



Metadata Glossary

AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange

September 2021

This document was developed by the Office of Research and Evaluation to serve as a guide for navigating the search categories in the Evidence Exchange. It also provides authoritative definitions for frequently used terms in research and evaluation at the agency (as of September 2021).

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About AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps, formerly known as the Corporation for National and Community Service, improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. As the nation's largest grant-maker in support of service and volunteering, AmeriCorps engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to their communities each year through AmeriCorps Seniors, AmeriCorps, the Social Innovation Fund, the Volunteer Generation Fund, and other programs.

The AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange is a digital repository of research, evaluation reports, and data. This evidence-based research focuses on national service, social innovation, civic engagement, and volunteering, and this repository builds our agency's evidence-base.

Criteria for Posting Evaluation Reports

The grantee program evaluation reports included in the Evidence Exchange were conducted to meet specific program evaluation requirements (see [AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Guidance](#) and [Evidence Evaluation for the Social Innovation Fund](#)) and were assessed by independent, third-party evaluators. Program requirements also determine whether a report is posted.

The methodology and quality of any report posted to the Exchange may be determined through the reading of that report.

This repository does not include reports of performance measures (see AmeriCorps National Performance Measures), which collect information on a program's ongoing progress but, unlike evaluations, do not assess the impact of a program

Notes on the Metadata

- Prior to 2020, AmeriCorps operated as the Corporation for National and Community Service (or CNCS). Most reports published prior to August 2020 are cited as such.
- Prior to 2020, AmeriCorps Seniors operated as Senior Corps. Most reports published prior to August 2020 are cited as such. Searchable metadata has been updated to reflect the name change.

Metadata

Metadata is information that describes one or more aspects of the broader piece of data in the research and evaluation report. It is an essential part of identifying report characteristics, filtering through documents, and searching the Evidence Exchange. This glossary outlines all available options for metadata submission.

If you have any questions about metadata, please reach out to the Office of Research and Evaluation at evaluation@cns.gov.

Program/Intervention

The name of the program or intervention being evaluated. This meta-field can also denote if the program/intervention is a funded award type like RSVP, Senior Companion, or Foster Grandparent award.

Implementing Organization

The name of the organization that is conducting the research or implementing the program being assessed.

For reports internally produced or contracted by the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE), use one of the below in place of organization name:

- **AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation** – Reports internally produced by AmeriCorps staff conducting assessments.
- **AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation Commissioned** – Reports produced through a contractual agreement.

Grantee/Intermediary(s)

The name of any organization(s) or State Commission(s) that provides sub-grants to and/or places service participants with other organizations.

AmeriCorps Program(s)

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)	Taps the skills, talents, and passion of more than 7,000 Americans annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. The program's nationwide corps of VISTAs commits full-time for a year at nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to build the capacity of these organizations to carry out programs that tackle poverty.	AmeriCorps State and National	Supports a wide range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive community service each year. It provides grants to a network of local and national organizations and agencies committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.
AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)	Strengthens communities and develops leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. In partnership with non-profits— secular and faith based—local municipalities, state governments, federal government, national and state parks, Indian tribes, and schools, members complete service projects throughout the region they are assigned.	Volunteer Generation Fund	Strengthens the role of volunteers in tackling pressing problems by expanding the capacity of state service commissions and volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support and retain individuals to serve in high-quality volunteer assignments.

AmeriCorps Program(s) continued

<p>Social Innovation Fund (SIF)</p>	<p>Targets public and private dollars to expand effective solutions across three issue areas: Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures and Youth Development. The SIF was a competitive grant program that invested in innovative solutions with evidence of impact and that were ready to grow to meet the needs of more communities. This work created a catalog of evidence-based approaches that can be replicated in communities across the country.</p>	<p>Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE)</p>	<p>Furtheres the mission of AmeriCorps by producing accurate and timely research on national service, social innovation, volunteering, and civic engagement. ORE conduct original and sponsored research and evaluations, support evaluations of grantees' research and programs, and promote evidence-based service models – all of which infuses data into AmeriCorps programs and contributes to the public understanding of national service.</p>
<p>AmeriCorps Seniors (Formerly known as Senior Corps)</p>	<p>Consists of programs that use the experience, skills and talents of more than 450,000 volunteers age 55 and older to serve at-risk youth, help seniors live independently and meet other community needs. AmeriCorps Senior volunteers serve through more than 65,000 local nonprofits, public agencies, faith-based and other community organizations.</p>		

AmeriCorps Focus Area(s)

AmeriCorps utilizes focus areas identified in the Serve America Act. The Serve America Act of 2009 reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by AmeriCorps by amending the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. The agency's previous priorities can be found on the next page.

While focus areas do not appear as a filter on the Evidence Exchange, typing them into the search bar will display results tied to the associated outcome categories defined on page 8.

