and federal regulations, terms and conditions for financial and grants management of the program, and State Commission grant requirements. Programs must report on project accomplishments and may need to participate in statewide training and service projects. Grantees must provide matching funds (cash or in-kind) from 24 to 50 percent to help support the program.</p> <p>Some other federal funds can help meet the matching requirements, if allowed by the program.</p>
AmeriCorps VISTA	<p>To be considered for an AmeriCorps VISTA program, the applicant must reflect the VISTA poverty mission, address one or more AmeriCorps focus areas (including education), clearly articulate defined goals with measurable impact, show sustainability, and demonstrate organizational capacity to support AmeriCorps members.</p>	<p>AmeriCorps members serve with a sponsoring organization for a full year. Resources are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for up to three years.</p>	<p>Project sponsors may be state or local agencies; nonprofit organizations (i.e., faith-based agencies, educational institutions, etc.), or tribal nations.</p>	<p>Sponsoring organizations absorb most of the costs related to project supervision and logistical support. Investment by the sponsoring organization and community is fundamental to the VISTA program.</p> <p>States and districts can use some other federal funds to support project implementation.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">AmeriCorps NCCC</p>	<p>NCCC projects must address a compelling community need, have clearly stated and well-planned tasks and objectives, have demonstrable measurable goals, engage members in meaningful service, provide opportunity for member development, involve community, and have a plan for sustainability.</p>	<p>Projects are normally six-to-eight weeks in duration but will vary depending on the requirements of the project. Projects must be capable of using at least one full team of 8-to-12 members effectively.</p>	<p>NCCC teams are available to help community and faith-based organizations, national nonprofits, schools, local municipalities, national and state parks, and Indian tribes.</p>	<p>Project sponsors are required to provide materials, specialized tools, orientation, training, and technical supervision. When teams are based off campus, project sponsors work with AmeriCorps to help arrange housing, kitchen facilities, and other logistical needs.</p> <p>States and districts can use some other federal funds to support project implementation.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">AmeriCorps Seniors: Foster Grandparent program</p>	<p>AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent applicants must demonstrate that their projects will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children, and for children with special and/or exceptional needs.</p>	<p>Awards are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for three years. Successful applicants may apply for a renewal after each three year award. Volunteers are required to commit to at least 15 hours a week.</p>	<p>Applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state and local governments.</p> <p>(Note: While school districts occasionally apply for grants to run programs directly, more typically, schools partner with existing grantees and participate as service locations.)</p>	<p>The applicant must have sufficient local presence to directly manage the proposed grant.</p> <p>The operation of a grant cannot be delegated to another organization, even if the other organization is an affiliate of the applicant.</p> <p>States and districts can use some other federal funds to support project implementation.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">AmeriCorps Seniors: RSVP</p>	<p>AmeriCorps RSVP grants are awarded to eligible organizations that engage individuals, age 55 and over, to volunteer in service activities. Volunteers engage in a diverse range of volunteer activities that serve community needs.</p>	<p>Awards are normally allocated to a sponsoring organization for three years. The AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers may serve a few hours or as many as 40 hours per week.</p>	<p>Applications are accepted from nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and state and local governments.</p> <p>(Note: While school districts occasionally apply to run programs directly, more typically, schools are service locations.)</p>	<p>The applicant must have sufficient local presence to directly manage the proposed grant.</p> <p>The operation of a grant cannot be delegated to another organization, even if the other organization is an affiliate of the applicant.</p> <p>States and districts can use some other federal funds to support project implementation.</p>

