



DEMOCRACY GOAL 2:

# Ask and All

## A Plan to Expand National Service & Volunteering

AMERICA'S  
SERVICE  
COMMISSIONS

COGENERATE

CONVERGENCE 

 **L1STEN**   
LISTEN FIRST PROJECT

 National  
Peace Corps  
Association

 POINTS  
OF LIGHT

**SERVICE  
YEAR**

 The  
CorpsNetwork

 VOICES  
for NATIONAL  
SERVICE  
20 Years of  
Advancing AmeriCorps

**YB** YOUTHBUILD

## THE CASE FOR NATIONAL SERVICE & VOLUNTEERING

National service and volunteering cultivate engaged citizens who are central to a vibrant democracy. Americans who participate in national service and volunteering are more connected to their neighbors and nation. This service brings young people and adults out of their comfort zones and enables them to serve alongside people of different races, ethnicities, ages, backgrounds, geographies, and beliefs toward a shared goal. This sense of common purpose develops more empathetic citizens and builds an enduring sense of duty and civic responsibility that lasts for a lifetime. At a time when our country's divides extend far beyond where we live or the politics we practice, building bonds through service with people who are different from ourselves teaches collaboration as a powerful problem-solving tool, leverages our differences as strengths, and strengthens the fabric of our society.<sup>1</sup>

Service has been at the core of American democracy since our country's founding, with the citizen soldiers of the Revolution, highlighted by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* in the 1830s, advanced by every generation in war and peace, and made more concrete with major initiatives launched by Presidents and Governors from both political parties and by nonprofits, philanthropy, and the private sector that have created new opportunities for Americans to serve.

National service and volunteering and the civic engagement it cultivates also build skills for future careers and habits of responsible citizenship — an understanding of others, the dignity of work and discipline, a sense of personal agency to effect change, a habit of civil dialogue, and an ability to work in multigenerational teams. Participants in a year or more of civilian national service receive a living stipend and, upon completion of their service, an education award. For many young people, service opens the doors to being the first in their family to imagine — and obtain — a college education. What is also compelling about service is that young people who have been the recipients of government service(s) and public assistance (including YouthBuild participants) are now able to be the providers of service to their communities.

Making national service and volunteering an expectation — a new American rite of passage from youth to adulthood — will renew and redefine for this generation the role of citizens in our democracy, promote an understanding of rights and responsibilities, and cultivate the leaders our communities and nation need to tackle our toughest challenges. Similarly, older people experiencing life transitions — whether returning from military service, becoming empty nesters, seeking an “encore” career, or considering retirement — should be given the opportunity to serve their communities in new ways, and to inspire younger generations to a lifetime of service.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

The enormity of our nation's challenges — and the opportunity to bind Americans together and to the nation — demands that we dramatically expand national service and volunteering and the civic engagement it fosters. More Perfect has brought together our nation's leading national service, civic engagement,

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<sup>1</sup> Will America Embrace National Service?

[https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Service\\_TEXT-3.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Service_TEXT-3.pdf)

volunteering, and bridging organizations to chart a course for the country toward a new era for national service and volunteering.

Ten organizations — [America's Service Commissions](#), [CoGenerate](#), [Convergence](#), [Listen First Project](#), [Points of Light](#), [Service Year Alliance](#), [The Corps Network](#), [National Peace Corps Association](#), [Voices for National Service](#), and [YouthBuild USA](#) — have come together for the first time and are working to advance [More Perfect's Democracy Goal 2](#) — Expanding National Service and Volunteering. They stand united behind this roadmap for governments at the national, state and local levels, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector to renew and expand national service and volunteering.

## THE STRATEGY

We envision a future in which every young person in America has the opportunity to serve their country as a new rite of passage as they enter adulthood. Studies indicate that this year of service will increase service and volunteering over the lifetimes of those who have performed such national service. Specifically, we aim to increase youth civilian national service from approximately 80,000 annual positions in 2023 to 250,000 positions by 2026, on a pathway to one million young people, one-quarter of an age cohort, serving annually by 2033. We also propose to increase national service and civic engagement among older Americans from 140,000 in 2023 to 250,000 positions by 2026, on a pathway to 500,000 by 2033. In turn, an expansion of national service also enables a significant increase in volunteering, since national service corps members engage many more volunteers in their service projects and studies show that people who perform national service volunteer at higher rates than their peers.<sup>2</sup> Reaching these goals has the potential to fuel much-needed civic renewal in our country and build the future leaders our country needs to work together across our differences and tackle the pressing challenges facing our communities and country.

In addition, we must dramatically expand opportunities for cogeneration: young people and older Americans joining forces to serve side by side. Young people want to learn from older ones, older people want to share what they know, and vice versa.

Making national service and volunteering an expectation — a new American rite of passage from youth to adulthood — will renew and redefine for this generation the role of citizens in our democracy, promote an understanding of rights and responsibilities, and cultivate the leaders our communities and nation need to tackle our toughest challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/AmeriCorps-Alumni-Outcomes-Study> & Will America Embrace National Service: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Service\\_TEXT-3.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Service_TEXT-3.pdf)



CONSERVATION CORPS

That means national service — from AmeriCorps State & National, VISTA, and NCCC to AmeriCorps Seniors, Conservation Corps, Peace Corps, and a variety of corps at the national and state levels — is uniquely poised to bring generations together across divides for mutual benefit and social impact. We should also develop new ways to link civilian and military service and see them as two sides of the same coin. Given that 80 percent of Americans ages 17-24 do not meet the qualifications for military service, we can harness some of this talent to choose civilian service and gain similar benefits of participating in causes larger than themselves.

