



PROJECT OVERVIEW

AmeriCorps Bundled Evaluation of Puerto Rico–Based Projects

September 2024



BUNDLED EVALUATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

Background

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States and has been so since 1898. Even though both Spanish and English are official languages, Spanish is the primary language spoken by the majority of its over 3 million inhabitants. The island has faced economic challenges and debt-related issues that have been aggravated by a series of natural and health disasters: Category 4 Hurricane Maria in 2017, 6.4 magnitude earthquake in 2020, and Category 1 Hurricane Fiona in 2022 caused significant devastation to the island's infrastructure and economy from which it is not yet recovered. Additionally, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic considerably reduced the island's income from tourism and other economic activities, leading to job losses, economic uncertainty, and healthcare and education constraints for many residents.

In 2022, AmeriCorps invested more than 11 million in federal funding in Puerto Rico and 1,046 members and volunteers served there. The spread of AmeriCorps-supported projects across the island spanned 37 out of

78 (38 percent) municipalities for a total of 107 unique locations on the island. In terms of volunteer capacity, over 7,000 Puerto Rico residents have served about 14 million hours since 1994 in different projects.

AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation has funded a bundled evaluation and capacity building project, being led by ICF, that comprises 14 organizations on the island with AmeriCorps State and National formula grants—half of which also include VISTA projects. The project includes organizations' formula grant projects and VISTA projects, as applicable.

Project Goals and Activities

The goals of this project are as follows:

- The project will provide resources and results that are used by AmeriCorps and the Puerto Rico commission, the Comisión de Voluntariado y Servicio Comunitario, to inform future investment and policy decisions.
- Organizations will incorporate enhanced data collection systems, engage in continuous program improvement, and adopt evidence-based practices.
- Findings will be used by all partners to inform member recruitment and retention.

To accomplish the project goals, ICF will conduct a bundled evaluation of the AmeriCorps-supported projects and deliver evaluation technical assistance to the supported organizations to build their evaluation capacity. Key features of each project component are presented in exhibit 1.

EXHIBIT 1.—Evaluation and evaluation technical assistance activities overview

Evaluation	Evaluation Technical Assistance
A participatory, mixed-methods approach will be used to evaluate the context and processes for implementing AmeriCorps projects in Puerto Rico as well as the outcomes of the projects on AmeriCorps members, the organizations, and the communities.	A needs assessment will be used to surface participating organizations' needs related to evaluation.
Several extant data sources will be accessed to collect programmatic and outcome information, including AmeriCorps applications and progress reports.	Individual support will be delivered through up to four individual coaching sessions for each organization in line with an organization-specific technical assistance plan.
To supplement these sources, primary data will be collected from key program constituencies through surveys, interviews/focus groups, and observations of project activities.	Group activities that address common needs and facilitate peer sharing will include virtual sessions and a 2-day in-person evaluation workshop in San Juan, PR. The workshop will include facilitated discussions and activities that prompt organizations to apply evaluation skills and concepts.

Participating Organizations

As shown in exhibit 2, 14 organizations received fiscal year (FY)2023 or FY2024 AmeriCorps State and National grants under the purview of the Puerto Rico service commission. Of those, 7 of the organizations also have VISTA projects. All 21 projects are considered part of the Puerto Rico bundle and will be included in the evaluation and program-specific evaluation capacity building (ECB), which will provide technical assistance to participating organizations. The awarded projects have set out to tackle community issues across a range of AmeriCorps focus areas.

EXHIBIT 2.—Participating AmeriCorps–supported projects in Puerto Rico bundle and planned number of members and VISTAs