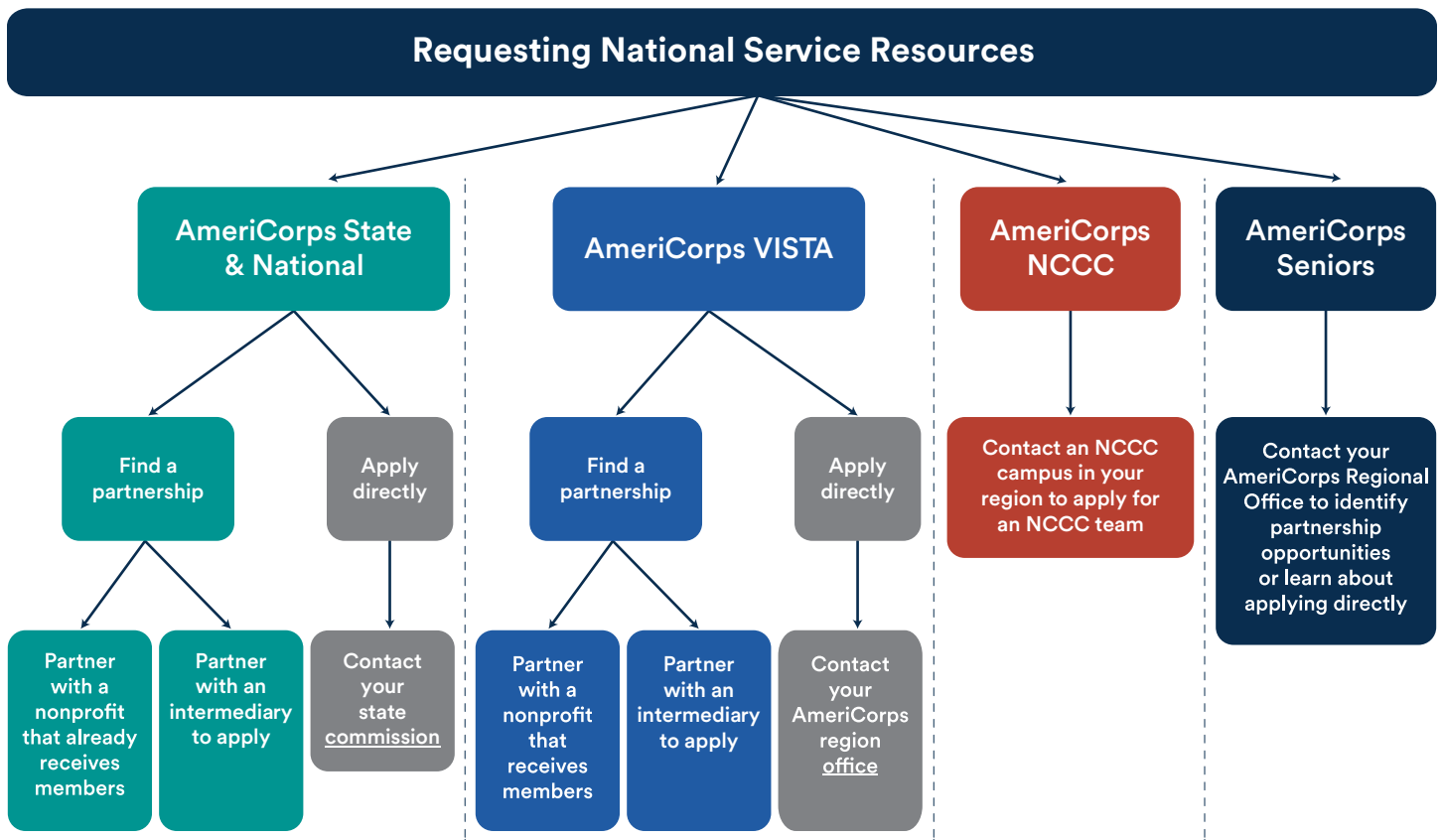
Determine Your Needs

Select a National Service Program that Meets Your Needs

Find a Partnership or Apply Directly

Section 3: Find a Partnership or Apply Directly

The process for requesting AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors resources varies by program. In some cases it involves an application process, while in other cases it may involve determining if your school district can be a site for an existing grantee. The best approach to take can also vary based on your relationships with community partners, your ability to manage grant funding, and your capacity to recruit, train, and support national service participants.



Finding a Partnership

Partnering with nonprofit and community organizations is a common approach taken by schools looking to leverage national service. This approach removes some of the burden from your district, and should be considered if your district may not have the infrastructure to manage funds, grants and/or participants.

Partners can help apply for resources, manage grants and funds, define participants' responsibilities, recruit and support participants, and collect data for performance measures, which, depending on the program, may be required. A partner that has already utilized national service resources may be particularly helpful.

Nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and cities/mayor's offices are common partners for school districts. When looking for a partnership, start by checking to see if any of these entities in your area already have national service resources. You can do this by referencing AmeriCorps' [state-specific national service resources](#) to find programs in your area. If potential partners already utilize national service, have a discussion regarding the opportunity to expand their existing programming or collaborate on a new program.

It can also be helpful to identify and work with a partner that has an evidence-based approach that can be implemented in your district, which may be simpler and more effective than creating a program from scratch. Many of the evidence-based programs align with the evidence framework in Every Student Succeeds Act. For more information see [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) and for evaluation results, see our research brief on [Return on Investment Studies](#).



Partnering with an Institution of Higher Education: The University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center for Community Partnerships houses the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development, which places full-time AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program into high-poverty Philadelphia schools and the school district of Philadelphia's main office. AmeriCorps members serve as Community Partnership Coordinators and work to assess student's needs and coordinate and facilitate community partnerships that meet those needs. George Washington's Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service runs a similar program in DC Public Schools.



Partnering with the City: The City of Flint supports AmeriCorps members in the State and National program and VISTA program to help increase attendance, improve third grade literacy, increase graduation rates, and make schools a resource in the community at schools in Flint, Mich. AmeriCorps members provide new and expanded educational and recreational programs during the school year and summer, and engage parents, volunteers, and community partner organizations. An AmeriCorps NCCC team has also served to provide additional out-of-school programming to students and improve the physical infrastructure of the school buildings and surrounding neighborhoods.



Partnering with Governor, Mayor, and Local Organizations: The Boston Promise Corps was developed as a community collaboration between Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, BPE, and Boston Public Schools. The Boston Promise Corps, which is comprised of both the Boston Teacher Residency and Dudley Promise Corps, ensures that all students in Boston's Dudley neighborhood are on track to graduate from high school and attend college. AmeriCorps members provide classroom interventions and extended day programming to support student achievement, all while preparing to be teachers and leaders in the highest need areas of the city.