In order to make national service part of growing up in America and to foster generations of citizens committed to serving and volunteering in their communities, we must first make it easier and more accessible for everyone to serve. Too often this strategy presents a false choice: expand the number of national service opportunities or invest in making service more accessible and equitable for Americans of all backgrounds. The ambitious plan outlined for Democracy Goal 2 dismisses that polarizing choice and acknowledges that our vision relies on simultaneous progress across each of our targets.

Our plan also recognizes that the current political landscape presents real challenges to achieving the bold, long-term vision for national service and volunteering that we have scoped for the coming years and presents multiple paths to achieve our goals and targets. This plan aims to transform what it means to serve our country and ensure that Americans of all backgrounds can find opportunities to become engaged citizens through national service and volunteering.

As we set our sights on the next 18 months, we will first lay a solid foundation from which to build for future growth and expansion of national service and volunteering in America.

The following priorities represent a holistic view of how to modernize and expand civilian national service and volunteering:

1. **Modernize AmeriCorps** to increase equity, minimize barriers to service, grow and deepen impact, and lay the groundwork for long-term expansion; in service of this aim, pursue a whole-of-government approach to national service expansion through interagency partnerships that utilize AmeriCorps and other national service programs to meet federal priorities;
2. **Innovate and Expand National Service and Volunteering Programs** by growing AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, YouthBuild (a national service program that works in marginalized, economically disadvantaged communities to deploy opportunity youth who are out-of-school and unemployed<sup>3</sup>), the new American Climate Corps; and the Volunteer Generation Fund that supports volunteering;

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<sup>3</sup> YouthBuild students are 85% young people of color--and all are from marginalized, economically disadvantaged communities.



3. **Innovate at the State level to expand national service and volunteering** and develop new service models, such as State Service Corps, Service Year Fellowships, and Cogenerational Service to scale impact;
4. **Invest in the Corps Member Experience** and enhance the value proposition of service across all service programs by prioritizing recruitment, in-service supports, and post-service pathways to higher education and careers, building demand for service and centering diverse youth in recruitment; and
5. **Leverage National Service as an Opportunity to bring Americans of all Backgrounds and Ages Together** by linking civilian and military service, making civic bridge building an integral part of the corps member experience, and advancing opportunities for cogenerational service.



## ONE

### Modernize AmeriCorps: Advance the Voices for National Service AmeriCorps Modernization Agenda which will increase equity, minimize barriers to national service, grow and deepen impact, and lay the groundwork for long-term expansion

Over the past several years, our sector has experienced the largest investment in national service in decades — with an additional one billion dollars infused in AmeriCorps through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) for pandemic response and recovery. [Voices for National Service](#), with support from other national service organizations, played a critical leadership role in securing the ARP investment as well as steady increases in annual appropriations, and, as a result of this influx of funding, AmeriCorps programs responding to communities hard hit by COVID-19 were stabilized. Additionally, AmeriCorps was able to substantially increase the living stipend for corps members from ~\$8.39/hr in FY20 to ~\$10.35/hr in FY23, and from \$3/hr in FY22 to \$4/hr in FY23 for AmeriCorps Seniors, an essential step toward making service more equitable, laying the groundwork for achieving one of the key principles of this plan’s vision.

This report's authors are working to sustain this progress by protecting these increases in annual appropriations. Fiscal year 2023 saw an increase of \$162 million for AmeriCorps, which allowed for increases to living allowances and education awards for corps members. In order to maintain this level of investment in national service and avoid a potential funding shortfall as ARP funds expire in the coming year, our sector must adapt our strategy and meet this changing political moment.

In an historic collaboration, our field is aligned around the priorities embedded in this plan and will continue to collaborate to build diverse and strategic champions, highlight the impact and value of national service with key policymakers and stakeholders, and work together to meet our goals and targets.

As we work together to sustain and increase investments in national service, we must simultaneously modernize the AmeriCorps grants program and other national service programs to increase the diversity of communities and individuals accessing national service.

Modernizing the AmeriCorps grants program will be critical to laying the groundwork for expanding national service long-term. Without making service more equitable and accessible for people of all ages to participate, our sector will be unable to grow, engage the next generation in service, and make national service an equally attractive choice for young people entering adulthood, people making mid-career transitions, or older adults looking for new purpose as they become empty nesters or approach retirement.

More Perfect has brought together our nation's leading national service, civic engagement, volunteering, and bridging organizations to chart a course for the country toward a new era for national service and volunteering.

The coronavirus pandemic and resulting investments in local communities ignited momentum behind a whole-of-government approach for expanding and strengthening national service and volunteering. Building on the successful examples of many post-9/11 agency corps, FEMA Corps, the School Turnaround AmeriCorps, and the Economic Mobility Corps, federal agencies are increasingly seeing the value in leveraging national service to meet their needs.