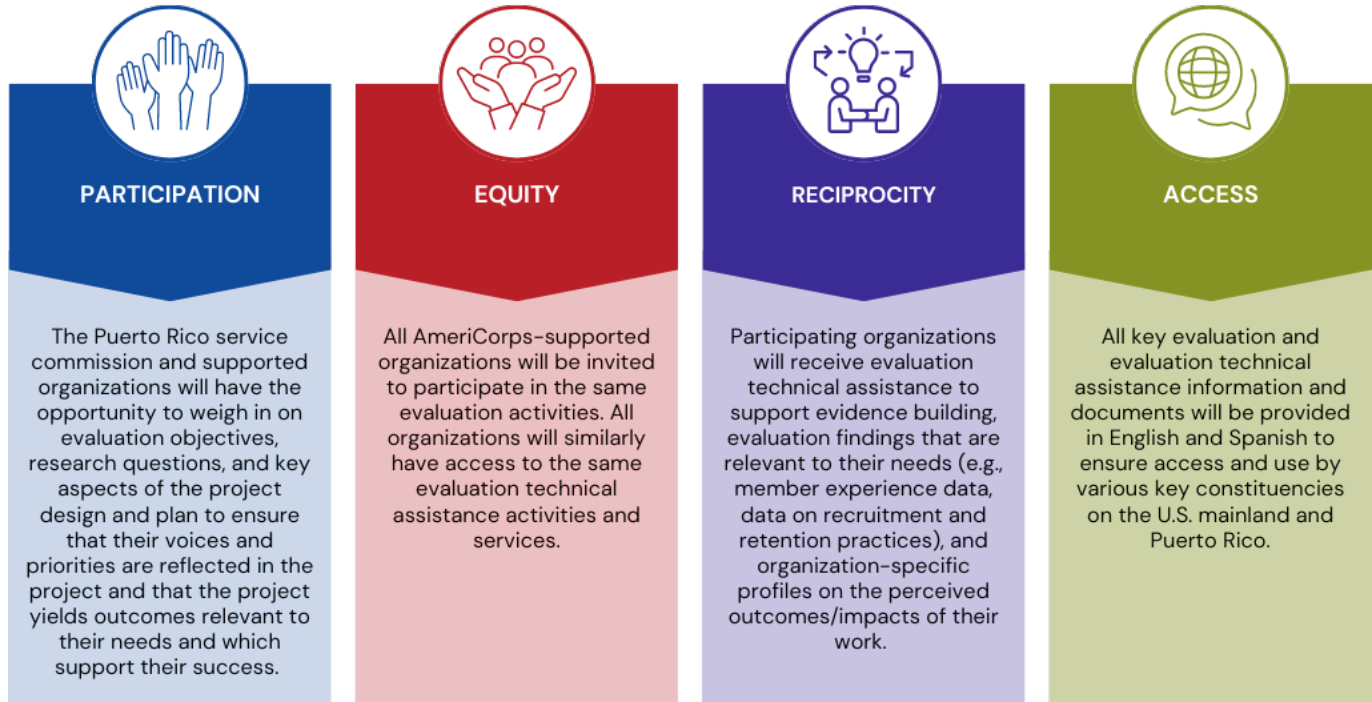
Organization	Fiscal Year of Award	Focus Areas	Planned # ASN* Members	Planned # VISTAs
Alianza Municipal de Servicios Integrados Inc.	2023	Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures	12	n/a
Asociacion Pro Juventud	2023	Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Healthy Futures	7	n/a
Caras of the Americas	2023	Education, Environmental Stewardship	15	n/a
Compania para el Desarrollo Integral de la Peninsula de Cantera	2023	Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Capacity Building	20	5
Corporacion del Proyecto ENLACE del Cano Martin Pena	2023	Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Capacity Building	10	10
Fundacion Sila M. Calderon	2023	Economic Opportunity, Education	14	n/a
Instituto Psicopedagogico De Puerto Rico	2023	Healthy Futures	19	n/a
Mujeres de Islas, Inc.	2023	Healthy Futures, Capacity Building	10	5
Municipio De San Juan	2023	Disaster Services	10	n/a
Oficina para la Promocion y el Desarrollo Humano	2023	Healthy Futures	4	n/a
Plenitud Iniciativas Ecoeducativas, Inc	2023	Disaster Services, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Education, Capacity Building, Economic Opportunity	11	5
Puerto Rico Youth At Risk Inc.	2023	Education, Capacity Building	10	5
Sistema Universitario Ana G. Mendez, Incorporado	2023	Economic Opportunity, Capacity Building	10	11
Techos Pa' Mi Gente (TPMG)	2024	Disaster Services, Capacity Building	7	11

Note. ASN = AmeriCorps State and National

Guiding Principles

The principles of participation, equity, reciprocity, and access will serve as the cornerstone of this project; they are described further in exhibit 3.

EXHIBIT 3.—Project guiding principles



Potential Outcomes of the Project

The desired outcome of the Puerto Rico bundled evaluation and capacity building project is to build evidence that ultimately strengthens organizational capacity in Puerto Rico and leads to better federal support for the island, with the ultimate goal of improving community outcomes.

Contact Information

AmeriCorps: Jehyra M. Asencio-Yace, PhD, JAsencioYace@americorps.gov

ICF: Samantha Spinney, PhD, Samantha.Spinney@icf.com

Acknowledgements

The ICF evaluation team would like to acknowledge the many members of the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE), the Comisión de Voluntariado y Servicio Comunitario, and the participating AmeriCorps-supported organizations who are contributing to this study. The evaluation team looks forward to continued collaboration with ORE on high-quality evaluation work that can inform policy and practice regarding how national service may be used to address national priorities.

We also want to thank BCT Partners for their external evaluation of the evaluation technical assistance component of the project. Their outside perspective is vital in supporting the outcomes of the work.

About AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).

About the Office of Research and Evaluation

The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America.

This report was commissioned by AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation under Contract #GS00Q14OADU209 and Order #95332A20F0075. Information in this report is in the public domain.

Suggested Citation

Spinney, S., Mazuelas Quirce, S., Topete, P., MacDonald, A., & Holbrook, B. (2024). *Project overview: AmeriCorps bundled evaluation of Puerto Rico-based projects*. ICF.

Photo Credit

AmeriCorps

About ICF

ICF (NASDAQ:ICFI) is a global consulting and digital services company with over 7,000 full- and part-time employees, but we are not your typical consultants. At ICF, business analysts and policy specialists work together with digital strategists, data scientists and creatives. We combine unmatched industry expertise with cutting-edge engagement capabilities to help organizations solve their most complex challenges. Since 1969, public and private sector clients have worked with ICF to navigate change and shape the future. Learn more at [icf.com](https://www.icf.com). For additional information about ICF, please contact:

ICF

1902 Reston Metro Plaza, Reston, VA 20190


Phone: 703-934-3603 or 1-800-532-4783

Fax: 703-934-3740 Email: info@icf.com



 [linkedin.com/company/icf-international](https://www.linkedin.com/company/icf-international)

 [facebook.com/ThisIsICF](https://www.facebook.com/ThisIsICF)

 [#thisisicf](https://www.instagram.com/thisisicf)