School districts often have multiple partnerships that draw on different streams of service to support students along the cradle-to-career continuum. One example is Orange County Public Schools in Florida, which works with multiple partners:

- **The City:** the school district works with the City of Orlando to deploy AmeriCorps members to middle schools to improve the academic achievement of students from low-income backgrounds through tutoring and student support, as part of the Orlando Partnership for School Success program.
- **National Partners:** City Year utilizes full-time AmeriCorps members to improve math and literacy skills, reduce absenteeism, and get students on track for high school graduation. City Year Orlando serves in Orange County schools, and members reach thousands of students.



For a full profile of Orlando, see Appendix A.

Applying as a School or School District

Depending on the program, applying directly as a school district or school requires you to take full ownership of managing funds, defining participants' responsibilities, training and supervising participants, and handling compliance and reporting requirements. While this approach allows you to bypass the process of finding and working with a partner, it also means additional responsibilities for your district or school. As a grantee, you will be solely responsible for meeting all grantee requirements and expectations pertaining to the program you choose to apply for. Schools and districts can use some other federal funds to support project implementation, as long as the use of funds is allowable under the other federal program.

If you choose to apply directly as a school district/school, ensure that you've addressed these questions prior to beginning your application:

- Do you have the organizational and staff capacity to train, manage, and supervise participants?
- Do you have the adequate policies and procedures in place to manage federal funds and grant requirements?
- Do you have sufficient cash or in-kind resources to meet match requirements, if applicable?
- Do you have the necessary systems/processes to capture and report on performance measure data?
- Do you have sufficient support from community partners to implement the program effectively?

The following are examples of how school districts utilize national service directly:



Jefferson County Public Schools School Turnaround AmeriCorps: Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky utilizes AmeriCorps members to mentor disadvantaged students at priority and focus schools to improve the academic engagement and attendance of participating students. Members also leverage volunteers for tutoring, parent and community engagement activities, and school-based service projects. AmeriCorps members help schools to achieve their school improvement goals. An implementation evaluation of the AmeriCorps School Turnaround initiative found that programs are perceived as contributing positively to achieving key outcomes, including improving students' academic achievement and socio-emotional health.

View the [national evaluation](#).





Birmingham School District: The Birmingham City School District in Alabama runs the Birmingham Engaging in STEM program, which places AmeriCorps members in 10 elementary and middle schools across the city. Members work one-on-one or in small groups providing proven, data-driven interventions to students struggling with math and also providing fun science enrichment activities after-school. Members follow a curriculum and conduct progress monitoring to ensure their students are proficient in algebra by the end of eighth grade and also work on family engagement.

Applying for AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps Seniors grants

- Applying for AmeriCorps State and National – Contact your [State Service Commission](#)
- Applying for AmeriCorps VISTA or AmeriCorps Seniors – Contact your [AmeriCorps Regional Office](#)

What’s the difference between an AmeriCorps Regional Office and a State Service Commission?

AmeriCorps Regional Offices are federal offices staffed by federal employees in the states and U.S. territories. They conduct public outreach and program support. They are directly responsible for developing grants and projects, and for overseeing all AmeriCorps Seniors and AmeriCorps VISTA projects within their jurisdiction. Each AmeriCorps Regional Office works closely with the governor-appointed State Service Commission in their state.

State Service Commissions are governor-supported entities that provide AmeriCorps funding to AmeriCorps programs in their states through annual grant competitions. In addition, the commissions oversee, monitor and support these programs. Grants are made either directly to an organization or through an intermediary that handles the distribution of grant funding and the grant management functions to a consortium of smaller organizations. State Service Commissions are also charged with encouraging volunteerism in their states, and often administer special volunteer initiatives.

For additional information on how to secure national service resources, please use the following links:

- [AmeriCorps State and National](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
- [AmeriCorps NCCC](#)
- [AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP](#)
- [AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program](#)
- [AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program](#)

For additional information on leveraging national service to support student success see:

- The Service Year Alliance report on “[How National Service Can Support Students in Low-Income Schools](#)”
- The Service Year Alliance “[Program Expansion Guide](#)” which highlights education programs and ways to partner with them in your communities.
- The Everyone Graduates Center report “[Overcoming the Poverty Challenge to Enable College and Career Readiness for All: The Crucial Role of Student Supports](#)”

Please note that examples provided throughout the document are included as illustrations of national service programs. Information may be from prior years, may not include impact or results, and is not intended to provide full details of programs.

National Service as a Pathway to Education and Employment for Students

Although this toolkit is focused on helping schools and school districts access national service resources, in this section we highlight some of the ways that your **students can benefit from serving in AmeriCorps**, regardless of whether your district utilizes the programs.

AmeriCorps programs do more than improve schools and communities; they serve their members by providing pathways to opportunity for people entering the workforce. Annually, AmeriCorps places more than 75,000 people into intensive service positions where they learn and apply valuable professional skills, learn about career fields, earn money for higher education, develop an appreciation for citizenship, and in some cases secure industry or professional certificates.



