



RESEARCH BRIEF – RETURN ON INVESTMENT STUDIES

# College Possible – College Access Program

[AmeriCorps.gov](http://AmeriCorps.gov)

College Possible is a college readiness, access, and success organization that supports and coaches low-income students in college preparation and success. The College Access program operates under College Possible and serves students during their junior and senior years of high school. Students attend after-school sessions led by AmeriCorps member coaches for two hours twice a week throughout those two school years in a supportive group of college-bound peers. Coaches implement an interactive curriculum designed to guide students through the key aspects of preparing for college. Topics include finding a best-fit college, academic preparation, financial planning, and personal development. Summer Bridge is a component of the college access program that uses in-person and text-based coaching to help student stay on the college track over summer break.

## Return on Investment Analysis

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

**AmeriCorps, a federal agency, brings people together to tackle the country’s most pressing challenges, through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. AmeriCorps helps make service to others a cornerstone of our national culture. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](http://AmeriCorps.gov).**



ROI analyses of national service programs estimate the monetary value of benefits that a program generates per dollar invested. The ROI analysis estimated College Access's ROI to be between \$1.50 and \$6.41 per funder dollar, depending on how long program participants and AmeriCorps members experience increased earnings as a result of the program. Because the federal investment is complemented by non-federal funding, the return on each federal dollar is even higher. The magnitude of the results are driven by improved employment and earnings outcomes for participants due to higher college enrollment and benefits to AmeriCorps members from increased lifetime earnings.

## Overview of Benefits and Costs

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

- **Increased college enrollment for College Access participants.** The high school students that participated in College Access have higher college enrollments rates, leading to improved employment and earnings long-term.<sup>1</sup>
- **Improved employment, earnings, and educational outcomes for AmeriCorps members.** AmeriCorps members have increased employment, earnings, and educational attainment after their period of national service.<sup>2</sup>
- **Increased tax revenue for government.** Government at the federal, state, and local levels realizes increased tax revenue from the improved employment and earnings of participants and AmeriCorps members.
- **Savings in government expenditures.** Government spends less on public assistance as a result of improved employment outcomes of participants and employment and educational outcomes of AmeriCorps members.

Funding for the College Access program in the period studied totaled \$5,525,583 and came from:

- Federal Government (AmeriCorps) – \$1,131,498 (20%)
- Contributions and Non-federal Grants – \$3,822,841 (69%)
- Other Contributions – \$446,114 (8%)
- Program Fees – \$125,130 (2%)

## ROI Results

The table below shows the full set of ROI results for the College Access program. 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 including contributions and non-federal grant, other contributions, and program fees ). The ROIs are presented as

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<sup>1</sup> Avery, C. (2013). Evaluation of the College Possible Program: Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial. NBER Working Paper No. 19562, JEL No. I23,I24. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w19562.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Friedman, E., Freeman, B., Phillips, B., Rosenthal, L., Robinson, D., Miller, H., & Porowski, A. (2016). *AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes: Final Survey Technical Report*. AmeriCorps (formerly Corporation for National and Community Service). Retrieved from [https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR\\_AmeriCorpsAlumniOutcomesFinalTechReport.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_AmeriCorpsAlumniOutcomesFinalTechReport.pdf).



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 1 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	\$7.87	\$23.80	\$33.58
Total Benefits per Funder Dollar	\$1.50	\$4.55	\$6.41
Federal Government Benefits per Federal Dollar	\$4.64	\$8.65	\$11.09

The magnitude of the positive ROI results is driven by:

- **The expected increased earnings resulting from increased educational attainment for College Access participants.** Avery's (2013) evaluation of College Access found that participation in College Access is estimated to increase enrollment at four-year colleges by 15 percentage points, leading to an additional 195 College Access participants enrolling in college.<sup>3</sup>
- **The employment outcomes of AmeriCorps members.** According to the national AmeriCorps Alumni Survey Outcomes Study, the percentage of members unemployed was 5 percent lower six months after serving in AmeriCorps versus six months before.<sup>4</sup>
- **The educational attainment outcomes of AmeriCorps members.** AmeriCorps members receive an education award after serving in the AmeriCorps program, which is used by a portion of members to help pay for postsecondary degrees post-service. That additional educational attainment increases future earnings.

The content of this research brief was drawn from the full AmeriCorps ROI study: Munaretto, C., Casey, B., Miller, B., Modicamore, D., Naugler, A., & Pershing, J. (2020). Return on Investment Study: College Possible College Access Program. ICF. Visit [nationalservice.gov/research](https://nationalservice.gov/research).

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

<sup>3</sup> Avery, C. (2013). Evaluation of the College Possible Program: Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial. NBER Working Paper No. 19562, JEL No. I23,I24. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w19562.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Friedman, E., Freeman, B., Phillips, B., Rosenthal, L., Robinson, D., Miller, H., & Porowski, A. (2016). AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes: Final Survey Technical Report (pp.56). Retrieved from [https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR\\_AmeriCorpsAlumniOutcomesFinalTechReport.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_AmeriCorpsAlumniOutcomesFinalTechReport.pdf)