As part of the American Rescue Plan investments, this plan's authors helped develop Public Health AmeriCorps. This \$400 million, 5-year partnership between AmeriCorps and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports the recruitment, training, and development of the next generation of

public health leaders through national service. Approximately 3,000 new national service corps members were deployed in the first year of Public Health AmeriCorps and it is expected that 15,000 corps members will serve over five years as long as Congress keeps appropriating the funding for this exciting new initiative.

Additionally, [Voices for National Service](#) and other organizations authoring this report spearheaded the formation of the National Partnership for Student Success, a partnership between AmeriCorps and the U.S. Department of Education to add 250,000 more volunteer mentors, tutors, and student success coaches to

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support students experiencing learning loss from the pandemic. From the American Rescue Plan, \$20 million in funding for the Volunteer Generation Fund was prioritized for NPSS, with additional investments pledged from the philanthropic community.

With narrowly divided chambers of the U.S. Congress, partisan politics bringing legislation to a standstill, and the retirement of several key congressional champions, we must continually cultivate and strengthen bipartisan champions for national service programs like AmeriCorps, and other programs addressed in section two below. Working with bipartisan champions in the House and Senate who are aligned with our vision for expanding equitable national service to meet community needs is a key step in sustaining investments in AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, YouthBuild, and Conservation Corps, meeting this plan's targets, answering the President's call from September 2022 to increase the living stipend for AmeriCorps members to \$15/hour,<sup>4</sup> supporting a new Civilian Climate Corps, and investing in the Volunteer Generation Fund (which has been championed by [Points of Light](#)).

Federal agencies are eager to fund projects to meet their agency's needs and are looking for ways to build sustainable pipelines into in-demand sectors and help fill the resulting jobs in local communities. National service offers an opportunity to train a young, passionate workforce, engage the talent and life experience of older volunteers, make an impact in local communities, and build the public servants and leaders for America's future.



TWO

Expand National Service and Volunteering Programs by growing the Peace Corps, YouthBuild; the new American Climate Corps; and the Volunteer Generation Fund that supports volunteering

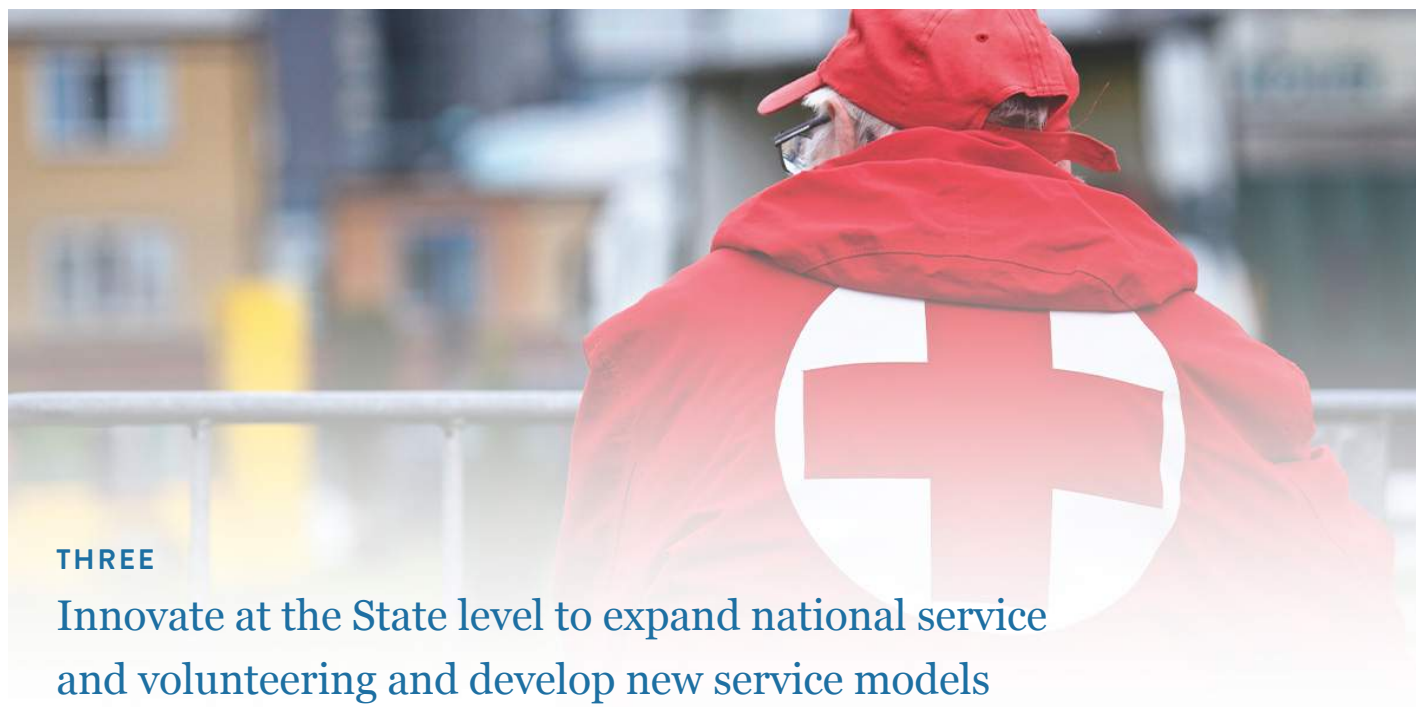
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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/statement-on-biden-call-for-national-service-united-we-stand>

We are working to increase annual appropriations in fiscal year 2024 for the Peace Corps and YouthBuild, continuing to allow for increases in living allowances and education awards for corps members. We are encouraged by the Senate Appropriations Committee's passage of a State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill which would increase Peace Corps funding for fiscal year 2024 by \$18 million, from \$430 to \$448 million.