Career coaches, guidance counselors, families of students, and classroom teachers should consider sharing the following link with information about AmeriCorps programs with high school students who may be looking for ways to help their communities, pay for college, and gain work experience: americorps.gov/serve

Benefits of Being an AmeriCorps member

- The ability to make an impact on an issue that they are passionate about.
 - Members can apply to serve with organizations in specific geographic locations and subject areas.
 - AmeriCorps assignments support a variety of causes, including education, healthy futures, economic opportunity, veterans services, environmental stewardship, and disaster services.
- A basic living allowance and financial assistance to help pay for college. AmeriCorps helps address rising college costs by providing financial assistance through the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to members who complete their service.
 - A full-time AmeriCorps member who successfully completes one full term of service will receive an education award equivalent to the Pell Grant. For 2021, this amount is approximately \$6,495 after one full-time service term. Individuals can earn up to two full-time education awards.
 - Since 1994, AmeriCorps members have earned more than \$3.3 billion to help pay for college, technical school, or to repay qualified student loans.
- Valuable service experience, job skills, and increased employability.
 - Members receive specialized training and engage in substantive assignments at their host organizations where they gain valuable work-related skills.
 - For many members, AmeriCorps service is their first professional experience. For others, it can be an important pathway to re-enter the workforce.
 - A Tufts University study found that for people with a college degree, having AmeriCorps experience on a resume has a positive and significant impact on the prospects of getting a job, offering a competitive advantage in the workforce.
 - Members can take advantage of initiatives like Employers of National Service, under which employers (including Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits, government agencies) make a commitment to hiring national service alumni.

There are a number of eligibility requirements to serve in an AmeriCorps program, including citizenship and a minimum age, which varies slightly based on the program, but is generally at least 17+ years of age. For more information, check americorps.gov/serve or contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

Appendix A: Examples of How School Districts and States Leveraged National Service

Below are historical examples of how school districts across the country utilized AmeriCorps programs and members to help students, teachers, and schools.

Milwaukee Public Schools



Overview of Milwaukee Public Schools

- Serves more than 71,000 students across 158 schools.
- Nearly 90 percent of students are minorities.
- 84 percent of students are from low-income backgrounds.
- 69 percent high school graduation rate.

National Service Supporting Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee Public Schools used AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors national service programs to provide tutoring, mentoring, classroom instruction, and college access services to its students. The schools effectively utilized national service and community partners to support students by promoting collaboration among multiple stakeholders.

By partnering with nonprofits to implement national service programs, Milwaukee Public Schools relaunched tutoring programs that were discontinued due to budget cuts, provided the support students need to graduate from high school, ensured that students continue to be mentored and encouraged as they transition from high school to college, and created a pipeline of teachers in high need schools.

Some program highlights include:

Collective Impact Utilizing National Service Programs

A partnership involving Milwaukee Public Schools, two AmeriCorps programs, City Year Milwaukee and Teach For America-Milwaukee, Northwestern Mutual Foundation, and other organizations helped support students at Dr. George Washington Carver Academy of Mathematics and Science, a K-8 school defined by the school district as under-performing. The 5-in-1 Collaborative included a focus on instruction, climate, family engagement, and school leadership. This model of collective impact encouraged partners to align goals for student success. A 2016 study found increased attendance, improved math and reading scores, and a decrease in school suspensions. Based on the success of the collaborative approach, the district expanded the collective impact model to other schools in the district.

College Access

College Possible, a nonprofit focused on college readiness, helps Milwaukee students from low-income backgrounds get to and graduate from college through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support. The program supports students on college campuses and developed deep partnerships with local institutions that made a strong commitment to serving students. College Possible works in close partnership with local high schools, including Milwaukee public high schools, public charter high schools and private schools.

Tutoring and Mentoring

The Interfaith-MPS Tutor Program is a partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools and Interfaith Milwaukee's RSVP Program. The program is volunteer-driven and comes at no cost to the school. Through this collaboration, the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program connected older adults, ages 55 and older with students and helped improve the academic performance and engagement of kindergarten through fifth grade students.

Prior to the establishment of the Interfaith RSVP program, the MPS Recreation Department had a 55+ Tutor Program which was discontinued due to budget cuts. The MPS Recreation Department was able to partner with Interfaith's RSVP program, and the volunteers became a key partner and resource to sustain critical tutoring efforts with the public school system that would have been lost due to local budget cuts. Since its launch in January 2011, the RSVP program quickly reached and surpassed its initial goal of 150 volunteer tutors serving in MPS elementary schools.

