



## **Corporation for National and Community Service**

Report on Veterans and Military Families and the  
Corporation for National and Community Service

Presented September 2015

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The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 authorizes CNCS to expand the participation of Veterans in national service programs, recognize the expertise Veterans can offer to national service programs, and assist the families of Veterans and members of the Armed Forces on active duty. Congress directed CNCS to report on its accomplishments and strategies in these activities, and CNCS contracted with the National Academy of Public Administration to assist in preparing this report to meet that requirement. In gathering the information for this report CNCS consulted with several Veterans service organizations that are CNCS grantees as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs as required by 42 U.S.C. § 12651k(b).

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\**Academy Fellow*

*When I came into AmeriCorps VISTA, I was in a dark place after my military service, trying to find my place and reintegrate into my community. AmeriCorps VISTA helped me do just that. Now I am moving into employment, my next step as a disabled Veteran and Wounded Warrior. I am so very thankful to AmeriCorps VISTA and United Way for their patience and help. I am forever grateful for this experience.*

Veteran in Augusta, GA

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction .....	3
CNCS Programs Focused on Veterans and Military Families and the Serve America Act.....	10
A Summary of Grantees in Each Issue Area.....	17
Stewardship of the Taxpayer Dollar .....	18
The Path Forward .....	20
APPENDIX A The History of Veterans in Community Service .....	A-1
APPENDIX B Strategy and Goals for Engaging Veterans and Addressing Veterans Needs .....	B-1
APPENDIX C Impact of CNCS Strategies on Enabling Veterans’ Participation .....	C-1
APPENDIX D Plans to Improve Services to Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations, and Military Families .....	D-1
APPENDIX E Coordination of Programs and Activities.....	E-1
APPENDIX F Plans to Involve Veterans as Resources and National Service Participants .....	F-1
APPENDIX G Westat Study: Understanding the Involvement of Veterans and Military Service in National Service .....	G-1
APPENDIX H Westat Inventory of National Service Programs that Engage Veterans and Military Family Members .....	H-1
APPENDIX I Joining Community Forces Memo .....	I-1
ENDNOTES	

## Executive Summary

In April 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 (Serve America Act), a landmark piece of legislation that refocused our country's approach to national service. In part, the new law provided the impetus for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to better engage the Veterans and military families community in national service.

Since the passage of the Serve America Act, CNCS has stepped forward to serve the Veterans and military families community. In addition to receiving increased and improved support services, Veterans and military families may benefit from participation in national service programs and improve their employment prospects, educational opportunities, and personal wellness.

The Serve America Act enhanced CNCS's authority to provide national service opportunities to the Veterans and military families community. From the language of the Serve America Act, CNCS has identified the following issue areas to help guide and evaluate its progress in supporting Veterans and military families:

- Provide services and support to military families
- Increase volunteer opportunities for Veterans and military families
- Improve Veterans and military families' education and certification opportunities
- Improve Veterans' and military families' employment prospects
- Increase Veterans' and military families' access to benefits
- Improve services to military children
- Improve transportation options, particularly for Veterans with disabilities
- Facilitate Veterans' participation in disaster preparedness programs
- Improve wellness opportunities for Veterans and military families.

This report highlights CNCS programs and grantees that showcase the best of what national service has to offer the Veterans and military families community. These programs have engaged dynamic individuals, such as AmeriCorps member Timm Lovitt, who launched the Washington Vet Corps with help from CNCS and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs; and Maxine Simms, a Senior Corps Foster Grandparent who tutors military children at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Then there's Amber Hale, an Iraq war Veteran who returned home to start the Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice Corps, an AmeriCorps grantee that helps Veterans in trouble with the law transition back into being productive members of society.<sup>1</sup>

In Vermont, Callie Frey, herself the daughter of a 27-year Navy Veteran, participates in Operation: Military Kids through the Vermont Youth Tomorrow AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) project where she supports recruitment, screening, training, and management of volunteers and development of relationships with state-wide partners to support local military children and youth. Callie's own experiences as a military family member enable her to relate to military children and share stories that help volunteers and educators gain insight into the unique needs of military children.<sup>1</sup>

Among the numerous military children served by Callie and the Vermont Youth Tomorrow AmeriCorps VISTA project are two brothers living with separate guardians during their mother's deployment who were reunited for a snowboarding adventure. Their story, like those above and throughout this report, is a testament to the impact that CNCS-funded programs have already made on the lives of Veterans and military families since the signing of the Serve America Act.

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<sup>1</sup> A complete list of service highlights is included in Appendix C.

While CNCS is proud of its progress integrating the Veterans and military families community more effectively in national service, CNCS's efforts must be understood in context as the beginning of a long-term strategic effort to serve this population. When President Barack Obama signed the Serve America Act into law in 2009, CNCS began reevaluating and redefining its goals, strategies, and objectives, culminating in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan guides CNCS's service with the Veterans and military families community, and closely adheres to the language articulated in the Serve America Act by establishing the following objectives:

- Increase the number of Veterans and military families served by national service programs
- Increase the number of Veterans and military families engaged as participants in national service programs
- Increase services to under-represented communities, including Veterans and military families;
- Increase health benefits from national service to Veterans 55 and older
- Increase CNCS's understanding of the Veterans and military families community
- Identify best practices for expanding national service opportunities within the Veterans and military families community.

The Strategic Plan is just the starting point for a host of internal changes to CNCS's business practices regarding Veterans' issues. Among other adjustments, CNCS has:

- Recruited a Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors and Military Families Initiatives, whose focus is to ensure CNCS prioritizes national service opportunities to this community
- Established Veterans and military families-focused projects as a Tier 1 funding priority, as explicitly noted in CNCS's Notices of Funding Opportunities<sup>ii</sup>
- Entered an interagency agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Forged strategic relationships with other government agencies, Veterans service organizations (VSOs) and non-profits to increase national service opportunities for Veterans and military families
- Vastly expanded training and technical assistance for Veterans and military families programs.

In 2012, CNCS engaged an independent organization to review and summarize its efforts thus far. CNCS asked Westat, a research and statistical survey organization, to survey all CNCS grantees whose programs serve Veterans and military families and provide an analytic report on its findings. The Westat Study of Veterans and Military Families in National Service interviewed over ninety CNCS grantees and found that CNCS grantees are ensuring that funds are being used to address those issue areas identified in the Serve America Act. Specifically, they found that grantees are implementing a wide range of activities in an effort to serve Veterans and military families, from offering direct services that are in high demand (e.g., providing employment training or benefits counseling) to supporting community-wide efforts to coordinate service delivery to Veterans (e.g., creating Regional Work Groups or developing local resource guides).

The pages that follow illustrate CNCS's efforts to date in greater detail. CNCS is proud of its successes thus far within the Veterans and military families community, and looks forward to achieving the goals articulated in its Strategic Plan.

## Introduction

CNCS engages more than five million Americans in service through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), and the Volunteer Generation Fund, and leads President Obama's national call-to-service initiative, United We Serve.

Further, CNCS:

- Acts as a catalyst by providing strategic critical support to volunteer organizations that, in turn, deliver much-needed services to communities throughout the country
- Promotes a healthy, vibrant non-profit volunteer sector that can deliver community services efficiently and effectively
- Builds national service participants' character and creates career and educational opportunities for them through national service
- Develops knowledge that will enhance the overall success of volunteer and service programs
- Cultivates a culture of renewed civic responsibility by encouraging people to become better citizens by participating in national service.

As part of its efforts to accomplish these goals, CNCS runs its own programs and provides grants and training and technical assistance to developing and expanding volunteer organizations. CNCS explores, develops, and models effective approaches for using volunteers to meet the nation's human needs, and conducts and disseminates research that enhances national and community service programs' effectiveness.

CNCS runs four major programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and Senior Corps. An overview of each program is provided below.

**What is AmeriCorps State and National?** AmeriCorps State and National engages AmeriCorps members in direct service and capacity-building to address critical needs within the Veteran and military family community. AmeriCorps members provide a range of services including employment placement, behavioral health counseling services, community rehabilitation and reintegration projects, homeless Veteran support and financial literacy, and tutoring for children of deployed servicemembers.<sup>iii</sup> The grantee designs service activities for a team of AmeriCorps members serving in full- or part-time positions.

**What is AmeriCorps VISTA?** AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. Established as Volunteers in Service to America in 1964, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993. AmeriCorps VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization, government agency, building organizational capacity to fight illiteracy, improve health services, increase housing opportunities, strengthen community groups, and bridge the digital divide in underserved communities.

**What is AmeriCorps NCCC?** AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women aged 18-24. Members are assigned to one of five campuses, located in Denver, Colorado; Sacramento, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Vinton, Iowa. The mission of AmeriCorps NCCC is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. Its members complete a series of service projects in their assigned regions in partnership with secular and faith-based non-profits, local municipalities, state governments, federal government, national or state parks, Indian tribes and schools.

**What is Senior Corps?** Senior Corps connects today's 55-and-over citizens with the people and organizations that need them the most. It helps them become mentors, coaches, or companions to people in need, or contribute

their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations. Conceived during John F. Kennedy's presidency, Senior Corps linked more than 360,000 Americans to service opportunities in 2012.<sup>iv</sup> Senior Corps offers several ways to get involved:

- **Foster Grandparent Program:** Foster Grandparents are role models and mentors. Serving at thousands of local organizations—including faith-based groups, Head Start Centers, schools, and other youth facilities—Foster Grandparents help children learn to read, provide one-on-one tutoring, and guide children at a critical time in their lives.
- **Senior Companion Program:** By becoming a companion to a frail person, Senior Companions help people stay in their own homes. Whether giving families or professional caregivers much-needed time off or running errands, Senior Companions make a difference that strengthens and preserves independence.
- **RSVP:** RSVP offers senior citizens a full range of volunteer opportunities with thousands of local and national organizations. RSVP volunteers choose how, when, and where they wish to serve.

### **National Service and Veterans and Military Families**

America's military deployment to Iraq officially ended in 2011 and its combat operations in Afghanistan are scheduled to end by the end of 2014. A new generation of Veterans is emerging, many of whom bore the hardships of battle, military life, and extended deployments away from their families.

CNCS has long recognized that national service and Veterans and military families are naturally complementary. Veterans and military families participating in national service often improve their employment prospects, educational opportunities, and personal wellness.

However, prior to 2009, CNCS lacked a mechanism for engaging Veterans and military families in a coordinated manner. Though the national service field has had a strong affiliation with the armed forces—with cooperation dating to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1940s—Veterans and military families had never been a specific priority for recruitment into CNCS' national service programs.

Part of the Serve America Act prioritizes Veterans and military families for recruitment as national service participants and as beneficiaries of national service programs. Furthermore, Congress directed CNCS to report on:

1. The number of Veterans serving in national service programs historically by year
2. Strategies being undertaken to identify the specific areas of need of Veterans, including any goals set by CNCS for Veterans participating in the service programs
3. The impact of the strategies described in paragraph (2) and the Veterans Corps on enabling greater participation by Veterans in the national service programs carried out under the national service laws
4. How existing programs and activities carried out under the national service laws could be improved to serve Veterans, Veterans service organizations, families of active-duty military, including gaps in services to Veterans
5. The extent to which existing programs and activities carried out under the national service laws are coordinated and recommendations to improve such coordination including the methods for ensuring the efficient financial organization of services directed towards Veterans
6. How to improve utilization of Veterans as resources and volunteers.

In addition, the legislation outlined some issue areas that would guide CNCS in providing national service opportunities to Veterans and military families. A summary of those issue areas is framed as follows for the purposes of this report:



1. **Services and Support to Military Families.** Promote community-based efforts to meet the unique needs of military families while a family member is deployed and upon that family member's return home.
2. **Volunteer Opportunities for Veterans.** Recruit Veterans, particularly returning Veterans, into service opportunities, including opportunities that utilize their military experience.
3. **Education and Certifications.** Assist Veterans in developing their educational opportunities (including opportunities for professional certification, licensure, or credentials), coordinating activities with and assisting state and local agencies administering Veterans' education benefits.
4. **Employment.** Coordinate activities with and assist entities administering Veterans' programs with internships and fellowships that could lead to employment in the private and public sectors.
5. **Access to Benefits.** Promote efforts within a community to serve the needs of Veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including helping Veterans file benefits claims, and assisting federal agencies in providing services to Veterans.
6. **Military Children.** Provide mentoring to military children, and assist Veterans to develop mentoring relationships with economically disadvantaged students.
7. **Wounded Warriors.** Develop projects to assist Veterans with disabilities, unemployed Veterans, older Veterans, and Veterans in rural communities, including assisting them with transportation.
8. **Wellness and Other Support Services.** Assist Veterans and their family members through establishing or augmenting programs that assist them with access to legal assistance, health care (including mental health care), employment counseling or training, education counseling or training, affordable housing, and other support services.