Disaster Services	Build the capacity of national service network organizations to help their states and localities prepare, respond, recover, and mitigate disasters and increase community resiliency	Economic Opportunity	Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people
Education	Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children	Environmental Stewardship	Provide direct services that contribute to increased energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, or improving at-risk ecosystems, and support increased citizen behavioral change leading to increased efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and economically disadvantaged communities
Healthy Future	Provide direct services that enable seniors to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity; and improve access to primary and preventive health care	Veterans and Military Families	Demonstrate the potential for AmeriCorps-supported national service interventions to 1) positively impact the quality of life of veterans and 2) improve military family strength

Prior Agency Focus Areas

<p>Capacity Building</p>	<p>Provide, support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children</p>	<p>Native Americans</p>	<p>Support Native American culture of service by addressing concerns around cultural preservation, as well as traditional language and lands preservation. Also includes assistance to elders, children, and youth; education, health, and wellness; job training; economic development for veterans and families; environmental stewardship; and disaster preparedness.</p>
<p>Youth Development (SIF)</p>	<p>Preparing youth for success in school, active citizenship, productive work, and healthy and safe lives.</p>	<p>Faith-based & Community Organizations</p>	<p>Strengthen the relationship between the federal government and secular- and faith-based nonprofit organizations to better serve Americans in need.</p>
<p>Service Projects & Initiatives</p>	<p>Support for additional national service and volunteering programs that benefit communities, but don't fall within the existing focus areas.</p>	<p>Colleges & Universities</p>	<p>Collaborate with other federal agencies, educational and nonprofit organizations to encourage student volunteerism and to promote a culture of service on college campuses across the country and after graduation.</p>

Outcome Category(s)

Derived from the AmeriCorps Performance Measurement framework and dependent on the preceding Focus Area.

Disaster Services	Economic Opportunity	Education	Environmental Stewardship	Healthy Futures	Veterans & Military Families	No Focus Area/Other
Assistance Provided	Financial Literacy	School Readiness	Energy Efficiency	Aging in Place	Veterans and Military Families Served	Benefit to National Service Members/Volunteers
	Housing	K-12 Success	At-Risk Ecosystems	Obesity and Food		Non-Profit Development
	Employment	Post-Secondary Educational Support	Awareness of Environmental Issues	Access to Care		Improving AmeriCorps
			Green Jobs			Other

Age(s) Studied

- 0-5 (Early childhood)
- 6-12 (Childhood)
- 13-17 (Adolescent)
- 18-25 (Young adult)
- 26-55 (Adult)
- 55+ (Older adult)

Focus Population(s)/Community(s)

This is not an exhaustive list. The selections below represent specific funded initiatives.

Opportunity Youth	Sometimes referred to as "disconnected youth" – defined as people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working	Schools	Institutions in the United States that have the primary function of educating (K-12 public, private, charter schools; colleges and universities)
Non-profits	501 (c) (3) nonprofit organizations, which are the primary recipients of AmeriCorps grants and resources	Tribes	American Indian and Alaska Native people represented by federally recognized tribal governments
Veterans and Military Families	Wounded warriors, veterans, military spouses, and their families	Rural	Communities in the United States with fewer than 50,000 residents and not adjacent or peripheral to larger communities
Suburban	Communities in the United States immediately adjacent/peripheral to metropolitan communities	Urban	Metropolitan communities in the United States, typically with more than 50,000 residents
Low-Income	Communities where the average income is below the federal poverty level		

Study Type

<p>Case Study or Descriptive</p>	<p>An intensive study of one set (or unit) of something, based on a comprehensive understanding accumulated from an extensive description and analysis of the set (or unit) taken as a whole and in its context.</p>	<p>Cost-Benefit or Cost Effectiveness Study</p>	<p>A study to determine the costs and benefits of a program or the implications of a program-related decision. The study documents the costs and benefits, and calculates monetary values for each. It may or may not include monetary value to costs and benefits that are difficult to quantify.</p>
<p>Feasibility</p>	<p>A type of analysis to assess the feasibility of implementing and operating an intervention.</p>	<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>A study that identifies the results or effects of a program and measures program beneficiaries' changes in knowledge, attitude(s), and/or behavior(s) that result from a program over a specific period of time.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>An impact study aims to provide a quantitative estimate of the causal effects of programs or policies. The preferred method for impact evaluations are randomized experiments, but other comparison group designs (quasi-experimental) are also appropriate for impact evaluations. Impact evaluations may be accompanied by process analysis or implementation analysis to document specific details of the intervention.</p>	<p>Review or Meta-Analysis</p>	<p>A scientifically disciplined approach to searching literatures, assembling studies for review, and analyzing, interpreting and reporting the results. The goal of the scientific approach is to reduce bias in the evaluation (ideological or theoretical preference). Other terms are systematic review, meta-analysis, and evaluation synthesis.</p>

Study Type continued

Industry Publication	<p>Published academic papers that report on research or evaluation findings.</p>	Summary Briefs	<p>Condensed version of a longer body of work that provides an overview of report findings. Also called a synopsis or digest.</p>
Published Articles	<p>Published article appearing in an academic journal, organization or university website, or industry trade outlet.</p>	General Research	<p>Research that is focused on building a body of knowledge for a field of study, practices and approaches.</p>
Implementation	<p>An implementation (process) study evaluates the implementation practices surrounding the intervention. This usually includes reviewing documents, administrative data, surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups. The study can also describe the organization, management, and service delivery procedures of the intervention, as well as identify policy, bureaucratic, and political factors that influence the way the intervention is structured and managed.</p>	Other	<p>Other evaluation products.</p>

Study Design(s)

Dependent on Study Type; meta-field could be left blank.