Classroom Instruction/Teacher Training

Teach For America buildt a diverse pipeline of high-impact teachers and leaders for high-needs schools across Milwaukee. Since 2009, over 500 Teach For America AmeriCorps members have served in Milwaukee schools, including nearly 200 members who served specifically in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Reading by Third Grade and Family Engagement

AmeriCorps members served as part of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's Spheres of Proud Achievement in Reading for Kids, commonly known as SPARK. Members work with students in preschool through third grade who have been identified by their classroom teachers as struggling readers. AmeriCorps members implement the SPARK Program by providing one-on-one tutoring sessions and/or small group reading activities that build students' phonemic awareness, phonic skills, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Each AmeriCorps member supported five to six students whom he/she met with three times per week, for 30-minute sessions, with the goal of improving students' literacy skills and developing strong, consistent relationships with them and their families through home visits and school activities which parents and families attend.

What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

"None of this happens without partnership. When we talk about college and career readiness...that's where our team from the AmeriCorps members have come in to support us, allowing us to build a pipeline around students who are receiving support around social-emotional, attendance and behavior focused on reducing suspensions."

– Darianne Driver, Ph.D., former Superintendent
Milwaukee Public Schools

Quoted from the Alliance for Excellent Education's webinar on leveraging national service to improve low-performing schools

"The group of students that have worked with the (RSVP) tutors have all had their test scores and grades go up. The students are always so excited to see the tutors walk through the door."

– Aleina Hodnett, MPS teacher

Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from MPS' approach:

- AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs can be implemented in multiple schools across your district.
- Promote collaboration among partners in order to better support student success. As demonstrated by Milwaukee's 5-in-1 Collaborative, which includes two AmeriCorps grantees, bringing in multiple organizations to work together and providing a variety of services to students can accelerate academic improvement. Collective impact models can maximize the work of individual programs.
- Utilize national service programs to address under-funded areas. By partnering with Interfaith Milwaukee's RSVP program, the school district was able to re-launch its 55+ Tutor Program which had been discontinued due to budget cuts.

Orange County, Fla. Public Schools



Overview of Orange County Public Schools

- 9th largest school district in the nation.
- Serves more than 200,000 students across 202 schools.
- Over 70 percent of students are minorities, including 43 percent Hispanic and 24 percent Black.
- 74 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

National Service Supporting Orange County Schools

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors national service programs supported thousands of Orange County Public Schools' elementary, middle, and high school students throughout the cradle-to-career pipeline. National service members provided additional services and support to low-performing schools and underserved student populations in 2018. Members worked directly and indirectly with students inside and outside the classroom, provide tutoring and mentoring, develop after-school programs, ensure students are in school and on track to graduation, and help students apply for college.

Programs had a substantial impact on test scores, graduation rates, and attendance rates. Due in part to support from national service members, the school district achieved a 5 percent increase in completed FAFSA applications in 2016, making it the top county in Florida by FAFSA completions. Support from national service members has been made possible by partnerships between Orange County Public Schools, the City of Orlando, and nonprofits.

Providence, R.I. Public Schools



Overview of Providence Public Schools

- Serves 22,000 students across 37 schools.
- Over 90 percent of students are minorities, including 68 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian.
- 55 percent of students come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken.
- 74 percent high school graduation rate.

National Service Supporting Providence Public Schools

Providence Public Schools used national service programs to provide early learning, STEM, family engagement, social-emotional learning, after-school, teacher training, and classroom instruction services to its students. Hundreds of preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school students benefit every year from the services provided by AmeriCorps programs. Some of these programs made a sustained impact in Providence for more than a decade.

Some program highlights include:

Early Learning

Jumpstart is a national early education organization providing language, literacy, and social-emotional programming for preschool children from under-resourced communities.

One-on-One Mentoring

The AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program made a long-term commitment to serving kids. Currently, AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in the Foster Grandparent program work with students from kindergarten to third grade. They assisted in the classroom with reading and literacy skills, modeling good behavior, tutoring students, and with art and language. The volunteers are a consistent presence in the school and teachers and administrators credit them for improved attendance and behavior.

Classroom Instruction/Teacher Training

Teach For America - Rhode Island developed hundreds of AmeriCorps members focused on improving educational outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds across the state. Members served across Providence County by teaching in high need areas for at least two years. Results from Teach For America's last iteration of the National Principal Survey demonstrated that 94 percent of the principals agreed that Teach For America - Rhode Island teachers are making a positive difference in academic achievement, and over 90 percent also agreed that teachers are making a positive difference in school culture, collaboration, and relationships with parents.

Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from Providence's approach:

- Consider using national service to provide a long-term, sustained source of services. The AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent program served in the same school for almost 20 years, and many AmeriCorps programs such as Jumpstart and Teach For America supported Providence students for more than ten years.
- Encourage your district's office/staff dedicated to strategic partnerships to coordinate with national service programs. This can help ease the implementation process and lead to a stronger impact.
- National service members are adept at dealing with diverse and underserved populations. Members can help bridge the gap between staff, students, and families in school districts such as Providence where there is large minority population and a significant portion of families for whom English is a second language.
- National service programs support early learning. Programs like Jumpstart can be used to help prepare children with the skills they need to enter Kindergarten ready to succeed.
- AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs not only support students in schools, but out of school as well with after school programs, family engagement, wraparound services, and a variety of other services.