## First Changes

Following the passage of the Serve America Act, CNCS revised its Strategic Plan, a keystone document from which Agency-wide goals, objectives, and strategies are derived. The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan notes that the Serve America Act prioritized CNCS's emphasis on the Veterans and military families community:

*Meeting the needs of Veterans and military family members is a civic priority. Unemployment rates among Veterans are greater than those for civilians, military servicemembers and their families redeem food stamps at twice the civilian rate, and there is increasing evidence that a child's development and well-being is affected by a parent's active duty deployment.*

*Our work with Veterans and military families is a developing area of focus for us. Although a few national service programs have historically supported Veterans and military families, our current Veterans and military families portfolio makes up less than one percent of the total programmatic funds awarded by CNCS.*

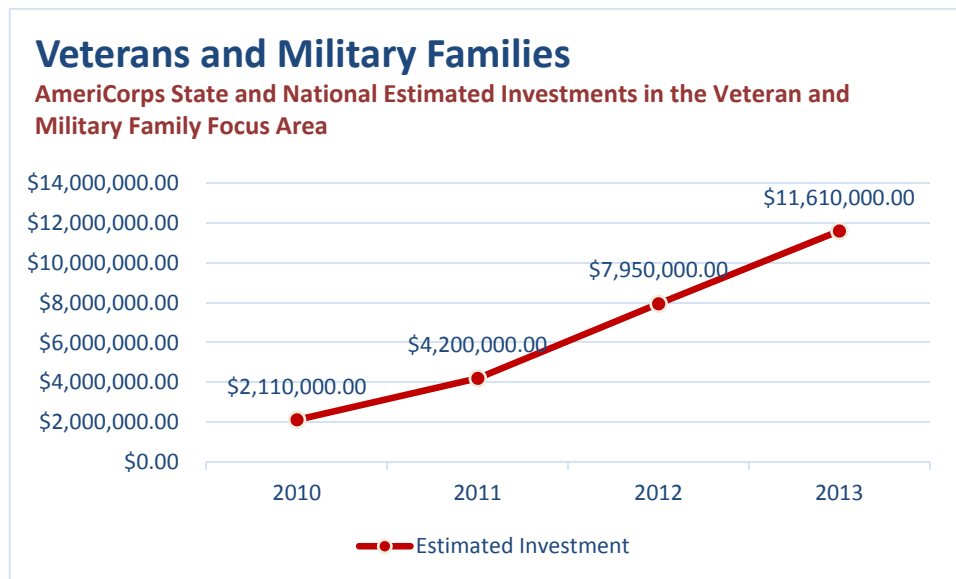
*Thus, we will continue to invest in programs that serve Veterans and military families, grow our knowledge base of how national service can best meet the needs of Veterans and military families, support efforts that engage Veterans who want to continue their service in new ways at home, and promote effective collaboration with our Veterans, military family members and Veteran-serving organizations.<sup>v</sup>*

The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan adopts goals, objectives, strategies, and performance measures guide CNCS's efforts to prioritize national service participation among Veterans and military families. The Strategic Plan aims to:

- Increase the number of Veterans and military families served by national service programs
- Increase the number of Veterans and military families engaged as participants in national service programs
- Increase services to under-represented communities, including Veterans and military families
- Increase health benefits from national service to Veterans 55 and older
- Increase CNCS' understanding of the Veterans and military families community
- Identify best practices for expanding national service opportunities within the Veterans and military families community.<sup>vi</sup>

### Progress

The Strategic Plan allows for five years, or until the end of 2015, to achieve these goals. Much of the progress detailed in this report should be understood in that context: Though the Serve America Act was signed into law in 2009, CNCS's new Strategic Plan only went into effect in 2011 and is scheduled to guide CNCS through the end of 2015. In other words, CNCS is in the initial stages of implementing a long-term plan to integrate Veterans and military families as national service participants, and will not conclude this initial effort until the end of 2015. The following charts<sup>vii</sup> illustrate AmeriCorps State and National's growing investments in support of Veterans and military families.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Programs reported member activity in the Veterans and military families focus area. Funds are calculated based on the total grant award multiplied against the percent distribution of member activity in the VMF focus area.

## Veterans and Military Families

### AmeriCorps State and National Estimated Members Serving in the Veteran and Military Family Focus Area



Through these targeted investments, CNCS is beginning to achieve tangible results towards the Strategic Plan's goals in Veterans and military families-focused programming, while showing real returns on the American taxpayers' investment. For example:

- **Growing support across the board:** In 2012, CNCS provided historic levels of support to the Veterans and military families community by engaging more than 1,000 Veteran AmeriCorps members and recruiting more than 27,000<sup>viii</sup> Veterans in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps to serve in over 200 communities across America.<sup>ix3</sup>
- **Capitalizing on National Days of Service.** CNCS's Call to Service leveraged more than 600,000 volunteers on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and 180,000 volunteers on the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance in 2013, with many engaged in projects focused on supporting Veterans, servicemembers, and military families.<sup>x</sup>
- **Building partnerships to support Veterans and their families.** In 2012, CNCS launched a partnership with the National Guard Bureau to improve services to returning guardsmen and their families.<sup>xi</sup> CNCS also launched Vet Corps, an initiative with the National Guard and the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America that was featured as a community best practice in the President's National Drug Control Strategy for 2012.<sup>xii</sup> In 2013, CNCS began a partnership to support VA's VetSuccess on Campus Counselors with AmeriCorps members to help ease Veterans' transition to campus life.
- **Increasing funding for programs serving Veterans and their families.** The numbers of AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers serving veterans and military families have grown substantially since the initiative began. In 2013, CNCS received another historically high request for AmeriCorps State and National grants, and provided funding for more than 2,500 AmeriCorps members focused on

<sup>3</sup> The number of Veterans enrolled in AmeriCorps is a voluntary field on the AmeriCorps enrollment form. Thus, Veteran status of AmeriCorps members may be underreported as approximately 30% of members did not answer this question on the form. Roughly 2% of those who answered the question indicated they were Veterans. Furthermore, the National Performance Measure Report identifies only AmeriCorps grantees related to Veterans and Military Families. Communities served by Senior Corps are not included in this Report. Additionally, it should be noted that grantees may have multiple service sites operating under an umbrella location for application purposes, and this data is not captured here.

the veterans and military families community. Additionally, more than 500 Senior Corps projects and 8,000 Senior Corps volunteers serve at Veterans Affairs facilities each year.<sup>xiii</sup>

- **Expanding service opportunities for Veterans and military families.** In 2012, CNCS engaged over 1,300 veterans in national service as AmeriCorps members or volunteers, and in 2013, AmeriCorps programs are targeting to engage 18,000 in 2013.<sup>xiv</sup> In 2010, Senior Corps programs engaged over 22,000 veterans to serve as volunteers; by the end of 2012, that number had increased to about 25,000.
- **Providing services to thousands of Veterans and military family members each year.** Thanks to AmeriCorps members, more than 36,000 veterans benefitted from AmeriCorps assistance in 2013.<sup>xv</sup> In 2012, Senior Corps volunteers provided service to approximately 300,000 veterans through activities including transportation and employment service referrals and mentored more than 3,000 children of military families.<sup>xvi</sup>
- **Impacting hundreds of communities across the country.** Since implementation of the Serve America Act over the past three years, CNCS has awarded national service grants to hundreds of organizations in more than 400 communities to serve the Veteran and military family community. In FY 2012, veterans and military families received support from more than 100 AmeriCorps State and National project sites, more than 130 AmeriCorps VISTA projects, and about 680 Senior Corps grantees.
- **Providing exceptional value for taxpayer investment.** Overall, AmeriCorps funded more than 1.2 million volunteer hours in support of veterans and military families in FY 12. Independent Sector, a leadership network for non-profits and volunteer organizations, estimates that the value of one volunteer's hour is equal to approximately \$22.14<sup>xvii</sup>. Based on this figure, the economic benefit of CNCS programs for veterans and military families is estimated to exceed \$28 million.

These initial successes did not occur in a vacuum, and occurred following a variety of organizational changes as CNCS implemented its 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. Among other major improvements, CNCS has:

- Recruited a Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors and Military Families Initiatives, whose focus is to ensure CNCS prioritizes national service opportunities to this community
- Established veterans and military families-focused projects as a Tier 1 funding priority, as explicitly noted in new CNCS Notices of Funding Opportunities
- Forged strategic relationships with other government agencies, veterans service organizations, and non-profits to increase national service opportunities for veterans and military families
- Vastly expanded its training and technical assistance among its veterans and military families programs.

In 2012, CNCS asked Westat, a research and statistical survey organization, to survey CNCS grantees serving the veterans and military families community. The resulting Westat Study on veterans and Military Families in National Service found that CNCS grantees were clearly endeavoring to address those issue areas identified in the Serve America Act, though many of the surveyed programs had only completed their first full year of operations in a three-year grant cycle, indicating many of the programs were a long way from maturity.<sup>xviii</sup> Despite many programs' infancy, the study concludes that initial successes occurred because national service programs successfully adapted to military culture and values.

CNCS has also fostered discussions among veterans who have participated in CNCS-sponsored programs to gauge the quality of their experiences in national service. In the vast majority of cases, veterans report that they are overwhelmingly happy with their time in national service. Over 90 percent of veterans believe that it was a defining personal or professional experience for them, and over 75 percent of veterans and military families were

satisfied with their national service experience.<sup>4</sup> With such high marks from the community targeted by the Serve America Act, CNCS programs are clearly beginning to have their desired impact.<sup>xix</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The survey, administered in 2013 to collect this information relied on a convenience sample and the results may or may not be representative of the overall population of Veterans in CNCS-sponsored programs.

## CNCS Programs Focused on Veterans and Military Families and the Serve America Act

CNCS has directed its initial efforts to engage veterans and military families in the issue areas extrapolated from the Serve America Act. The following sections explain how CNCS has begun to build successful national service opportunities that address each area.

**1. Services and Support to Military Families.** CNCS will promote community-based efforts to meet the unique needs of military families while a family member is deployed and upon that family member's return home.

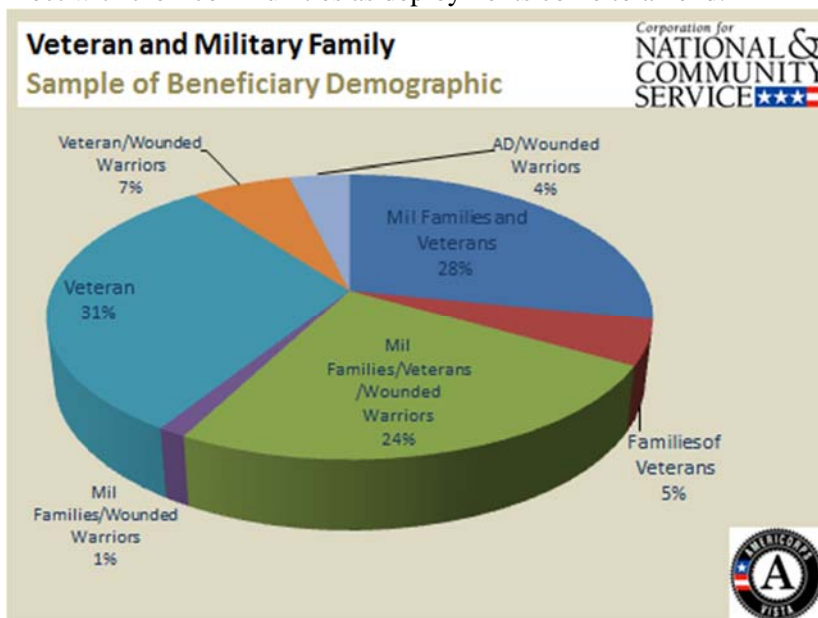
Since the beginning of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than two million servicemembers have deployed abroad. Of course, many servicemembers also have families, and extended deployments meant that many families had to endure periods of hardship when a mother, father, spouse, child, or sibling was away. For example, 52 percent of military spouses surveyed by the RAND Corporation said that their children experienced an increase in social problems while their family was separated by deployment.<sup>xx</sup>

Maxine Sims, a 65-year-old widow of a Vietnam Veteran and mother to a son in the Air Force, says she understands how difficult life can be for children of deployed servicemembers, particularly when it comes to focusing on school work.<sup>xxi</sup> Given her background, Maxine believes she has a special ability to connect with children in the classroom, a trait that led her to volunteer with the Senior Corps Foster Grandparents at Tinker Elementary School on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Maxine works with the children of military parents, helping with their schoolwork and keeping them focused on their education during the difficult times of parental deployments.

Of course, Maxine and her Senior Corps Foster Grandparent colleagues aren't the only national service participants with a special desire to help military families separated by deployments. The American Red Cross of West Alabama, an AmeriCorps VISTA project, educates families about military deployment and reintegration, and helps returning servicemembers reconnect with their communities as deployments come to an end.

AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members serving with Washington County Vermont's Youth Services, the Red Cross of South Arizona, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Central Kentucky all focus their efforts on the needs of children in military families.

Ten of the CNCS grantees surveyed as part of the Westat study carried out activities under the Serve America Act to provide services and support to military families.<sup>xxii</sup> A recent review of AmeriCorps VISTA projects supporting the military community indicates that over half of such programs include a focus on military families.



Source: 2011 Field Report of Veteran and Military Family Activity (Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA)

**2. Volunteer Opportunities for Veterans.** Recruit Veterans, particularly returning Veterans, into service opportunities, including opportunities that utilize their military experience.

Forty-four percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans surveyed in 2011 said their adjustment to civilian life had been difficult, compared with the 25 percent of veterans surveyed from previous eras.<sup>xxiii</sup> Half of those who served in combat report signs of post-traumatic stress, and 75 percent report living with nightmares and flashbacks from their combat experience.

Participating in national service projects can help. By working with other Veterans, serving veterans and military families, and making differences in their communities, veterans who participate in national service often find reentry into civilian life a bit easier, while continuing to serve their country as they did in the military.

To assess CNCS’s performance with respect to engaging veterans in national service, the Serve America Act tasked CNCS with tracking and reporting on the number of veterans serving in national service programs historically by year. The table below shows the number of veterans serving in each AmeriCorps program and in Senior Corps from 2010 to 2013 where data are available.

Program Year	State & National	AmeriCorps VISTA	NCCC	AmeriCorps Overall	Senior Corps
2010	1,191	49	0	1,240	22,350
2011	1,097	186	1	1,284	25,573
2012	1,068	237	3	1,308	24,904

Iraq War Veteran Timm Lovitt was one of many veterans with a desire to continue serving his country after his military career ended. He suffered a traumatic brain injury in Iraq when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive device 10 feet from Timm’s truck. Upon returning from war, Timm found it difficult to relate to his community in his home state of Washington and began to seek out other veterans with whom he could discuss his experiences. Together, despite their wounds from battle, Timm and his fellow veterans shared a desire to continue to serve the country even after separating from the military. Timm found his way to AmeriCorps.