American Climate Corps. On September 20, 2023, The White House announced the [American Climate Corps](#), a new national service program that will initially engage 20,000 Americans in conservation and green infrastructure projects, drawing on new resources and reach across six federal agencies, leveraging existing funding from the bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Our partners – [The Corps Network](#), [Service Year Alliance](#) and [Americas Service Commissions](#) – helped develop the new corps and created [The Partnership for the Civilian Climate Corps](#) (PCCC) – a coalition of over 100 multi-sector, bipartisan organizations – a strong network of nonprofits and public-private partnerships to support this new conservation corps. This new corps has been one of the top priorities within Democracy Goal 2 and More Perfect leadership and its partners have been working closely with The White House on the American Climate Corps since being asked to provide an initial draft during the Presidential Transition.

In addition to the American Climate Corps, five states -- Arizona, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Utah will be creating state-based Conservation Corps -- building on the work of five other states that have already created state-based Climate Corps -- California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, and Washington.



### THREE

## Innovate at the State level to expand national service and volunteering and develop new service models

The recent influx of funding in states and local communities from the American Rescue Plan, the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, and Inflation Reduction Act make this a critical time for the



national service community to prioritize innovation at the state level.

With the support of this report's authors, we have already seen multiple states utilize ARP and other federal and state funds to stand up new corps to meet their states' needs. In Washington State, for example, **Serve Washington**, the state service commission, partnered with the Schultz Family Foundation to launch the Washington COVID Response Corps, a first-of-its-kind youth service program focused on responding to community needs resulting from COVID-19, specifically food insecurity. In the first six months, the new program deployed 120 AmeriCorps members at 70 community nonprofits in 14 counties across the state.

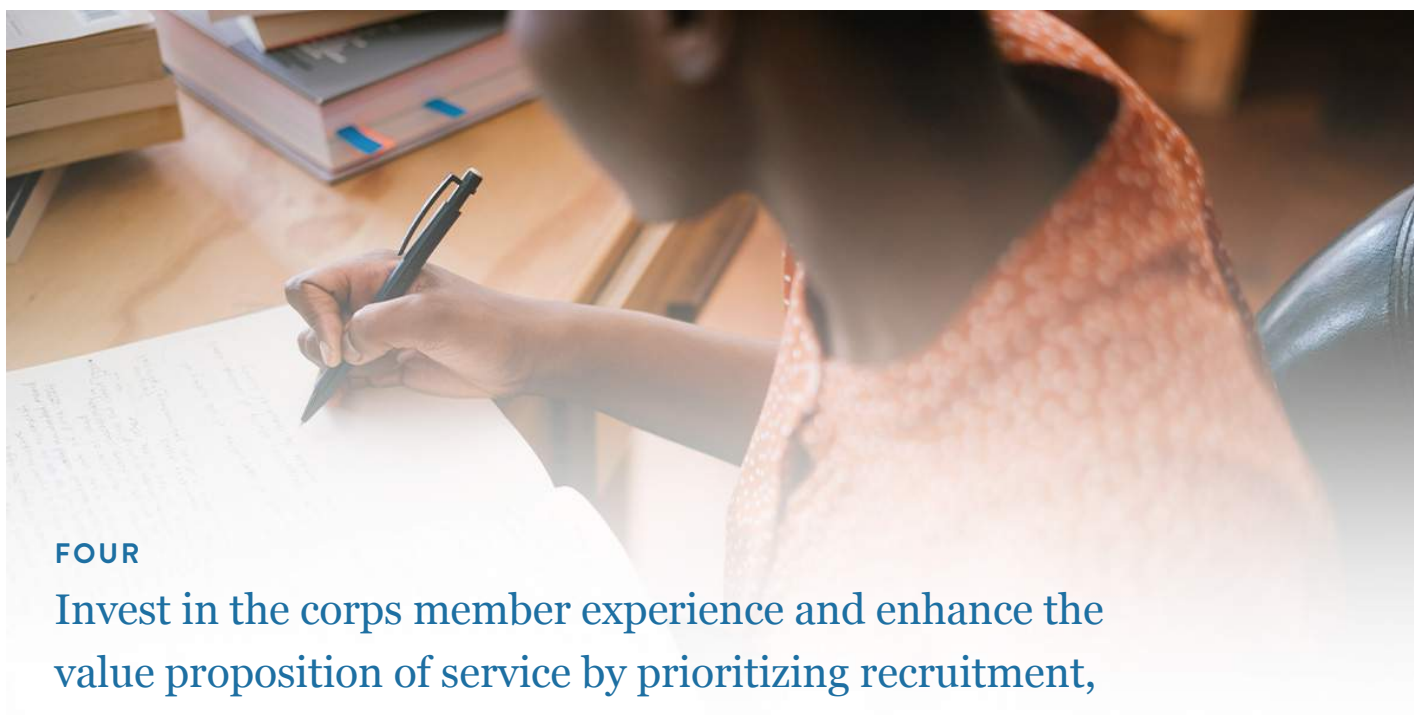
Meanwhile, **California Volunteers** partnered with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program and CoGenerate to launch the **Encore Intergenerational Vaccine Corps**, a demonstration project bringing retired medical professionals together with younger non-medical volunteers to vaccinate 47,000 underserved people at federally qualified health clinics in 6 counties in Northern California. In addition to helping mitigate the COVID-19 public health crisis, this pilot showcased the power and energy created and the range of talent harnessed when people of all ages serve together.