Rural School Districts

Waynesville, Mo. • Eastern Kentucky



A significant portion of national service members serving across the country are serving in rural communities. Schools in rural communities may not have the same access to local support and partnerships as schools in urban areas, making the presence of AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors members an integral part of student success. In addition to benefiting students, national service programs create job opportunities for their members in areas where there are limited employment opportunities. Programs in Missouri and Kentucky demonstrate the impact that national service can have in rural school districts.

Waynesville, Mo.

Overview of the Waynesville R-VI School District

- Serves roughly 6,000 students from central Missouri.
- 73 percent of students are military affiliated.
- Due to a drawdown of soldiers, student enrollment has decreased, leading to decreased state funding.
- One of the most diverse student populations in Missouri. 43 percent of students are minorities, including 14 percent Black.
- 46 percent of students are from low-income backgrounds.

National Service Supporting the Waynesville R-VI School District

Waynesville R-VI sponsors its own national service programs, meaning that it has applied for and received funding for national service members from AmeriCorps. School district staff, including the district's Community Resource Office, supervise and manage its national service members. The district chose to apply for funding after determining that AmeriCorps members could increase student learning opportunities in areas of need.

Members provide academic tutoring to students, lead clubs and activities after school, develop community initiatives to support disadvantaged students, foster partnerships between community agencies, and promoted economic development and growth. Many members are military-connected. District staff report that members have contributed to increased student growth, improvement in math and reading proficiency, college and career readiness, and have made great strides to help the community with food insecurity.

What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

"We are so grateful for the relationships they (AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, and National Veteran Corps) build with our students...Our veterans who serve in these roles have the added importance of being a military presence in the lives of students whose parent may be deployed overseas."

– **Brian Henry, Ph.D., Superintendent**
Waynesville R-VI School District

Eastern Kentucky

Overview of Eastern Kentucky School Districts

- National service supported multiple counties and school districts in eastern Kentucky, including Bell County, Knox County, Perry County, and Leslie County.

- Schools receiving national service resources were Persistently Low Achieving schools.
- 98 percent of students in Bell, Knox, Perry, and Leslie Counties qualify for free or reduced lunch.

National Service Supporting Kentucky Schools

School districts partnered with Berea College, a college in eastern Kentucky, to support students with AmeriCorps resources. Berea College manages programs that use AmeriCorps members to provide school turnaround, tutoring/mentoring, and STEM services. As the grantee, the college assumed responsibility for applying for funding, deploying members to schools, supervising members, and meeting all other grantee requirements.

In 2013, Berea College received AmeriCorps funding for its PartnerCorps School Turnaround program. The program had substantial success and was provided additional funding after the original grant cycle. The original grant served two Persistently Low Achieving schools, Knox Central High School and Leslie County High School. In each school, 20 AmeriCorps members mentored students and assisted them with successfully navigating high school and pursuing post-secondary education, with a primary focus on improving attendance. Every student was assigned an AmeriCorps mentor.

Berea College also sponsored an AmeriCorps NCCC team through its Partners for Education program. Members supported a traveling, Crime Scene Investigation-themed, STEM summer enrichment camp.

What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

“Our kids face a lot of the same challenges as kids in urban areas...I think schools like in Eastern Kentucky and Appalachia in general could really benefit from PartnerCorps. I think we need it. I think we can save some kids with PartnerCorps and that’s what it’s all about.”

– Robert Roark, Leslie County High School Principal

from a video with Berea College on PartnerCorps

[Learn more](#)

Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from the approach taken by rural school districts in Missouri and Kentucky:

- There is more than one way to bring national service members into your district. The Waynesville R-VI school district decided to sponsor its own program, while districts in Kentucky have partnered with Berea College. The best approach depends on your district’s resources and needs.
- Sponsoring a program: Applying directly as a school district allows you to take full ownership of managing funds, defining members’ responsibilities, managing members, and supervising members on a day-to-day basis. While this approach allows you to bypass the process of finding a partner, it also allocates additional responsibility to your district. As a grantee, you’ll be solely responsible for meeting all grantee requirements and expectations pertaining to the program you choose to apply for. The Waynesville R-VI school district created an infrastructure for managing funds and members through its Community Resource Office. The office’s staff, including its Director of Community Resource/ Alternative Education, Assistant Director of National Service, Payroll Generalist/VISTA Supervisor, Grant Financial Specialist, and HR Coordinator spend a portion of their time managing AmeriCorps grants. The office defined clear expectations for its members and created a handbook with basic expectations for service members to reference during their service terms.
- Partnering with a local organization: This approach is particularly beneficial if your district lacks resources to manage funds and members. Partners can help apply for funding, manage funds, define member responsibilities, supervise members, and collect data for performance measures. Your district will still need to work with the partner to identify areas of need and ensure that resources are being allocated effectively. In addition to colleges/universities, nonprofits and cities/mayor’s offices are common partners for school districts.

Colorado



National Service Supports Colorado Schools

As part of its effort to improve educational outcomes, Colorado is leveraged national service programs to make a more targeted and sustained investment in education. Serve Colorado (Colorado's State Service Commission) and the AmeriCorps Regional Office partnered with local education policy experts and elected officials to address a host of education needs, with a particular focus on early childhood education, high school graduation, and services for rural youth. As part of its 2016-2018 State Service Plan, Serve Colorado pledged to play its part in improving the educational landscape of the state and to support AmeriCorps programs that increase the state's high school graduation rates in the ways that make the most sense for communities throughout Colorado.

AmeriCorps State & National: Across the state, hundreds of AmeriCorps members in the State and National program in Colorado supported students. Members are provided tutoring to students below proficiency in mathematics; provided evidence-based and targeted interventions to students with attendance problems; improved literacy proficiency of kindergarten through third grade students in the highest-need schools through reading tutors; leveraged volunteers in projects that improve school climate; and improved interest and engagement in STEM, knowledge of potential STEM careers, a more positive attitude toward STEM and academics.

AmeriCorps VISTA: Across the state, AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program, serve in education-related positions with K-12 schools, community colleges, and afterschool programs. AmeriCorps members built the capacity of nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies to bring people out of poverty. In the education sector, members serve in K-12 and higher education settings. Activities included developing new programs, writing curricula, fundraising, building volunteer programs, forging partnerships, and designing evaluation systems. Their ultimate goals were to reduce poverty by increasing school engagement, retention, attendance, test scores, and graduation rates.

AmeriCorps Seniors: Across the state, hundreds of AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers in the Foster Grandparent program and RSVP program, are supporting academic achievement. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served students through two programs: Foster Grandparents and RSVP. Foster Grandparents worked with students one-on-one in settings primarily including day cares, pre-schools, and K-12 schools. These students may be behind academically, have special needs, be considered underserved, or suffer from abuse or neglect. RSVP volunteers provide a wide range of activities including tutoring and mentoring students or providing other needed volunteer services to schools.

Colorado's Strategy for Using National Service to Improve Statewide Educational Outcomes

A national service program that supported increasing graduation rates is the Colorado Youth for a Change AmeriCorps Program. Currently, AmeriCorps members provide services to off-track in-school and disengaged out-of-school youth and help them reengage and reenroll in school. Members served at many sites within Colorado school districts including Aurora, Denver, Englewood, Adams, and Jefferson. AmeriCorps members are responsible for helping reenrolled students remain enrolled in an education program and in-school youth improve their academic engagement, as measured by increased attendance. In addition, the AmeriCorps members leverage additional volunteers who engage in supporting and tutoring in-school youth.

What State Leaders are Saying About National Service

“AmeriCorps members all across the state, from Denver to Durango, helped improve results in the lives of their students and the communities they work in. They did this by bringing optimism, excitement and energy to the classroom and serving as in-class role models. They are an invaluable resource to our state and we are exceptionally proud of their service.”

– **Donna Lynne, former Lieutenant Governor**
State of Colorado

“We are incredibly grateful to our AmeriCorps members who devote their time and effort to serve as mentors, helping students with math, reading and other knowledge they need to graduate ready for college and careers. For many schools across Colorado, AmeriCorps is a vital partner in our mission to ensure equity and opportunity for every student, every step of the way.”

– **Katy Anthes, Ph.D., Colorado Commissioner of Education**

What can other States Learn from Colorado’s Approach to Leveraging National Service?

- Promote collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Each state has an AmeriCorps Regional Office and State Service Commission that provide AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors resources. These agencies can bring national service expertise into discussions with elected officials, State Education Agencies, and other local leaders who have identified state education priorities. In Colorado, the AmeriCorps Regional Office, State Service Commission, elected officials, State Capitol, and Department of Education were all engaged in the development national service solutions.
- Evaluate your state’s current national service landscape to identify communities where the level of funding/ resources may not match the need for additional education services. Colorado mapped the allocation of national service investments as a starting point for its discussions with local leaders.
- Align national service with your state’s priorities/challenges. By evaluating the allocation of national service investments vs. unmet state education needs, Colorado identified early childhood education, high school graduation, and services for rural youth as needs that national service could be used to address.
- Prioritize areas in your state where the need is greatest. In Colorado, communities with the lowest graduation rates were prioritized for the development and implementation of AmeriCorps NCCC projects.
- Projects that would benefit from an infusion of energy may be a good fit for national service. National service programs provide additional support for students without displacing educators and staff.

Minnesota



National Service Supports Minnesota Schools

AmeriCorps State & National: AmeriCorps State and National members in Minnesota support students throughout the cradle to career pipeline. Members engaged with students from the time they begin learning to the time they enter college, providing early learning, reading by third grade, 8th grade math proficiency, high school completion, and college access services. Members are serving in hundreds of sites and across many focus areas including:

- Ready for Kindergarten
- 8th Grade Math Proficiency
- College Admission
- Third Grade Reading Proficiency
- High School Completion

AmeriCorps VISTA: Across the state, 70 AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program serve in education-related positions with K-12 schools, community colleges, and after-school programs. Members built the capacity of nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies to bring people out of poverty.