Together with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and AmeriCorps, Timm began the Washington State Vet Corps to serve Veterans, active duty military members and their families. Vet Corps is run by veterans and military families, for veterans and military families, fulfilling Congress’s goal as stated in the Serve America Act of providing more opportunities for veterans and military families to participate in national service.

What does Vet Corps do? And how is it doing? In short, Vet Corps is succeeding. Washington State Vet Corps members are making positive contributions in their communities throughout Washington State as college Veteran navigators and as transition and employment assistance specialists, at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

Vet Corps has leveraged thousands of hours of volunteer service by veterans and family members in past years. In 2012, Vet Corps received an AmeriCorps Award of \$650,000 and \$275,000 in eligible education awards, which further enhances Vet Corps educational opportunities and professional development for veterans and military family members serving. In partnership with contributions from the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Vet Corps leveraged 50 full-time AmeriCorps members serving veterans and military families and 85,000 dedicated AmeriCorps member hours for an estimated \$1.9 million<sup>xxiv</sup> in value of direct service by and for veterans and military families.

Over the life of the full three-year grant, Vet Corps will receive \$1,950,000 in direct funding from CNCS and \$825,000 in eligible education awards, to leverage 150 AmeriCorps members serving veterans and military families through 225,000 hours of dedicated service by AmeriCorps members. CNCS estimates this would yield roughly \$5 million<sup>xxv</sup> in value of direct service, a return on taxpayer investment of about 2:1.

The Washington State Vet Corps is, of course, not the only grantee sponsored by CNCS. The Westat Study reviewed 15 grantees and five sites that focus on providing volunteer opportunities for Veterans.<sup>xxvi</sup> Two are AmeriCorps State and National programs, eight operate as AmeriCorps VISTA projects, one has both AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA grants, and four are Senior Corps programs.

Veterans believe that national service opportunities like the Washington State Vet Corps have profound impacts. When CNCS asked veterans who have been AmeriCorps members, 68 percent<sup>5</sup> said that national service helped them reconnect with their communities<sup>xxvii</sup>—one of the goals Timm Lovitt set out to achieve.

**3. Education and Certifications.** Assist veterans in developing their educational opportunities (including opportunities for professional certification, licensure, or credentials), coordinating activities with and assisting state and local agencies administering Veterans' education benefits.

As a new generation of servicemembers return from conflicts overseas, the country has again begun an attempt to repay its warriors through increasing their access to higher education. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provided expanded coverage for professional certifications, including all levels of education through the doctoral level, vocational training, and technical certifications, as well as funding for pre-enrollment testing. It also expanded educational benefits to certain members of the military and their families, a provision not included in previous GI Bills.<sup>xxviii</sup>

With expanded benefits come new possibilities and questions for national service programs: Can CNCS grantees help veterans choose the best programs, and help veterans navigate them once they have enrolled? Can CNCS grantees provide remedial education to ensure veterans are qualified for challenging certifications? Can grantees provide vocational training?

CNCS grantees can often offer advice, tutoring, or vocational training that veterans cannot find elsewhere. At Nebraska's Metropolitan Community College, AmeriCorps VISTA members have helped veterans and their families transition from a life in the military to a life in the classroom. The AmeriCorps VISTA members have set up a resource guide and a website specifically for student Veterans, compiled a list of faculty members with military experience, and staged events such as the September 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Remembrance.

Other programs, like the Great Basin Institute in Nevada, or the Conservation Corps in California and Montana, respectively offer internships and vocational training that can lead to full-time employment. The Municipality of Maunabo in Puerto Rico, an AmeriCorps VISTA sponsor, and the RSVP program in Dutchess County, New York, offer basic or remedial education training services to help veterans become eligible for other higher education programs.

In total, CNCS provides support to 27 grantees that support Veterans' use of educational services and benefits. Eleven of the 27 are AmeriCorps State and National grantees, 13 operate AmeriCorps VISTA projects, one is a recipient of both an AmeriCorps State and National and VISTA grant, and two are operating programs with Senior Corps funds.<sup>xxix</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The survey used to collect this information relied on a convenience sample and the results may or may not be representative of the overall population of Veterans in CNCS-sponsored programs.



**4. Employment.** Coordinate activities with and assist entities administering Veterans' programs with internships and fellowships that could lead to employment in the private and public sectors.

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the size of the U.S. military ballooned as the services recruited heavily to meet deployment requirements. At the beginning of 2002, for example, the U.S. military had just 5,200 servicemembers deployed in Afghanistan, but by 2008, that number had soared to over 187,000.<sup>xxx</sup>

As the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq draw to a close, a new generation of servicemembers is returning home and separating from the military. For veterans newly separated from the military, it can be difficult to find employment. This problem is particularly acute among younger Veterans, where the unemployment rate is over 20 percent.<sup>xxxi</sup>

For example, at any given time, the Idaho Department of Labor (DOL) has between 25,000 and 30,000 unemployed Veteran cases in its database. CNCS provides a solution through AmeriCorps members who can successfully augment state resources and services to help veterans find jobs. In 2009, the Idaho Department of Labor held a training for its 11 full-time state Veterans Representatives, who advocated for more boots on the ground to serve the local veterans community. Serve Idaho, the State Service Commissions, worked through the DOL to bring in AmeriCorps members to several of the local offices to provide support to the Veterans Representatives. In 2012, all nine of Idaho DOL's AmeriCorps members were veterans themselves.

These AmeriCorps members provide essential services, like helping veterans as they enter local Department of Labor offices, helping them to write a resume, or locating available resources. Veterans' representatives are able to focus on more involved cases, such as providing employment assistance for veterans with disabilities. AmeriCorps members also have benefited from their service with the Department of Labor, as five of the 18 have gone on to obtain employment supporting the public interest either with the State of Idaho (such as in the Department of Labor) or with VSOs.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Throughout the CNCS portfolio of grantees, 38 provide these types of employment-related services to veterans across the country. Of the 38, 19 are funded through AmeriCorps State and National, 11 are AmeriCorps VISTA projects, two use funds from both AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA, and six operate Senior Corps programs.<sup>xxxiii</sup> These organizations provide a range of employment services to Veterans, including professional training programs, job search skill-building programs, and job seeking and retention service and support.

**5. Access to Benefits.** Promote efforts within a community to serve the needs of veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including helping veterans file benefits claims, and assisting federal agencies in providing services to veterans.

Once servicemembers separate from the military, Veterans face the sometimes confusing task of applying for benefits. In 2011, veterans filed more than 1.3 million claims, which is twice the number filed a decade prior, due to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The number of veterans seeking benefits has grown and will continue to as more servicemembers return home and separate from the military.

CNCS is well placed to support grantees that aim to help veterans understand this often complex process, and help them file paperwork correctly and on time. Placed at the County Veteran Service Offices, California's Operation Welcome Home is an AmeriCorps grantee that supports Veterans' transition from military service to civilian life. Operation Welcome Home provides veterans with information on available benefits and services, helping veterans and military families access those to which they're entitled.

In 2012, Operation Welcome Home received a \$406,000 AmeriCorps grant in addition to \$166,500 in eligible education awards. The program hosts 60 part-time AmeriCorps members and has provided 54,000 dedicated

service hours to veterans and military families seeking access to earned benefits upon their transition home. Using the Independent Sector estimation, the value of this service to the community is \$1.176 million, or a nearly 3:1 return on investment.

CNCS sponsors 19 grantees working to help veterans and military families gain access to earned benefits throughout the country. Four are AmeriCorps State and National programs, seven are AmeriCorps VISTA programs, and eight operate as Senior Corps programs.<sup>xxxv</sup>

**6. Military Children.** Provide mentoring to military children, including assisting veterans in developing mentoring relationships with economically disadvantaged students.

Children with military parents deployed abroad can experience emotional strain over twice the national average.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Helping children adapt to the absence of a deployed parent is a special challenge that places Veteran national service participants in a unique position to mentor military children and provide a positive influence in their lives.

Hosted by University of Arizona, Operation: Military Kids has received \$292,600 in funding from CNCS and support from 22 AmeriCorps VISTA members to help military youths aged 5 to 18 cope with the stresses of being away from their parents serving far from home. The Operation: Military Kids program was developed by AmeriCorps members to enhance skill development among children of deployed military parents. One of their activities, the Digital Speak Out Military Kids program, helps youth share stories of a loved one on deployment through photography, video, and podcasts while emphasizing digital storytelling. Operation: Military Kids Career Pathfinders Summer Camp lets teens participate in a residential summer program on the University of Arizona campus to explore a variety of post-high school career options and life skills.

Recently, the Digital Speak Out Military Kids program and Career Pathfinders Summer Camp were recognized as “best practices” during the 2011 and 2012 National 4-H Military Liaisons and Operation: Military Kids Project Directors Meeting. The programs were also recognized during the 2010 Children Youth and Family at Risk National Conference for their continued impact and deployment support for military youth. Operation: Military Kids was also one of the winners in the veterans and Military Families category in the 2012 National Service Impact Awards.

Throughout the country, CNCS supports 19 grantees running youth mentoring programs, which focus both on mentoring military and disadvantaged youth. Ten grantees provide direct service through members. Five of these organizations are funded through AmeriCorps State and National grants, three through Senior Corps, and two through both AmeriCorps State and National and VISTA. Nine grantees are AmeriCorps VISTA capacity-building programs, such as AmeriCorps VISTAs of Big Brothers Big Sisters—a sub-recipient site of the United Way in Western Kentucky—where members recruit volunteers, enroll military families in the program, organize program orientations, and review relationships between mentors and military children.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

**7. Wounded Warriors.** Develop projects to assist veterans with disabilities, unemployed Veterans, older Veterans, and veterans in rural communities, including assisting them with transportation.

As a result of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, 711,986 new veterans have used medical services at the VA, in addition to those who have fought in previous conflicts.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Many veterans with physical or mental disabilities, or those who are unemployed, elderly, or live in rural communities, often require a helping hand to access the medical services they require.

National service programs are well-situated to help America’s disabled veterans access medical services, particularly when veterans have special disabilities that pose unique transportation requirements or when veterans live in rural communities with scarce public transportation.

Laurie Ott, Executive Director of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Wounded Warrior Care Project in Augusta, Georgia, wants to “help our warriors become productive citizens. It’s about reintegration with community, and with family.” The CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project provides programs and services to injured soldiers, Veterans, and their families; collaborates and cooperates with other Wounded Warrior programs; and establishes new resources for medical care, housing, vocational training, employment, and family support. The project filled three AmeriCorps VISTA positions with veterans to help injured servicemembers access needed care. These AmeriCorps VISTA members are developing programs that train mentors, support homeless veterans with transition housing services, and help veterans access benefits and navigate the higher education system.

Elsewhere, the Washington State Vet Corps program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord works with ill and wounded veterans to connect them with service opportunities as part of their comprehensive recovery care plan. These programs are part of the larger Vet Corps grant of \$1,950,000 described previously in Section 2 on Volunteer Opportunities for Veterans.

Throughout the country, CNCS supports 17 grantees that provide transportation to Wounded Warriors: two have AmeriCorps State and National members; two have AmeriCorps VISTA members; and 13 operate Senior Corps programs. For some programs, like RSVP programs in Collier County (Florida), Clinch Valley (Virginia) Community Action, and the Municipality of Maunabo in Puerto Rico, transporting veterans is their project’s primary objective.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Other programs offer to transport veterans among a range of services. They assist veterans with rides to the VA Hospital, other medical appointments, job interviews, or to run routine errands, such as to the supermarket, Veterans’ Center or barber shop. In many of these communities, getting to medical facilities requires a drive of an hour or more.

**8. Wellness and Other Support Services.** Assist veterans and their family members through establishing or augmenting programs that assist them with access to legal assistance, health care (including mental health care), employment counseling or training, education counseling or training, affordable housing, and other support services.

CNCS’s Veteran programs stand at the intersection of the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, VSOs, non-profits, state agencies, and national service programs. There is no other organization that can leverage its relationships with each of these entities to provide broad-based, community-focused wellness and support services to America’s Veterans. In short, CNCS can help these organizations become greater than the sum of their parts at the local community level.

Legacy Corps, in Maryland and 10 other states, is a prime example of an AmeriCorps grantee addressing broad-based health and wellness needs of veterans and military families. As a focus project for CNCS’s priority on veterans and military families, Legacy Corps is in the process of recruiting 540 quarter-time AmeriCorps members who will leverage an additional 410 volunteers to provide caregiver support services to Veteran and military families at 17 sites in 11 states. The organization provides many essential services to veterans and non-veterans alike, including running errands, providing transportation to appointments, preparing meals, conducting property maintenance, and visiting those in need of companionship.

Legacy Corps estimated that, by the end of 2013, participating veterans and family members would have significantly increased their commitment to their communities and provided 280,800 hours of respite and support to 703 veterans or military family members. This level of dedication will decrease the traditional caregiver’s burden and stress, while enabling families to remain in their communities and postpone or avoid institutional care. CNCS investment of nearly \$1.9 million was leveraged to provide almost \$5.3 million in

direct service by and for the veterans and military families community. Over the course of the three-year grant value, CNCS will provide \$5.6 million, yielding 729,000 dedicated AmeriCorps hours providing support to veterans and military family members for a community benefit of \$15.9 million.<sup>x1</sup>

In addition to projects like Legacy Corps that enable veterans to remain in homes, CNCS supports numerous programs that house and care for veterans requiring full-time care. The Minneapolis Veterans Home, established in 1887 for indigent veterans of the Civil War, is located on 51 acres of wooded campus overlooking the Mississippi River and provides nursing and domiciliary care to 341 Veterans. The veterans take pride in what they have done and deserve to live in an environment that reflects appreciation of their service. The home needed renovations, so AmeriCorps NCCC members painted 92 resident rooms, dayrooms, and hallways.

CNCS supports 66 grantees that provide one or more of the services categorized under *Wellness and Other Support Services*. Eighteen operate programs with AmeriCorps State and National funds, 28 with AmeriCorps VISTA resources, two with both AmeriCorps and VISTA funds, and an additional 18 operate Senior Corps programs.<sup>xii</sup>

Given the broad definition of the issue area, vastly different programs offer a variety of services that adhere to this issue area's parameters, such as:

- Legal assistance to Veterans. An AmeriCorps member and attorney with the Northwest Justice Project (a grantee under Equal Justice Works in Washington, DC) spends 100 percent of his time assisting veterans with legal cases. In addition, the Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice assists incarcerated veterans with reintegration into their communities after their release.
- Assistance in accessing appropriate health care. The Virginia Vets Corps drives disabled veterans to medical appointments all throughout the state.
- Affordable housing and homeless services. Several grantees offer outreach and services to homeless Veterans, including the Maine Commission for Community Service, the Tennessee Community Assistance Program, and Mission Solano Rescue Mission in California. Others recruit veterans as volunteers to support the grantees' efforts to rebuild or rehabilitate existing homes, like Habitat for Humanity, Vets Corps, the St. Bernard Project in Louisiana, and the Rebuilding Together Capacity Corps in Washington, DC.
- Other support services include an array of grantees offering services to the veterans' community, such as tax preparation, meal delivery, financial literacy training, or memorial services and beautification projects.

## A Summary of Grantees in Each Issue Area

The Westat Inventory on National Service Programs Engaging Veterans and Military Families breaks down grantees in the veterans and military focus by issue area, included in the chart below.

CNCS Veterans and Military Families Focus Area: 2012							
Issue	Number of Westat interviews	Grantees	Sub-grantees/Sites**	Ameri-Corps S&N	Ameri-Corps VISTA	Ameri-Corps and VISTA	Senior Corps (RSVP & FGP)†
<b>Total*</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>
Services and Support for Military Families	24	20	4	7	7	3	7
Volunteer Opportunities for Veterans	62	53	9	25	19	4	14
Education and Certifications	25	22	3	12	10	1	2
Employment	43	39	4	24	13	-	6
Access to Benefits	26	23	3	11	5	-	10
Youth Mentoring	18	13	5	4	8	2	4
Transportation	21	20	1	3	3	-	15
Disaster Preparedness	4	4	--	3	1	-	-
Wellness and Other Support Services	59	52	7	18	21	2	18

\* Grantees typically offer services in more than one Issue Area; therefore, the total count for all Issue Areas is greater than the total number of grantees.

\*\* Sites sometimes receive a subgrant from an umbrella organization while in other cases they serve as a service point with the umbrella providing centralized supervision.

† Although several Senior Companion Programs were identified as part of the initial review, none had enough data available to support their participation in the study.

## Stewardship of the Taxpayer Dollars

CNCS goes to great lengths to ensure that its investments yield tangible benefits to the communities in which CNCS operates. For example, the results achieved through funding appropriated under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act demonstrate effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars. CNCS estimates that return on investment exceeded \$3 for every \$1 in Recovery Act funds obligated. Between the enrollment of the first Recovery Act AmeriCorps member and the end of 2010, CNCS leveraged more than 1,091,000 AmeriCorps members and volunteers to serve more than 8.75 million service recipients across its programs, which:

- Generated more than \$124.48 million in cash and in-kind resources for nonprofits
- Provided employment and skills training and counseling to 181,821 people
- Helped place 15,238 people in jobs
- Provided foreclosure and housing assistance services to 113,541 people.<sup>xlii</sup>

In the case of veterans and military families, CNCS is already learning that Veterans' can-do attitudes often leverage the CNCS's investment. CNCS's major programs—AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC and Senior Corps—have all made significant progress in both serving the Veteran and military families community and engaging veterans in community service.

CNCS continued to foster a culture of integrity, accountability and transparency in FY 2013 by fortifying its internal controls, oversight, and monitoring. In the spirit of continual improvement and CNCS' Strategic Plan Goal 4 strategy of promoting diligent use of internal controls, CNCS established a new Office of Accountability and Oversight (OAO) in April 2012 and implemented an Integrity Framework as a set of disciplined practices to help ensure CNCS's organizational effectiveness, cohesion, and longevity. This framework identifies integrity as a key cultural value. All CNCS staff members are called upon to act in accordance with high ethical and professional standards and to continually assess and improve daily business practices. To support this framework, CNCS updated all management team work plans to include an enhanced integrity performance standard.

### **AmeriCorps State and National:**

Since the Serve America Act, AmeriCorps State and National has quadrupled its investment in programs that engage veterans and meet the needs of veterans and military families, representing three percent of its total budget.

Beginning in 2012, CNCS announced new AmeriCorps investments in veterans and military families national service opportunities. That year, AmeriCorps funded 1,190 members to support more than 50 grantee organizations that provided services and assistance to over 36,000 veterans.<sup>xliii</sup> Continuing to build on this impact, AmeriCorps increased investments in veterans and military families by nearly 50% in FY2013 from the previous year.<sup>xliv</sup>

CNCS will also provide an estimated<sup>6</sup> \$4 million in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards (Education Awards) to AmeriCorps members to use to pay for college or pay back student loans. Many of the AmeriCorps members receiving an Education Award will be Veterans. Thus, AmeriCorps is providing education benefits that these veterans can use to assist in their future education, apprenticeship, or training. Alternatively, veterans can transfer their earned Education Award to a family member. CNCS is now tracking the number of veterans who claim their Education Award so that we can monitor its value as a recruiting tool for this population.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on competitively awarded member service years (1700 service hours) in FY 2013.

## **AmeriCorps VISTA:**

Since the Serve America Act went into effect, AmeriCorps VISTA has mobilized 14,000 veterans and military family members in national service, thereby assisting 129,000 Veterans. AmeriCorps VISTA dedicated 336 member service years (one MSY equals 1700 service hours) to its veterans and military families portfolio in 2011 alone, which led to improving 100,000 lives.<sup>xlv</sup> That year, AmeriCorps VISTA allocated approximately three percent of its nearly \$99 million budget, or \$2.97 million, to its veterans and military families portfolio. Furthermore, AmeriCorps VISTA has increased the number of projects with Veteran AmeriCorps VISTA members from 12 in 2008 to 251 in 2012. In 2014, in accordance with CNCS's Strategic Plan, AmeriCorps VISTA will continue to focus on providing economic opportunity, healthy futures, and education for veterans and military families.

A majority of veterans who have served in AmeriCorps VISTA projects have found the experience especially positive. Sixty-seven percent of veterans surveyed at the end of their service term said that their AmeriCorps VISTA experience will help improve their chances of finding a job. Seventy one percent of veterans who responded stated that participation in AmeriCorps VISTA helped them reconnect with community activities in civilian life.<sup>xlvi</sup>

## **AmeriCorps NCCC:**

Since 2000, AmeriCorps NCCC teams have provided service to over 76,000 veterans through more than 101,000 hours of project service, contributing to energy conservation, environmental stewardship and conservation, urban and rural development, infrastructure improvement, and responding to natural and other disasters. However, AmeriCorps NCCC faces a unique challenge recruiting veterans as national service participants. NCCC participants must be between the ages of 18-24, and as Americans are only eligible for military service beginning at age 18, few leave military service by the time they are 24 years old. Many NCCC programs focus instead on serving the veterans and military families community, rather than recruiting veterans for service projects.

Certain projects serving veterans and military families are extremely well-suited to NCCC's capabilities. For example, AmeriCorps NCCC members will help renovate and restore a former National Guard Armory in Smyrna, Delaware that is now home to a Boys and Girls Club that serves military children and families.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## **Senior Corps:**

Senior Corps has been a leading program for CNCS's efforts within the veterans and military families community. Veterans are attracted to serve in Senior Corps as part of a "lifetime of service" to the nation that continues the commitment begun during their military experience. Furthermore, as veterans and their families age and require a little extra assistance in their daily lives—like a ride to the doctor's office—they are important CNCS service recipients.

Over the last three years, Senior Corps' RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companions programs have continued their service of veterans. Each year Senior Corps serves approximately 300,000 veterans and in 2012 engaged 25,000 veterans as volunteers, an increase of over 2,000 in two years.

In 2012, Senior Corps allocated approximately seven percent of its budget to RSVP grantees focused on veterans and military families, as well as 6.5 percent for Foster Grandparents, and 13 percent for the Senior Companion Program. Many of the RSVP funds were awarded through a competition for relinquished FY 2011 funds that resulted in a total of 14 augmentation grants to support 725 new volunteers serving veterans and military families (for further information, see Appendix C).<sup>xlviii</sup>

## The Path Forward

CNCS's focus on veterans and military families as national service participants is off to an excellent start. However, there is still work to do. CNCS has planned to fully implement the Serve America Act's prioritization on veterans and military families by the end of the lifecycle of CNCS's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan.

In the 2014 Congressional Budget Justification, CNCS recognizes the current environment of fiscal restraint, while pressing forward with plans to serve the veterans and military families community.

*At a time of social need and fiscal constraint, CNCS is focusing its investments on cost-effective programs that produce results, by supporting local organizations and leveraging outside resources to assist individuals and communities in need and put more Americans on the pathway to economic opportunity — helping disconnected youth, new Americans, Veterans, military families, seniors, people with disabilities, and others acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment.<sup>xlix</sup>*

These priorities are translated throughout CNCS's programs. Details on CNCS's plans to expand service for and by veterans and military families, both through program-level efforts and interagency partnerships, as well as strategies for identifying specific areas of need and using veterans as resources, are included in Appendices D through F.



# Appendix A

## The History of Veterans in Community Service

National service has been linked to the military for decades. Beginning in 1933, the military played an instrumental part in the success of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a public work relief program in operation from 1933 to 1945 for unemployed, unmarried men between 18-25 years old, one of the New Deal's most popular initiatives.

The CCC provided unskilled manual labor jobs for its participants, whose labor contributed to the conservation or development of natural resources in rural lands. Corps members planted trees, constructed parks and buildings, and paved public roads to remote areas. Reserve U.S. Army officers originally ran the program, with General Douglas MacArthur as its head. Though the CCC was never an independent government agency, it served as the model for the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a CNCS program.

Since its inception in 1993, CNCS and its programs and grantees have served the veterans and military family community and engaged veterans and military family members as leaders in the national and community service movement. Many veterans have come to view national service as a way to continue to give back to the country they love as part of a lifetime of service. Indeed, thousands of veterans and their families have both assisted others and have been assisted by volunteers and participants in CNCS's programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA.

Prior to the Serve America Act in 2009, there was no language in CNCS's legislation focusing on the veterans and military families community. The participation of veterans and their families in CNCS-sponsored programs, while encouraged and embraced, was not the result of a coordinated effort. As such, the Serve America Act marked a major evolution in CNCS's strategic priorities.

Geography has played a role in CNCS's—and its grantees'—experiences with the Veteran and military families population. National service sponsors are located in close proximity to military installations, where the local population is full of active duty military members, their families, as well as many veterans and their families. In the past, these military-affiliated individuals often became volunteers by virtue of a program's presence in their communities.

Other CNCS programs and grantees have provided services in areas of particular interest to veterans. For example, national service grantees that focus on the housing needs of low-income citizens frequently reported serving veterans even prior to the Serve America Act's passage in 2009, because veterans are disproportionately represented among America's homeless population.<sup>1</sup>

In 1993, Washington State's Fort Lewis (now Joint Base Lewis-McChord) established the Warrior Transition Battalion cooperation with AmeriCorps. The program was the predecessor to the Washington State's first Veterans Corps program, profiled earlier in this report. That same year, the Department of the Navy and AmeriCorps completed and issued a Memorandum of Understanding designed to encourage Navy Veterans to join AmeriCorps after completing their service. The National Call to Service (NCS) program, which became effective in October 2003, allows veterans to receive financial incentives (either cash or student loan repayment, for example) and a shortened active duty enlistment period in exchange for completing one year of AmeriCorps after completing their military service.<sup>ii</sup>

AmeriCorps NCCC, with five residential campuses around the country, was built on the successful models of the Civilian Conservation Corps and of the military. Several of the first NCCC training center directors were flag-

level military officers who were attracted to working for NCCC because of its military-style deployments to service locations for extended periods, as well as the chance to work with younger volunteers.

Senior Corps has always involved veterans. In part, that's because volunteers are 55 or older, which is a population subset containing many veterans. RSVP includes large Veteran populations from the Vietnam War, Korean War, and World War II who desire to give back to their communities as part of their lifetime of service.

Beginning in the mid-2000s, CNCS leadership recognized that, given its existing relationships with non-profit grantees nationwide, CNCS was uniquely situated to serve veterans and military families, and that veterans and military families would benefit in turn from increased participation in national service programs.

CNCS's first concerted outreach effort to enhance national service opportunities for veterans began in 2006. Members of CNCS's state and national leadership began discussions with the American Legion Auxiliary, a leading VSO, about ways in which the two organizations could leverage each other's expertise—sharing data, management practices, and recruitment tools—to serve their communities more effectively, while involving a greater number of veterans in national community service. CNCS and the American Legion Auxiliary signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to exchange these best practices later that year.

The MOU marked a significant step, as many CNCS grantees and affiliated organizations began to work with veterans at that time. Many now partner with VSOs, state and federal agencies, and organizations operating within the National Guard or military installations to serve and engage veterans. Several of these programs receive funding through the American Legion Auxiliary's AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA grants.<sup>lii</sup>

Beginning with CNCS's cooperation with the American Legion Auxiliary, the focus on serving veterans and military families has been largely in response to emergent needs in the Veteran and military family community. Based on recent conflicts, these emergent needs have included servicemembers returning from combat with disabling conditions (such as traumatic brain injuries or post-traumatic stress disorder), young family members adjusting to new situations because servicemember parents were deployed, and separated and retired servicemembers having trouble finding employment.

The needs in the Veteran community generally are growing; however, until recently, there had been no coordinated national and community service effort to support programs that address them. As the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, noted in 2010, “[The need] can't be met by the Pentagon, [and] it can't be met by the VA. It can only be met, I believe, by communities throughout the country joined together with the Pentagon and VA to get it right for those who've sacrificed so much.”<sup>liii</sup>

The Serve America Act has invigorated CNCS's focus on the veterans and military families community, and has facilitated even greater progress in this area since 2009.

## Appendix B

### Strategies and Goals for Engaging Veterans and Addressing Veterans' Needs

In response to the Serve America Act, CNCS carried out a top-down review of its program priorities. To achieve the goals articulated in the new law, CNCS began a serious effort to increase its focus veterans and military families as strategic priorities in CNCS's keystone documents. Most important is the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan which guides CNCS's major decisions on budgeting requests, funding allocations, strategic initiatives, and data collection.

Whereas almost no mention was made of veterans and military families in the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan, the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan emphasizes veterans and military families as a CNCS focus area. CNCS views the first year of the new Strategic Plan, 2011, as the baseline year for its efforts to operationally prioritize veterans and military families programs. The Strategic Plan allows for a five-year timeframe to make major quality-of-life improvements within the veterans and military families community.<sup>liv</sup>

The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan notes that the Serve America Act defines CNCS's forward-looking emphasis on the veterans and military families community:

*Meeting the needs of Veterans and military family members is a civic priority. Unemployment rates among Veterans are greater than those for civilians, military servicemembers and their families redeem food stamps at twice the civilian rate, and there is increasing evidence that a child's development and well-being is affected by a parent's active duty deployment.*

*Our work with Veterans and military families is a developing area of focus for us. Although a few national service programs have historically supported Veterans and military families, our current Veterans and military families portfolio makes up less than one percent of the total programmatic funds awarded by CNCS.*

*Thus, we will continue to invest in programs that serve Veterans and military families, grow our knowledge base of how national service can best meet the needs of Veterans and military families, support efforts that engage Veterans who want to continue their service in new ways at home, and promote effective collaboration with our Veterans, military family members and Veteran-serving organizations.<sup>lv</sup>*

The Strategic Plan outlines four priority goals designed to improve CNCS' programming.<sup>lvi</sup> Three of the four have explicit or implicit impacts on the veterans and military families community. CNCS articulates several specific objectives designed to achieve the goals, which are in turn supported by strategies. Finally, the Strategic Plan details performance measurements it will track for each goal. The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan's priority goals, underlying objectives, and performance measures are briefly outlined below.

**Goal 1.** *Increase the impact of national service on community needs in communities served by CNCS-supported programs.*

**Objective in support of Goal 1:** *Increase the number of Veterans and military servicemembers and their families served by CNCS-supported programs.*

CNCS has prioritized measuring success in reaching this objective. The objective will be achieved through the following strategies, all of which began implementation at the end of 2012:

- Provide information and technical assistance that encourages program grantees and sponsors to develop established program responses tailored to the veterans and military families community.
- Encourage the national service network to consider and apply for support to implement and test innovative approaches that benefit the veterans and military families community in rural and underserved areas.
- CNCS-supported members, participants, and volunteers will engage in or develop proven or promising activities that provide, support, and facilitate the veterans and military families community's access to: 1) services to which they are entitled; 2) workforce development resources and services; 3) education services; 4) safe, affordable housing; and 5) other quality-of-life improvements.

Strategies in support of this objective correspond to the Veteran and military family issue areas identified in the Serve America Act.

**Objective in support of Goal 1:** *Increase the number of Veterans and military family members engaged in providing services through CNCS-supported programs.*

To achieve this objective, CNCS will employ the following strategies, all of which had baseline availability in 2011:

- Conduct outreach to encourage existing programs to engage veterans and military family members and organizations with depth of experience serving veterans and traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Explore partnerships with other federal agencies that work directly with veterans, military family members, and veteran service organizations.

**Goal 2:** *Strengthen national service so participants engaged in CNCS-supported programs consistently find satisfaction, meaning, and opportunity.*

**Objective in support of Goal 2:** *Make national service opportunities accessible and attractive to Americans of all backgrounds.*

This objective does not explicitly focus on the veterans and military families community; however, to achieve this goal, CNCS will employ several strategies that will have an implied effect on the veterans and military families community. One such strategy is to focus funding on traditionally underrepresented groups and strengthen outreach and technical assistance efforts to ensure an expanded group of grant applications.

Veterans and military families are considered an “underrepresented group,” and were clearly noted as a priority area in the 2013 and 2014 Notices of Funding Opportunity.<sup>lvii</sup>

**Performance Measurement:** To measure progress toward these objectives, CNCS will emphasize measuring the veterans and military families community in its programs to ensure that the participation of veterans and military families increases in quantity and quality.<sup>lviii</sup>

**Objective in support of Goal 2:** *Help CNCS-supported Veterans and participants 55 and older experience health benefits associated with service.*

To achieve Goal 2, CNCS will support programs that improve the psychosocial health of veterans and military families.<sup>lix</sup>

**Goal 3.** *Maximize the value we add to grantees, partners, and participants.*

**Objective in support of Goal 3:** *Build on the knowledge base of best practices and support efforts to measure results.*

To achieve this objective, CNCS will develop targeted materials that will facilitate application of learning and leadership. This implies including a set of best practices for the veterans and military family-centered programs.

**Performance Measurement:** To measure progress toward these objectives, CNCS will count the number of veterans and military family members served by CNCS-supported programs, as well as count the number of veterans and military family members providing services under CNCS-sponsored programs.

This effort began in 2012 when CNCS contracted with Westat, a research and statistical survey organization, to gather this data. The resulting studies are entitled The Westat Inventory of National Service Programs Engaging Veterans and Military Families and the Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service. They are included in full in Appendices G and H, respectively, in this report.

## Appendix C

### Impact of CNCS Strategies on Enabling Veterans' Participation

The Strategic Plan reflects CNCS's increased emphasis on veterans and military families, and this emphasis can be seen in CNCS's Congressional Budget Justification. Highlights from the 2014 Congressional Budget Justification are included in this report, and an excerpt from the 2013 counterpart below illustrates how current CNCS funding is designed to facilitate greater participation by veterans and military families in national service.

As part of the 2013 budget request, Robert Velasco, CNCS's Acting Chief Executive Officer at the time, wrote:

*The FY 2013 CNCS budget will bring vital leadership, resources, and coordination to some of the most pressing challenges that America has ahead: supporting individuals, organizations, and communities on the road to economic recovery; addressing the needs of a new wave of Veterans returning from war...*<sup>lx</sup>

The 2013 Congressional Budget Justification tied CNCS's budget requests to its long-term strategic goals.<sup>lxi</sup> CNCS requested \$1.062 billion for 2013, a 1.3 percent increase over its 2012 enacted budget. The 2014 budget request is a 1.2 percent increase over 2013 levels.<sup>lxii</sup>

CNCS's goals reflect the Agency's investment in the objectives outlined in the Serve America Act. In an effort to measure its progress, CNCS retained Westat, a research and statistical survey organization, to evaluate CNCS's grantees working with the veterans and military families community. Tracking this data and ascertaining best practices among grantees helps CNCS fulfill Goal 3 in its Strategic Plan.

Initially, CNCS compiled a list of 178 programs and projects representing AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, and Senior Corps that program officers believed addressed veterans' needs. After review, Westat interviewed 98 programs and projects that were confirmed to provide service opportunities or benefits to the veterans and military families community. This included 36 AmeriCorps State and National programs, 37 AmeriCorps VISTA projects, 5 joint AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA programs, and 20 Senior Corps programs. Eight-five of the interviewed organizations were direct recipients of CNCS grants and the remaining 13 received funds through intermediary organizations funded by CNCS.

The Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service concluded that though CNCS-supported grantees are in the early stages of involvement with the veterans and military families community, they are "implementing a wide range of activities in an effort to serve this population, from offering direct services that are in high demand (e.g., providing employment training or benefits counseling) to supporting community-wide efforts to coordinate service delivery to veterans (e.g., creating Regional Work Groups or developing local resource guides)"<sup>lxiii</sup> Furthermore, the Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service finds that, "CNCS grantees are ensuring that funds are being used to address those [Veteran and military family] issue areas called out in the Serve America Act requirements."

### CNCS Programs

While the Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service provides an overall picture of the programs' successes to date, it is crucial to examine the individual programs to understand the impact that CNCS's new goals and strategies are beginning to have.

Each of CNCS's major programs has aligned its activities with the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. In the following sections, this report reviews each program's progress and the initial impact on the veterans and military families community.

### **AmeriCorps State and National:**

In the 2013 Congressional Budget Justification, AmeriCorps State and National spelled out its commitment to the veterans and military families community:

*The FY 2013 Budget Request of \$345 million will support 74,000 AmeriCorps members who will be engaged in programs across the country. Driven by local needs, these AmeriCorps members will serve in a variety of positions, including teachers and tutors, job trainers, disaster responders and outreach coordinators for Veterans and military families.*

In addition to the programs highlighted in this report, AmeriCorps State and National's impact on the veterans and military families community is most richly demonstrated by a look at CNCS-funded programs and the important service they accomplish at the local level.

### **Florida**

**American Red Cross of Florida's Southern Gulf Region** currently has two AmeriCorps members who are veterans committed to supporting servicemembers, veterans, and military families. Typical Red Cross Services to members of the Armed Forces include emergency communications from family members, financial assistance, and referral services. The AmeriCorps members serving in the Southern Gulf Region are going well beyond these fundamental services to act as "force multipliers" by conducting outreach to veterans and military family members and building relationships with community organizations that support this population.

The service performed by the AmeriCorps members focuses on economic empowerment, education, addressing homelessness, and building connections among veterans and military families—areas that are both high priorities for CNCS and critical needs for veterans and military families. One of their initiatives is a mentoring program in which members recruit Veteran volunteers to mentor other veterans, help them with paying bills and obtaining benefits, and refer them to other services in the community. They also host "Make a Difference Days" in which AmeriCorps members help to feed the homeless, many of whom are veterans.

There is no major military installation in the region, so the Red Cross and its AmeriCorps members focus heavily on the National Guard population, supporting Yellow Ribbon stand-downs (collaborative events for veterans coordinated between local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies) with briefings on services, a family reintegration program, and connecting veterans and military families to military aid organizations. Finally, an AmeriCorps member serving with the Red Cross developed a partnership called UNITE – Universities Networking Information to Educate – that connects Veterans Certifying Officials (school officials who certify beneficiaries of VA education benefits), professors, and incoming Veteran students at local universities to build awareness about veterans' issues and help veterans thrive in the academic environment.

### **Louisiana**

**St. Bernard Project** (SBP) is an award-winning rebuilding nonprofit organization whose mission is to remove physical, mental and emotional barriers for those who are struggling to recover from the devastation and trauma caused by natural disasters. With clients throughout the Greater New Orleans area, St. Bernard Project reaches the communities most in need through several programs.

To achieve its goals, St. Bernard Project uses an “Under One Roof” model to operate four direct-service programs: Rebuilding Program; Opportunity Housing; Veterans Initiatives; and Disaster Recovery Lab. Their Veterans Corps program also creates opportunities for veterans to continue to serve through their extensive AmeriCorps programs supporting housing in their communities. By offering all of the necessary services to rebuild their clients’ homes, St. Bernard Project hopes to restore the hard-working, family-oriented communities in New Orleans and St. Bernard to a level of vibrancy and self-sufficiency so that they can participate in the city’s prolonged recovery and rebirth.

St. Bernard Project’s “Good Work, Good Pay” program hires, trains and pays fair wages to veterans and other unemployed residents, primarily as electricians, plumbers and carpenters. “Good Work, Good Pay” creates jobs in residential construction while tackling the region’s significant blight problem.

## **Michigan**

**Michigan Veterans Coalition Outreach AmeriCorps Program:** The Michigan Association of United Ways, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, engage 14 full time members in four Michigan urban areas as part of the Michigan Veterans Coalition Outreach AmeriCorps Program. Members connect military veterans with services to reduce negative socio-economic consequences exacerbated by chronic diseases, substance abuse, and disabilities. Members serve as liaisons in urban areas to coordinate activities, recruit and manage volunteers, and to determine areas of need in partnership with VSOs. They also provide information and outreach services in locations where veterans congregate and access services.

## **Missouri**

**Waynesville R-VI School District AmeriCorps State and National/VISTA Project.** The rural Waynesville School District in Missouri encompasses the Fort Leonard Wood Military Installation. Seventy percent of its students are from military families, and in some schools, more than 50 percent of the student population changes annually. AmeriCorps teams have created a comprehensive after-school program to help the students stay on course academically.

The program continues during the summer, as students receive individualized assistance through the summer school program. Forty AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates and AmeriCorps NCCC members partner episodically with full-time AmeriCorps members to offer tutoring during school and to provide unique educational enrichment opportunities after school, including camping, interactive science experiments, museum trips, leadership camps, fitness activities, and service-learning projects.

AmeriCorps State and National members provide tutoring and academic support to 1,696 students throughout the school day and lead more than 400 students in after school programs. Meanwhile, AmeriCorps VISTA members work behind the scenes to assess the needs of each program, establish clubs, create workshops for parents and students, and secure grant funding.

## **Montana**

**The Montana Conservation Corps (MCC)** empowers young adults through hands-on conservation service and education. Each season MCC enrolls over 200 young adults from across the country in its AmeriCorps program, where members live, learn and serve in crews of six to eight, completing conservation projects in local communities, national forests, state and national parks, wildlife refuges and federally designated wilderness areas. MCC has successfully filled 20 of its AmeriCorps member slots with veterans, achieved through focused outreach to Veteran-oriented organizations.

## **Nevada**

**Great Basin Institute – Nevada Conservation Corps (NCC)** harnesses the energy and idealism of youth to meet the needs of Nevada public lands and communities. As a federally-funded AmeriCorps program, the NCC promotes ecological literacy through field research and direct conservation service. The statewide program transcends racial, ethnic and economic barriers by creating a cadre of corps



members from diverse backgrounds, drawing a broad-based national recruitment process. By uniting environmental resources from federal, state and county agencies, NCC provides students and young professionals with opportunities to make meaningful contributions toward protecting and conserving Nevada's natural heritage, while also gaining valuable service experience in the natural resource management field.

As chainsaw trail and restoration team members, Veteran AmeriCorps members make a lasting contribution to Nevada's natural heritage. They gain valuable field experience while working on habitat improvement, restoration, and recreation projects with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and state agencies. NCC's partnerships with these agencies exemplify the principal of interagency coordination to support veterans articulated in the Serve America Act. In 2011, NCC placed a Veterans Green Corps Restoration Crew in the Spring Mountain outside Las Vegas, Nevada. This crew worked with the US Forest Service to maintain and build trails for access into the public lands. NCC is working on developing additional Veteran programs that could include fire and trail crews. Other projects include recreational trail construction and maintenance, hazardous forest fuel reduction, and habitat restoration.

## **Pennsylvania**

**Butler County Memorial Hospital** received an AmeriCorps grant for the Family Service Corps. It supports six AmeriCorps members who assist community agencies in meeting demand for services in the areas of support to veterans, health education, transitional housing, and mentoring of children and at-risk youth.

## **Vermont**

**Vermont Youth Development Corps (VYDC)** is an AmeriCorps State program whose members serve at innovative, youth-focused organizations statewide that address critical community issues and help youth thrive and ultimately become healthy, engaged citizens. All VYDC members reach out to military families and make an effort to ensure that youth and families participate in the programs and events at their sites. In addition, VYDC places an AmeriCorps member in support of Operation: Military Kids, a national program designed to bring community partners together in support of local military children and youth impacted by deployment. Along with other members placed through Vermont Youth Services' AmeriCorps VISTA project, the VYDC member at OMK manages volunteers, publicizes events, speaks to community members and supports numerous programs and events designed for military youth or families.

This support is especially important in Vermont. The state's National Guard has one of the highest per capita participation rates in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, and consequently, one of the highest per capita casualty rates. When a National Guard member is activated his or her family becomes "suddenly military" and must deal with the normal stresses of mobilization while also making the transition to a military lifestyle.

There are many programs and resources available to help families prepare for deployment but Vermont has no federal installation. National Guard families are spread all across the state and are often too far away to access these support services. Many families live in communities where there is little or no military presence and civilian members of the community may not understand the needs of the military community. By educating Vermont communities on the unique experiences and challenges of military life and providing positive opportunities for military youth, Operation: Military Kids helps military families to feel like an integral part of their communities, connects them to existing community resources, and makes them stronger despite the challenges of military life.

## **AmeriCorps VISTA:**

In the FY 13 Congressional Budget Justification, AmeriCorps VISTA spelled out its commitment to the veterans and military families community:

*In FY 2012, all new VISTA programming was aligned with the Agency's Strategic Plan. VISTA will be assessing the program's performance using capacity building performance measures that support outcomes and impact that align with several Goal 1 measures that have been identified in the CNCS Priority Measures; these include VISTA's investments in education, housing, Veterans and military families, and food security. In FY 2013, VISTA will continue to focus and align its resources with the Strategic Plan, and will collect data for the priority performance measures and continue to focus on supporting sponsors who adopt promising practices that lead to good outcomes for the targeted services.*

*Within the areas of Economic Opportunity and Education, VISTA will target a significant subset of resources towards programs that specifically assist economically vulnerable Veterans and their families.*

AmeriCorps VISTA continues to expand programming to support new projects that assist low-income veterans and military families or enhance existing projects to begin serving or better serve low-income veterans in these focus areas. Additionally, all projects are encouraged to recruit veterans to serve as AmeriCorps VISTA members, particularly projects that serve veterans and military families.

AmeriCorps VISTA projects are particularly adept at achieving Goals 1 and 2 in the Strategic Plan, increasing the participation of veterans and military families, and serving underrepresented communities. AmeriCorps VISTA is proud to share several examples beyond those in the main body of the report of successful programs that have impacted the veterans and military families community.

## **California**

**California Conservation Corps Veteran Green Corps.** AmeriCorps VISTA members working with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) are supporting veterans as they transition from the CCC to permanent employment. AmeriCorps VISTA members recruit and connect with veterans before they enter the CCC, assess the Veterans' individual needs, determine their career goals, and perfect their resumes and cover letters. The members' service activity is aligned with their career goals, and then once they complete their service year, the CCC staff helps them navigate the application and interview process for employment in the conservation field. Of the first 25 Veterans served by the program, 18 have been hired in civilian jobs, including the U.S. Forest Service. This past summer, AmeriCorps VISTA member Heather Hays was singled out for helping Veterans make the most of the Veteran Green Corps program. She was one of the winners in the Veterans and Military Families category in the 2012 National Service Impact Awards.

## **Mississippi**

**Services to Armed Forces for Northeast Mississippi.** AmeriCorps VISTA member Estella Heard assists the Red Cross Services to Armed Forces for Northeast Mississippi. Heard identifies all branches of the military in Mississippi for outreach activities and joint-event participation, including military hospitals and guard and reserve units. She also recruits community volunteers and builds networks to provide and increase services to Veterans. In addition, she identifies and connects with all resources in Mississippi for Veterans for outreach, partnership, and mutually beneficial activities.

## **New Hampshire**

**Families in Transition.** A New Hampshire-based AmeriCorps VISTA member sponsored by Families in Transition was instrumental in creating housing for homeless Veterans. The AmeriCorps VISTA member secured project-based vouchers valued at \$78,600 that will house at least nine homeless Veterans and 24 of their dependent family members. For another property, he helped raise \$25,000 in cash and \$287,500

in New Hampshire State tax credits, which are expected to yield another \$230,000 toward developing permanent housing for five homeless Veterans. During his service, this AmeriCorps VISTA member became known for his expertise and research into funding opportunities, becoming a resource not just for his site, but for other organizations addressing the homeless and aiding the poor.

## Virginia

**Give an Hour.** AmeriCorps VISTA member Rachel Kersaint was the driving force behind the Military Family Financial Summit, hosted recently by Give an Hour and the Community Blueprint (itself a collaboration between CNCS and Points of Light), in Hampton Roads, VA. Kersaint helped secure a venue, reached out to speakers, and promoted the event within the Hampton Roads community. Local financial experts hosted workshops. The most popular workshop was “Portable Entrepreneurship for Military Spouses,” which provided information about careers accommodating the unique demands of military life.

## AmeriCorps NCCC:

Though veterans are not explicitly mentioned in NCCC’s Strategic Plan, the NCCC program director stated that serving the veterans and military families community is a top-tier goal.<sup>ixiv</sup> Since 2000, NCCC teams have provided service to over 76,000 veterans through more than 101,000 hours of project service. The projects have served veterans and non- veterans alike through energy conservation, environmental stewardship and conservation, urban and rural development, infrastructure improvement, and natural and other disasters. Since the Serve America Act was signed into law, NCCC has increased the number of projects serving the veterans and military families community. NCCC increased from 11 veterans and military families projects in the three years prior to the SAA to 41 veterans and military families projects after the Serve America Act. The Atlantic Region has been a focal point for NCCC’s efforts in the veterans’ community due to the high concentration of service opportunities, as well as a large concentration of veteran and military families.

## Colorado

**Veterans Green Jobs.** NCCC has partnered with veterans and military families in Denver, Colorado in an innovative program called **Veterans Green Jobs**. The program provides green-job education, transition support, and career and enterprise development opportunities for military Veterans, empowering and supporting them to lead America’s transition to energy independence, ecological restoration, community renewal, and economic prosperity. Veterans Green Jobs was founded in 2008, based on the concept of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and operates programs in a variety of green-jobs fields, including home energy efficiency, renewable energy, land conservation, and urban forestry.

AmeriCorps NCCC teams have served 8 projects with Veterans Green Jobs since 2010. One of their major accomplishments during this period was the creation of a program with the Go Green Store to keep materials out of landfills as well as provide a place for people to purchase construction materials at more affordable prices. NCCC has also worked with children of Veterans Green Jobs employees at the Bring Your Child to Work Day. They have assembled and distributed nearly 15,000 energy efficient kits, weatherized nearly 350 homes, and educated more than 18,000 people on sustainability and conservation practices.

## Tennessee

**Matthew 25** is a nonprofit organization focused on moving homeless men from the streets into permanent housing. More than a shelter, Matthew 25 provides supportive services to help 200-250 homeless men annually, 60 percent of whom are veterans looking to turn their lives around. The men are required to save 75 percent of what they earn with the goal of saving a set amount of money to allow them to seek affordable housing. Almost every man has a substance abuse or mental health disorder that has led to homelessness, which Matthew 25 treats. The River Eight NCCC team helped refurbish the

facility so the men can take pride in their living space. The team painted two murals in their billiard and workout room and laid down new flooring. River Eight also prepped the floors in the dining hall and hallways for new tile, and replaced the trim on the floors after the flooring was complete.

### **Senior Corps:**

In the 2013 Congressional Budget Justification, Senior Corps explicitly prioritized the veterans and military families community:

*The FY 2013 Budget Request for the Senior Corps programs is nearly \$208 million, supporting Americans, aged 55 and older, who will make significant contributions in improving educational outcomes for at-risk and special needs youth; connecting Veterans and military families to needed services; responding to disasters; and helping low-income seniors stay in their homes and avoid costly institutional care.*

In 2010, Senior Corps programs engaged about 22,350 veterans to serve as volunteers; by the end of 2012, that number had increased to 25,000. In 2012, Senior Corps volunteers provided service to nearly 300,000 veterans through activities including transportation and employment service referrals. Additionally, more than 500 Senior Corps projects and 8,000 volunteers serve at Veterans Affairs facilities each year.<sup>lxv</sup>

Furthermore, in 2012 Senior Corps conducted a special competition for existing programs to expand veterans and military families-related activities. A Senior Corps augmentation competition considered eighteen augmentation applications from 11 states with RSVP grantees serving the veterans and military families community. Ultimately 14 augmentation grants totaling \$245,750 were awarded to support more than 800 new volunteers serving more than 15,000 veterans and military family members.

### **Alabama**

**Athens-Limestone County RSVP** volunteers are partners in a project called “Moms on a Mission,” which helps to collect and package items such as batteries, travel pillows, socks, toiletries, sunscreen, eye saline, calling cards and non-perishable food for troops abroad. The volunteers address cards to soldiers and send special care packages during the holidays. The program was started by one mom who received a letter from her son, a Soldier stationed in Iraq, requesting these everyday supplies.

### **Florida**

**Impact Broward RSVP** operates a Veteran mentoring program called Veterans Helping Veterans that provides returning or struggling combat veterans with a “Battle Buddy” who can provide one-on-one assistance to help that Veteran with his/her individual needs. This assistance often includes help with resume building, job searches, interview skills, coping skills, and above all, friendship. RSVP volunteers help returning veterans readjust to civilian life, and in the process, gain lasting relationships and the satisfaction of giving back to other veterans in need.

The program began in 2010, and grew in 2012 following the opening of the Broward County Veterans Court. Through this system, veterans with legal problems are frequently referred to the Veterans Helping Veterans program as part of a larger treatment and rehabilitation program for behavioral, mental health, or substance abuse issues related to their military service. Veteran mentors understand the burdens of returning home from military service and can relate to them in ways their lawyers or other counselors cannot. By checking in on them, making sure they get to VA and other appointments, and helping them to improve their resumes and job skills, RSVP Veteran mentors play a vital role in getting these veterans back on track and out of the revolving door of the justice system.

### **Georgia**

### **Metro Atlanta Senior Companion Program, Georgia State University Neighborhood**

**Collaborative, Atlanta.** Senior Citizen Services and Visions are Adult Day Care and Adult Day Health facilities. Visiting Nurse Health Systems provides case management for frail adults who live at home. The Veterans Hospital provides support for frail seniors who served in the United States Armed Forces. There are 11 Senior Companions supporting 34 fragile seniors so they can remain in their homes. According to the latest annual report from Georgia's Division of Aging, the institutionalization of a senior would cost \$16,315 per year, per senior. As such, these Senior Companions save the families and taxpayers a combined \$554,710.

### **New Hampshire**

**Coos County RSVP, Tri-County Community Action Program, Berlin, NH.** Seniors living in the rural North Country of New Hampshire and who can no longer drive often find themselves in challenging circumstances. With no public transportation and private services unaffordable for most, their only hope for living at home is through publicly funded transportation and volunteer drivers. RSVP volunteers play a critical role, sometimes driving on mountainous and snow-covered roads, to allow seniors and disabled veterans to attend medical appointments, complete hospital visits, and receive other vital services. Thirty Coos County RSVP volunteers drove over 26,000 miles in 304 trips. These volunteer services saved the Community Action Program's North Country Transit system \$12,273. Forty-four Carroll County RSVP volunteers logged 71,233 miles and volunteered 3,118 hours helping 109 clients live independently. The Caleb Group, the Disabled American Veterans, the American Cancer Society, the First Church of Christ Vaughn Community Center, ServiceLink, local hospitals, the Division of Health and Human Services, and the Visiting Nurse Association all benefited from these drivers.

### **North Carolina**

**Cumberland County RSVP – Fort Bragg Retirement Center.** RSVP volunteer Carol Anderson has served at the Fort Bragg Retirement Center since 2006, when she retired as Director of the Center. Carol leads a team of four RSVP volunteers assisting active-duty military personnel retiring or separating from military service. Filling out forms is required for each person's transition, and Carol's team meets regularly with those who are ending their service to ensure all forms are filled out completely and accurately. Without Carol Anderson and her team of volunteers, Fort Bragg Retirement Center would not be able to provide such high-quality service to military and federal civilian personnel.

### **Ohio**

**RSVP of Youngstown** collaborates with the Veterans of Foreign Wars to recruit RSVP volunteers. For several years, these Veteran volunteers have been educating African American youth about African American military heroes. The veterans have compiled many stories and pictures of African American servicemembers, which they present before groups of students as role models. Professor Russell Adams, historian and the dean of the African American Studies Department at Howard University, Washington, DC, has taken an interest in the program. In November, Veteran volunteers, community leaders, children, and RSVP staff rode a bus to Washington to visit Professor Adams and The Spirit of Freedom Memorial, honoring black Civil War soldiers and sailors.

### **Texas**

**Senior Citizens of Greater Dallas Senior Companion Program (SCP).** Marianna Touchstone, LMSW-ACP, is the Medical Social Worker at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center-Dallas. She states that many of their patients are discharged to return home, contingent upon in-home assistance and that the Dallas SCP helps with providing that care, enabling the client to live more independently for a longer period of time. She also said the SCP has delayed nursing home placement for 1-2 years for many of their clients.

## CNCS Operations

The Strategic Plan reflects CNCS's updated agenda to add or expand our programs and operations to implement the Serve America Act's focus on veterans and military families.

### **Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors, and Military Families Initiatives.**

To oversee the execution of its Strategic Plan as it relates to Veterans, CNCS recruited a Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors, and Military Family Initiatives to coordinate all of CNCS' activities in the veterans and military families portfolio. The Senior Advisor is responsible for ensuring CNCS serves the veterans and military families community in accordance with the Serve America Act. An abbreviated version of the Senior Advisor's position description follows below:

*The Senior Advisor for Wounded Warrior, Veteran, and Military Family Initiatives is a discretionary position that serves as a confidential policy advisor to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), and Program Directors for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps and the Social Innovation Fund in the formulation of national strategies, policies, and guidelines to implement the Veterans and military families strategic focus area.*

*The position advises on and approves all formally published policies related to Veterans and military families, including but not limited to all relevant Notice of Funding Opportunities, all Agency-wide performance measures, and all grant activities of the corporation.*

*The Senior Advisor to the CEO supervises the relevant Veterans, military family, and Wounded Warrior subject matter activities of all program-director-designated staff liaisons from AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund. The position develops national strategies, policies, and short- and long-range plans and monitors their implementation in collaboration with the directors of AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund.*

*The position involves serving as the liaison to the Cabinet (e.g. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs) officials, Veterans and military families' organizations, programs that serve Veterans and military families, Veteran service organizations and service providers, state service commissions and other stakeholders to further program development, and strategic direction of CNCS.*

*The position advises the directors involved with the grant review process and makes actionable recommendations on proper and effective strategies to ensure the strategic focus area of Veterans and military families, as identified in the Serve America Act (2009), are adequately reflected in the grant review process and result in an appropriately balanced portfolio.*

*The position acts as the principal interagency liaison in the development and drafting of interagency agreements that support the strategic goals and objectives related to wounded warrior, Veteran and military families.*

The Senior Advisor manages, develops, and works to strategically expand a portfolio of initiatives focused on the Veteran and military family community. The current Senior Advisor is an Iraq War Veteran, former Defense Department SES-level appointment with policy experience at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

## **Notices of Funding Opportunities Solicit Veterans-Focused Projects**

To make grants to the programs highlighted in the previous section, CNCS must first solicit grant applications. Prospective grantees request funding by responding to Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) published by CNCS. As a result of the new Strategic Plan, CNCS has begun to prioritize grant-making to applicants that focus on veterans and military families. In line with the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, veterans and military families-focused programs have become a Tier 1 funding priority in many NOFOs, giving these grantees applications and advantage in the awards process.

The following is a list of NOFOs from the last several years that explicitly target the veterans and military families community. Other NOFOs not included in this list accept applications focused on the veterans and military families community, though it is not explicitly emphasized in those NOFOs.<sup>lxvi</sup>

- Senior Corps Relinquishment Funds Grants FY 2013
- American Express Leadership Academy Participation FY 2013
- AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2013
- Senior Corps RSVP Competition FY 2013
- AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2012
- September 11th 2012 National Day of Service and Remembrance
- AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Planning Grants FY 2012
- AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grants FY 2012
- Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service Grants FY 2011
- AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2011
- AmeriCorps State and National and Indian Tribes Planning Grants FY 2011
- Senior Corps RSVP FY 2010
- AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2010
- AmeriCorps State and National Planning and Indian Tribes Planning Grants FY 2010
- Nonprofit Capacity-Building Grants FY 2010.

## **Improvements in Training and Technical Assistance**

CNCS is building a community of grantees with a common interest in serving the veterans and military families community. Grantees throughout the country should be familiar with one another to improve services offered by sharing best practices and receiving training on the particulars of working within a special community that has its own culture and rhythms. After issuing its 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, CNCS sought to immediately upgrade its efforts to provide training and technical assistance.

These efforts are investments in building an ever more efficient community in accordance with the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. Specifically:

- CNCS began a user-generated learning series on key program design, recruitment, and barriers to serve the veterans and military families community.
- CNCS reviews and reports on Veteran and military family grant applications to identify best practices, emerging practices, and common characteristics of successful and less successful grantees.
- CNCS held stand-alone conference sessions at key annual convenings of national and community service leaders for training purposes.
- CNCS has established long-term (FY 2015) budget support goals for increased training allocations to the veterans and military family focus area.

- CNCS has established an affinity group and online forum for all veterans and military family program directors to share best and emerging practices.
- CNCS conducts regular webinars, conference presentations, conference sessions (National Conference on Volunteering and Service, Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps grantee meetings), and distributes training materials, all of which are intended to increase awareness about the capabilities and needs of veterans and military families in national service, improve their service experience, and make service delivery to this community more effective.
- CNCS has created a preference scale for funding grant applications with veterans and military families in the top tier. Specifically, starting in 2011, the AmeriCorps grant competition reflected that one of the highest funding priorities would be growing AmeriCorps' investment in programs that engage and serve veterans and military families.<sup>lxvii</sup> In addition, to track Veteran involvement in national service, CNCS made simple but effective adjustments to its web portal that allow veterans to simply click a box to identify themselves as such on the AmeriCorps applications. This adjustment extended to other CNCS program portals in 2013.

### **Strategic Relationships with Government Agencies and Veterans Service Organizations**

A number of government agencies and VSOs cater to the veterans and military families community in various capacities. As the country's leader on national service, CNCS is in a unique position to partner with them and leverage their abilities to help veterans and military families participate in national service programs and experience the benefits that serving provides.

CNCS has established official and collaborative relationships with several government agencies and VSOs. These relationships support the Strategic Plan by improving relationships that will increase the numbers of veterans and their families participating in national service. CNCS has developed the following enhancements to its relationships with the veterans and military families community:

- **A Formal Interagency Agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs** to fund AmeriCorps members to serve on up to 94 college campuses across the country to support VetSuccess on Campus Counselors in meeting the education and career development needs of Veterans and their families.
- **A Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Veterans Affairs** to expand and lead volunteer management roles at VA medical facilities nationwide.
- **A Memorandum of Understanding with the American Legion Auxiliary** to enhance the volunteer and service components of the organization's strategic plan, assist the organization in utilizing volunteers in the development and delivery of family support services to the National Guard, and strengthen the American Legion Auxiliary's use of national service resources in Veteran programs and volunteer services.
- **The Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors, and Military Family Initiatives** serves as a Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service representative as a member of the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee. The Committee advises the Under Secretary for Health on participation of volunteers in VA medical facilities, assists in recruitment and orientation of volunteers, and keeps participating organizations informed of volunteer needs and accomplishments.<sup>lxviii</sup>
- CNCS participates in supporting the **Joining Community Forces Initiative**,<sup>lxix</sup> a White House-sponsored initiative headed by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, focused on employment, wellness, and other community-based services for veterans and military families. CNCS committed to provide an opportunity for the National Guard to place AmeriCorps VISTA members in every state and



territory at zero cost to them. These members are co-located with National Guard units and help to remove economic barriers to a successful transition and reintegration. See Appendix I for more information.

### **Engaging Veterans with Disabilities**

In 2010, CNCS launched the Engaging Veterans with Disabilities Initiative to enhance the capacity of national service programs to recruit, engage and support veterans with disabilities as in structured volunteer experiences. CNCS conducted the Initiative through its National Service Inclusion Project, housed at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, in partnership with CTAT (Center for Technical Assistance and Training) and Operation TBI Freedom at Denver Options. Through this project, veterans have reported that a national service experience can provide a relatively less stressful transition back into the community while enabling them to remain part of a team that is actively continuing to serve the country.

In its 2013 Congressional Budget Justification, CNCS recognized that disability grants could be an effective mechanism for targeting wounded servicemembers as they transitioned back to civilian life and requested \$3 million to increase the number of national service participants with disabilities. Consistent with appropriations provisions from 2010 and 2011, this language would have restored direct funding to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in national service programs, with a particular focus on recruitment of veterans and Wounded Warriors.

Nonetheless, the results of the Engaging Veterans with Disabilities Initiative have informed disability and inclusion projects by CNCS grantees such as Operation ABLE Community, a pilot project developed in collaboration with the Department of the Army to connect Wounded Warriors with community service opportunities near them. Such programs enable wounded veterans to serve their communities, build their resumes, and develop critical professional and personal networks to ease their transition to civilian life.

CNCS's Disability Inclusion efforts help fulfill Goals 1 and 2 in the Strategic Plan by improving participation by the veterans and military families community and by improving Veterans' wellness.

### **Independent Study Provides Initial Feedback on CNCS Veterans and Military Programming: Findings of the Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service**

In 2012, CNCS commissioned Westat, a research and statistical survey organization, to conduct a study of CNCS's veterans and military families programs. Specific findings and program overviews from the Westat Study on veterans and Military Families in National Service are included throughout this report. Westat's broad conclusions on the impact of CNCS's initial engagement of the veterans and military families community are summarized below:

- A large number of programs and projects included in the study were relatively new to engaging veterans and military families. Many, in fact, had just finished their first year of operations at the time of the interview. Because CNCS grants are awarded for a three-year period of performance, most program and projects were a long way from maturity at the time of the study.
- Many interviewees from civilian organizations said the success of their programs could be attributed to their ability to bring military culture into their activities, either by establishing partnerships with VSOs or by recruiting veterans as national service participants or community volunteers. Importantly, the need for creating such linkages, either through organizational partnerships or recruitment of veterans into national service, was one of the technical assistance needs most commonly cited by interviewees.

- Only a handful of programs reported having outcome data on their service recipients, and none had impact data to share with the study team.
- Veterans as national service participants are high-quality volunteers. Interviewees consistently reported they had a better work ethic than an organization’s full-time employees; as a result, they said these offices or organizations had become measurably more productive through national service.
- Veterans as national service participants are “excellent teachers, researchers and writers” who could help meet the needs of their communities.
- Although programs described varying levels of success with relatively new efforts to engage veterans and military families, all interviewed programs addressed the most pressing needs identified for the veterans and military families community in the Serve America Act.
- National service and volunteering provided excellent opportunities for veterans to reintegrate into civilian life. There was an often-expressed belief that volunteering and service to others aligned closely with servicemembers’ values. This was particularly true of the Iraq and Afghanistan combat Veterans.
- National service can provide returning servicemembers with skill development opportunities that may ultimately translate into employment. This was commonly reported by employees at the various Conservation Corps in the context of both the capacity-building efforts of AmeriCorps VISTA members and the direct services provided by AmeriCorps members.

The Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service also categorized its impact findings within the issue areas identified in the Serve America Act,<sup>lxx</sup> finding:

- Issue area 2, “volunteer opportunities for Veterans,” was most frequently covered by grantees at 62 organizations.
- The second most common issue area was wellness and other support services, or issue area 9, including linkages to housing, legal advice, behavioral health support, and “recognition” services offered by national service programs. Of the 59 interviewees who said their organizations provided one of the services within this issue area, nearly half—27—said the focus was on housing services.
  - Moreover, 17 indicated that their programs offered behavioral health support services, including peer support for post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health counseling, or twelve-step groups for substance abuse.
  - Ten organizations offered legal assistance to Veterans, including mentoring and support for former offenders.
  - Eight organizations provided financial literacy training or other financial support services to veterans and/or military families.
  - Eight assisted veterans with obtaining food, whether through vouchers, connecting veterans with food banks, or serving hot meals.
  - Another 19 organizations—including 14 RSVP grantees—provided services specific to Veterans, such as friendly visits to hospitals and recognition days to honor veterans for their service.
- Employment supports, the third-most-often-addressed issue area, included on-the-job training opportunities, general employment support (resume writing and interviewing skills), and hosting or referring their beneficiaries to job fairs. Of the 43 organizations that offered such services, 24 were AmeriCorps programs and 13 were AmeriCorps VISTA-run projects. Five of the AmeriCorps programs are affiliated with one of the Conservation Corps included in this study.

