



## RESEARCH BRIEF – ROI PROJECT

# Green City Force

AmeriCorps.gov

### Program Description

Green City Force (GCF), operating in Brooklyn, New York, uses workforce training to improve the economic mobility of AmeriCorps members, all of whom reside in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing. During the six-month program, members gain hands on experience with building sustainable infrastructure, engaging in urban agriculture, and distributing fresh produce. That experience can lead to green career pathways such as energy conservation assistants, compost coordinators, solar energy installers, energy auditors, and other positions and apprenticeships. AmeriCorps members also prepare for and take the Green Professional Training (GPRO) certification and the OSHA 30-hour Construction and Safety training and 10-hour Site Safety Training, improving their understanding of green building practices and workplace health and safety. That can enable members to attain occupations such as HVAC technicians, plumbers, and electricians.

### Return on Investment Analysis

To better understand the impact of the program in relation to costs, AmeriCorps commissioned a return on investment (ROI) analysis by ICF, an independent research firm.

**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).**



ROI analyses of national service programs estimate the monetary value of benefits that a program generates per dollar invested. The ROI analysis of total benefits per funder dollar estimated the Green City Force program's ROI to be between \$0.69 and \$7.60, depending on how long AmeriCorps members experience increased earnings as a result of the program. Total benefits per federal dollar are higher, between \$1.39 and \$17.93.

## Overview of Benefits and Costs

To calculate the ROI, the program benefits were identified, quantified, and compared to the program's costs. Benefits of GCF include:

- **Additional earnings by AmeriCorps members.** Serving in AmeriCorps leads to increased wages and reduced unemployment post-national service through skill acquisition, as well as increased educational attainment post-service. Workforce training is a primary focus of GCF, leading to improved employment outcomes for Service Corps members.
- **Living allowances, stipends, and education awards.** AmeriCorps members receive living allowances and stipends during their national service and receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award after successful completion. Due to the high pre-service unemployment rate of this group, the opportunity cost to GCF AmeriCorps members presented in this analysis is negative, meaning the opportunity to participate in the program and earn a stipend outweighs potential forgone earnings for AmeriCorps members.
- **Increased tax revenue for government.** Federal, state, and local governments receive more income tax revenue from increased AmeriCorps member earnings post-service, as well as additional sales tax revenue related to those earnings. Federal, state, and local governments also realize tax revenue from the taxable living allowances, stipends, and education awards provided to AmeriCorps members. Further, federal and state governments realize tax revenue from increased earnings by AmeriCorps members as a result of increased educational attainment.
- **Reduced lifetime spending on corrections, public assistance, and social insurance.** Because of the increase in postsecondary educational attainment for AmeriCorps members and program participants, federal and state governments spend less on these items.
- **Benefits to various stakeholders from GCF program activities.** GCF AmeriCorps members participate in activities such as the Farms at NYCHA program, which distributes fresh produce to NYCHA residents for free through the efforts of GCF AmeriCorps members. Benefits of this program include cost savings to NYCHA residents from the distribution of free produce. In addition, composting organic waste at the farms reduces municipal government spending on processing of waste and benefits society by reducing carbon emissions.

Program costs for GCF program totaled \$1,444,961 and were funded by AmeriCorps (federal government), state and local government, program service fees, and foundations.

## ROI Results

The table below shows the ROI results. Each row represents a different ROI calculation depending on which benefits are considered (all benefits or only benefits to the federal government) and which funding is considered (federal funding only or all funding). The ROI estimates are presented as dollars returned for every \$1.00 of investment. The analysis used three different scenarios to estimate benefits under different assumptions. Specifically, the study assumed that increased earnings attributable to the programs last for one year (short-term scenario), 15 years (medium-term), or 30 years (long-term).



ROI Calculation	ROI Scenario		
	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Total benefits per federal dollar	\$1.39	\$9.45	\$17.93
Total benefits per funder dollar	\$0.69	\$4.09	\$7.60
Federal government benefits per federal dollar	\$0.21	\$1.67	\$3.10

The program produces strong returns for the medium- and long-term scenarios for all ROI calculations. The most significant factors driving the positive ROI estimates in the medium- and long-term scenarios are:

- **Educational attainment outcomes of AmeriCorps members.** After serving in the AmeriCorps program, AmeriCorps members receive an education award, which is used by a portion of members to help pay for postsecondary degrees post-service. The additional educational attainment resulting from the use of the education award generates additional earnings for AmeriCorps members.
- **Employment outcomes of AmeriCorps members.** GCF AmeriCorps members experience increased employment and increased earnings post-service as a result of the workforce training and career development elements of the GCF program.

**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.

For more information, please contact [evaluation@cns.gov](mailto:evaluation@cns.gov).

**About this Brief**

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