In the education sector, AmeriCorps members serve in K-12 and higher education settings. Activities include developing new programs, writing curricula, fundraising, building volunteer programs, forging partnerships, and designing evaluation systems. Their ultimate goals are to reduce poverty through increasing school engagement, retention, attendance, test scores, and graduation rates.

AmeriCorps Seniors: Throughout Minnesota, hundreds of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in the Foster Grandparent and RSVP programs support academic achievement. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve students through two programs: Foster Grandparents and RSVP. Foster Grandparents work with students one-on-one in settings primarily including day cares, pre-schools, and K-12 schools. These students may be behind academically, have special needs, be considered underserved, or suffer from abuse or neglect. RSVP volunteers provide a wide range of activities including tutoring and mentoring students or providing other needed volunteer services to schools.

Minnesota's Strategy for Using National Service to Improve Education Outcomes:

Minnesota Reading and Math Corps

In 2002, ServeMinnesota worked with a Minnesota state legislator to better understand statewide education issues and develop ways to utilize national service as a strategy to address critical state needs. Then-state legislator Alice Seagren, the Chair of the Minnesota House's K-12 finance committee, was interested in finding ways to improve the state's persistently low early literacy rates. She saw value in the unique capacity of AmeriCorps to provide extra support for students, and proposed that the State Service Commission match the people power of AmeriCorps with a data-driven model designed by literacy experts to address reading challenges across the state.

In 2003, Minnesota's state legislature allocated \$150,000 to implement the new program, now known as Minnesota Reading Corps. The program began by working with students in Head Start. Following early success, it expanded to include K-3 reading programs in order to ensure Minnesota students were reading by third grade. As school districts began to see the impact the program was making, and evaluations demonstrated the effectiveness of the program, Minnesota's state legislature increased appropriations, growing from \$150,000 in 2003 to nearly \$8 million in 2017. Since 2003, Minnesota Reading Corps has provided early intervention services to more than 200,000 age 3 – grade 3 students.

ServeMinnesota and the Minnesota Reading Corps work closely with the Minnesota Department of Education to implement the program across the state. Appropriations for Minnesota Reading Corps flow through the state education agency, which has included the program as part of its budget. The program works closely with the agency to understand its policy objectives and align priorities and resources with those objectives.

By using AmeriCorps members to implement an “out of the box” solution developed by literacy experts, the state legislature was able to achieve its goal of improving literacy without a significant additional cost burden on school districts. Following expansion in Minnesota, Reading Corps expanded nationally, and is now in 8 states. Building on the success of the model, the Minnesota Math Corps was created in 2008 to help 8th graders prepare for and improve in algebra.

Minnesota Alliance with Youth

The Minnesota Alliance with Youth’s Promise Fellow program started as part of the GradNation campaign led by America’s Promise Alliance to end the nation’s dropout crisis. Minnesota Alliance with Youth engages more than 200 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows who serve in middle schools, high schools, and community based organizations across the state to reduce high school drop-out rates with interventions focused on attendance, behavior, and coursework.

What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

“Reading Corps and Math Corps not only helped our students learn how to read and perform better in math, these AmeriCorps programs also saved our district in special education costs.”

– **Julia Espe, Ph.D., former Superintendent**
Princeton Public Schools

Takeaways for Other States: What State Education Agencies, State Legislators, and other Public Officials can learn from Minnesota’s Approach to Leveraging National Service

- Align national service with your state’s education priorities and challenges. Governors, State education officials, and state legislators can work with their State Service Commissions and AmeriCorps Regional Office to figure out how national service can be used to address critical education needs in the state. From Kindergarten readiness, reading by third grade, to high school graduation and college and career success, national service is a strategy that can be utilized to support students across the state.
- Using national service as a statewide solution can benefit multiple stakeholders:
 - State Education Agencies can add national service programs to their budget and/or leverage programs to advance their policy objectives,
 - Legislators can use national service to help create low-cost solutions to challenges they have identified,
 - And State Service Commissions can expand the reach and impact of their programs.
- Projects that would benefit from an infusion of energy may be a good fit for national service. National service programs provide additional support for students and educators without displacing educators and staff.
- Encourage participation by your state’s education/policy experts when developing solutions. Bringing together knowledgeable experts and national service resources can lead to more sustainable, replicable, and impactful solutions.
- Look for programs that are scalable by using an existing evidence based approach/model or creating a new model that can be replicated by multiple schools across the state. Look for programs that are moving the needle for students and can be implemented across the state wherever they can help meet a need.
- Match the people power of national service programs with your scalable solution. ServeMinnesota leveraged literacy experts to develop the model for Minnesota Reading Corps, and relied upon AmeriCorps members to implement the model in schools across the state. Reading Corps started as a small program and now tutors serve in hundreds of elementary school and preschool settings across Minnesota.
- State Service Commissions and AmeriCorps Regional Offices can serve as a bridge between schools, education policy experts, and legislators/public officials. When designing a national service solution, State Commissions and AmeriCorps Regional Offices can act as an intermediary to convene multiple stakeholders while providing a depth of knowledge of national service programs.

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