- In issue area 7, transportation services to Veterans, RSVP programs were strongly represented, comprising 15 of the 21 organizations that indicated they provided such services. RSVP programs are uniquely well-suited to this type of service as their volunteers often have the flexibility to volunteer a few hours per week as needed to, for example, drive a Veteran to the VA hospital for an appointment.

*The full Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service is included in Appendix G of this report.*

## Appendix D

### Plans to Improve Services to Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations and Military Families

CNCS continues to work to identify areas where it can improve services to veterans and military families. Though CNCS has made initial progress, there is much work to do. CNCS is aggressively pursuing the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan to ensure its programs fulfill those goals by the end of 2015.

#### Improve Coordination

CNCS believes achieving the underlying objectives of Goals 1 and 2 in the Strategic Plan—to increase Veterans’ participation and wellness—can be accomplished by continuing to forge alliances with government agencies, VSOs, and other non-profits. CNCS is uniquely positioned among the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, and VSOs to leverage those entities’ best practices, size, and financial resources to scale up veterans and military families programs at the community level.

Now that CNCS has begun to institutionalize its priorities for veterans and military families, CNCS can turn to the task of identifying gaps in service and plan to address those deficiencies. CNCS has recognized that creating strategic partnerships with other government agencies can provide veterans and military families with expanded opportunities to participate in national service. Its unique authorization allows interagency agreements (IAAs) to augment and improve services delivered by other federal agencies with national service participants.

Using existing legal frameworks, including Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and IAAs, to establish formal relationships with other agencies would improve services to Veterans. As an example of the use of this authority, CNCS launched FEMA Corps in March 2012 with 1,600 AmeriCorps members to provide disaster response and recovery services around the country. This interagency collaboration will add scale and save the Department of Homeland Security \$60 million per year.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Under the auspices of the President’s Task Force on Expanding National Service, CNCS seeks to leverage these interagency partnerships to grow national and community service opportunities for veterans and military family members. As such, CNCS is exploring or has negotiated interagency agreements with several agencies participating in the Task Force.

Training and technical assistance for CNCS grantees has emerged as a crucial foundation for building a cohesive community of veterans and military families programs working toward all the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.

CNCS will work with grantees as veterans and military families programs mature to identify their ongoing training and technical assistance needs and add or adjust these platforms so future grantees understand how to serve the veterans and military families community better. CNCS already plans to begin training programs in the following issue areas:

- Train non-military volunteers on the fundamentals of military life and culture.
- Train veterans on service-related benefits and eligibility criteria for various benefits.
- Continue to grow online training opportunities for grantees, such as webinars through the Knowledge Network. The network’s goal is to share and develop practices, tools, models, and interventions that will add to strategic partnerships that engage and retain veterans in service (especially those serving other Veterans), improve the quality of service to veterans and military families, particularly in employment

and housing, and strengthen the network of veterans and military families national service projects across the country.<sup>lxxii</sup>

- CNCS is planning regional basic and advanced training institutes that cover the gamut of inclusion topics and effective strategies to help build the technical capacity of national service programs to comply with federal and state equal opportunity employment laws. As the number of individuals (including Veterans) with disabilities in service increases, concomitant training that builds program capacity to support and retain them is necessary.

To handle increased training and technical assistance needs, CNCS has begun the process of upgrading certain capabilities and will continue to do so as new needs are identified.

- CNCS has upgraded its information technology infrastructure to improve how it manages national service participants and electronic applications for grants (also known as the eGrant system).
- Webinars, the CNCS Knowledge Network, conference presentations, conference sessions (National Conference on Volunteering and Service, Senior Corps and AmeriCorps grantee meetings) and training materials are beginning to improve the volunteer experience for veterans and make service delivery more effective.
- A special section of the Knowledge Network has been created for CNCS's veterans and military families stakeholders. These typically are grantees working in the veterans and military families area that are willing to help others by sharing or developing materials, offering webinars, or planning conference sessions.

### **Improve Data Collection**

Almost a quarter of the organizations interviewed for the Westat Study on veterans and Military Families in National Service reported that they had to conduct some form of local needs assessment to determine which services were most needed by local veterans and military families population. Half of the organizations said that their needs assessments had been done in an informal manner, often through conversations with affiliate programs, or by bringing together groups of community members (civilians, Veterans, and service providers) to discuss available resources and the outstanding needs.

Furthermore, the Westat Study on veterans and Military Families in National Service found grantees were limited in the collection of outcome data, which should be a routine aspect of program implementation. Because current funding opportunities often require organizations to demonstrate effectiveness through quantitative measures, grantees and sites will benefit from additional technical assistance from CNCS in understanding the outcomes of their efforts.

CNCS has recognized the importance of collecting high quality data by its veterans and military families programs. As the veterans and military families program area matures, CNCS will work with grantees to ensure that data collection is fully integrated with their programs, in accordance with Goal 1 in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan.

# Appendix E

## Coordination of Programs and Activities

### Strengthening CNCS Executive Staff for Veterans and Military Families: Role of the Senior Advisor

The Senior Advisor for Veterans, Wounded Warriors, and Military Families Initiatives has improved coordination between programs and activities. The Senior Advisor's position description (in full above, in Appendix C) clearly states that the responsibility for coordinating all activities in the veterans and military families focus area falls under that position. Specifically, the Senior Advisor has responsibility for:

*The formulation of national strategies, policies, and guidelines to implement the Veterans and Military Families Strategic Focus Area... The position develops national strategies, policies, and short and long-range plans and monitors their implementation in collaboration with the directors of AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund.*

The Senior Advisor closely coordinates programs in accordance with the goals laid out in the Strategic Plan.

### Office of the Inspector General

After the Serve America Act was signed into law, CNCS immediately strengthened the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to ensure it instituted strong accountability practices in accordance with its new responsibilities. In January 2010, the OIG released its own strategic plan that articulated new goals and strategies to improve its performance and ensure improved coordination of programs and activities in the veterans and military families community.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

The new goals are as follows:<sup>lxxiv</sup>

- **Goal 1:** Reduce program vulnerabilities, strengthen program integrity and CNCS's efforts to manage its programs efficiently and implement effective internal controls. The OIG will do this by providing timely and independent information to CNCS's Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer, senior management and Congress regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of CNCS programs and operations.
- **Goal 2:** Look ahead, anticipate change, stay flexible, and be prepared to meet new challenges.
- **Goal 3:** Make the results of OIG reviews public, to the extent allowable by law and privacy considerations, through a robust OIG website, social media tools, and look for ways to operate in an environmentally conscious or "green" manner.

In partnership with the OIG, CNCS works to ensure accountability for all its programs, including those serving veterans and military families. This cooperation ensures that taxpayer dollars are efficiently used to achieve outcomes that benefit veterans and military families and other CNCS stakeholders.

# Appendix F

## Plans to Involve Veterans as Resources and National Service Participants

CNCS plans to involve veterans as resources and as national service participants were created and driven by the Serve America Act. The legislation drove the Strategic Plan, and the underlying goals, strategies, and performance measurements ensure veterans will be involved efficiently and productively as resources and national service participants.

CNCS is developing the following recruiting strategies:

### Outreach and Promotional Strategies

- CNCS has begun a media strategy designed to attract new veterans to national service. These feature CNCS programs, grantees, and individual volunteers.
- The CNCS veterans and military families programs have increased its public web presence, with a series of blog posts at [www.serve.org/vets.asp](http://www.serve.org/vets.asp). The goal of the site is to foster a sense of community while telling real-life stories of CNCS programs and grantees and how they are affecting the veterans and military families community.
- CNCS has engaged with the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program and the National Guard to ensure CNCS programs are an official part of servicemembers' transition briefings, so new veterans are aware of national service opportunities available to them.
- Through the Westat Study on Veterans and Military Families in National Service, CNCS has learned that the best recruitment tool for veterans is through word-of-mouth. Veterans and military families are a unique community, and inherently trust other veterans and their families to provide recommendations on personal and professional opportunities, including volunteer programs and services. In a sense, the best plan to involve veterans and their families in CNCS-sponsored projects is to ensure that every Veteran's experience with a CNCS-sponsored project is the best it can be.
- CNCS has performed targeted, direct outreach to veterans with disabilities to increase the number recruited as active participants in national service. This approach includes the development of recruitment materials and methods, and the testing and implementation of practices that effectively connect national service program opportunities to disabled Veterans.
- CNCS regularly participates in conferences, roundtable discussions, and other convenings hosted at organizations like the American Legion, the Aspen Institute, the Center for American Progress, the Center for A New American Security, as well as regular veterans and military families community meetings at the White House.

### Improving Identification of Veterans' Skill Sets

Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about the effectiveness of programs and policies. Stakeholders want to know if the programs they are funding or supporting in other ways are actually having the intended effect. Equally important are questions such as how the program could be improved, whether the program is worthwhile, whether there are better alternatives, and whether the program goals are appropriate and useful. For evaluations to contribute to quality improvement, data must be collected from all stakeholders, on all types of program activities, and at frequent intervals.

In order to promote an evidence-based approach to service interventions and support CNCS grantees in measuring the effectiveness of their programs for veterans and military families, CNCS has developed performance measures that focus specifically on this community. All FY 2014 grant competitions promote funding of programs with a focus on veterans and military families. The performance measures focus on the number of (a) Veterans; (b) Veterans' family members; (c) family members of active-duty military servicemembers; and (d) active-duty military servicemembers that receive CNCS assistance, as well as veterans and military family members engaged in providing services through CNCS programs.<sup>lxxv</sup>

CNCS also encourages grantees to conduct impact evaluations, which assess the outcomes of program participants against those of a comparison group. Such an evaluation design offers the strongest evidence for program effectiveness and is ultimately the benchmark CNCS would like to set for all of its grantees.

As CNCS programs evolve and a solid data baseline evolves, CNCS will be able to identify gaps in Veteran recruitment and under-utilization within programs that can handle additional participants. Over time, CNCS is confident it will develop an efficient data collection, recruitment, and allocation cycle.



## **Appendix G**

### **Westat Study: Understanding the Involvement of Veterans and Military Families in National Service**

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/CNCS\\_Report\\_on\\_Veterans\\_and\\_Military\\_Families\\_Appendix\\_G.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/CNCS_Report_on_Veterans_and_Military_Families_Appendix_G.pdf)

## **Appendix H**

### **Westat Inventory of National Service Programs That Engage Veterans and Military Family Members**

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/CNCS\\_Report\\_on\\_Veterans\\_and\\_Military\\_FamiliesAppendix\\_H.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/CNCS_Report_on_Veterans_and_Military_FamiliesAppendix_H.pdf)

# Appendix I

## Joining Community Forces Memo



NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU  
111 SOUTH GEORGE MASON DRIVE  
ARLINGTON VA 22204-1373

NGB-J1

18 October 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR All States State Family Program Directors

SUBJECT: Joining Community Forces/Volunteers In Service to America

1. Joining Community Forces (JCF) strengthens and promotes support networks to aid every veteran, military, and family member (VMF) in all 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. JCF's mission is to maximize the effect of community resources (civilian and military) serving the VMF in order to build resilience and foster a sustainable and relevant support network. By providing leadership, messaging, resource referrals, and standards, JCF provides the platform necessary to make the most meaningful impact toward achieving its vision, whereby national, state, and local support entities can partner and exponentially impact the VMFs in and around their community.

2. Since announcing this initiative at April's Professional Development Seminar, my office has been developing strategic action plans and further developing national partner opportunities from both the military and civilian communities. Each partner brings a unique set of tools vital to ensure the JCF initiative is effective, sustainable and enduring. One of these partners is the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS will be providing at no cost to the National Guard, Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) community capacity builders for each requesting state that completes the project application process as described in the 2012 Program Guide (Enclosure 1). VISTAs are hired for a one year period, and may be renewed for up to three years. They are expected to work 40 hours per week and must be directly supervised at least 50 percent of the time by a Title 32 supervisor. States may request the number of VISTA resources needed to support their JCF initiative at state and community levels. CNCS has committed to a minimum of 100 VISTAs. Based on available resources, CNCS may authorize assignment of additional VISTAs.

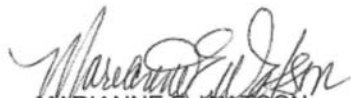
3. Although there is traditionally a matching fund requirement to obtain a VISTA, CNCS has waived this condition for this program. However, there is still a requirement to have a \$500 reimbursable emergency travel fund for each VISTA assigned, and to reimburse the VISTA for travel expenses in performance of their mission. The reimbursable travel is estimated to be between \$2,000 to \$8,000 per year depending upon the state JCF program. These two expenses cannot be paid with appropriated funds, however the attached 2012 Program Guide provides options on how these requirements can be resourced.

4. VISTAs currently support the National Guard in several states and are doing an outstanding job in helping to identify providers willing to support our VMF's with goods and services, as well as the recipients who are in need of them. I encourage you to learn more about this valuable resource and encourage you to utilize VISTAs to support your JCF program.

NGB-J1  
SUBJECT: Joining Community Forces/Volunteers In Service to America

5. Point of contact for this initiative is Ms. Darla L. Haines, Outreach Program Manager, [darla.haines@us.army.mil](mailto:darla.haines@us.army.mil), (703) 607-5491.

Encls  
2012 Program Guide -  
The VISTA Community Capacity  
Building Model



MARIANNE E. WATSON  
Brigadier General, GS  
Director, Manpower and Personnel  
National Guard Bureau

CF:  
JFHQ-State Chiefs of Staff  
ARNG G1  
ANG A1

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