We have seen other impressive innovations at the state level where federal and state agencies have partnered with state service commissions to stand up new climate-related national service corps.

- **The Minnesota Home Energy Initiative** leverages a three-way partnership for training among the program, the Minnesota Department of Commerce, and Community Action Partnership Agencies (CAPs). AmeriCorps members receive training on energy efficiency activities and are matched with a weatherization and energy professional to provide direct support to vulnerable households and trained and coached on energy career opportunities.
- Volunteer Maine, the state's service commission, and bipartisan state legislators launched the **Maine Climate Corps** focused on energy efficiency, energy conservation, and helping residents save money on their utility bills while heating their homes. This report's authors have supported and advised similar initiatives in Colorado, Michigan, and several other states.
- In California, Governor Newsom and California Volunteers have utilized ARP funds to develop new state service initiatives, including the **#CaliforniansforAll Youth Jobs Corps**, the **California Climate Action Corps**, and **California College Corps**, enhancing equity and accessibility for corps members across California and the country.
- Finally, in Maryland, newly elected Governor Wes Moore, with support from this report's authors, created a new **Maryland Corps**, a commitment to create a service year option for every high school graduate in the state, provided \$1.1 million for the Chesapeake Conservation Corps, created a new cabinet department of service and civic innovation, and is waiving in-state residency requirements for those who performed a service year in Maryland to obtain lower tuition in public universities.

We will build on these innovations by lifting up these successful models and developing relationships with governors and state legislators across the country to further expand and scale service in additional states. We will develop an action-prompting report that features these innovations and encourages other governors and state legislators to advance them.

To expedite expansion of service opportunities, we will explore innovative new models for service, including service year fellowships and expanded cogenerational service — models that have the potential to make national service more accessible for individuals and communities that otherwise may not have access to these service opportunities.



#### FOUR

### Invest in the corps member experience and enhance the value proposition of service by prioritizing recruitment, in-service supports, and post-service pathways to higher education and careers, building demand for service and centering diverse youth in recruitment

In making civilian national service part of growing up in America, we need to ensure that the next generation is eager to participate and sees the value in serving their community.

National service remains popular among Generation Z and interest in service is strong, but competition from better paying jobs and low living stipends for national service are barriers to expansion. As a result, the nation needs to invest in the entire corps member experience — from recruitment to service to post-service outcomes.

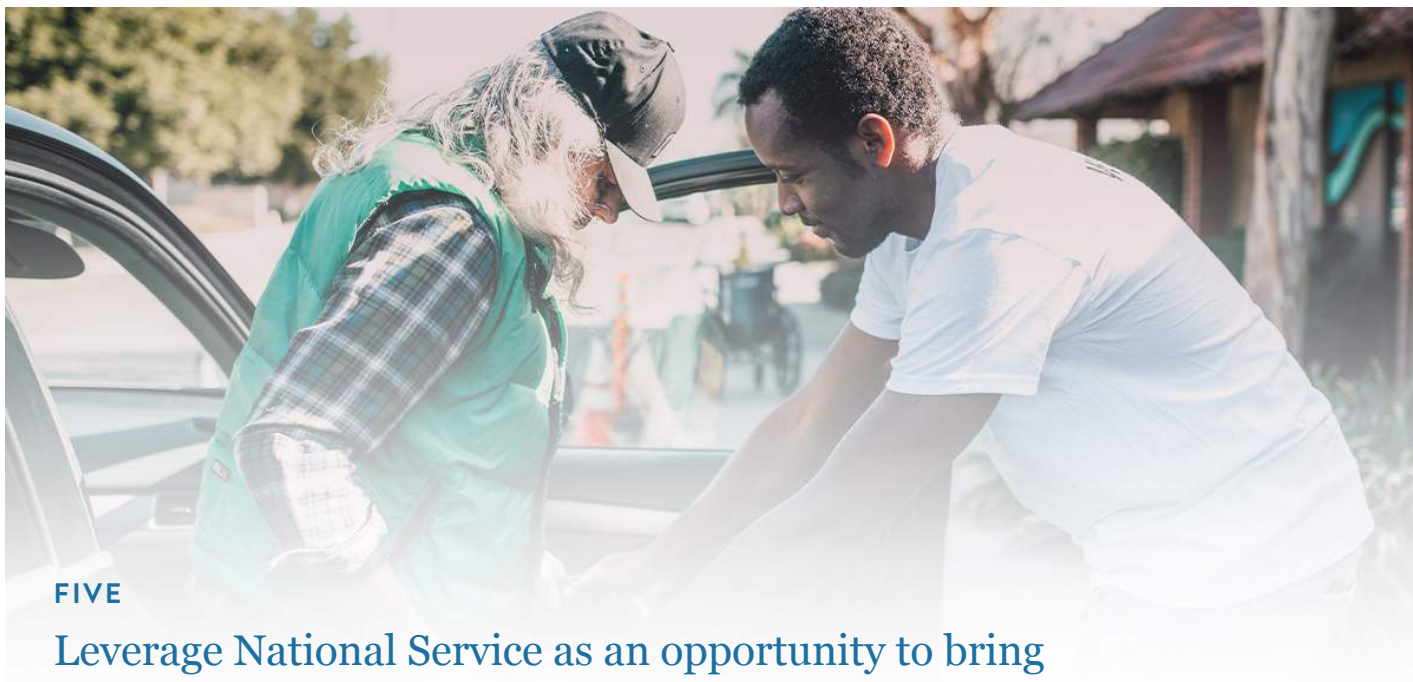
Recent market research and focus groups show that positioning national service as a viable option is the most important aspect in recruiting youth into service. We must invest in wraparound supports for corps members while continuing to increase the living stipend. Otherwise, national service will remain out of reach for many Americans from marginalized communities and non-traditional backgrounds.

Finally, beyond recruiting young people and supporting them during their service, our sector must prioritize

training, credentialing, skills development, and post-service higher education and career pathways for corps members. By creating a pipeline from national service into higher education and careers, including encore careers, we are ensuring that employers, higher education leaders, elected officials, and other stakeholders recognize the skills and value national service corps members bring to our communities, institutions, and workplaces.

With the help of this report's authors, AmeriCorps has built two impressive networks — Employers of National Service and Schools of National Service — that engage employers and higher education institutions to value and reward national service alumni. This plan highlights the need to bolster these networks, invest in intentional skills development, and strengthen the pathways out of service into specific jobs and educational opportunities that are seeking the types of leaders that national service develops.

Investing in these young people will not only create new, sustainable talent pipelines into many fields, such as education, public health, clean energy, and public service careers, but will also build the leaders of tomorrow.



## FIVE

Leverage National Service as an opportunity to bring Americans of all backgrounds and ages together, connect civilian and military service, and make civic bridge building an integral part of the corps member experience

American society is increasingly divided. Our differences — whether partisanship, class, race, geography, and more — have led to animosity towards and distrust of our fellow citizens. More and more, national service — at all ages — is identified as a potential solution, as well as service in our armed forces.

## CONNECTING CIVILIAN AND MILITARY SERVICE:

While our military only needs about one percent of the country to serve, civilian national service as a new opportunity and expectation can enable a much greater percentage of the country to experience the joys and challenges of serving a larger cause. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.”



AMERICORPS VETERAN ENGAGEMENT

The Commission on Military, National and Public Service made a number of [recommendations](#) to unite military and civilian service which we believe should be pursued especially in light of the challenges that the military, Peace Corps, and AmeriCorps are all facing when it comes to recruitment. The Commission recommended:

1. That Congress authorize and appropriate funding for a pilot program overseen by the Secretary of Defense, CEO of AmeriCorps and Director of the Peace Corps to invest recruiting resources for the military, AmeriCorps and Peace Corps in underserved markets as defined by each service—focusing on gender, geography, socioeconomic status, and critical skills—to better reflect the demography of the Nation and ensure that recruiting needs are met into the future.
2. That Congress directs and appropriates the necessary funds for the Secretary of Defense, the CEO of AmeriCorps, and the Director of the Peace Corps to collaborate on joint advertising campaigns and to share marketing research resources.
3. That given that up to 80 percent of people who apply to the military do not meet the eligibility requirements, that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the CEO of AmeriCorps and the Director of the Peace Corps, develop and provide a plan for providing ineligible or non-selected applicants with information about the other forms of service.
4. That the President directs the Secretary of Defense, the CEO of AmeriCorps, and the Director of the Peace Corps to sign an interagency agreement (IAA) formally committing their agencies to develop and implement cross-service incentives for recruitment and retention purposes.
5. That the President requires the Secretary of Defense to work with the CEO of AmeriCorps to provide information on national and public service to transitioning military service members through DoD’s Transition Assistance Program, and to provide military and public service information to individuals completing national service.
6. That the President directs the CEO of AmeriCorps and the Director of the Peace Corps to work with the Secretary of Defense to provide military service and public service information to transitioning national service members.
7. That the Selective Service System includes information on how to apply to AmeriCorps and Peace Corps along with information on how to apply to the military when they reach out to young men who are turning 18 and are required to register with the Selective Service.



## COGENERATIONAL SERVICE:

There's no better way to establish lifelong habits of service than to ensure young people serve alongside older Americans as a team, tackling community problems with a shared sense of purpose and commitment, unleashing a multigenerational force for good across the country.

Indeed, cogenerational service — older and younger service members and volunteers joining forces to solve problems together — can do so much to address society's greatest challenges, including:

- Mitigating the public health crisis that loneliness poses for young and old alike;
- Reducing ageism and improving the health and well-being of people of all ages;
- Expanding young people's network of relationships with people who have life experience and career connections;
- Building a more sustainable and robust multigenerational workforce;
- Improving service to communities by bringing a greater diversity of perspectives, skills and life experiences to the table; and
- Reducing polarization and creating more empathy and understanding across the divides of race, culture, background, economic status, and identity.



COGENERATE

A recent survey by NORC at the University of Chicago showed an especially deep interest in young people and people of color across the age spectrum to work with older generations to improve the world around them.<sup>5</sup> Offering the opportunity to join an age-diverse corps can be an enticement for young people to serve. Cogenerational teams help young people hone skills required to thrive in a multigenerational workforce, dramatically expands their network of relationships with people who have life experience and career connections, and casts a new and compelling vision of

lifelong service at a time when their understanding of civic engagement is being formed and solidified.

To continue to grow our knowledge of cogenerational service's impact on participants and communities, we must invest in further research to explore the effect of diverse, multigenerational teams on service outcomes and on bridging divides.

## NATIONAL SERVICE AND BRIDGING DIVIDES:

With tens of thousands of corps members actively working to strengthen communities across the country, few systems or platforms offer as much potential as AmeriCorps, Conservation Corps, and other corps at the state and local levels in helping to bridge community divides.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://cogenerate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Encore-Cogeneration-Report-1.pdf>

Proponents of national service as a means of bridging our divides argue that, by bringing diverse volunteers together to achieve service program goals, service experiences can:

- a. Create positive relationships among volunteers and/or community members that transcend their differences;
- b. Increase understanding and reduce bias and stereotypes among both volunteers and members of communities/constituencies that are the focus of service; and
- c. Cement these gains among all participants, so that both volunteers and engaged community members will experience lasting positive changes in attitudes and behaviors, including greater openness to the perspectives of others and increased motivation and ability to work constructively with people whose backgrounds and beliefs are different from their own.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, in June 2023, Service Year Alliance and AmeriCorps announced a partnership to build a new community of practice that aims to create, test, measure, and spread effective practices that help AmeriCorps and other national service members across a variety of programs develop as life-long bridgers.

The national service sector does not stand alone in working to realize this theory of change. The bridging field — a set of organizations whose programs bring Americans together across our divides — stands ready to assist. Both national service and civic bridgebuilding focus on fostering community civic infrastructure that is resilient, equitable, and adept at solving common problems. This report identifies and supports many recommendations for deepened partnership at the intersection of national service and bridge building.



THE CORPS NETWORK

- Partnership between national service and bridge building ecosystems:
  - Programs and states should engage local organizations and initiatives able to support thinking, planning, execution, and evaluation in regard to incorporating civic bridge building elements in service programming;
  - Incentivize and practice placing corps members in civic bridge building programs;
  - Likewise, bolster national service recruitment by creating entry points through bridge building programs.; and
  - Leverage ongoing work of the Bridging Movement Goals & Measures Program to measure bridging outcomes of national service and volunteering.
- Bridge Building organizations deploying corps members:

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Convergence and the Consensus Building Institute for this articulation of the national service-bridging theory of change.

- AmeriCorps and states should (1) incentivize and enlist civic bridge building organizations to become grantees and (2) promote planning grants to strengthen the pipeline of bridging grantees equipped to make subgrants to smaller, local bridge building organizations.
- Engagement of alumni:
  - The national service ecosystem should: (1) create and resource an office of AmeriCorps alums, preferably within the agency, to nurture a sense of shared identity and pride and to incentivize alumni to work in their communities to strengthen civic infrastructure, (2) convene alums in local communities to support promising bridging organizations that require greater capacity, and (3) offer a renewable,
  - multigenerational talent pipeline of alumni available to be called back into service.
- Civic CPR:
  - Pilot, refine, and deploy at scale a lowest-common-denominator “Civic CPR” curriculum that equips every corps member with the building-block mindsets and skills required to connect across differences.
  - Implement changes to the “80-20 Rule,” which restricts training to 20 percent of a corps member’s time. Before sustainable changes are enacted, the agency should leverage its waiver authority for this purpose.
- Bridging experiences during service term:
  - Develop and pilot pathways for corps members to experience greater viewpoint diversity than afforded by their programs, for example:
    - Incentivize corps members to volunteer once per month at a community nonprofit;
    - Require corps members to participate in an activity or experience programmed by a bridgebuilding organization; or
    - Create exchange programs for corps members to spend a week or more with different grantees.
  - Develop bridging credentials that corps members can earn.
- Increasing viewpoint diversity:
  - Pilot new strategies to recruit more grantees and corps members with a variety of worldviews, and incentivize cogenerational service, which will naturally build in worldview diversity as people become more conservative as they age.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.chicagobooth.edu/review/there-are-two-americas-and-age-divider#>

## THE TARGETS

Each of More Perfect's five Democracy Goals<sup>8</sup> are accompanied by concrete targets that provide a blueprint for action. We have worked closely with the co-chairs of each of the five Democracy Goals and other partners to shape the targets. Several key considerations have guided the development and design of the targets.

First, we have tried to keep the targets under each of the five goals to a manageable number, for if everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

Since the founding of the country, service has been the golden thread of American democracy, enabling citizens to contribute to the health of their communities, country, and world.

Second, we have tried to balance the aspirational with the achievable, especially where a field puts a high priority on federal legislation that may nonetheless face obstacles to near-term passage. In these cases, we have reflected the legislation as a target because it embodies key policy priorities, but, wherever possible, we have included targets for action at the state or local level whose achievement can build support for federal action.

Third, while the goals have an initial 3-year time horizon prompted by the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, we recognize that many changes will take a longer period of time to be realized. As a result, in developing the targets we have tried to identify key milestones between now and 2026, which, if achieved,

would yield significant benefits, while also contributing to momentum for longer term changes. We intend to keep this effort going long after 2026.

In service of the five strategic priorities described above, what follows are the Democracy Goal 2 targets:

- Expand annual civilian national service opportunities for youth from approximately 80,000 in 2022 to 250,000 by 2026, on a path to 1 million by 2033
  - Expand existing appropriations for AmeriCorps (State and National, VISTA, NCCC), Peace Corps, YouthBuild, funding streams that support Conservation Corps project work, and other national service programs, including new efforts at the state and local levels, in order to reach 250,000 national service opportunities by 2026 and 1 million by 2033
  - Expand existing appropriations for AmeriCorps Seniors (Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companions Program, RSVP) in order to reach 250,000 national service opportunities by 2026 and 500,000 by 2033.
  - Grow existing, and develop new, partnerships between AmeriCorps and other federal agencies to expand the use of interagency corps
  - Develop, expand, and sustain innovative state models of national service

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<sup>8</sup> The Democracy Goals are: Universal Civic Learning, National Service & Volunteering, Bridging Divides, Trusted Elections and More Representative & Responsive Governance, and Access to Trusted News and Information.



- Begin to implement and expand the American Climate Corps, leveraging the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs law and Inflation Reduction law funds
  - Encourage cogenerational innovation through blended streams of service, including AmeriCorps Seniors programs interested in collaborating with AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps VISTA
  - Make cogenerational service a priority for more national service opportunities by including language in future RFPs and NOFAs that encourage organizations to recruit and engage younger and older people in service together to better reflect the multigenerational communities they serve
  - Develop innovative new approaches for the expansion of national service opportunities, such as service year fellowships and cogenerational service
  - Pass statutory and regulatory reforms to modernize the AmeriCorps grants program and other federal national service grantmaking, removing barriers that make it hard to access or effectively utilize AmeriCorps resources, making service a more viable strategy for more community-based organizations, and ensuring grantees can deliver more robust compensation and supports to their corps members
  - Pursue opportunities to link military and civilian service as two sides of the same coin; and
  - Augment national service's inherent bridging capacity with additional intentionality and training to bring Americans of all backgrounds together and make civic bridge building a universal, integral part of each corps member's experience.
- Increase the number of Americans from currently underserved populations and communities who participate in national service annually
    - Increase AmeriCorps living stipends to the equivalent of \$15/hour and support a \$13,000 AmeriCorps Education Award (indexed to the maximum value of a Pell Grant), and pass legislation to exclude both benefits from federal income tax
    - Expand the number of individuals of all ages who are exiting national service with a certificate, credential, credit, or direct pipeline into their next step, through new employer or higher education partnerships, greater opportunities for federal employment through expanded Non-Competitive Eligibility, bolstered Employers of National Service and Schools of National Service efforts, and other innovative solutions
    - Promote new collaborative approaches to the recruitment of prospective national service members, including through partnerships with AmeriCorps, across the field, and with other key sectors, as well as through shared tools such as the service year common application
- Increase, on a statewide level, the percentages of Americans who volunteer by 15% resulting in more civically active states
    - Expand how America views volunteering, removing barriers and developing a more holistic view of volunteering with additional entry points at every life stage

- Continue to spur innovation in volunteering by investing in the Volunteer Generation Fund, expanding Statewide volunteer recognition programs, including the President’s Volunteer Service Award, and increasing incentives for States to expand volunteering
- Measure progress through the annual Volunteering in the United States Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Develop and socialize programs, trainings, and experiences that enable community volunteers to connect and collaborate with people who have different backgrounds and beliefs.



SENIOR CORPS

## CONCLUSION

Since the founding of the country, service has been the golden thread of American democracy, enabling citizens to contribute to the health of their communities, country, and world. In the process, national service and volunteering have enabled Americans to build bridges across differences to do shared public work. With leading organizations coming together on clear goals, targets, and plans to meet them, we can create a common expectation and opportunity for generations of engaged citizens to engage in national service and volunteering and foster leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors who can work together across differences to advance the nation’s work.

*This report is dedicated to Harris Wofford, Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy for Civil Rights and co-founder of the Peace Corps, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service (today called “AmeriCorps”), and former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania. At our Summit at Gettysburg in 2014, Senator Wofford closed the summit by urging the next generation to commit to revitalize national service by focusing on these two words, “Ask and All.” We name this report in honor of his rallying cry to our generation and future generations to commit to a culture of service.*

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