Experimental (RCT)	A randomized control trial (RCT) aims to identify the results or effects of a program and attribute those results or effects directly to the program. RCTs that utilize a control group require quantitative data and advanced statistical methods. The group receiving the intervention is called the treatment group. The control group is a group of individuals not participating in the program or receiving the intervention. The control group is necessary to determine if the program, rather than some other factor, is causing the observed changes. New eligible program applicants are randomly assigned to either the treatment group or the control group, and outcomes are compared between the two groups.
Quasi-Experimental (QED)	A quasi-experimental design (QED) also aims to identify the results or effects of a program and attribute those results or effects directly to the program. QEDs utilize a comparison group, require quantitative data, and advanced statistical methods. The group receiving the intervention is called the treatment group. A QED uses statistical matching procedures to form a comparison group from a similar population of individuals (e.g., similar participants from another program, extra applicants, etc.), and outcomes are compared between the two groups. The comparison group is necessary to determine if the program, rather than some other factor, is causing the observed changes. The QED is considered less rigorous than the RCT.
Non-Experimental	A non-experimental study is purely observational, and the results are intended to be purely descriptive. (Non-QED or Non-RCT). Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single group post design: Examines outcomes for program beneficiaries after they receive program services• Single group pre-post design: Provides a comparison of outcomes for program beneficiaries before and after they receive program services• Retrospective pretest: Respondents are asked about their level of understanding or skill after an intervention occurs and are then asked to think back to their understanding prior to the intervention.

Level of Evidence

Determination of the program's cumulative body of evidence along the evidence continuum. If the intervention was not assessed per the terms and conditions by a third-party evaluator, the field is left blank.

Level of Evidence is assessed at the program-level for AmeriCorps programs. For SIF evaluations, Level of Evidence is assessed by a third-party evaluator using programmatic evaluation documentation.

	AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)	Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)
No Evidence	The applicant has not provided evidence that they have systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.	No comparable category.
Preliminary	The applicant has described up to two outcome studies about the intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or a similar intervention that the applicant will replicate with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows: 1) The applicant must describe at least one outcome study that was conducted of their own intervention. This must include a detailed description of the outcome study data from pre and post-tests without a comparison group or post-test comparison between intervention and comparison groups. An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement.; OR 2) The applicant must describe at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation (e.g. propensity score matching) that found positive results for the same...	Evidence that is based on a reasonable hypothesis supported by credible research findings. Thus, research that has yielded promising results for either the program model or a similar program model will meet AmeriCorps' criteria. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track participants through a program and measure participants' responses at the end of the program; and 2) third-party pre- and post-test research that determines whether participants have improved on an intended outcome.

Level of Evidence continued

	AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)
Preliminary continued	intervention that the applicant plans to replicate.; OR 3) The applicant may submit evidence from both bullets listed above. In this case, the applicant must provide data from an outcome study of an intervention it has previously implemented (see above) and also proposes to modify their program by replicating another random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation. The description should include details about how the intervention studied and the applicant's proposed approach are the same and how the applicant will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model.

Level of Evidence continued

	AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)	Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)
Moderate	<p>The applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies that evaluated the same intervention described in this application and identified evidence of effectiveness on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. Evidence of effectiveness (or positive findings) is determined using experimental design evaluations (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)) or quasi- experimental design evaluations (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site). The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.</p>	<p>Evidence from previous studies on the program, the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity). This also can include studies for which the reverse is true— studies that only support moderate causal conclusions but have broad general applicability. The following would constitute moderate evidence: 1) At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study supporting the effectiveness of the practice strategy, or program, with small sample sizes or other conditions of implementation or analysis that limit generalizability; 2) at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi- experimental study that does not demonstrate equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry but that has no other major flaws related to internal validity; or 3) correlational research with strong statistical controls for selection bias and for discerning the influence of internal factors.</p>

Level of Evidence continued

	AmeriCorps (for FY 2016)	Social Innovation Fund (for FY 2016)
Strong	<p>The applicant has demonstrated that the intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state- level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well- implemented QED or RCT. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive. Findings from the RCT or QED studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.</p>	<p>Evidence from previous studies on the program, the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and that, in total, include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the state, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity). The following are examples of strong evidence: 1) More than one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study or well-designed and well- implemented quasi-experimental study that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program; or 2) one large, well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled, multi-site trial that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program.</p>

Researcher/Evaluator

Name of researcher(s) of general research, commissioned research organization, or evaluator(s) of a program/intervention.

Year Published

The year the report was published.

Report Citation

The format for citing this report in other documents.

Study Site Location (City/ County)

A listing of one or more cities/counties where the study/intervention took place.

Study Site Location (State)

A listing of one or more states where the study/intervention took place.

Date Posted Online

The date materials were made publicly available on the AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange.