



AmeriCorps 2023 State of the Evidence Report

September 1, 2023

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AmeriCorps

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Contents

Executive Summary	ix
I. Introduction	1
A. How AmeriCorps invests in building evidence	2
B. Context for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report	3
C. Overview of the 2023 State of the Evidence Report	4
1. State of the Evidence framework	4
2. Research questions	6
3. Methodological approach	7
4. Characteristics of the reviewed studies	8
D. How the report is organized	12
II. What is the State of the Evidence on AmeriCorps Participants?	15
A. Characteristics of AmeriCorps members	15
B. Benefits to AmeriCorps members and volunteers	18
III. What is the State of the Evidence on AmeriCorps Partners?	23
IV. What is the State of the Evidence of AmeriCorps on Communities?	27
A. Evidence on how AmeriCorps-funded interventions benefit communities	27
1. Education	28
2. Economic opportunity	32
3. Healthy futures	34
4. Environmental stewardship	36
5. Disaster services	37
6. Veterans and military families	39
B. Investing in community-based solutions generates greater value in return	39
C. Successfully scaling an intervention requires evidence and readiness	42

Table of Contents

V.	What Do We Know About the State of National Service, Volunteering, and Civic Engagement in the United States?	45
A.	Societal rates of volunteerism and civic engagement	46
B.	New insights advance understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement	48
1.	Factors that promote civic engagement among individuals	48
2.	Studies using participatory research illustrate how to include community members in the design and study of programs to address complex social problems	50
3.	Practices that help organizations maximize the impact of volunteers	52
4.	The importance of nonprofits for the subjective well-being of communities	53
VI.	Summary and Recommendations	54
A.	The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps participants	54
B.	The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps partners	55
C.	The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on communities	56
D.	The state of the evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society	58
	References	60
	Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report	A.1
	Appendix B. Study Review Rubric	B.1

Tables

I.1.	AmeriCorps ORE research grant cycles and priority funding areas	3
IV.1.	Number of reviewed studies examining AmeriCorps outcomes and impacts in the community domain, by AmeriCorps focus area.....	27
A.1.	Studies reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence report	A.3
B.1.	Study review rubric for the 2023 State of Evidence report	B.3

Figures

I.1.	State of the Evidence framework.....	5
I.2.	Percentage of studies by study source that conducted the research.....	9
I.3.	Percentage of studies by main study approach.....	10
I.4.	Percentage of studies by AmeriCorps program included in the research	11
I.5.	Percentage of studies by State of the Evidence framework domain.....	12
II.1.	AmeriCorps member profiles	17
IV.1.	COVID-19 Containment Response Corps phases for disaster service response	38
IV.2.	ROI per funder dollar for AmeriCorps-funded interventions	41
IV.3.	The Scaling Programs with Research Evidence and Effectiveness (SPREE) process.....	43
V.I.	Changes in social capital between 2008 and 2013 on measures of individuals' associational connections and formal ties.....	47
V.2.	Civic enrichment hypothesis	50

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Executive Summary

In the past decade, AmeriCorps,¹ its grantee organizations, and AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) research grant recipients have generated a wealth of evidence on AmeriCorps programs, interventions, civic engagement, and national service. In 2017, AmeriCorps ORE released the first State of the Evidence Report, which was one of the agency's first large-scale efforts to synthesize a growing body of evidence across the various AmeriCorps funding programs and grants. That report used evidence obtained from October 2014 to June 2017. The purpose of this report is to synthesize key themes from studies produced by or for AmeriCorps from 2017 to 2022 with the goal of describing the state of the evidence where the agency seeks to make an impact.

This 2023 State of the Evidence report is based on the investments AmeriCorps regularly makes in evidence building through several avenues. The agency provides funding and technical support to AmeriCorps State and National grantee organizations to conduct independent evaluations of their interventions. Other programs, such as AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps Seniors, also generate evidence that aligns with the agency's learning agenda. AmeriCorps ORE funds research grants, third-party evaluations, systematic reviews, and meta-synthesis analyses, and it also conducts its own research to generate credible and relevant evidence on AmeriCorps programs, successful interventions, and civic life in the United States.

2017 State of the Evidence Report

The 2017 State of the Evidence Report is a precursor to the current report. The 2017 report synthesizes the body of evidence produced by or for AmeriCorps from 2014 to 2017. See the [2017 State of the Evidence Report](#) for a discussion of AmeriCorps' earlier evidence findings, which are not included in this 2023 State of the Evidence Report.

A. State of the Evidence framework and research questions

In collaboration with ORE, Mathematica developed a State of the Evidence framework that defines where the agency seeks to build evidence in pursuit of its mission to "improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering." This framework guides how we approach the evidence synthesis and the structure of this report.

The four domains in this framework represent where AmeriCorps seeks to make an impact through its investments in national service and volunteerism: participants, partners, communities, and society. Each domain also includes the specific research questions this report addresses:

- **Participants** are the individual AmeriCorps members and volunteers who join AmeriCorps to serve local communities through AmeriCorps programs.

What does AmeriCorps know about AmeriCorps participants? More specifically ...

- What are the characteristics of participants who serve with AmeriCorps?
- What outcomes and impacts, if any, do AmeriCorps participants experience?

¹ Prior to 2020, AmeriCorps operated as the Corporation for National and Community Service (or CNCS).

- **Partners** are the AmeriCorps grantees and sponsoring organizations that receive AmeriCorps program funding to implement service projects in their local communities using AmeriCorps members and volunteers.

What does AmeriCorps know about AmeriCorps partners? More specifically ...

- In what ways, if any, has AmeriCorps helped build the capacity of grantees and sponsor organizations to achieve their missions and better serve their communities?

- **Communities** are the individuals, groups, and local areas that experience or receive services from AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors delivered by AmeriCorps members and volunteers.

What does AmeriCorps know about communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers? More specifically ...

- What outcomes or impacts, if any, do communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers experience?
- What does the research say about investments in and scaling of effective interventions?

- **Society** represents national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in the United States more broadly.

What does AmeriCorps know about national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society? More specifically ...

- What are the societal rates of volunteerism, participation in national service, and civic engagement? How do these rates vary by demographic characteristics?
- What new insights has AmeriCorps-funded research generated to advance the field’s understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement?

Mathematica began this synthesis by identifying a total of 116 studies eligible for review based on the AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange as the primary source for compiling studies reviewed for this document. Studies produced through AmeriCorps ORE research grants were compiled through the [grantee profiles](#) published on the agency’s website or obtained directly from ORE. We then used this framework and a structured review process to extract key information from those 116 studies, including their design and key findings. See Appendix A for a full list of studies reviewed and Appendix B for the rubric used to review the studies in this report.

It is also important to know that this report is meant to capture the state of the evidence produced or supported by AmeriCorps during a specific timeframe (2017 to 2022). Evidence and knowledge building are ongoing processes, especially as the agency continues to generate new research. As a result, themes discussed within this report should be viewed as characterizing the evidence as it exists at the time of this report, with the understanding that the interpretation of that evidence can evolve as new evidence emerges.

B. Summary of key findings

Most of the reviewed studies (95 percent) were conducted by evaluators external to AmeriCorps, and the most common study designs used by AmeriCorps-funded evaluators facilitate drawing causal conclusions about intervention impacts (43 percent). In addition, the majority of studies (71 percent) focused on the AmeriCorps State and National program. Of the four domains in the framework, the majority of the reviewed studies provided evidence that focused on the communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers (61 percent).

1. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps participants

We reviewed 16 studies (14 percent of 116 studies) that examined AmeriCorps participants' characteristics and the benefits participants experience through serving or volunteering with AmeriCorps. Three studies showed how these members possess the cultural competency to work and interact with communities of people who are different from themselves and showed that they enter their service term with unique backgrounds and motivations to serve. The 14 studies that examined benefits to participants paint a mixed picture on how AmeriCorps members and volunteers benefit from their service or volunteer experience. Only five studies of those 14 studies used a quasi-experimental design (QED) or randomized-control trial (RCT) design, and of these, only three found positive impacts on AmeriCorps members' employment, education, and civic engagement (Anderson et al. 2019; Frazier et al. 2018; Hudson-Flege 2018). Two of the 14 studies focused on AmeriCorps Seniors; they were a QED and a meta-synthesis of extant literature on the program, provided evidence on how AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers experienced improved physical and psychological well-being due to their service experience (Frazier et al. 2019; Georges et al. 2018).

2. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps partners

We reviewed 10 studies (9 percent of 116 studies) that examined whether AmeriCorps helped build the capacity of partners—grantees and sponsor organizations—to achieve their missions and better serve their communities. Emerging themes from two grantees' QED evaluations suggested that AmeriCorps partnerships can help grantees meet their project goals (McCreary et al. 2020; Viola et al. 2018). Other outcomes studies highlighted how AmeriCorps partners experienced increases in their capacity to better serve their communities. However, these studies did not include a comparison group in the study design, so it is difficult to attribute these promising outcomes to partners' AmeriCorps involvement.

3. The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on communities

We reviewed 71 studies (61 percent of 116 studies) that examined how communities and the individuals within them benefit from AmeriCorps-funded interventions, the value generated from investing in AmeriCorps-funded interventions, or how to scale interventions to increase the scope of their impact. Fifty-one of those studies explored impacts or outcomes associated with AmeriCorps-funded interventions, most of which were in AmeriCorps' education focus area (31 studies); the other focus areas (disaster services, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, healthy future, and veterans and military families) had eight or fewer studies.

Our review of 15 return on investment (ROI) and benefit-cost studies (two of which also examined outcomes or impacts) highlighted how AmeriCorps-funded interventions across the six focus areas can

generate additional value that exceeds the initial investments necessary for implementing the interventions. An additional seven studies discussed important prerequisites to successfully scale an intervention.

4. The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society

We reviewed 25 studies (22 percent of 116 studies) that furthered evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in the United States. One descriptive study helped generate new insights on the civic health of society with regards to the levels of formal volunteering in the United States and the variations in individuals' characteristics among volunteers (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2021). Another study also identified the importance of exploring the multifaceted nature of civic engagement and how trends can differ based on how civic engagement is measured (Weiss et al. 2019). Nine studies also explored factors that may affect civic engagement among individuals. Eight studies highlighted how participatory research can be successful in engaging individuals in the strategy design and research processes to help address those individuals' own or local community needs. Finally, five studies highlighted how organizational practices can influence how successful organizations are in engaging and maintaining volunteers to support their goals.

C. Implications of the findings

Based on this report's findings, we propose the following recommendations that can help AmeriCorps and its evidence-building ecosystem, which includes AmeriCorps ORE, AmeriCorps program offices, and State Service Commissions, to further its evidence-building efforts.

1. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps participants

The findings from this report detail opportunities for AmeriCorps to strengthen its efforts to build evidence on AmeriCorps members and volunteers:

- Consider expanding efforts to analyze data on the characteristics of AmeriCorps members and volunteers who apply for and serve with AmeriCorps.
- Explore avenues for collecting data from AmeriCorps members and volunteers when entering and exiting the program to help generate new evidence in this domain.
- Provide additional supports to grantee evaluators to support developing new evidence on AmeriCorps members.

2. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps partners

Findings in this domain offer strategies for how AmeriCorps can gather additional evidence on its partners.

- Explore avenues for collecting data from AmeriCorps partners at the beginning and end of their grant period.
- Consider linking partner survey data with other data sources.
- Consider avenues for facilitating impact studies on AmeriCorps partners.

3. The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on communities

Findings in this domain offer considerations for how AmeriCorps can continue to build evidence on AmeriCorps' impact on communities.

- Consider what additional supports and trainings would help build evidence in focus areas that had fewer studies.
- Utilize meta-analytic approaches to further identify how AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact communities.
- Continue efforts in developing additional ROI studies and build grantee evaluator capacity to include these or other cost-related analyses in the evidence they produce.

4. The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society

Findings in this domain identify approaches where AmeriCorps can grow and apply the evidence on building national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society.

- Continue designing future rounds of AmeriCorps ORE research grant funding that prioritize specific topics of interests to programs, agencies, and the field to build more evidence in those areas.
- Explore ways to help partner organizations incorporate new evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement into their own practices and identify opportunities for service and volunteering that do not currently exist. As new innovations occur, seek to identify opportunities to test new approaches with impact studies.

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I. Introduction

Since the federal agency's beginning in 1993, AmeriCorps² has aimed to use national service and volunteerism to help Americans improve their own lives while strengthening local communities and fostering civic engagement across the nation. As the sole federal agency dedicated to community service and volunteerism, AmeriCorps provides resources, coordination, infrastructure, and leadership to connect individuals with organizations working to address community challenges. AmeriCorps has done so through funding programs and grants that:

- Fund local and national organizations to engage AmeriCorps members, up to one year of service, using evidence-based or evidence-informed approaches to strengthen communities ([AmeriCorps State and National](#)) and develop community leaders through direct, team-based national and community service ([AmeriCorps NCCC](#))
- Enhance organizations' capacity to alleviate poverty and address the impacts of poverty in local communities ([AmeriCorps VISTA](#)) and increase volunteer recruitment and retention ([Volunteer Generation Fund](#))
- Provide grants to organizations to engage Americans age 55 and older to deliver one-on-one mentoring and academic support to children with exceptional needs ([AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program \[FGPI\]](#)); provide friendship and supportive and individualized assistance to help adults remain independent in their homes ([AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program \[SCPI\]](#)); and volunteer in their communities to help address critical needs ([AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program \[RSVP\]](#))
- Support national days of service ([Martin Luther King Day of Service](#) and [September 11 Day of Service](#)) that encourage Americans to volunteer in their communities
- Fund efforts to improve understanding of the importance and impact of civic engagement and national service ([AmeriCorps ORE research grant program](#))

AmeriCorps focus areas

- **Disaster services** help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural and other disasters.
- **Economic opportunity** addresses housing, financial literacy, and employment needs of individuals and families with low income.
- **Education** helps communities design and implement solutions that improve educational outcomes and prepare students for college and their careers.
- **Environmental stewardship** trains individuals in conservation and green jobs and supports successful science-based conservation strategies.
- **Healthy futures** interventions focus on health-focused assistance, prevention, and intervention to educate and maintain healthy communities.
- **Veterans and military families** programs provide services to meet their needs and engage veterans and military families in national service opportunities.

Through its various programs and grants, AmeriCorps draws on the value of national and community service to address the focus areas of disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families (see sidebar). To do this, AmeriCorps identifies and invests in community solutions through its dedication to using evidence to find what works

² Prior to 2020, AmeriCorps operated as the Corporation for National and Community Service (or CNCS).

and build the capacity of grantee organizations, service members, and communities to have a lasting impact on the well-being of individuals and local areas.

A. How AmeriCorps invests in building evidence

Guided by its [strategic learning and evidence-building plan](#) (also referred to as the AmeriCorps learning agenda), the agency generates and uses actionable evidence and data to inform how it operates and seeks to continually improve upon its effectiveness (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2022). The plan also demonstrates how AmeriCorps applies its evidence-building principles (see sidebar) to do the following:

- Enhance the agency’s impact on national service members and volunteers, along with the communities and organizations they serve within.
- Articulate agency- and program-specific priority projects that can build upon the existing evidence base for national service, volunteerism, and civic engagement.

To achieve these objectives, AmeriCorps regularly invests in evidence building through various avenues. The agency, along with State Service Commissions, provides funding and technical support to AmeriCorps State and National grantee organizations to conduct independent evaluations of their interventions.³ These grantees range from those assessing the early phases of their interventions to those developing quality, causal evidence of effectiveness for their interventions. This approach aligns with AmeriCorps’ aim of growing new solutions to current issues facing local communities while also aiming to expand the impact of existing interventions. Because the type and quality of research on grantees’ interventions vary widely, AmeriCorps developed tiered-evidence frameworks to rate the quality of evidence for the interventions it supports. AmeriCorps applies “pre-preliminary,” “preliminary,” “moderate,” and “strong” evidence ratings based on whether the evidence demonstrates a causal impact or whether the evidence is

AmeriCorps evidence-building principles

- AmeriCorps adheres to rigorous scientific and data standards.
- AmeriCorps prioritizes relevant evidence.
- AmeriCorps makes findings from its evidence-building activities broadly available and accessible.
- AmeriCorps protects the independence and objectivity of its evidence.

Source: AmeriCorps Policy 900: Evaluation Policy, as cited in AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (2022).

AmeriCorps evidence ratings and criteria

- **Pre-preliminary** ratings are applied when there is not an available outcomes or impact evaluation for the intervention but there is performance data for that intervention.
- **Preliminary** ratings are applied to outcomes studies, such as pre- and post-tests with no comparison group or post-tests only for treatment and comparison groups.
- **Moderate** ratings are applied to study designs that support causal conclusions but have limited generalizability beyond the study context.
- **Strong** ratings are applied to study designs that support causal conclusions that generalize to other contexts or focal populations.

Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

³ The [AmeriCorps Evaluation Resources](#) page displays various resources for technical assistance and evaluation capacity building that the agency provides to help grantees build evidence for their interventions.

generalizable to other contexts and populations (see sidebar for the criteria associated with each evidence rating category). Other programs, such as AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps Seniors, also generate evidence that align to the agency’s learning agenda.

In addition, the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) funds third-party evaluations, systematic reviews, and meta-synthesis analyses, as well as conducts its own research, to generate credible and relevant evidence on AmeriCorps programs, successful interventions, and civic life in the United States. Producing and synthesizing well-executed evaluations and research further expands the knowledge base on national service, volunteerism, and civic engagement, and addresses priority areas of interest to AmeriCorps and the research field. AmeriCorps ORE has also funded four research grant cycles between 2015 and 2022 that support researchers, scholars, and dissertation writers at higher education institutions to study civic engagement, volunteering, national service, and civil society more broadly (see Table I.1). These AmeriCorps ORE research grants help increase the field’s understanding of the nation’s civic health, identify factors that facilitate or serve as barriers to civic engagement and national service, and engage in innovative research approaches that help address community challenges.

Table I.1. AmeriCorps ORE research grant cycles and priority funding areas

Grant cycle	Priority funding areas
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching the economic benefits of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement • Developing innovative methods to measure these concepts at various geographic levels
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and measuring civic engagement at the community level • Understanding individuals’ motivations for and behaviors of civic engagement throughout the life course. • Researching the impacts of civic engagement, volunteering, and national service for individuals, families, and communities
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a participatory research approach to engage people within their communities to identify, understand, and address societal issues and exploring the use of national service to assist in tackling community-identified priorities
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on prior research funded by AmeriCorps or propose new lines of research that build the field of volunteering and civic engagement especially in the context of COVID • Pursue several broad categories, including studying volunteers and volunteer management; understanding and measuring civic engagement, volunteering, and national service at varying geographical levels; understanding civic infrastructure and how it strengthens communities; and studying national service programs’ interests

Source: <https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/research-evaluation>.

B. Context for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Federal government agencies are increasingly conducting systematic evidence reviews and synthesizing evaluations and research to help identify themes, strengths, and limitations of the evidence base they have helped to produce or fund. These efforts help advance the substantive fields in which they operate and inform current and future planning efforts on where more evidence is needed. In the past decade, AmeriCorps and its grantee organizations and ORE research grant recipients have generated a wealth of evidence on AmeriCorps programs, interventions, civic engagement, and national service. To help summarize and identify broader implications from this work, the agency periodically contracted with third-party evaluators to conduct meta-synthesis analyses designed to build knowledge of AmeriCorps-

funded interventions with evidence of beneficial impacts on communities and individuals receiving intervention services (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2017; Frazier et al. 2019; JBS International 2015; Richman and Streke 2020; Zhang and Sun 2016). Each of these studies summarized evidence findings from within one or two AmeriCorps funding programs, but none took an agency-wide perspective on the cumulative evidence produced by AmeriCorps.

The AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (2017) State of the Evidence Report, however, was one of the agency's first large-scale efforts to synthesize a growing body of evidence across the various AmeriCorps funding programs and grants. Focusing largely on research studies funded from October 2014 to September 2017 (fiscal years 2015 to 2017) and a few key reports before that time period, AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (2017) identified several key findings about the state of the evidence at the time:

- **Volunteerism and AmeriCorps service can benefit individuals' economic opportunity.** The report highlighted one study that found that volunteers' odds of finding employment were 27 percent higher than those of non-volunteers (Spera et al. 2013). The report also discussed a study of nearly 4,000 AmeriCorps alumni from the 2005, 2010, and 2013 cohorts, which found that the majority of alumni say AmeriCorps benefited their career path (Friedman et al. 2016).
- **Older Americans who volunteer can experience health improvements.** The report highlighted a representative study of 8,000 volunteers through AmeriCorps Seniors FGP and AmeriCorps Seniors SCP. The analysis found that compared to a sample of non-volunteering older adults, AmeriCorps Seniors FGP volunteers were less likely to self-report poor or fair health, and AmeriCorps Seniors SCP volunteers were more likely to self-report excellent or very good health (Tan et al. 2016).
- **AmeriCorps-funded interventions increased the return on taxpayer investment.** The report highlighted several studies demonstrating the cost savings associated with AmeriCorps-funded interventions across AmeriCorps focus areas. For example, one cited study found that school-level costs from implementing a one-on-one AmeriCorps-funded tutoring reading program were about \$1,000 lower per student than the average cost for other supplemental reading services (Jacob et al. 2015).

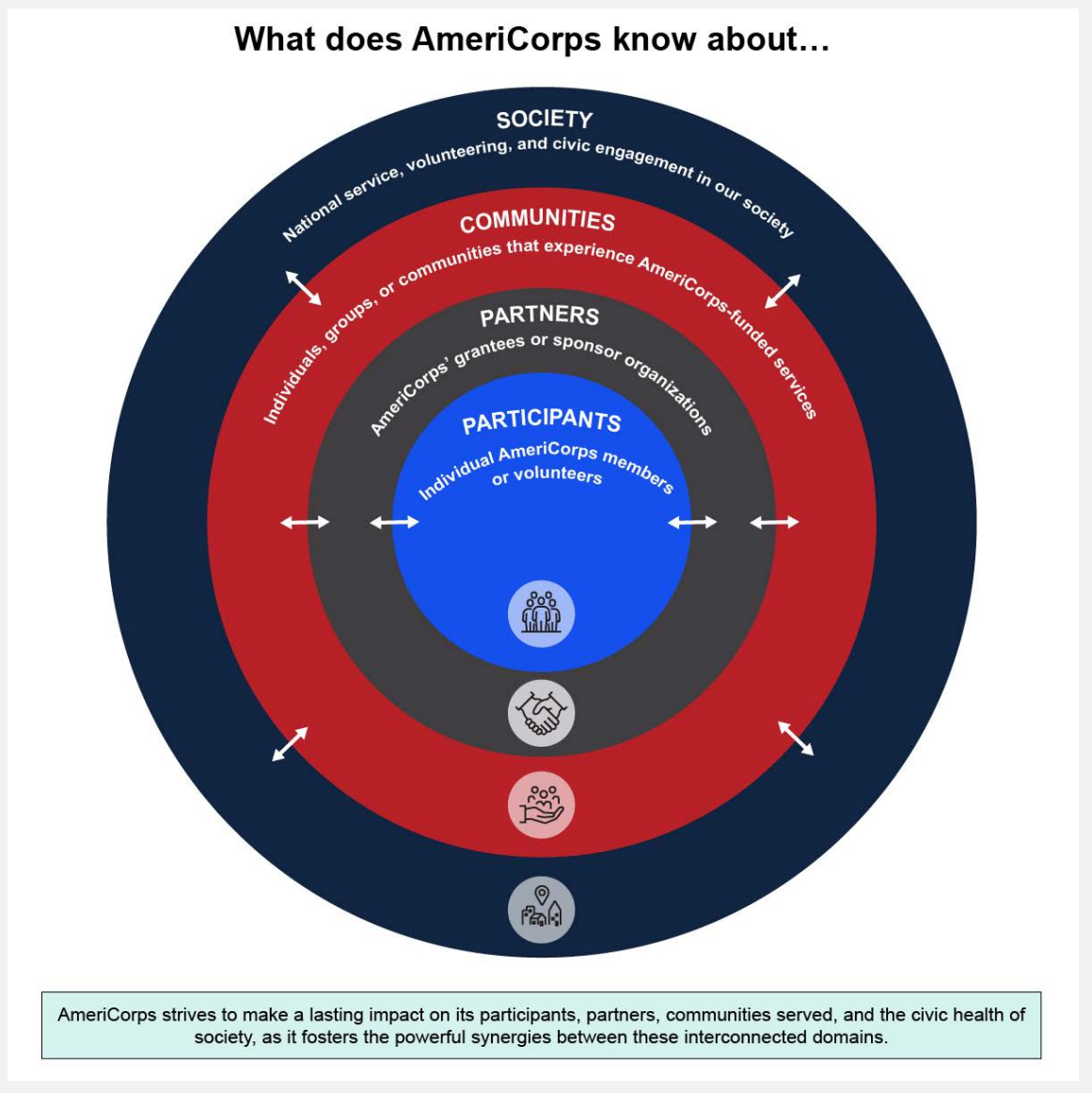
C. Overview of the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

In this section, we describe the framework, research questions, and methodological approach that guided the 2023 State of the Evidence Report. We also provide descriptive information on the studies we reviewed for the report.

1. State of the Evidence framework

Building on the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (2017) analysis, the purpose of this report is to synthesize the AmeriCorps-conducted or -funded research and evaluations published from July 2017 to December 2022. In collaboration with AmeriCorps ORE, Mathematica developed a framework (Figure I.1) that defines where the agency seeks to build evidence in pursuit of its mission to "improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering." This framework guided how we approached the evidence synthesis and ensuing structure for the report.

Figure I.1. State of the Evidence framework



The framework consists of four domains—participants, partners, communities, and society—that represent where AmeriCorps seeks to make an impact through its investments in national service and volunteerism:

- **Participants** are the individuals who join AmeriCorps as members and volunteers to serve local communities through AmeriCorps programs. In addition to various benefits AmeriCorps provides to members and volunteers (such as education awards and supplemental health insurance), AmeriCorps participants also gain valuable professional and personal skills that can improve their lives.
- **Partners** are the AmeriCorps grantees and sponsoring organizations that receive AmeriCorps program funding to implement service projects in their local communities using AmeriCorps members and volunteers. These partners receive funding or member allocations directly from AmeriCorps or as subgrantees to other funding partners or State Service Commissions. AmeriCorps funds and participants can help build organizations' capacity to deliver services and address challenges in their communities.

- **Communities** are the individuals, groups, and local areas that experience or receive services from AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors delivered by AmeriCorps members and volunteers. For example, this can include students who received one-on-one college preparation support from AmeriCorps-funded mentors, local environments where AmeriCorps members created new green spaces, or adults who received financial literacy training from AmeriCorps-funded instructors. AmeriCorps, through its members and volunteers and funded partners, seek to make community impacts in each of AmeriCorps' six focus areas.
- **Society** represents national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in the United States more broadly. AmeriCorps produces and funds research and evidence designed to enhance the field's understanding of these key areas. The research can also inform how the agency can engage community residents, its members and volunteers and partners and can help strengthen communities.

AmeriCorps strives to impact each of these domains directly through its programmatic and ORE research grant-making opportunities. The agency also recognizes and encourages ways that these domains can influence each other (as shown in Figure I.1 with two-directional arrows between the four domains). For example, engaging AmeriCorps participants in national service has the potential to increase their career-readiness skills, which in turn can improve civic engagement more broadly in society. Additionally, providing capacity building supports directly to AmeriCorps partners and matching them with AmeriCorps participants can enable partners to do more or serve more individuals in their communities, which can help address community-level issues in their local context. New research on civic engagement can also provide AmeriCorps partners with innovative strategies on how to recruit young adults into national service opportunities, which can help improve participant, partner, and community outcomes.

2. Research questions

The primary objective of this report is to synthesize the various studies produced by or for AmeriCorps from 2017 to 2022 to describe the state of the evidence for the participant, partner, community, and society domains where the agency seeks to make an impact. The specific research questions this report addresses are:

- **What does AmeriCorps know about AmeriCorps participants? More specifically ...**
 - What are the characteristics of participants who serve with AmeriCorps?
 - What outcomes and impacts, if any, do AmeriCorps participants experience?
- **What does AmeriCorps know about AmeriCorps partners? More specifically ...**
 - In what ways, if any, has AmeriCorps helped build the capacity of grantees and sponsor organizations to achieve their missions and better serve their communities?
- **What does AmeriCorps know about communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers? More specifically ...**
 - What outcomes or impacts, if any, do communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers experience?
 - What does the research say about investments in and scaling of effective interventions?

- **What does AmeriCorps know about national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society? More specifically ...**

- What are the societal rates of volunteerism, participation in national service, and civic engagement? How do these rates vary by demographic characteristics?
- What new insights has AmeriCorps-funded research generated to advance the field’s understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement?

3. Methodological approach

To focus on the body of AmeriCorps-related literature produced since the 2017 State of the Evidence report, the scope of the studies reviewed for this report included those published between July 2017 to December 2022. To address the first three primary research questions, this report focused on synthesizing evidence on how AmeriCorps participants might benefit from their service experience, how AmeriCorps participants can enhance AmeriCorps partner capacity, and how national service can impact local communities. As such, we reviewed studies in which AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers were the focus of the research or were involved in delivery of services that AmeriCorps partners provided to communities. This meant that studies funded by AmeriCorps’ Social Innovation Fund (SIF) were excluded from this review as AmeriCorps participants were not included in these grants. SIF was a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (dba AmeriCorps) that received funding from 2010 to 2016. During that time period, the program awarded 59 intermediary grantees to establish subgrants with community organizations to overcome local challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. As part of their funding, SIF grantees and subgrantees were required to conduct rigorous program evaluations. In total, the SIF program generated 126 evaluations, of which 85 percent were based on a randomized-control trial (RCT) design or quasi-experimental design (QED). To address the fourth primary research question, we reviewed studies developed or funded by AmeriCorps that aimed to increase the knowledge base on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society.

Overall, we identified a total of 116 studies eligible for review. These studies were conducted by AmeriCorps program grantees, AmeriCorps ORE research grantees, AmeriCorps ORE, or AmeriCorps ORE-commissioned contractors. See Appendix A for the full list of studies reviewed for this report. The [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) was the primary source for compiling studies reviewed for this document. This public digital repository provides equitable access to research and evaluation reports on AmeriCorps-funded interventions for users to identify effective solutions that can help address the needs of their communities. The Evidence Exchange posts studies designed to meet program-specific evaluation requirements and are assessed by independent, third-party evaluators (see the Evidence Exchange Metadata Glossary in AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation [2021] for more information). Studies produced through AmeriCorps ORE research grants were compiled through the [grantee profiles](#) published on the agency’s website or obtained directly from AmeriCorps ORE. These studies were from the 2015, 2017, and 2018 AmeriCorps ORE research grant cohorts.⁴ We did not limit studies on the basis

⁴ At the time of this report, some AmeriCorps ORE Research grantees still had active grants, which meant that they had not yet produced a study or made it available to AmeriCorps ORE. Additionally, some grantees produced studies

of their research or evaluation design, but evaluation-capacity building guides, tip sheets, or tools were excluded from review.⁵

We next applied a structured review process to extract key information from all 116 studies identified as eligible for review. Using the review rubric presented in Appendix B, a study team leader and two reviewers documented the characteristics of each study. If multiple studies focused on the same intervention, a separate rubric was completed for each study. The study team leader reviewed the completed rubrics to identify any discrepancies between the reviews. To create the final review, the study review team discussed and resolved any discrepancies across the three reviews, and, if needed, another study team leader was consulted if a consensus could not be reached.⁶

The review rubric captured information on the characteristics of the study's substantive focus, along with its design and key findings. Substantive focus characteristics included the State of the Evidence domain(s) categorization; AmeriCorps focus and topic areas; the affiliated AmeriCorps program(s) through which AmeriCorps participants served when providing intervention services or through which partners received AmeriCorps supports; intervention components and settings; and the focal population for the study. We also recorded information on the study source itself; that is, we identified whether it was produced by an AmeriCorps program grantee, an AmeriCorps ORE research grantee, the AmeriCorps ORE, or an AmeriCorps ORE-commissioned contractor. We extracted information on the study's research design (for example, randomized-controlled trial, quasi-experimental design, meta-synthesis, or descriptive) and key outcomes of interest to the study and recorded a description of the study's main findings.

It is important to note that our review did not assess the quality of study design implementation or its analytic approach, as these studies were designed to meet AmeriCorps' evidence-building requirements. However, our characterization of the study findings is grounded in the research design used and statistical tests conducted and not in how study authors described the findings. For example, findings from an outcomes study that did not include a comparison group are not characterized as evidence of impact, even if the study authors described their findings as such.

4. Characteristics of the reviewed studies

In this section, we provide descriptive information about the studies reviewed for this synthesis, including the entities that generated the research, the types of study designs used, the AmeriCorps programs that the studies included or focused on, and the number of studies that align with each of the four domains described in the State of the Evidence framework (Figure I.1). These characteristics uphold the objectivity, rigor, generalizability, and relevancy of the evidence that AmeriCorps has supported and created.

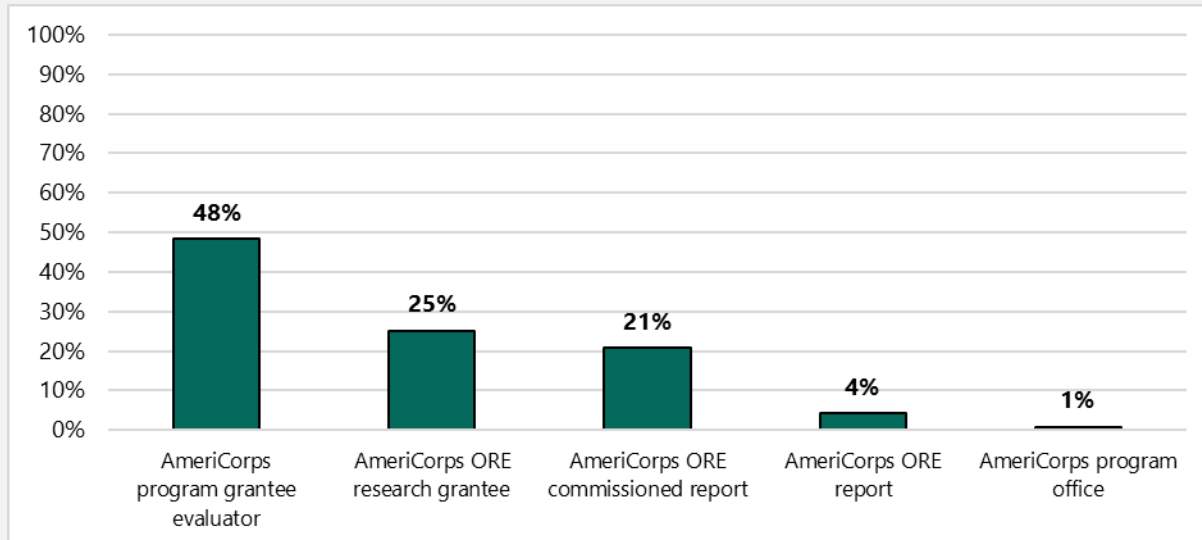
that were not publicly available (for example, journal articles requiring publication fees). As a result, we compiled and reviewed 29 eligible studies affiliated with 18 out of 36 AmeriCorps ORE research grantees from the 2015, 2017, and 2018 cohorts. We did not identify any studies from the 2022 cohort, as these ORE research grantees will conclude their research projects over a three year period.

⁵ Our search also yielded 23 documents that were practitioner guides, evaluation-related tools, and summary briefs of original studies already compiled as part of the search. We excluded these documents from our review.

⁶ The review included six studies (two meta-syntheses and four case studies) that were produced by Mathematica. AmeriCorps ORE commissioned these studies under a separate contract that focused on scaling evidence-based models.

The majority of reviewed studies were generated by AmeriCorps program grantee external evaluators. Figure I.2 displays the percentage of studies by the source that conducted the research. AmeriCorps program grantee evaluators produced the majority of reviewed studies (48 percent of the 116 reviewed). This pattern is consistent with AmeriCorps' grant-making process, particularly for the AmeriCorps State and National program, which has evidence-building requirements for grantees based on their funding type, grant type, and grant size and the grant program's award evaluation requirements based on its Terms and Conditions.⁷ The three cohorts (2015, 2017, and 2018) of AmeriCorps ORE research grantees produced 25 percent of the reviewed studies. AmeriCorps ORE commissioned 21 percent of the studies through external contractors while also directly producing four percent itself. One study, produced by the AmeriCorps NCCC program office with technical support from AmeriCorps ORE, was also reviewed. Overall, 95 percent of the reviewed studies were carried out by evaluators external to AmeriCorps. While AmeriCorps funded these studies, the reliance on external evaluators reduces the potential for conflicts of interest and provides objectivity to the study results.

Figure I.2. Percentage of studies by study source that conducted the research



Source: $N = 116$ studies produced for or by AmeriCorps from June 2017 to December 2022 reviewed for this report.

Note: AmeriCorps ORE = AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation.

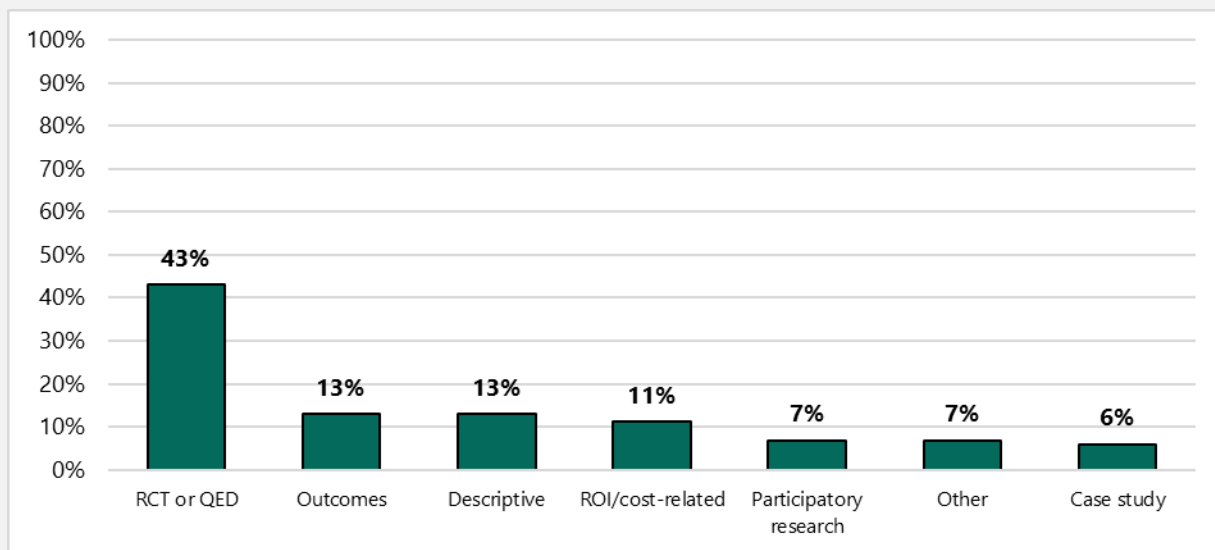
The most common study designs used by AmeriCorps-funded evaluators facilitate drawing causal conclusions about intervention impacts. Figure I.3 displays the percentage of studies by the main study design employed by the evaluators. Fifty of the 116 reviewed studies (43 percent) used impact study design, with 37 percent of all studies using a quasi-experimental design (QED) and six percent using a randomized controlled trial (RCT). These study designs support causal conclusions about the interventions or programs studied. Such studies assess an intervention's impact by assessing differences in outcomes between those receiving the intervention (the treatment group) and a comparable group of individuals not receiving the intervention (the comparison group). Further analysis (not displayed in Figure I.3) shows

⁷ Additional information on terms and conditions for AmeriCorps State and National grants can be found at <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2023ASNProgram508TC.pdf>

that an AmeriCorps program grantee evaluator conducted 43 of the 50 impact studies (86 percent) that used a QED or RCT approach.

Additionally, 13 percent of the reviewed studies used an outcomes study design. Outcomes studies often collect data from individuals before and after they receive an intervention to determine whether individuals' outcomes changed over time. However, any detected changes cannot be definitively attributed to the intervention because, without a comparison group, it is unclear what individuals would have done if they had not received the intervention. Thirteen percent of the studies used a descriptive design, and 11 percent used a return on investment (ROI) or other cost-related study design. Most of the ROI or cost-related studies were conducted through AmeriCorps commissioned reports. Seven percent of the studies used a participatory research approach, which were all conducted by AmeriCorps ORE research grantees. These studies directly involved community members as equal and active participants in all aspects of the research.⁸

Figure I.3. Percentage of studies by main study approach



Source: *N* = 116 studies produced for or by AmeriCorps from June 2017 to December 2022 reviewed for this report.

Notes: RCT = randomized-controlled trial; QED = quasi-experimental design; ROI = return on investment. The "Other" category includes implementation studies, meta-syntheses, and theoretical frameworks.

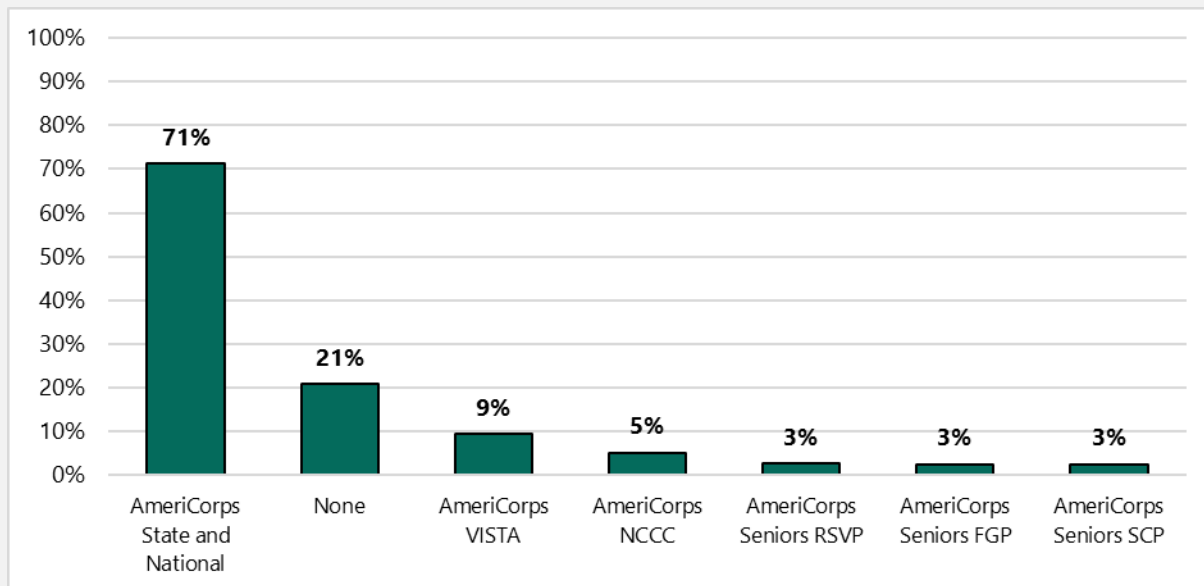
Participatory research is a methodological approach that can include one or more study designs. We classified studies using this approach into their own category separate from the other study design classifications.

The majority of studies focused on the AmeriCorps State and National program. Seventy-one percent of the 116 reviewed studies included, at least in part, the AmeriCorps State and National program or its members (Figure I.4). These studies, for example, focused on AmeriCorps State and National members' experiences or outcomes or evaluated interventions where AmeriCorps State and National members delivered services to intervention recipients or communities. This pattern aligns with AmeriCorps funding requirements across the different program offices, as the AmeriCorps State and National program has evidence-building requirements for grantees based on their funding type, grant

⁸ Additional information on participatory research methods can be found at https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2021_07_20_ParticipatoryResearchOnePager_ORE.pdf.

type, grant size, and the program’s award evaluation requirements based on their Terms and Conditions. The other AmeriCorps funding programs require their grantees to collect and track data, but their Terms and Conditions for grantees and sponsors do not require conducting formal evaluations of their interventions. Less than a quarter of the studies (22 percent) did not focus on interventions or participants of a particular AmeriCorps program. The vast majority of these studies (23 of 25 studies) were conducted by AmeriCorps ORE research grantees that broadly focused on expanding the knowledge base on facilitators, barriers, and approaches to civic engagement and volunteerism in the United States. Nine percent of the studies included the AmeriCorps VISTA members, whereas AmeriCorps NCCC and the three AmeriCorps Seniors programs (RSVP, FGP, and SCP) were included in five percent or less of the studies.

Figure I.4. Percentage of studies by AmeriCorps program included in the research



Source: *N* = 116 studies produced for or by AmeriCorps from June 2017 to December 2022 reviewed for this report.

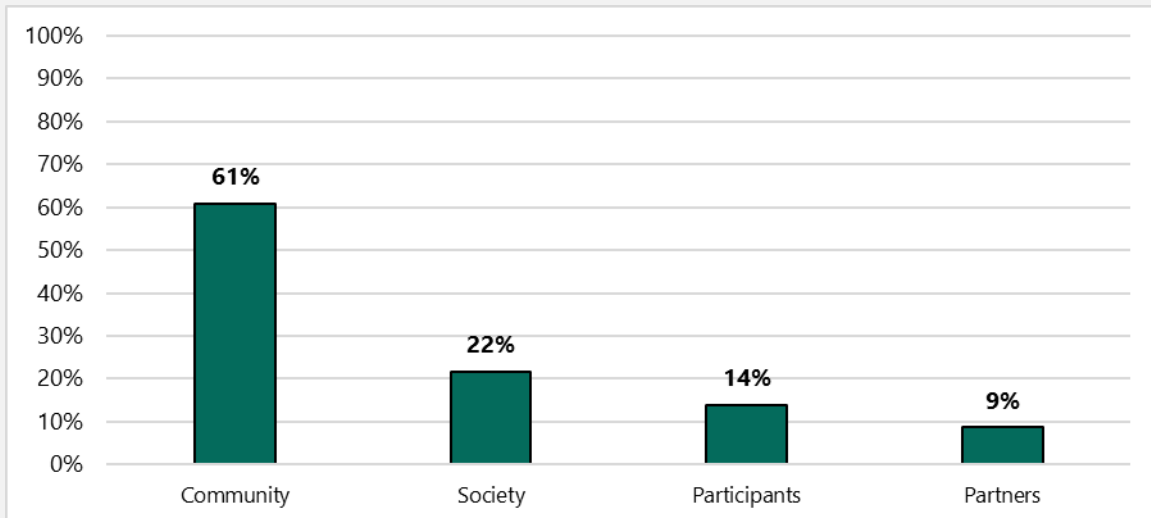
Note: RSVP = Retired and Senior Volunteer Program; FGP = Foster Grandparent Program; SCP = Senior Companion Program. Percentages do not add to 100 percent because studies could be represented in more than one category. Twelve studies included AmeriCorps members from more than one AmeriCorps program (for example, analyzing community impacts based on services delivered by AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members).

The majority of the reviewed studies provided evidence that focused on the communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers. We classified studies according to the four domains presented in the State of the Evidence framework (Figure I.1) based on studies’ primary outcomes or focus.⁹ Sixty-one percent (71 studies) of the 116 reviewed studies focused on the communities and individuals receiving intervention services funded by AmeriCorps (Figure I.5). Among these 71 community-focused studies, 37 used either a QED or RCT to assess impacts on those receiving intervention services (not displayed in Figure I.5). Less than a quarter of all studies (22 percent) were categorized under the society domain. These studies, predominantly conducted by AmeriCorps ORE

⁹ Studies about or including AmeriCorps and its members and volunteers were coded under the participant, partner, or community domains. Studies could be classified under more than one of these domains (for example, if a study reported on community-level outcomes while also assessing AmeriCorps participant outcomes). If AmeriCorps was not an explicit focus of a study, the study was classified in the society domain.

research grantees, aimed to expand the knowledge base on topics of interest to AmeriCorps, such as factors that relate to individuals’ civic engagement. Relatively fewer studies focused on AmeriCorps participants (14 percent) and partners (nine percent) during this review’s timeframe.¹⁰ These studies focused on describing the AmeriCorps member experience, changes in outcomes for AmeriCorps members, or ways in which organizational capacity increased because of the partners’ involvement with AmeriCorps.

Figure I.5. Percentage of studies by State of the Evidence framework domain



Source: *N* = 116 studies produced for or by AmeriCorps from June 2017 to December 2022 reviewed for this report.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 percent because studies could be categorized into more than one domain. Ten studies included AmeriCorps members from more than one AmeriCorps program (for example, including AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members in their analysis).

D. How the report is organized

Our discussion of these studies’ findings in the ensuing chapters is organized around the four domains of the State of the Evidence framework and the corresponding research questions we seek to address. In Chapter II, we describe the evidence that focuses on AmeriCorps participants—the members and volunteers engaging in national service—and the reported experiences and outcomes derived from their engagement with AmeriCorps. In Chapter III, we discuss AmeriCorps partner grantees and sponsoring organizations and the evidence that highlights ways in which AmeriCorps involvement has helped build their organizational capacity. In Chapter IV, we describe evidence that focuses on ways in which AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact the communities and individuals receiving AmeriCorps-funded grantee or sponsor services delivered by AmeriCorps members and volunteers. In Chapter V, we describe the evidence that helps increase the field’s understanding of national service, volunteerism, and civic engagement in society. Chapter VI provides a summary of key findings and offers recommendations based on these themes.

¹⁰ The 2017 State of the Evidence report discusses several studies that focus on AmeriCorps participants that were outside the scope of studies reviewed for this report.

We placed a relatively greater emphasis on impact studies for identifying themes related to how participants, partners, and communities might benefit from their AmeriCorps involvement and discuss emerging findings from other types of studies that coalesce around each other or support other studies' impact findings. In areas where there is an absence of impact studies or there is relatively less research overall, we aimed to clarify what conclusions can and cannot be drawn from the evidence discussed.

It is also important to know that this report is meant to capture the state of the evidence produced or supported by AmeriCorps during a specific timeframe (2017 to 2022). Evidence and knowledge building are ongoing processes, especially as the agency continues to generate new research. As a result, themes discussed within this report should be viewed as characterizing the evidence as it exists at the time of this report, with the understanding that the interpretation of that evidence can evolve as new evidence emerges.

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II. What is the State of the Evidence on AmeriCorps Participants?

Each AmeriCorps program relies on and empowers AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers to help address the issues and challenges local communities face. These AmeriCorps participants seek to make a difference in their communities through their national service and volunteerism, and their experiences can help them develop professionally, personally, and civically as individuals. In this chapter, we present key themes arising from the 16 studies (14 percent of 116 studies) our review identified as having a focus, at least in part, on AmeriCorps participants.

The chapter addresses two research questions:

- **What are the characteristics of participants who serve with AmeriCorps?**
- **What outcomes and impacts, if any, do AmeriCorps participants experience?**

In Section A of this chapter, we discuss key findings from the small subset of studies that explored key characteristics of AmeriCorps participants. Section B synthesizes themes arising from studies that assessed whether AmeriCorps participants benefited from engaging in national service and volunteerism.

A. Characteristics of AmeriCorps members

Our review process identified three studies that primarily focused on key characteristics of AmeriCorps participants.¹¹ The three studies included samples of AmeriCorps members serving through the AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, or AmeriCorps VISTA programs. We did not identify any studies that provide characteristics of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. This section describes key findings from these three studies. We do not intend for our discussion to be an all-encompassing description of AmeriCorps members, as these studies sought to describe AmeriCorps members according to key measures of interest to the research.

AmeriCorps members possess the cultural competency to work and interact with communities of people who differ from themselves. AmeriCorps administers the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES) to AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA members to capture insights about their service experience and attitudes upon exiting from their program.¹² Based on the AmeriCorps member theory of change, the survey includes questions that align to four pathways through which the agency aims to impact its members: bridging differences, civic engagement, “getting things done,” and life and career skills. AmeriCorps ORE conducted a descriptive analysis of AmeriCorps MES data collected from 2016 to 2020 to understand how AmeriCorps members bridge differences by serving individuals different from themselves while also serving alongside members from other backgrounds (Dermanjian and Johnson 2022) (see the box).

¹¹ AmeriCorps collects demographic information on its members and volunteers, such as age, sex, and race and ethnicity, as part of the application and enrollment process. The agency analyzes this information (for example, see <https://data.americorps.gov/National-Service/AmeriCorps-Members-Demographic/2ca3-89j5>) to learn more about who is applying and enrolling in AmeriCorps service opportunities and to help the agency know whether it is engaging a diverse corps of members and volunteers who reflect the diversity of the communities in which they serve.

¹² Dermanjian and Johnson (2022) report that nearly 300,000 AmeriCorps members have responded to the MES since 2015, and 75 to 80 percent of members completed the MES each year from 2016 to 2020.

The study found that most AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA members completing the AmeriCorps MES at the end of their service from 2016 to 2020:

- **Enjoy exploring differences** between their co-workers and friends from different cultures and backgrounds (over 88 percent) and feel they **respect the values** of people from different cultures and backgrounds (over 94 percent)
- **Enjoy interacting** (over 92 percent) and **feel confident when interacting** (over 88 percent) with people from different cultures and backgrounds

Note: Dermanjian and Johnson (2022) analyzed survey responses for each AmeriCorps program separately. The percentages referenced here represent the lowest proportion reported for an AmeriCorps program in a particular year across the 2016 to 2020 time period.

The study also found that the proportion of AmeriCorps members demonstrating cultural competency on these MES questions was relatively greater among those who indicated they regularly worked on a team during their service term compared to members who worked on teams less often. The findings were generally consistent across AmeriCorps member demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, ethnicity, and education), AmeriCorps focus area, and the AmeriCorps program through which members served. While this descriptive study highlights how AmeriCorps members demonstrate important aspects of cultural competency, the study design's limitations make it difficult to attribute these patterns to AmeriCorps members' service. Without knowledge of members' level of cultural competency at the start of their service and without a comparison group, we cannot know what these individuals' cultural competency would have been had they not served through AmeriCorps. Additionally, because the study focused on members from three AmeriCorps programs (State and National, NCCC, and VISTA), it is unclear whether these findings can be generalized to AmeriCorps volunteers who participate in AmeriCorps Seniors programs.

AmeriCorps members enter their service terms with unique backgrounds and motivations to serve.

AmeriCorps seeks to recruit and enroll a diverse set of members who reflect the communities in which they serve. Having an in-depth understanding of who AmeriCorps members are at the start of their service can help the agency identify whether it is meeting recruitment and enrollment goals and help ensure that the agency is meeting the needs of its service members. As part of a three-year quasi-experimental longitudinal impact evaluation of AmeriCorps NCCC service on AmeriCorps members' leadership skills and qualities, Georges et al. (2021) conducted a descriptive study of the baseline findings of AmeriCorps NCCC members to identify their key characteristics at the start of their service term and how they compare to individuals who were invited to join AmeriCorps NCCC but did not enroll. The evaluation and report will be completed in December of 2023. The study's sample included 1,120 AmeriCorps NCCC members who began service from winter 2020 to winter 2021, which was 77 percent of all AmeriCorps NCCC members who began their service during that timeframe (see the box).

Analysis of the data collected at baseline from these members showed that:

- Their average age was 21 years,
- Half identified as female, 48 percent identified as male, and two percent identified as nonbinary.
- Over 95 percent had at least a high school diploma or GED and 32 percent had a bachelor’s degree.
- Over two-thirds (69 percent) had previous volunteer experience.
- Fifty-seven percent lived in a two-parent or two-guardian household; 26 percent lived in a single parent household; six percent had no parent, one parent and one guardian, or one guardian only; and 10 percent declined to provide this information.

Georges et al. (2021) also found that AmeriCorps NCCC members (n = 1,120) and the comparison group (n = 927) were similar at baseline on measures of self-efficacy, life skills, collaborative work practices, communication skills, valuing diversity, and community engagement. However, a smaller proportion of AmeriCorps NCCC members than comparison group individuals reported being civically engaged in their community and exhibited confidence in their professional skills and problem-solving ability. The findings from this study provide a deeper understanding of who AmeriCorps NCCC members in this cohort are, but additional research is needed to determine whether and how these characteristics are typical of other AmeriCorps NCCC cohorts and how they compare to the characteristics of members serving through AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA.

A separate study conducted by an AmeriCorps ORE research grantee also sought to develop distinct profiles of AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC members based on their characteristics when they began their service term (Hudson-Flege 2018). To carry out this work, the study applied a cluster analysis on a sample of 1,424 AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC members and 1,216 comparison group members who participated in the 1999–2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study. As shown in Figure II.1, the Hudson-Flege

Figure II.1. AmeriCorps member profiles



Source: Hudson-Flege (2018).

(2018) study grouped AmeriCorps members into four unique profiles based on their age, education level, and public service motivation (defined as commitment to public interest, civic awareness, and attraction to public policy): Young Idealists, Wanderers, Gappers, and Public Servants. The study also noted statistically significant differences between these member profiles based on gender, race or ethnicity, and family income. For example, compared to the study sample as a whole, the Public Servant profile had a higher representation of female AmeriCorps members, and the Young Idealist and Wanderer profiles had a higher representation of Black and Hispanic members. Overall, the study provided a unique lens for understanding AmeriCorps members as they begin their national service, though it is important to acknowledge that these profiles are based on a small set of measures that likely do not fully encapsulate

the nuances of all AmeriCorps members. Future studies can aim to use more recent data on AmeriCorps members and incorporate additional measures on AmeriCorps to continue exploring the characteristics of AmeriCorps members who engage in national service.

B. Benefits to AmeriCorps members and volunteers

Our review process identified 14 studies focused on assessing whether national service and volunteering through AmeriCorps benefits AmeriCorps participants. AmeriCorps participants from all of the AmeriCorps (State and National, VISTA, and NCCC) and AmeriCorps Seniors (FGP, SCP, and RSVP) programs were included in at least one study, with AmeriCorps State and National members being at least part of the focus in most of the studies (10 of 14). Five of the 14 studies used either a QED or RCT design to assess impacts on AmeriCorps participants, and another study was a meta-synthesis that conducted a review of other external evaluations that had causal designs.¹³ The other eight studies used an outcomes or descriptive study design. The 14 studies examined outcomes that we thematically grouped into three categories: growing one's employment or educational future, improving one's well-being; and increasing one's civic engagement. In this section, we describe key findings associated with each of these outcome categories.

Although AmeriCorps members experienced employment- or educational-related outcome improvements, there is limited evidence on whether individuals' AmeriCorps service caused these outcomes. Our review identified four studies that used a QED or RCT design to assess whether AmeriCorps members' service experience affected their employment or educational outcomes. Using a comparison group allowed these studies to attribute any differences in outcomes between AmeriCorps members and the comparison group to AmeriCorps members' service experiences. Only two of the four studies reported statistically significant differences between AmeriCorps members and comparison group individuals. One (Anderson et al. 2019) found that AmeriCorps State and National Reading Partners alumni were approximately 1.3 times more likely to report they currently worked in the nonprofit, public, or government sectors than a matched comparison group sample from the national General Social Survey dataset. The other, the Hudson-Flege (2018) study described in Section II.A, found that AmeriCorps members characterized as Gappers (recent college graduates with low public service motivation) had greater increases in basic work skills relative to a comparison group of Gappers who did not serve through AmeriCorps. However, the study did not find statistically significant differences on the basic work skills measure between AmeriCorps members and comparison group members within the other three profiles, and the study groups across all four profiles were similar in the extent to which individuals felt responsible for their employment success and educational success.

Two other studies using a QED or RCT design did not find evidence of impacts on AmeriCorps members. One study found that although opportunity youth¹⁴ serving with AmeriCorps State and National showed increases in high school completion, courses completed, current employment, hourly wages, and longest employment period between pre-test and post-test assessments, comparison group members

¹³ Three of the 14 studies used a QED design to assess impacts on individuals receiving AmeriCorps-funded services but used an outcomes study design to examine whether AmeriCorps members experienced outcome changes.

¹⁴ AmeriCorps defines opportunity youth as individuals from 16 to 24 years who are disconnected from school or work (Frazier et al. 2018).

experienced similar improvements in these areas (Frazier et al. 2018). The other study used a field experiment to determine the impact of having AmeriCorps service listed on a résumé during a job search and found that listing AmeriCorps on individuals' résumés when applying for jobs did not have statistically significant impact on whether they received a call back for a job interview (Levine et al. 2018).

Three outcomes studies reported statistically significant outcome improvements for AmeriCorps members, although not having a comparison group prevents any causal conclusions. The findings might also not be generalizable to AmeriCorps participants serving in different substantive areas or contexts. For example, one study found that AmeriCorps State and National members who served with YouthBuild had statistically significant increases in their educational attainment goals and knowledge of how to pursue college and career pathways (The Center for Youth and Communities 2019). Another study found that AmeriCorps State and National members trained through the Alliance for Catholic Education Teaching Fellows experienced statistically significant increases in (a) teachers' self-reported preparedness for conducting various instructional tasks and (b) principal and academic supervisor performance ratings over the course of the school year (Kowalski et al. 2018). A third study found AmeriCorps State and National members serving as mentors and community coordinators for the Energy Express program increased in their confidence and knowledge to perform their role and attitudes towards community service (Edmonds 2019).

Five reviewed studies used a post-test only or descriptive study design to highlight how AmeriCorps members appeared to benefit from their national service experiences, but these study designs do not enable us to attribute these outcomes to their AmeriCorps service experience. These studies found that the majority of AmeriCorps State and National members in the study samples reported that they gained useful skills and industry-related knowledge (Dietz et al. 2019; Viola et al. 2018) and that their AmeriCorps experience helped shape their employment and educational goals (Anderson et al. 2019; Dietz et al. 2019). One study reported that 73 percent of AmeriCorps State and National members serving with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) program were employed or self-employed six months after their service ended (Dietz et al. 2019). Another study found that 41 percent of 367 sponsoring organizations across five states reported that they hired AmeriCorps State and National members who served with their organization (Whitsett et al. 2018). A comprehensive descriptive study of 4,671 AmeriCorps NCCC service projects completed between 2012 and 2019 found that most projects self-reported making impact on AmeriCorps NCCC members' technical skills (84 percent) and managerial skills (56 percent) that would benefit their future careers (Sum et al. 2020).

AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers experienced improvements in their physical and psychology well-being. Two studies investigated physical or psychological well-being impacts or outcomes of adults volunteering through AmeriCorps Seniors programs. A longitudinal study of AmeriCorps volunteers in AmeriCorps Seniors FGP and SCP found that AmeriCorps volunteers in both programs who remained for their entire service reported statistically significant improvements in their self-perceived health than a comparison group of adult non-volunteers in the general population (Georges et al. 2018). However, there were no significant differences between these two groups on the average number of self-reported symptoms of depression. When comparing the two AmeriCorps Seniors programs to each other among those who stayed for the entire service, the study found that FGP volunteers were more likely to report improvements in self-rated health than SCP volunteers, whereas SCP volunteers had higher life

satisfaction scores and lower social isolation/loneliness scores than FGP volunteers. A meta-synthesis study of the three AmeriCorps Seniors programs (FGP, SCP, and RSVP) also identified robust evidence of the positive outcomes volunteers can experience (Frazier et al. 2019). The study reviewed 27 reports on the AmeriCorps Seniors programs, which contained a total 64 AmeriCorps volunteer outcomes. Twelve of the 52 positive outcomes were based on RCT or QED study designs, which found that AmeriCorps volunteers had better physical health (six outcomes), overall functioning (one outcome), life satisfaction (two outcomes), mental health (two outcomes), and social connectedness (one outcome).

An AmeriCorps ORE research grantee conducted a descriptive study of 1,697 adults volunteering through AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP to examine factors that may relate to adults' satisfaction with their volunteer role and whether they intended to remain in that role (Crittenden 2019). Because adults hold several social roles (for example, caregiving, working, and volunteering), the more roles one has or the extent to which roles have competing demands has the potential to influence their volunteering decisions. Ultimately, the study found that the extent to which individuals have roles with competing demands (role conflict) was related to their volunteering satisfaction and the number of roles they occupied was related to the amount of time they spent volunteering. Although this study did not examine physical or well-being outcomes associated with volunteering, the findings provide insights on why volunteers vary in their program participation, why they may differ in the benefits that come from volunteering, and supports they may need to help sustain their volunteering through AmeriCorps.

Some aspects of AmeriCorps members' civic engagement and civic mindedness increased after their service. The review identified three studies that used a QED or RCT design to assess impacts of AmeriCorps service experience on members' civic engagement and civic mindedness. These studies defined and measured civic engagement and civic mindedness in varying ways, which speaks to the multifaceted nature of these complex constructs. Hudson-Flege (2018) found that members in the Wanderers, Gappers, and Public Servants profiles demonstrated a statistically significant greater increase in their opinion about the importance of being active in the community (referred to as neighborhood obligation) than comparison group members. The study also showed statistically significant differences between Young Idealists, Gappers, and Public Servants relative to comparison group members on opinions about the feasibility of working with other neighborhood residents to meet local needs (referred to as grassroots efficacy). However, the study found no reported differences between the study groups on a measure of community-based activism.

The two QED studies that focused on AmeriCorps members serving with specific grantee organizations had mixed findings about whether members' service impacted their civic engagement and civic mindedness. Anderson et al. (2019) found that compared to a matched sample of individuals from the American National Election Study, Reading Partners AmeriCorps alumni were more likely to express their political views, self-report higher levels of political knowledge, and participate in volunteer activities. However, the two samples were similar with regards to voting in the 2016 presidential election and sense of social trust. The Frazier et al. (2018) QED, which used a sample of opportunity youth in AmeriCorps State and National programs, found that AmeriCorps members and the comparison group had similar outcomes on various measures of civic engagement, such as sense of community, social trust, and sense of self-efficacy to solve community issues.

In addition, the review identified three studies that examined changes in civic engagement using samples of AmeriCorps members serving with specific grantee organizations, but none included a comparison group in the study design. A study of AmeriCorps members serving in the YouthBuild program reported statistically significant increases between baseline and follow-up on members' volunteer and community service involvement, leadership skills, and sense of community connectedness (The Center for Youth and Communities 2019). The other two studies found relative increases between AmeriCorps members' pre-test and post-test reports on their likelihood to volunteer in the future (Viola et al. 2018) and being involved in volunteer or community service activities to help their community (Dietz et al. 2019), but the report does not indicate whether these changes were statistically significant.

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III. What is the State of the Evidence on AmeriCorps Partners?

AmeriCorps strives to support and empower nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations to address the critical issues in their local areas. Through its partnerships with these grantees and sponsor organizations, AmeriCorps provides them with AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers to help partners increase their reach. AmeriCorps programs, such as AmeriCorps VISTA, can also help build the capacity of these organizations by providing AmeriCorps members that can help enhance their infrastructure and foster community partnerships. In this chapter, we answer the research question:

- **In what ways, if any, has AmeriCorps helped build the capacity of grantees and sponsor organizations to achieve their missions and better serve their communities?**

In this chapter we present key findings from the 10 studies in the review identified as having a focus, at least in part, on AmeriCorps partners. We organize our discussion based on studies that examined whether AmeriCorps partners accomplished more within their communities and studies that focused on whether AmeriCorps help developed partners' organizational capacity. Given the small number of studies in this area and the limited number based on experimental design, our synthesis in this chapter should be viewed as identifying emerging themes that warrant additional exploration with further research.

Partnering with AmeriCorps helped grantees and sponsoring organizations meet their project goals. We identified four studies that examined whether and how AmeriCorps partners were able to achieve the objectives they hoped to accomplish. Two of these studies focused their impact analyses on specific grantee organizations hosting AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members using a QED approach (McCreary et al. 2020; Viola et al. 2018). A third study conducted a post-test only outcomes approach among AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor organizations that partnered with AmeriCorps from 2016 to 2019 (Hamdan and Robles 2022). The fourth study provided descriptive information using qualitative data that discussed how AmeriCorps members helped increase the capacity of coaching programs to help individuals recover from the opioid addiction (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2020).

Results from the two QEDs showed that AmeriCorps grantee organizations with AmeriCorps members were more able to accomplish their mission than comparable organizations that did not host AmeriCorps members. Viola et al.'s (2018) analysis of Habitat for Humanity (HFH) found that small and large HFH sites hosting AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members built and rehabbed more homes than HFH sites that did not host any members. A similar pattern was found in the environmental stewardship area. McCreary et al. (2020) found that state and federal land management personnel from across the United States that work with AmeriCorps State and National Conservation Corps programs (the treatment group) were able to accomplish more of their agency's planned work than personnel who did not work with



AmeriCorps partners built 13 percent more homes per year and completed 30 to 42 percent more trail or habitat management tasks than sites that did not host AmeriCorps members.

Sources: Viola et al. (2018); McCreary et al. (2020).

AmeriCorps (the comparison group). For example, treatment group agencies working with AmeriCorps members completed a significantly higher percentage of planned trail and fuel management work than comparison group agencies that did not partner with AmeriCorps. However, comparison group agencies accomplished more of their planned invasive species management work than did the treatment group AmeriCorps partner agencies. Additional studies on this topic are needed to determine how generalizable these findings are to other AmeriCorps partners, especially among those implementing interventions aligned with other AmeriCorps focus areas of interest, such as economic opportunity, education, and healthy futures.

Data collected from 941 AmeriCorps NCCC sponsoring organizations that completed service projects between 2016 to 2019 also highlights how partners believe AmeriCorps members helped them achieve their project goals (Hamdan and Robles 2022). These sponsoring organizations implemented a variety of projects in their communities, such as those focused on disaster response and recovery; enhancements of parks, natural habitats, and at-risk ecosystems; and access to improved economic opportunities, food security, or nutritional practices. Overall, 96 percent of AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor organizations agreed

Among the 941 AmeriCorps NCCC sponsoring organizations completing service projects between 2016 to 2019, the majority of them indicated that their AmeriCorps NCCC service team ...

Supported their organization's mission
(96 percent)



Contributed substantially to project objectives
(88 percent)



Helped enhance services to the communities
(92 percent)



Source: Hamdan and Robles (2022).

that their AmeriCorps NCCC teams supported their organization's mission, 88 percent reported that their AmeriCorps NCCC team made substantial contributions to their project objectives, and 92 percent reported that their AmeriCorps NCCC team helped enhance services they provided to their communities. Qualitative data collected by another study focusing on AmeriCorps State and National partners using coaching programs to help individuals recovering from opioid addiction also highlighted how the AmeriCorps members helped provide the necessary capacity. Without the support, they would not have been able to deliver health services and supports to community individuals (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation

2020). Although these results highlight various ways in which AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor organizations report benefiting from host AmeriCorps NCCC teams, the lack of baseline data on the extent to which these organizations felt they were already achieving their goals and the absence of a similar comparison group of non-hosting sites make it difficult to draw causal conclusions about these findings.

AmeriCorps partners experienced capacity increases in ways that can help them better serve their communities, but it is unclear if these increases were due to their AmeriCorps involvement. We identified six studies on whether and how AmeriCorps partners improved their organizational capacity. Two of these studies examined outcomes related to volunteer engagement and management and another study synthesized prior research on the AmeriCorps VISTA program implementation and the extent to which AmeriCorps VISTA helped build capacity for partners. A QED study conducted by an AmeriCorps ORE research grantee examined the extent to which participation in AmeriCorps VISTA helped organizations attract new volunteers in future years (Messamore et al. 2021). Comparing a sample of 80

AmeriCorps VISTA grantee organizations to a similar group of 1,116 organizations that did not host AmeriCorps VISTA members, the study found that AmeriCorps VISTA organizations had 71 percent more volunteers two years later than did non-VISTA organizations. The study also found that VISTA organizations experienced a one percent increase in volunteers for every 10 percent increase in the number of days served by AmeriCorps VISTA members. A synthesis review by AmeriCorps ORE of previous studies of the AmeriCorps VISTA program also highlighted how organizations hosting AmeriCorps VISTA members were able to sustain their projects after closing out their partnership with the AmeriCorps program (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2018). Another study examined whether an AmeriCorps State and National volunteer infrastructure program helped community-based organizations improve their volunteer management practices (JBS International 2018). Using a pre-test, post-test design, the study reported that organizations increased in measures of volunteer plan development, implementation, and sustainability, and the results were similar between organizations that received the program for one year compared to those that participated for multiple years. Although these are promising results, it is difficult to attribute the growth specifically to the volunteer infrastructure program without the presence of a comparison group of organizations that did not receive the program.

An analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database provides insights on the extent to which AmeriCorps NCCC members provide capacity support to AmeriCorps sponsoring organizations (Sum et al. 2020). Among 4,796 AmeriCorps projects implemented between 2012 and 2019, 34 percent had outputs or accomplishments characterized as helping to build capacity, such by supporting partnership and coalition building. AmeriCorps NCCC members most often provided capacity supports for projects that were primarily focused on the disaster services focus area.

The other two studies we reviewed focused on measures of program evaluation and performance measurement capacity and overall capacity across several organizational domains. One study conducted an RCT on a performance measurement training and technical assistance that AmeriCorps members provided to local organizations (Marc Bolan Consulting 2020). The study found that organizations randomized into the intervention group reported greater knowledge gains about what constitutes evidence of effectiveness along with greater confidence in their ability to engage in evaluation and performance management compared to organizations assigned to the control group. However, the two study groups were similar on other outcome measures, such as the overall evaluation and performance management knowledge measure, attitudes toward conducting various components of an evaluation, and self-reported capacity to conduct an evaluation. The other study evaluated an intervention that placed AmeriCorps State and National members in local philanthropic organizations to provide various capacity building services, such as helping to develop partnerships, improve programming and capacity, and engage volunteers (Pritchard et al. 2020). The evaluation used a QED approach and compared partner organizations to a group of similar nonprofit organizations that did not host AmeriCorps member on a measure of overall organizational capacity (based on factors related to program development, delivery, and education; outreach; technology; and volunteer management). The results showed both study groups experienced organizational capacity growth, and it did not detect a statistically significant difference between the groups.

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IV. What is the State of the Evidence of AmeriCorps on Communities?

AmeriCorps programs are designed to strengthen local communities by addressing the local issues and challenges they face. Backed by the support of AmeriCorps funding and the structure of local organizations, AmeriCorps-funded partners and their members and volunteers enter communities to deliver interventions on the ground alongside and in service to local communities and the individuals residing within them. In this chapter, we present themes about the benefit of AmeriCorps grantee and sponsor programs to communities by investigating outcomes and impacts of AmeriCorps-funded interventions on communities, the value generated from investing in AmeriCorps-funded interventions, and how to prepare interventions to become ready to scale to serve more individuals within and across communities.

The chapter addresses two research questions:

- **What outcomes or impacts, if any, do communities served by AmeriCorps-funded grantees or sponsors and their members and volunteers experience?**
- **What does the research say about investments in and scaling of effective interventions?**

We reviewed 71 studies classified under the communities domain of the State of the Evidence framework. In Section A, we discuss key findings from studies that examine outcomes and impacts of AmeriCorps interventions on community members they aim to serve. In Section B, we present evidence about the monetized value AmeriCorps grantee and sponsor programs bring to communities, factoring in the other domains as well, relative to the investment and opportunity costs associated with implementing these programs. Section C discusses ORE’s work regarding how to identify and scale the most effective interventions with a goal of creating the greatest positive impact on communities.

A. Evidence on how AmeriCorps-funded interventions benefit communities

We reviewed 51 studies that examined impacts or outcomes associated with AmeriCorps-funded interventions. Studies evaluated programs across the six AmeriCorps focus areas of disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families (Table IV.1). Studies could be classified under multiple focus areas if they examined outcomes pertinent to those areas. For example, a study on the Sunset Park AmeriCorps program examined an intervention that sought to improve adults’ work skills and their children’s reading skills, connecting it to both economic opportunity and education (The Sunset Park Health Council 2019). In this section, we summarize findings across the studies reviewed for each focus area, starting with education, which had the most identified studies.

Table IV.1. Number of reviewed studies examining AmeriCorps outcomes and impacts in the community domain, by AmeriCorps focus area

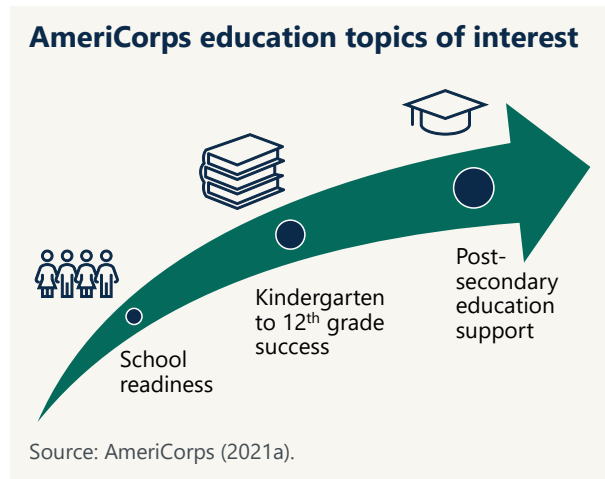
Disaster services	Economic opportunity	Education	Environmental stewardship	Healthy futures	Veterans and military families
2	8	31	6	6	1

Note: $N = 54$. Numbers do not add to 51 because studies could be represented in more than one focus area.

1. Education

AmeriCorps' work in the education focus area seeks to improve educational outcomes for students to prepare them for when they first enter kindergarten all the way through to beginning college or their careers. Topics of interest to the agency within this focus area include kindergarten to grade 12 success, school readiness, and postsecondary education support.

Our review categorized 31 studies, all conducted by AmeriCorps State and National grantees, that offered evidence on AmeriCorps-funded interventions in the education focus area. While each intervention has its unique vision and strategies for achieving that aim, these programs commonly provided some form of mentoring, tutoring, or after-school support for students or training to teachers. Twenty-seven studies used a QED or RCT design, three were outcomes studies, and one was an implementation study. In this section, we discuss key themes related to students' outcomes in literacy (16 studies), math (11 studies), attendance (five studies), socio-emotional or behavioral (seven studies), school readiness (five studies), and college enrollment (four studies). To do this, we summarize evidence across different AmeriCorps-funded interventions. We do not make any claims about whether a particular intervention model has sufficient evidence to be considered effective.



Evaluations of AmeriCorps-funded interventions seeking to increase students' literacy outcomes indicate success with younger students and when measuring specific aspects of their literacy development. We identified 16 studies, three using RCT designs and 13 using QED designs, that compared literacy outcomes for K–12 students receiving AmeriCorps-funded interventions to the outcomes for comparison groups of students. Eight studies reported statistically significant positive impacts on students' literacy outcomes. Three of these studies evaluated the Reading Corps model, focusing on students between kindergarten and grade three and measuring specific literacy domains (Markovitz et al. 2018; Pepper et al. 2018; Van Norman 2020). Two of the eight studies examined different program models (Literacy First and Energy Express) using samples of kindergarten and grade one students or students between kindergarten and grade six, and also measured specific literacy domains (Caverly et al. 2019; Edmonds 2019). Key findings from these studies show impacts on young students' letter sound fluency (Caverly et al. 2019; Markovitz et al. 2018; Pepper et al. 2018), whole word reading (Caverly et al. 2019; Edmonds 2019), nonsense word fluency (Caverly et al. 2019; Pepper et al. 2018); and reading development and fluency (Caverly et al. 2019; Edmonds 2019; Pepper et al. 2018; Van Norman 2020). Three of the eight studies found positive impacts on students' grades in literacy classes (Chapin Hall 2017) or on district or state assessments (Chapin Hall 2017; Kowalski et al. 2018; Lambert 2019).

The other eight studies, which did not report statistically positive impacts, tended to use samples of students from wider grade bands (for example, kindergarten to grade 12 or grade one to grade eight) and used state assessments or class grades as their outcome measures than those that reported positive outcomes (Abraham and Polush 2019; Agile Analytics 2020; Fairchild 2017; Gerdeman et al. 2017; JBS International 2017, 2020; Nathenson et al. 2021; Tetta et al. 2019). There were no other distinguishable patterns. Additional studies that incorporate a meta-analysis approach can synthesize findings from these and future studies and help to add clarity on the evidence of effectiveness on literacy outcomes.

Studies provided little evidence that AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact student math outcomes. We identified one RCT study, nine QED studies, and one outcomes study that examined whether AmeriCorps-funded interventions improved students' math outcomes. Two studies found positive impacts on students' math outcomes on several different measures. For example, an RCT study of Math Corps, a math tutoring intervention for students in grades four to eight, found that students in the intervention group had higher math fact fluency and math achievement scores than students in the control group, though the groups were similar in their mathematics state exam scores (Coddington et al. 2019). A QED study of City Year Chicago found that the intervention, which includes math support among other forms of academic and social-emotional support, had a significant impact on math grades and standardized test scores of students in grades four to eight and on math grades of students in grade nine relative to the comparison group (Chapin Hall 2017).

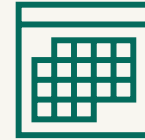
Findings from two other QED studies provided additional evidence suggesting that their examined intervention had positive impacts on math outcomes, but the results were ultimately inconclusive. For example, one study on the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Teaching Fellows program found that students taught by early career ACE teachers in one diocese had significantly lower math growth than the students of other first- and second-year teachers, but ACE-taught students in another diocese had significantly greater math growth than the comparison group (Kowalski et al. 2018). Another study on the Keystone SMILES intervention reported that eight of the 12 treatment schools scored better than a sample of 12 comparison schools on year-to-year average growth and four-year average growth on state math assessments, but it is unclear if the overall difference between the two groups was statistically significant (Wolf from Consulting 2020).

Among the other seven identified studies that examined students' math outcomes, six QED studies did not find significant differences between students receiving services from AmeriCorps-funded interventions and comparison group students (Agile Analytics 2020; Fairchild 2017; Gerdeman et al. 2017; JBS International 2017, 2020; Nathenson et al. 2021). The other study, on the Providence Children's Museum Literacy Club, found 52 percent of its students in grades two to four achieved a 10 percent growth rate on a math skills assessment between program entry and exit but did not include a comparison group in the study design (Providence Children's Museum 2019).

AmeriCorps-funded interventions were successful in improving attendance outcomes, particularly for students in grades five to nine. We identified five QED studies that examined whether AmeriCorps-funded interventions successfully impacted students' school attendance. Four of these studies examined interventions designed, at least in part, to have AmeriCorps members provide one-on-one support to students identified as being at risk of disengaging from school or being off track from graduating (Agile

Analytics 2020; Chapin Hall 2017; The Improve Group 2019; Lin and Reece 2021). The fifth study assessed an after-school program in which AmeriCorps members coordinated enrichment and academic support activities with youth (Sim and Good 2019). Three studies that conducted primary or subgroup analyses on students in grades five to nine found statistically significant impacts on students' attendance. For example, the evaluation on the Ready to Extend a Caring Hand (REACH) Corps found that students in grades five to eight had significantly fewer unexcused absences than comparison group students, but there were not any differences when comparing students from kindergarten to grade four (Lin and Reece 2021). Similarly, the evaluation of the City Year program found positive impacts on attendance for students in grade nine relative to a comparison group, but the program and comparison groups had similar levels of attendance among students in grades four to eight (Chapin Hall 2017). Another study on the Partners for After School Success program found significant positive impacts on grade eight students across three different school years (Sim and Good 2019). The study also found significant impacts on attendance for grade seven students across two different school years and for grade six students in one of the school years examined. Two studies, on the Alliance with Youth and the Communities in Schools programs, reported statistically significant increases in student attendance among those in the program, but these improvements were similar to those of comparison groups of students (Agile Analytics 2020; The Improve Group 2019).

AmeriCorps programs improved school attendance for students in older grade levels



Sources: Chapin Hall (2017); Lin and Reece (2021); Sim and Good (2019).

There is less evidence suggesting that AmeriCorps-funded interventions improve social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for students. We identified seven QED studies that examined a variety of social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for students. Five of the studies did not detect statistically significant impacts on reducing student misbehavior (Agile Analytics 2020; Chapin Hall 2017; Lin and Reece 2021) or scores on behavioral and social-emotional assessments (JBS International 2017, 2020). Two studies found impacts on the extent to which students completed their work (The Improve Group 2019) and progressed to the next grade level (Fairchild 2017), but no other studies examined these outcomes to support any general findings associated with these outcomes.

Children receiving AmeriCorps-funded interventions experienced gains in school readiness, but more evidence is needed to determine whether these interventions made an impact. We identified five studies that focused on fostering school readiness among preschool children. Two of them evaluated the Jumpstart intervention using QEDs (CCR Analytics 2019; Magnolia Consulting 2019) and another QED study assessed the First 5 Santa Cruz Reading Corps (Wright et al. 2017). Both interventions focused on improving preschool children's language, literacy, and social-emotional skills needed to enter kindergarten developmentally ready to learn. We also identified an outcomes study on the Sunset Park AmeriCorps program (The Sunset Park Health Council 2019) and an implementation study on the Learning Early Achieves Potential (LEAP) initiative (ACET 2018); both programs aimed to improve preschool children's social-emotional skills and school readiness.

The three QED studies found that preschool children served by the First 5 Santa Cruz Reading Corps and Jumpstart experienced significant increases in the literacy and language skills needed for school readiness. Children in preschool programs with Santa Cruz Reading Corps members experienced statistically significant impacts in their emergent literacy skills, such as recognizing letter names, letter sounds, and picture names (Wright et al. 2017). Jumpstart children also gained in their literacy skills, as measured by the extent to which they met language development age expectations and scored on early literacy assessments, but these increases were statistically similar to those experienced by matched comparison groups (CCR Analytics 2019; Magnolia Consulting 2019).

The two other studies did not assess impacts on school readiness using a comparison group design. The outcomes study on the Sunset Park AmeriCorps program reported that 94 percent of the 52 children served saw increases in their Child’s Behavior Traits assessment scores (The Sunset Park Health Council 2019). The LEAP implementation study highlighted model fidelity strengths and challenges and opportunities to improve the program’s implementation, which would allow future studies to evaluate and detect potential impacts of the program, but the study did not focus on assessing child outcomes or impacts (ACET 2018).

AmeriCorps members had a positive impact on students’ college enrollment. We identified four studies that focused on postsecondary educational support, all of which were QED studies. Three of these studies focused on the College Possible intervention (Richardson et al. 2018; Rolfhus et al. 2021; Spinney et al. 2019) and the fourth study evaluated the College Advising Corps that was implemented in Missouri (Bettinger et al. 2019). In both interventions, AmeriCorps members serve as peer coaches to low-income students in grades 11 and 12, providing guidance on key aspects of preparing for college. These four studies offer a consistent picture that peer coaching of low-income high school students impacts their enrollment in college and other academic outcomes (see the box).

Peer coaching focused on college preparation has a positive impact on high school students’ outcomes

Relative to matched samples of comparison group students, students who received peer coaching:

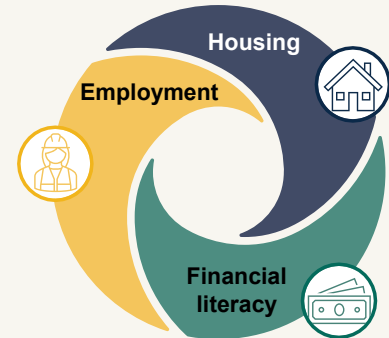
- Were more likely to **enroll in college** immediately after high school
- Were more likely to **enroll in a four-year college**, including students who had relatively lower levels of academic performance
- Completed a greater number of **college admissions applications, scholarship applications, and financial aid applications**
- Enrolled in a greater number **Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses** during their senior year
- Had higher school **attendance rates, grade point averages, on-track to graduate rates, and levels of noncognitive skills**

Sources: Bettinger et al. (2019); Richardson et al. (2018); Rolfhus et al. (2021); Spinney et al. (2019).

2. Economic opportunity

AmeriCorps programs in the economic opportunity focus area seek to improve the economic well-being of those receiving AmeriCorps services. Topics of interest within this focus area include increasing employability, financial literacy, and housing opportunities for those in need. Our review identified eight studies conducted by AmeriCorps program grantees that offered evidence on AmeriCorps-funded interventions in this area. Three studies used QEDs to assess intervention impacts, and five used an outcomes design. The available studies covered a diverse set of outcomes, making it difficult to identify themes on topics related to employability, literacy skills, and housing. For example, one study focused on crime reduction impacts and the economic savings associated with it, while another focused on providing free legal services to individuals with low to moderate incomes, as having unmet legal needs can create economic insecurity (we discuss this study in Section A.6 of this chapter). We highlight key findings associated with the studies identified in this focus area and discuss the need for additional studies that can help produce evidence of effectiveness for AmeriCorps-funded interventions.

AmeriCorps economic opportunity topics of interest



Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

Emerging evidence highlights improvements in housing-related outcomes, but additional research is needed to understand how AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact those outcomes. Three studies examined housing-related outcomes. Nelson and Kaiser’s (2020) QED study on the Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity (TCHFH) program compared outcome differences between a sample of families who acquired a home through TCHFH to a matched comparison group of similar families who qualified for TCHFH support but had not yet closed on a home. The study measured families’ person-per-bedroom ratio (a measure of overcrowding in a residence in which lower ratios are more desirable) and ratings of home satisfaction, safety, and housing issues. Families served by TCHFH had significantly lower person-per-bedroom ratios and were more likely to meet the ratio of two or less (a guideline set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development) than comparison group families. TCHFH families also reported greater overall home satisfaction and feelings of safety and fewer housing issues than the comparison group.

An outcomes study that examined varying approaches for delivering housing-related improvements and other support services to older adults also reported positive improvements across a variety of measures, though a lack of comparison group in the study design limits any causal conclusions (Walter et al. 2019). For example, adults age 65 and over who received safety repairs to their homes, information on fall prevention, and referrals to other support services reported significant increases in well-being and greater confidence in performing daily tasks without fear of falling. Using a different sample of older adults who received home risk assessments, hazard intervention and remediation services, energy efficiency services, and weatherization services, the study found that most clients reported improvements in moving safely around the house (67 percent), mobility while entering or exiting the house (62 percent), and performing daily life activities (59 percent). An outcomes study of the Keep Austin Housed project highlighted how

the project delivered housing placement services to 1,072 clients over two years and 422 clients obtained housing in that time (Keep Austin Housed 2019).

Adult learners developed new skills, but additional research is needed to examine how AmeriCorps-funded interventions contribute to employability and wealth outcomes. Three studies examined AmeriCorps-funded interventions designed to enhance adult learners' skills and knowledge. One QED study assessed the Community Technology Empowerment Project's Northstar program, which teaches computer skills to adult learners, by comparing a sample of unemployed job-seeking adults who completed at least four hours of Northstar and passed a Northstar assessment to a similar group of unemployed jobseekers attending workforce centers in the region (Backman 2018). The study found that Northstar participants had a 47 percent employment rate one quarter later whereas the comparison group's employment rate was 40 percent; the seven percent difference was statistically significant. In a survey of program participants, 81 percent of the adult learners reported the computer skills they acquired helped them in searching for employment.

Two outcomes studies examined increases in English language proficiency and financial literacy skills. An outcomes study on the VOCAL AmeriCorps program highlighted how 3,378 adult learners demonstrated progress in English as a second language (49 percent of all program enrollees) and 2,018 adult learners obtained a job (approximately 50 percent of all program enrollees) over the course of the project's three-year period (Meehan 2019). Among a sample of economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services through the Sunset Park AmeriCorps program, a pre-test, post-test study showed that 69 percent of participants showed gains in their literacy skills (The Sunset Park Health Council 2019). However, it is difficult to attribute these outcomes to the VOCAL or Sunset Park programs without the inclusion of a comparison group in the study design.

Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of AmeriCorps-funded interventions in reducing crime. The AmeriCorps Urban Safety (AMUS) program provides real-time crime mapping analyses and collaborative problem-solving processes to deter and reduce crime in Detroit, Michigan. A QED study of the program found that although AMUS precincts experienced a decrease in crime frequency during the study's three-year period, these changes were statistically similar to those experienced in non-AMUS precincts (Moss 2018). The study also estimated that the reduced crime in the AMUS precincts saved \$378 million when factoring costs associated with victims and the criminal justice system, opportunity costs associated with criminals' choosing to engage in crime, and other intangibles. Although the study did not find evidence of effectiveness for the AMUS program, it highlights a promising avenue for examining community-level economic impacts in addition to the individual-level impacts evaluations often explored.

3. Healthy futures

Within the AmeriCorps healthy futures focus area, the agency strives to improve individuals' health and well-being by helping older adults with special needs maintain their independence (aging in place), addressing individuals' obesity and nutritional needs (obesity and food), and improving individuals' access to health care services they need (access to care). We identified six studies that provided evidence on AmeriCorps-funded interventions and projects in this focus area. Two were QED studies conducted by AmeriCorps program grantee organizations, and three were outcomes studies conducted by AmeriCorps program and AmeriCorps ORE research grantee organizations. Another study was an AmeriCorps ORE-commissioned meta-synthesis on AmeriCorps Seniors impacts and outcomes.

AmeriCorps healthy futures topics of interest

Aging in place



Obesity and food



Access to care



Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

Two of these studies focused on obesity and food outcomes and one study examined outcomes related to aging in place. The three other studies are health related but did not fit neatly into the three healthy futures categories: two focused on outcomes we labeled supportive family environments and the third assessed community-level measures of subjective well-being (levels of positive or negative affect). We discuss the findings associated with those studies, but there is an insufficient amount of evidence to draw broader conclusions around AmeriCorps' impact in these areas.

Although children participating in AmeriCorps interventions showed improvements in health and nutritional outcomes, evidence of impacts is limited. A QED study conducted on the Up2Us Coach program sought to examine whether coaches trained in sports-based youth development strategies, social-emotional skill-building techniques, and mentoring strategies can impact youths' attributes associated with healthy decision making, physical fitness, and nutritional habits (Jarjoura and Meckes 2018). Among the eight healthy decision-making attributes assessed in the evaluation—self-awareness; positive identity; situational awareness; future focus and plan B thinking; discipline; social confidence; pro-social connections; and well-being—the study found that Up2Us Coach youth participants experienced significantly greater increases in well-being than did matched comparison group of youth. The study also found that Up2Us Coach youth participants showed gains in physical fitness and nutritional habits, but these increases were similar to those experienced by the comparison group. An outcomes study on the Live Healthy Kids intervention also reported increases in children's nutritional habits across several measures (Mwangi 2018). The Live Healthy Kids intervention is designed to expose children to and teach them about a variety of healthy foods and promote physical exercise. Using a pre-test, post-test design, the study found that children significantly improved in their knowledge of fruits and vegetables and willingness to try new foods and parents' report of their children's willingness to engaged in 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Home visiting programs using a parent education curriculum can help create supportive family environments for children. We identified two evaluations, a QED study and an outcomes study, that examined home visiting programs using the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) parent education curriculum. The QED evaluation of the Birth & Beyond Family Resource Center initiative found that families receiving at least eight hours of home visiting services using the NPP curriculum had better child welfare outcomes than families not receiving Birth & Beyond home-visiting services (Applied Survey Research 2021). For example, children in families receiving at least eight hours of home visiting were less likely to experience substantiated recurrences of maltreatment over the course of a 12-month period relative to a matched comparison group that did not receive home visits. The outcomes study conducted on the Child Welfare System Improvement program also found positive family and parent outcomes associated with families receiving NPP during home visiting services (LPC Consulting Associates 2017). Families receiving at least eight hours of NPP demonstrated significant increases in their parenting knowledge and decreases in risk behavior, and 85 percent of the parents did not have child welfare involvement 12 months after completing the NPP curriculum.

Additional research is needed to better understand AmeriCorps Seniors impact on program beneficiaries. The Frazier et al. (2019) meta-synthesis of research conducted on AmeriCorps Seniors programs highlighted benefits the volunteers experienced (see Chapter III), but the study identified relatively less research on how these programs may benefit the older adults, caregivers, and children served by the programs. The study identified 28 outcomes that focused on adult clients, but only two outcomes showed positive impacts based on QED or RCT evaluations. These impacts were on measures of overall functioning and depression/mental health outcomes. The synthesis did not identify any impact or outcomes studies that showed increases in physical health for adult clients. There were relatively fewer outcomes examined for caregivers and children, and while most indicated positive results, they were examined using outcomes study designs that do not enable causal conclusions on program impacts.

Evidence on the reciprocal effect between community well-being and the presence of AmeriCorps programs warrants further exploration. An innovative study conducted by an AmeriCorps ORE research grantee assessed how levels of community subjective well-being were associated with the number and sustained presence of AmeriCorps members across 1,347 counties in the U.S. (Velasco et al. 2019). The study measured various aspects of community level well-being—engagement, disengagement, positive emotions, negative emotions, and negative relationships—by categorizing social media postings in those areas. A key finding was that a one-year increase in AmeriCorps' presence in the community was associated with decreased levels of negative relations and disengagement language in social media postings. Although most of the studies discussed in this chapter examine the impacts or outcomes for those directly receiving AmeriCorps-funded services, Velasco et al. (2019) highlight potential indirect impacts AmeriCorps can have on individuals who are not receiving AmeriCorps services but have AmeriCorps members based in their communities. The study also found that levels of disengagement in social media posts were associated with AmeriCorps program presence in subsequent years, and the authors hypothesize that disengaged communities might be less likely to apply for or receive AmeriCorps funding. Additional research in this area can help inform ways to identify and prioritize investment in underserved communities.

4. Environmental stewardship

Within its environmental stewardship focus area, AmeriCorps aims to make community-level impacts in several key areas by increasing energy efficiency, creating green jobs and green spaces, fostering awareness and stewardship, and protecting at-risk ecosystems. We identified six studies that examined AmeriCorps-funded interventions and projects within this focus area. Five of these were QED studies conducted by AmeriCorps State and National grantee organizations, and another was a descriptive study on AmeriCorps NCCC-funded projects.

AmeriCorps environmental stewardship topics of interest

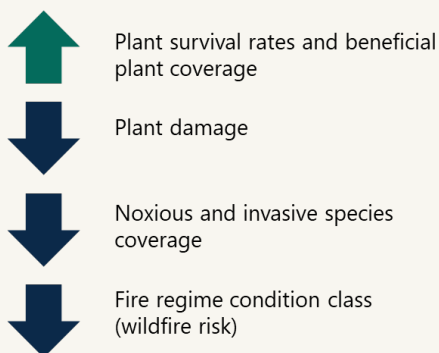


Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

AmeriCorps-funded approaches are protecting at-risk environmental ecosystems. The five QED studies examined various approaches to protecting ecosystems. Two of these studies examined the effectiveness of different Washington Conservation Corps’ restoration methods on native plant survival rates, along with ratings of deer browse and string trimmer plant damage in Washington state (The Watershed Company 2018, 2021). The evaluations tested two separate restoration methods—applying deer deterrent to the plants and using protection tubes around the plants—relative to a comparison set of plants that received no treatment. The Watershed Company (2018) found that plants protected by tubes had significantly greater survival rates and lower damage from string trimmers one year later than both the comparison plants and plants treated with deer deterrent. However, the three groups were similar on deer damage. The Watershed Company (2021) found that these patterns were sustained over three additional years. Another QED assessed the impact of watershed restoration activities conducted by AmeriCorps members serving with EarthCorps (The Watershed Company 2019), also in Washington state. AmeriCorps members in this study used power tools, hand tools, and herbicides to suppress invasive plants in an effort to make natural areas healthier. The study found that areas treated with restoration

methods used by AmeriCorps members experienced statistically significant decreases in invasive species coverage one year later relative to untreated comparison areas. These results are similar to another QED study in Montana state parks that found the use of weed treatments made a statistically significant impact on reducing invasive species while also increasing beneficial plant coverage (Naiman-Sessions and Shteir 2019). Finally, the fifth QED study found a positive impact of Nevada Conservation Corps’ fuels reduction treatment activities on reducing the fire regime condition class, which reduces the risk of wildfires, on the treated public lands (Christiansen 2019).

Impacts of AmeriCorps environmental stewardship interventions



Sources: Naiman-Sessions and Shteir (2019); The Watershed Company (2018, 2019, 2021).

This body of evidence provides strong evidence on how AmeriCorps environmental stewardship interventions have made positive impacts. It is also important to consider the generalizability of these findings, as the evidence is based on interventions conducted in the Western region of the United States. Future studies are needed to understand how the assessed environmental stewardship activities discussed here or other approaches might impact localities in other parts of the nation.

AmeriCorps NCCC projects make a positive environmental footprint in communities. An analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database provides a broad sense of the environmental-related outputs and outcomes that AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor organizations report creating in their communities (Sum et al. 2020). Among 4,796 AmeriCorps projects implemented between 2012 and 2019, 34 percent focused on at-risk ecosystems (such as protecting wildlife species or restoring wetlands), 29 percent focused on environmental conservation (such as constructing hiking trails or restoring parks), and 18 percent focused on awareness and stewardship (such as planting new trees).¹⁵ To understand the reach of AmeriCorps NCCC through these projects, the study reported that members cleared 1,141 acres of land of unwanted brush or exotic vegetation and restored or created 1,287 miles of hiking trails. Members also taught 64 environmental education programs. Although these findings provide detailed information on the scope of AmeriCorps NCCC-funded projects in this focus area, information on similar projects funded through other AmeriCorps programs, such as AmeriCorps State and National, would enable a more comprehensive analysis of the agency's footprint in this area and help see if these activities are achieving agency objectives.

5. Disaster services

AmeriCorps' activities in the disaster services focus area aim to help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural and human-made disasters. Disasters include forest fires, floods, hurricanes, oil spills, pandemics, terrorist attacks, and tornadoes. A primary topic of interest includes outcomes that capture the extent of disaster assistance provided by AmeriCorps members. Our review identified two studies that included a focus on this area. One is a descriptive analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC service projects (also discussed in Chapter II), and the other is an implementation study conducted by the AmeriCorps NCCC program office of its COVID response.

Disaster services is the most common primary focus of

AmeriCorps NCCC projects. Sum et al.'s (2020) analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database showed that 50 percent focused on disaster services. Among the 4,796 AmeriCorps projects implemented between 2012 and 2019, 30 percent focused specifically on providing disaster assistance (such as by assisting people at mass care facilities or helping to process federal disaster aid applications) and 11 percent focused on public safety (such as by supporting disaster simulations or exercises). Projects

AmeriCorps disaster services topics of interest



Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

¹⁵ The Sum et al. (2020) study refers to these areas of focus as project characteristics, and NCCC projects could have more than one characteristic.

focusing on addressing natural and other disasters produced a total of 9,250 outputs for their communities. For example, AmeriCorps members developed 583 informational documents and training materials in efforts to assist in disaster preparedness; produced 454 resource guides or reports on disaster recovery efforts; and supported 371 service facilities to aid in disaster responses (see sidebar). These findings provide detailed information on the scope of AmeriCorps NCCC-funded projects in the disaster services area, but they do not address the effectiveness of those projects.

Response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic provides a case study on how national service can be mobilized to address a public health crisis. The AmeriCorps (2021b) implementation

study on how the COVID-19 Containment Response Corps (CCRC) formed and responded to the COVID-19 public health crisis in the State of Colorado provides deep insights on how national service programs assemble together and respond to disaster situations. The study discusses various phases of the CCRC's creation and response efforts (Figure IV.1), highlighting contextual factors and program strengths and challenges experienced along the way. For example, the study discusses how a shared focus, trust among partners, and political support helped to quickly and effectively launch the CCRC initiative. However, CCRC needed to navigate numerous challenges, such as administrative hurdles, logistical challenges (for example scheduling necessary trainings), and a sense of having to figure out the approach along the way. As CCRC transitioned to implementation and scaled, it engaged approximately 934 members and volunteers who completed 17,629 case investigations and delivered 32,803 test results to thousands of Colorado community members.

How AmeriCorps NCCC projects focused on disaster services



50 percent of AmeriCorps NCCC projects focused on disaster services

Disaster services projects produced **9,250 outputs**, which included:



583 informational documents and training materials in disaster preparedness efforts



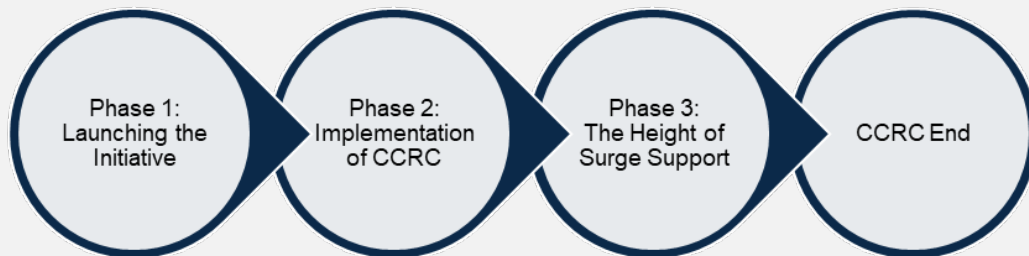
454 resource guides or reports in disaster recovery efforts



371 service facilities supported in disaster response efforts

Source: Sum et al. (2020).

Figure IV.1. COVID-19 Containment Response Corps phases for disaster service response



Note: CCRC = COVID-19 Containment Response Corps.

6. Veterans and military families

AmeriCorps aims to assist veterans and military families by connecting them to education opportunities, helping them access services and benefits they have earned, and providing job training and employment search supports. We categorized one study as aligning to the veterans and military families focus area, which was an outcomes study on the Justice for Montanans intervention (Mandiloff and Scott 2019). Although the intervention was not designed specifically for this special population, the study reported that over a two-year period Justice for Montanans served 4,083 veterans and 9,529 veteran family members, along with 264 active duty members and 1,346 active duty family members. Justice for Montanans services included providing low- to moderate-income Montanans with legal needs with access to legal self-help information, resources, referrals for civil legal matters, and volunteer support for civil legal assistance. Although the study did not conduct subgroups analyses of veterans, active duty members, and military families, it did report increases in legal understanding among 77,908 low- to moderate-income Montanans who participated. Additional research is needed to understand how veterans and military families benefit from AmeriCorps-funded services.

AmeriCorps veterans and military families topics of interest



Source: AmeriCorps (2021a).

B. Investing in community-based solutions generates greater value in return

Return on investment (ROI) studies help shed light on the overall monetized value that AmeriCorps programs bring to the participant, partner, and community domains relative to the investment and opportunity costs associated with implementing these programs. While rigorous RCT and QED studies assess program impacts, ROI studies help to inform whether those impacts are worth it when making funding or resource allocation decisions. Other types of cost analyses can provide an understanding of whether it is feasible to scale an intervention (Section IV.C discusses scaling).

Our review identified 15 studies that conducted cost-related analyses for AmeriCorps-funded interventions. Twelve were ROI studies on different programs or interventions commissioned by AmeriCorps ORE, and the other three were cost or benefit-cost analyses conducted by AmeriCorps program grantees. We base our discussion primarily on the 12 ROI studies because they used the same methodological approach for generating their calculations (see the box). We supplement those findings with results from the other three studies.

Methodological components to the 12 reviewed ROI studies

- **Measuring and monetizing program benefits:** This part involves using program, public, and third-party data to estimate the benefits realized by key groups or entities impacted by the program (for example, program recipients, AmeriCorps members delivering services, and government agencies).
- **Estimating forgone benefits:** This part concerns calculating the opportunity costs, which are the potential benefits that key groups or entities may have experienced had the program option not been chosen (for example, the benefits from the program funding had funds been invested elsewhere).
- **Assessing program costs:** This part involves determining the total costs needed to implement the program for a particular duration of time, which can include grant amounts, matching funding from other sources, fees, and education awards to AmeriCorps members.
- **Calculating the ROI:** This part consists of three ROI calculations: (1) total benefits per federal dollar, (2) total benefits per funder dollar, and (3) federal government benefits per federal dollar. However, because there were insufficient data to inform the length of time that AmeriCorps members and, where applicable, program recipients will experience earnings benefits from their involvement in the program, the ROI calculations considered a range of possible durations, such as:
 - *Short-term:* this scenario assumes earnings impacts of a single year after program exit;
 - *Medium-term:* this scenario assumes earnings impacts last 15 years; and
 - *Long-term:* this scenario assumes earnings impacts last 30 years.

Sources: Borgida et al. (2022); Clark et al. (2022a, 2022b); Modicamore et al. (2020a, 2020b); Munaretto et al. (2020, 2021a, 2021b); Naugler et al. (2021a, 2021b, 2021c); Voigt et al. (2022).

AmeriCorps-funded programs demonstrate a positive ROI across AmeriCorps' focus areas. Figure IV.2 summarizes the ROI estimates for the 12 AmeriCorps-funded programs (Borgida et al. 2022; Clark et al. 2022a; 2022b; Modicamore et al. 2020a; 2020b; Munaretto et al. 2020a; 2020b; 2021; Naugler et al. 2021a; 2021b; 2021c; Voigt et al. 2022). There are several key themes associated with these findings, which show how these programs can generate value when addressing local community issues.

- **Each of the agency's six focus areas of interest has an AmeriCorps-funded program demonstrating a positive ROI.**

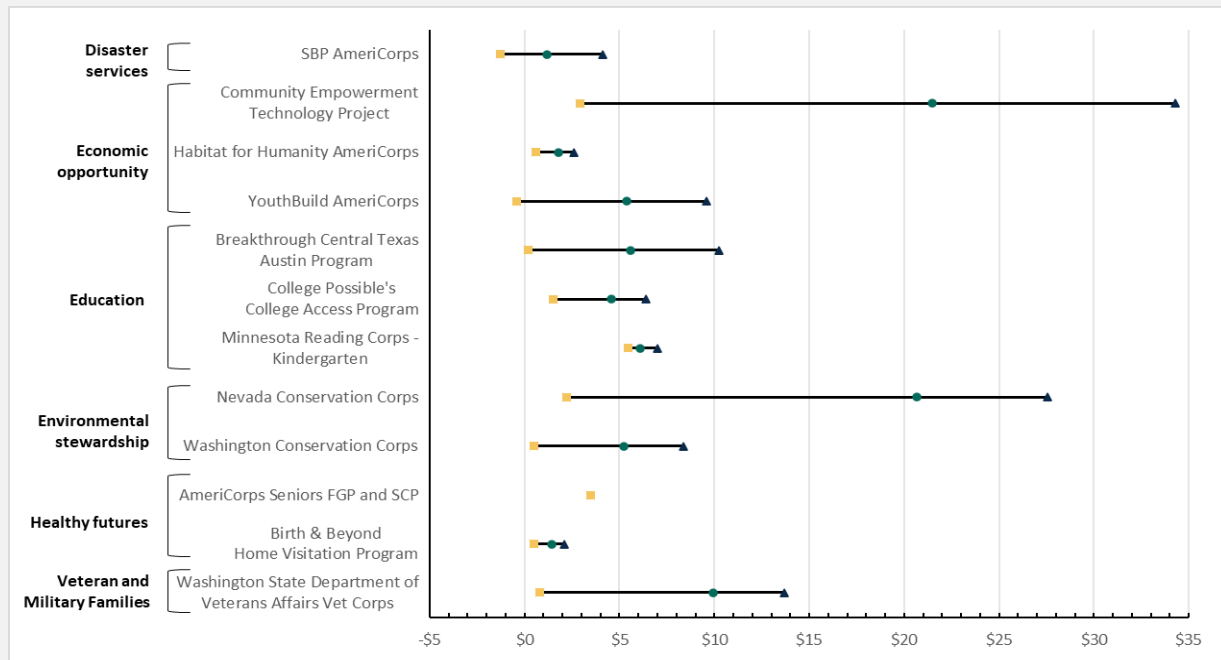
- *Disaster services:* SBP AmeriCorps (Borgida et al. 2022);
- *Economic opportunity:* The Community Empowerment Technology Project (Modicamore et al. 2020b), Habitat for Humanity (Naugler et al. 2021b), and YouthBuild (Naugler et al. 2021c);
- *Education:* Breakthrough Central Texas—Austin program (Clark et al. 2022a), College Possible's College Access program (Munaretto et al. 2020a), and Minnesota Reading Corps—Kindergarten (Munaretto et al. 2020b);
- *Environmental stewardship:* Nevada Conservation Corps (Voigt et al. 2022) and Washington Conservation Corps (Munaretto et al. 2021);

From 2020 to 2022, AmeriCorps ORE commissioned 12 ROI studies that demonstrated how programs generate value when addressing local community issues

Additional information on these studies can be found on the [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#).

- *Healthy futures*: AmeriCorps Seniors FGP and SCP (Modicamore et al. 2020a) and Birth & Beyond Home Visitation program (Naugler et al. 2021a); and
 - *Veteran and military families*: Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Corps (Clark et al. 2022b).
- **All programs saw a positive ROI in the medium and long-term scenarios.** The 12 programs showed a positive return on invested dollars, under the assumption that AmeriCorps members experienced earning impacts for 15 or 30 years after finishing their service program.

Figure IV.2. ROI per funder dollar for AmeriCorps-funded interventions



Note: The graph reflects three ROI calculations for each program (with the exceptions of AmeriCorps Seniors FGP and SCP) based on varying assumptions on the length of time AmeriCorps members and program participants will experience earnings benefits. The yellow boxes represent the short-term scenario of earnings benefits lasting for one year, the green circles represent the medium-term scenario of earnings benefits lasting for 15 years, and the blue triangles represent the long-term scenario of earnings benefits lasting for 30 years. For example, under the long-term scenario where earnings benefits lasting for 30 years, every dollar invested in SBP AmeriCorps from all funders returns \$4.14 in value.

Sources: Borgida et al. (2022); Clark et al. (2022a, 2022b); Modicamore et al. (2020a, 2020b); Munaretto et al. (2020a, 2020b, 2021); Naugler et al. (2021a, 2021b, 2021c); Voigt et al. (2022).

Two other benefit-cost studies conducted by AmeriCorps program grantees that used different methodologies also contribute to understanding the value of programs in the education and economic domain. For example, a benefit-cost study of College Possible’s College Fit initiative found that for every \$1 spent, a benefit of \$14.66 was returned in year 1 of the program, whereas a benefit of \$4.34 was returned in year 2 (Rolfhus et al. 2021). The authors attributed the difference between years to the greater number of students served in the program’s first year than in the second year. In the area of economic opportunity, another AmeriCorps program grantee estimated that every dollar invested in the Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors program generated \$1.80 in benefits (Walter et al. 2019).

Another AmeriCorps program grantee conducted a cost study on the Minnesota Reading Corps pre-kindergarten program (Brooks et al. 2018). The study found that the average costs were \$84,980 per site and \$1,690 per student, while average personnel costs were \$51,680 per site and average training costs were \$29,860 per site.

C. Successfully scaling an intervention requires evidence and readiness

When evidence shows that an intervention helped improved individuals or community outcomes, there is often the desire to identify ways to scale the intervention so that it can work for more people. AmeriCorps ORE funded the Scaling Evidence-Based Models (SEBM) project to generate practical knowledge about how the agency might foster the successful scaling of effective interventions using one of three approaches (see the box) and help support AmeriCorps' efforts to identify which interventions work and how they can work for more people. Undergoing this effort would also serve as an example to other governmental agencies and philanthropic funders on how they can systematically review evidence of effectiveness of the interventions they fund, as well as assess how ready their grantees or funded organizations might be for scaling activities.

Intervention scaling approaches

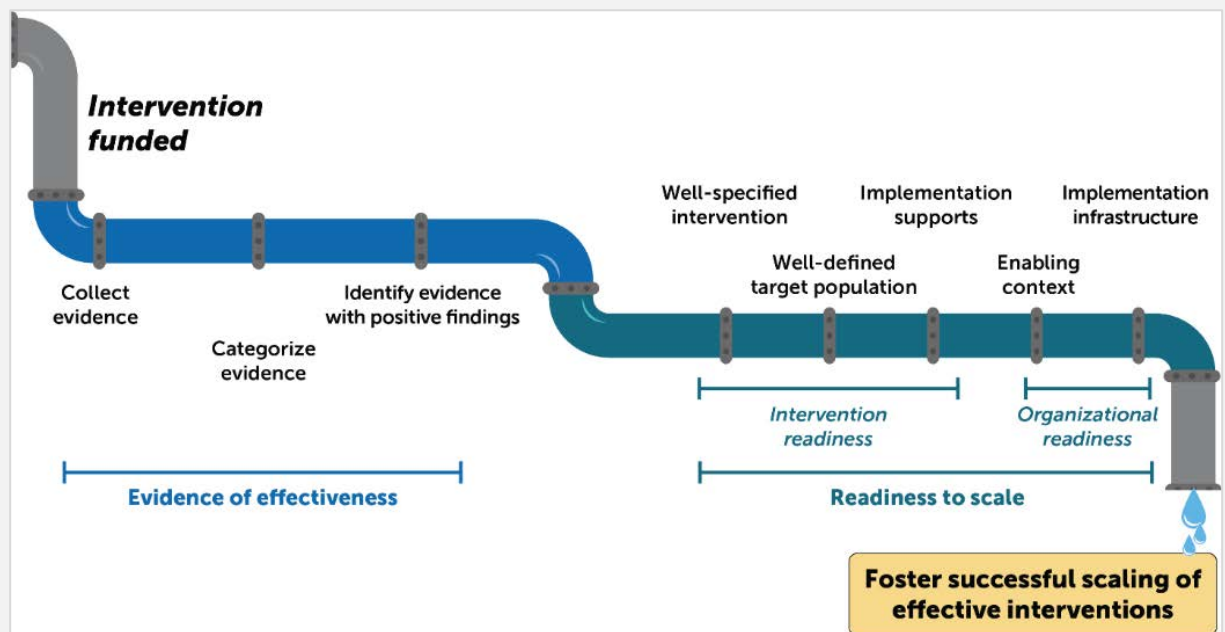
There are three main approaches to scaling interventions so that more people could receive the beneficial impacts of an intervention:

- **Expansion:** Extending the intervention to more people in the same target population and location where it had previously been offered.
- **Replication:** Extending the intervention to the same target population but in a new location. Replication is about creating a new implementation infrastructure, whereas expansion is about increasing the capacity of an existing infrastructure.
- **Adaptation:** Modifying an existing intervention to serve a new target population or to implement it in a new setting (type of location).

Source: Selekman et al. (2020).

The SEBM project developed and applied the Scaling Programs with Research Evidence and Effectiveness (SPREE) process to help AmeriCorps identify which of its funded interventions demonstrate evidence of effectiveness and a readiness to scale (Maxwell and Richman 2019). The project also conducted a series of case studies with AmeriCorps grantees in the process of scaling their interventions. The SPREE process has two distinct parts, each of which is represented in Figure IV.3. The first part is designed to identify interventions with rigorous evidence of effectiveness for participants receiving the services. In order to scale an intervention successfully to serve a greater number of individuals, there needs to be rigorous evidence that supports the intervention's effectiveness to begin to with. The second part is designed to determine the extent to which the effective interventions and the organizations implementing them demonstrate a readiness for scaling. If grantees do not have the intervention-level and organization-level definitions, processes, and structures in place prior to scaling, they are less likely to maintain or exceed the benefits first documented about its effectiveness.

Figure IV.3. The Scaling Programs with Research Evidence and Effectiveness (SPREE) process



Source: Richman and Streke (2020).

Applying this process to grantees and their interventions funded between 2010 and 2019, the SEBM project conducted a systematic review of intervention evidence documents and applications for AmeriCorps funding. The review identified interventions with the strongest evidence of effectiveness and provided AmeriCorps with an understanding of why other interventions did not meet criteria for rigorous research, such as using study designs lacking the internal validity that gives confidence that the intervention, and not other factors, impacted individuals receiving the intervention (Richman and Streke 2020). The project also identified the extent to which organizations described the intervention conditions—having a well-specified intervention, a well-defined target population, and implementation supports—and organization conditions—having an enabling context and implementation infrastructure—needed to be ready for scaling. AmeriCorps-funded organizations implementing interventions with evidence of effectiveness did a better job in their scaling plans of describing the readiness of their interventions for scaling than they did of describing what organizations needed to be ready to support scaling (Selekman et. 2020). The SEBM project used the findings from these reports, along with scaling principles emerging from implementation science research, to develop an interactive tool designed to help organizations improve both their readiness to scale an intervention and the intervention’s readiness to be scaled (see the sidebar).

Case studies conducted on three AmeriCorps grantees (Anderson et al. 2020; Eddins et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2020) and a cross-site analysis of arising themes (Needels et al.

Scaling Checklists: Assessing Your Level of Evidence and Readiness (SCALER) tool

The SCALER tool helps organizations (1) ensure the intervention to be scaled is likely to produce desired outcomes and is therefore worthy of being scaled and (2) identify whether the effective intervention and the organization are ready to scale

The [SCALER tool](#) can be found on the AmeriCorps evaluation resources page.

2020) also highlighted various facilitators and challenges that can occur as organizations scale their interventions. For example:

- Grantees often used multiple funding sources to support scaling, but this can lead to multiple data-collection efforts needed to satisfy different funding requirements. The timing of available funding might also condense grantees' preferred planning period, which can make scaling more challenging.
- Grantees experienced internal support, particularly from organizational leaders, and local support from community stakeholders to scale their interventions.
- When striving to serve a new focal population or better serve an existing one while scaling, administrators valued personnel whose language and culture aligned with those of the focal population and its challenges.
- An increase in personnel needed for scaling created additional logistical considerations for training personnel on the intervention. This included conducting decentralized trainings across multiple locations and providing site-specific information to make the training materials more relevant.

V. What Do We Know About the State of National Service, Volunteering, and Civic Engagement in the United States?

AmeriCorps strives to make a lasting impact on the civic health of society and to be a thought leader in the field of volunteering and civic engagement. AmeriCorps ORE furthers the agency's mission by supporting and conducting research and evaluations that advance the knowledge base and public understanding of volunteering and civic engagement. Since 2002, ORE has contributed to this evidence building in part by funding and analyzing data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement.¹⁶ The CPS CEV, the most robust longitudinal survey on the topics of volunteering and civic engagement, provides valuable insight into America's civic health over time. Based on the recommendation from National Academies of Sciences¹⁷ to complement the national level CPS CEV survey with additional measurement approaches and research designs, AmeriCorps ORE launched its research grant program in 2015 to support researchers, scholars, and dissertation writers at institutions of higher education as they pursue projects that advance understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society.¹⁸ AmeriCorps ORE research grantees also help examine effective strategies that foster civic engagement and use innovative research methods to address community priorities. To date, ORE has funded four research grant cycles that have awarded 55 grants.¹⁹

In this chapter, we present key themes arising from the 25 studies—24 conducted by AmeriCorps ORE research grantees and one conducted by AmeriCorps ORE—that contribute to the body of knowledge about national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in the United States. We answer the research questions:

- **What are the societal rates of volunteerism, participation in national service, and civic engagement? How do these rates vary by demographic characteristics?**
- **What new insights has AmeriCorps-funded research generated to advance the field's understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement?**

In Section A of this chapter, we discuss key findings from three studies that describe the current state of volunteerism and civic engagement in the United States. Section B synthesizes themes that arise from 22 studies using a variety of methodologies that provide insights on the factors that relate to individuals'

¹⁶ More information on the CEV can be found at <https://data.americorps.gov/api/views/rgh8-g2uc/files/6160b250-6443-45ef-8b2a-cb42f909a8fa?download=true&filename=2021%20CEV%20Dataset%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

¹⁷ See the National Academy of Sciences (2014) "Civic Engagement and Social Cohesion Measuring Dimensions of Social Capital to Inform Policy" for more information at <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/18831/civic-engagement-and-social-cohesion-measuring-dimensions-of-social-capital>

¹⁸ AmeriCorps has funded four ORE research grant cycles to date. More information about the AmeriCorps ORE research grants can be found at https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/What%20is%20a%20Research%20Grant_053023_final_508.pdf and <https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/research-evaluation>.

¹⁹ At the time of this report, some AmeriCorps ORE research grantees still had active grants, which meant that they had not yet produced a study or made it available to AmeriCorps ORE. Additionally, some grantees produced studies that were not publicly available (for example, journal articles requiring publication fees). As a result, we compiled and reviewed 29 eligible studies affiliated with 18 of 36 AmeriCorps ORE research grantees (from the 2015, 2017, and 2018 cohorts). Twenty-four of these studies are discussed in this chapter (the other five were discussed in earlier chapters).

civic engagement; how participatory research methodology can include community members to study and address complex social problems; practices that help organizations maximize the impact of volunteers; and the importance of nonprofit organizations for the subjective well-being of communities.

A. Societal rates of volunteerism and civic engagement

We identified three studies that describe specific aspects of civic engagement in society: volunteerism and social capital. Two of these studies present findings from longitudinal data available in the CPS CEV, which in 2019 surveyed 139,217 households in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The third study presents findings from a survey of 683 representative nonprofits in 2019. This section describes key findings from these three studies. We do not intend for our presentation of the findings to be an all-encompassing descriptive account of civic engagement in the United States, as these studies present data and findings on only two aspects of civic engagement.

Access to the CPS CEV on the AmeriCorps Open Data Portal

The [2019 CPS CEV data](#) described in this section is publicly available on the AmeriCorps Open Data Portal. At the time of this report, AmeriCorps ORE is also in the process of analyzing the recently released [2021 CPS CEV data](#).

Volunteering among Americans has remained stable at 30 percent over the last 20 years, but current rates vary by demographic, socioeconomic, and family characteristics. Analyses of 2019 CPS CEV data reveal that an estimated 30 percent of Americans, or 77.9 million people, reported that they volunteered for an organization or association (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2021). In total, these volunteers served an estimated 5.8 billion hours with an economic value of \$147 billion. The study also identified how rates of volunteerism vary by key demographic characteristics (see the box).

Volunteerism rates in 2019 varied by demographic characteristics

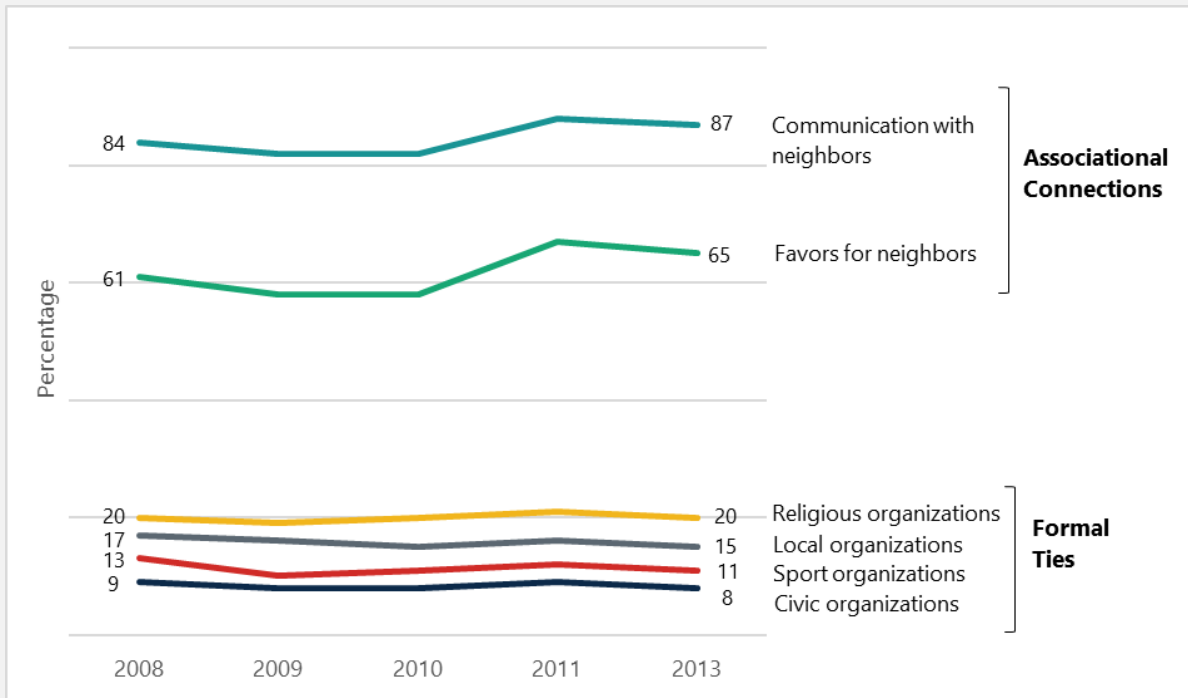
- Women volunteer at higher rates (33 percent) than men (25 percent).
- White individuals volunteer at higher rates (32 percent) than those of another race (25 percent) or Black individuals (23 percent).
- Non-Hispanic individuals volunteer at higher rates (33 percent) than Hispanic individuals (19 percent).
- Generation X, or those born between 1965 and 1980, had the highest rate (35 percent) of volunteerism compared to other age groups (30 percent for baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; 28 percent for generation Z and millennials, born after 1996 and between 1981 and 1996, respectively; and 25 percent for the silent generation or older, born before 1946).

Source: AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation (2021).

The study found that the rate of volunteerism with organizations and associations increased dramatically with educational attainment and annual household income. Twelve percent of those with less than a high school diploma volunteered compared with 44 percent among those with a college degree or higher. Among those in households with an annual income of less than \$40,000 a year, 20 percent volunteered, compared with a 45 percent volunteer rate in households with annual income of \$150,000 or more. Rates of volunteering were also relatively higher among part-time workers and parents of school-aged children, who tend to have more discretionary time, network ties, and other personal circumstances that support civic engagement.

A new measure reveals that the associational dimension of social capital did not decline from 2008 to 2013, despite declines in social capital as a whole throughout the twentieth century. Social capital is defined as the networks and ties among individuals, groups, and organizations, and researchers have noted its decline throughout the twentieth century (Weiss et al. 2019). These researchers sought to measure dimensions of social capital that have not been empirically assessed since the General Social Survey was revised in 2004.²⁰ The authors discussed how social capital is multidimensional and includes formal ties with groups and organizations, along with informal associational connections between neighbors in the community. The study used CPS CEV data to measure changes in social capital between 2008 and 2013 on these two dimensions. Formal ties were measured by participation in groups, and informal, associational connections were measured by speaking with or exchanging favors with neighbors. The study found that while individuals' formal ties decreased, informal associational connections did not decline during this time period, though there was a slight, nonlinear decrease during the Great Recession (see Figure V.1).

Figure V.1. Changes in social capital between 2008 and 2013 on measures of individuals' associational connections and formal ties



Note: This graph reflects the percentage of respondents who reported participating in civic organizations, sport organizations, local organizations, and religious organizations in the previous 12 months and who reported speaking with their neighbors and exchanging favors with their neighbors at least once a month.

Source: Weiss et al. (2019).

²⁰ The General Social Survey stopped fielding questions that measure social capital in 2004. Other national surveys were able to measure trust, one dimension of social capital, after 2004, but the associational dimension of social capital has not been captured since 2004 (Weiss et al. 2019). More information about the General Social Survey can be found at <https://gss.norc.org/>.

Nonprofits vary in the number and type of volunteers they engage. A survey of nonprofits representative of the 2019 US nonprofit sector provided insight into how organizations work with volunteers and how these volunteers benefit the organizations. Hager and Brudney (2021) describe how nonprofits vary in the number of volunteers they engage and the amount of time volunteers devote to nonprofits. For example, over a 12-month period, 7.3 percent of nonprofits worked with 10 or fewer volunteers for an average of 10 or fewer hours a week, while at the other end of the spectrum 3.6 percent of nonprofits worked with over 1,000 volunteers for an average of over a thousand hours a week.

In addition, the average volunteer age differed by nonprofit sector: the average age of a volunteer in education, health, environmental, arts, and human service nonprofits was 46 to 48 years. International organizations engage volunteers with an average age of 51 years, and religious nonprofits have the oldest average volunteer age at 60 years. The authors also analyzed change over time using data from the first wave of the survey administered to a nationally representative sample of nonprofits in 2003. In 2019, volunteers were more interested in episodic, short-term assignments than in 2003.

B. New insights advance understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement

In this section, we present new insights from 22 studies regarding the factors that influence individuals' civic engagement, how participatory research approaches can be used to include community members in the design and study of programs to address complex social problems, the practices that help organizations maximize the impact of volunteers, and the importance of nonprofits for the subjective well-being of communities.

1. Factors that promote civic engagement among individuals

We identified nine studies that explored the factors that affect civic engagement among individuals. The inquiry across these studies focused on a variety of subgroups, from Latino/a youth to workers in cooperative firms, providing a rich picture of civic engagement in different communities. Findings from these studies are thematically grouped into three categories: (1) how civic engagement is related to fostering critical consciousness (that is, a critical analysis of social systems, inequities, and one's place within those systems, along with cultivation of a commitment to social change); (2) how youths' environmental context can influence what civic engagement activities they engage in; and (3) the relationship between professional life and civic engagement. In this section, we describe key findings in each of these categories.

Development of critical consciousness among people of color promotes their civic engagement.

Five studies provided insight into how fostering program participants' critical consciousness can help increase these individuals' civic engagement. Three of these studies focused on the Latino/a community, either measuring the outcomes of an adult education program (one study) or by conducting participatory research approaches with Latino/a youth (two studies). Two studies focused on Black parents of school-age children using either mixed methods or a review of scholarly literature on critical race theory.

Three programs supported development of a critical understanding of inequities in American society and affirmed that the lived experiences of participants navigating those inequities promoted civic engagement

among both youth and elders in the Latino/a community. For example, Clark-Ibáñez et al. (2021) found that participation in *Cultivando Sabiduría*, a civic education program that used culturally responsive and civic education practices, was associated with increased levels of volunteering and knowledge of electoral processes and participation in politics among low-income, Spanish-speaking Latino/a adults age 55 or older (Clark-Ibáñez et al. 2021). Pritzker et al. (2020) engaged Latino/a youth in participatory research to identify strategies to overcome barriers to civic participation. They found that approaches that acknowledge and incorporate how Latino/a youth's lives are influenced and impeded by their surrounding contexts show promise for promoting forms of civic engagement, including volunteering and community service. Nicotera and Pritzker (2020) also used participatory methods in a school setting and found that practices that support Latino/a civic engagement include facilitation of discussion and activities related to current social issues and civic action, connecting students with civic leaders in the Latino/a community, and encouraging school staff to reflect on the ways in which their own implicit biases affect their practice as educators.

Critical consciousness is also a key concept for Marchand (2019), who explored the role Black parents play in their children's education. Using mixed methods, including qualitative interviews with Black parents of students in racially diverse middle schools with documented racial achievement gaps, Marchand found that Black parents' analysis of inequities in schools influences how and why they engage in their children's schools, as defined as actions parents take at the school site. As part of this study, Marchand identified a gap in the field's ability to measure the complexity and motivation of Black parents' school participation and created and validated a new measure, critical parent engagement, that captures the relationship between parents' consciousness of racial inequity and their participation in their children's schools. Another study by Marchand et al. (2019) that reviewed scholarly literature on critical race theory endorsed this conceptual framework of critical parent engagement and its ability to help explain the factors that promote or hinder Black parental school involvement. The authors discussed the potential benefit of this framework for schools and districts as they work towards equity in the school system.

Environmental context can shape youths' civic engagement behaviors. A mixed methods study by Wray-Lake and Abrams (2020) used surveys and in-depth interviews with youth to gather perspectives on the different ways youth of color in high-poverty urban communities engage civically. The study found that young people's civic engagement was primarily through informal activities, defined as those that are spontaneous or casual, as opposed to activities that are structured or through an organization. Most civic activity was undertaken in youth's own neighborhoods, for example attending informal social gatherings or helping neighbors or peers (Wray-Lake and Abrams 2020). The study also found that youth engaged in civic activity that was unique to their local context, such as intervening to stop someone from being bullied, and that emphasized personal responsibility, such as getting good grades in school. As a result of the study's findings, the authors proposed a new conceptual model of youth civic action that represents the experiences of the youth interviewed and includes four civic engagement pathways youth take: (1) disengaged, defined as having low community involvement; (2) personally responsible, defined as emphasizing personal goals; (3) safely engaged, defined as engaged in community-based forms of helping; and (4) broadly engaged, defined as engaged in a variety of civic actions in the community as well as being interested or engaged politically (Wray-Lake and Abrams 2020).

Participation in democratic activities in the workplace and professional networks can strengthen civic engagement. Our review identified three studies that explored the relationship between workplace structure and civic behavior. Two of these studies used mixed methods, and one used qualitative methods.

A study of 1,147 workers in 82 worker cooperatives, defined as companies in which workers share in the profits and management of the organization using democratic principles, across the United States found that those who work in cooperatives are more civically engaged

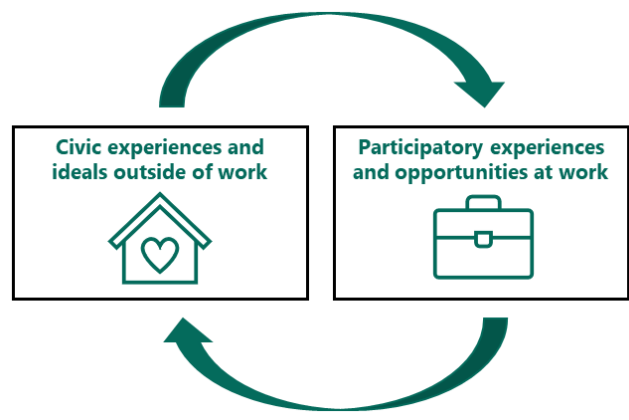
compared to national measures, even when compared to individuals with similar characteristics who work in conventional firms (Schlachter and Már 2020; Schlachter and Purshinskaya 2021). For example, the rate of serving as an organization leader was 53 percent among cooperative workers, compared with 11 percent of those working in traditional firms, and the rate of attending a public meeting was 51 percent among cooperative workers, compared with nine percent of those working in conventional firms. Schlachter and Már (2020) also found that participation among cooperative workers in firm governance was positively associated with civic behaviors, including volunteering, serving as an organizational leader, or attending public meetings. By complementing its surveys with qualitative interviews, this study developed a new theory to explain the mutually reinforcing relationship between civic activity in and outside the workplace, the civic enrichment hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, ideals in one’s personal life lead people to seek out workplaces that reflect these ideals (see Figure V.2).

Complementing the civic enrichment hypothesis of a bidirectional influence of engagement in personal and professional life, as well as porous boundaries between the two, a qualitative study by Best et al. (2017), conducted 70 in-depth interviews, finding that professional networks and community ties play an instrumental role in facilitating both professional advancement and civic involvement among immigrant professionals. This study found that immigrant professionals are variously engaged civically, participating in both formal and informal community-based organizations and groups.

2. Studies using participatory research illustrate how to include community members in the design and study of programs to address complex social problems

We identified eight studies that used a participatory research approach²¹ to work with community members to study and provide recommendations on how to address specific local social issues with

Figure V.2. Civic enrichment hypothesis



Source: Schlatter and Már (2020).

²¹ Participatory research is an approach or framework where community members are actively involved in the research, using their community expertise to identify local issues and develop actionable solutions. Some participatory research studies use a more specific approach that emphasizes the resulting action of the study: Participatory action research (PAR) or youth participatory action research (YPAR) when youth are involved).

different focal populations, including youth experiencing homelessness and low-income, first-generation high school students. The participatory research studies used a variety of data collection methods, including interviews, focus groups, surveys, journaling, and photovoice. These community-based approaches to local challenges also aligned to focus areas of interest to the agency.

- **Economic opportunity.** In a program to support youth experiencing homelessness, peer support specialists worked to build relationships with the youth and to help them access services within their community, including healthcare and housing. A study using participatory action research (PAR) methodology, collected data through interviews and journaling. It found that peer mentors provide a unique opportunity to build authentic relationships with young people experiencing homelessness and that service providers should emphasize relationship building in addition to provision of services (Erangey et al. 2020). A related study also collected data through interviews and journaling to learn about the PAR process of working with peer mentors. The study found that navigating power dynamics is important for power-diverse PAR teams, defined as teams comprised of individuals with clear differences in their levels of power. The study found that use of specific activities, such as power mapping, in which members of a team identify those with power and discuss how to influence them, can be effective tools to navigate power dynamics in PAR (Littman et al. 2020).
- **Education.** A PAR study on ways to reduce barriers to college information and access among low-income, first-generation high-school students resulted in development of an action plan to increase college enrollment (White 2022). This study used photovoice (student-taken photos that express their perspectives and feelings) and Q methodology, and the author notes that using PAR can help generate strategies to address social problems that are tailored to a specific community context.
- **Environmental stewardship.** A youth PAR (YPAR) study that used photovoice to document a specific type of environmental injustice called “slow violence” aimed to make this problem more visible so as to draw attention to it and increase the amount of resources devoted to solving it (Willett et al. 2021). Over the course of the study, the adult and youth co-researchers documented specific instances of slow violence, including dumping, and noted that in their neighborhoods vulnerable people, including children and those with disabilities, were most affected by this injustice. The study concluded with strategies for how community members themselves could address slow violence, along with an analysis of the effect inequitable services and infrastructure play in this problem. The team designed many actions with partners to facilitate work in the problem areas they identified, but many of their plans were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and thus were not described in detail in this study.
- **Healthy futures.** Other examples of participatory research occurred within different focal populations and focal issues, such as a PAR study engaging the families of children with disabilities in a poor community in Puerto Rico to form support networks to discuss their individual and collective strengths and needs (Vazquez-Rivera and Rojas-Livia 2021). Another action research study worked with eight community-based organizations (CBOs) in the Boston area to learn from their experiences responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and found that CBOs can respond to an emergency by integrating service provision into their activism and organizing work (Loh 2022).

Two of the eight studies demonstrated how participatory research can help increase civic engagement more broadly. Jacquez et al. (2021) and Dutt et al. (2021) worked with refugees in Cincinnati to understand how to foster civic engagement in this community and support community members to

become drivers of change. Through a survey and focus groups, the first study identified three actions to increase refugees' civic engagement: (1) a civic leadership workshop for refugees on how to become involved in civic life, (2) a guide with resources on living in Cincinnati, and (3) an event to foster community building among refugees from different countries of origin. The second study conducted a participatory evaluation and found that engaging in participatory research fostered a sense of solidarity among the refugee co-researchers.

3. Practices that help organizations maximize the impact of volunteers

We identified five studies that discuss practices that help organizations maximize the value of volunteers. One study describes findings from a survey representative of the 2019 US nonprofit sector. Another study is a meta-synthesis of scholarly research on volunteer-management practices. A third study used an RCT design to assess if use of emotional language in nonprofit mission statements enhances charitable behavior. Another descriptive study explores the language change in over 700 nonprofit mission statements, and a final study uses a new method of data collection, systematic social observation (SSO), to explore the relationship between space and participant interaction during civil society convenings.

Use of volunteer-management practices can increase the benefit volunteers bring to an organization and volunteers' satisfaction with the work. Two studies provided insight on how nonprofit organizations use practices to affect the experiences of volunteers and to ensure that their efforts yield the maximum benefit for the organizations. A descriptive study of a survey representative of the 2019 US nonprofit sector by Hager and Brudney (2021) found that investments in volunteer management capacity result in greater benefit from volunteers for the organization. The volunteer management practices mentioned in this study include matching volunteers to appropriate tasks, providing training and professional development for volunteers, communicating the value of their work to volunteers and organizational leaders, and assessing volunteer impact, among others. Although these practices are not widely adopted by nonprofits, nonprofits reported that they are receptive to best practices in volunteer management. Nonprofits with large amounts of revenue invest in volunteer management practices at higher rates than those with less revenue, but between 2003 and 2019 nonprofits on average did not increase their volunteer management capacity.

Volunteer management practices associated with positive organizational and volunteer outcomes include:

- Assigning volunteers tasks that align with their career goals (increased volunteer longevity)
- Messages of support from the organization on volunteers' work and their general well-being (increased volunteer longevity and satisfaction)
- Provision of training and professional learning opportunities for volunteers (increased volunteer longevity)
- Cultivation of positive relationships among volunteers (increased volunteer longevity)

Sources: Hager and Brudney (2021); ICF International (2021).

A meta-synthesis of scholarly research on volunteer-management practices since 2010 expands on Hager and Brudney's findings. According to the 2021 study (ICF International 2021), volunteer management practices such as matching volunteers to roles based on interest, supporting volunteers, and providing

training opportunities are positively associated with retention and other positive volunteer outcomes, including their satisfaction with their volunteer work.

Nonprofits use language that evokes emotion in their mission statements, which can increase charitable behavior. Two studies provided insight on the use of language by nonprofits in their messaging. An RCT found that use of emotional language, defined as language that evokes an affective feeling, in nonprofit mission statements enhances charitable behavior, including donations and volunteers (Paxton et al. 2020). The study found differences in the effect of positive and negative language according to the nonprofit field. Positive emotion is effective in social bonding fields, which include arts, culture, humanities, education, recreation and sport, youth development, and religion-related issues. Negative emotion is effective in social problem fields, which include environment, healthcare, crime and legal-related, employment, agriculture, food and nutrition, housing and shelter, and civic rights and social action. A descriptive study analyzed the language in over 700 service and advocacy nonprofit mission statements and showed that, over time, nonprofits have adopted more inclusive language regarding sexual and gender identities (Velasco and Paxton 2022). The authors note that further research is needed to explore if these language changes will result in meaningful improvements to the diversity of individuals volunteering with nonprofits.

The size of a space matters for fostering participant interaction. One study explored how the physical spaces where civil society convenings—defined as meetings, events, and activities—take place help foster participant interaction and the building of social ties among participants. The study used a new method, systematic social observation (SSO), to analyze how two dimensions of spatial variation, one which measures how large the space is, and the other which measures the boundaries of the space and whether the space is distinct from other spaces, affect participant interaction. The study concludes that medium-sized spaces are the best for fostering interaction among participants and notes the promise of the SSO for collecting large-scale data on space, participant interaction, and social ties (Baggetta et al. 2022).

4. The importance of nonprofits for the subjective well-being of communities

A study by Ressler et al. (2021) advances the field’s understanding of the importance of nonprofits for community well-being. This study used administrative and social media posting data to explore whether there are more expressions of positive emotions in communities with higher numbers of nonprofit organizations. The study found that the presence of nonprofit organizations in a community was associated with a decrease in negative emotions communicated by residents of that community via social media (Ressler et al. 2021). This study parallels the methodological approach of the Velasco et al. (2019) study discussed in Chapter IV, which found that a one-year increase in the presence of AmeriCorps programs in the community was associated with decreased levels of negative relation and disengagement language in social media postings.

VI. Summary and Recommendations

AmeriCorps regularly invests in evidence building to enhance the agency's impact on national service members and volunteers, as well as on the communities and organizations that they serve within. The agency also seeks to be a thought leader by growing the knowledge base on trends in national service, volunteerism, and civic engagement in the United States and the individual, contextual, and societal factors that contribute to the nation's civic health. This report synthesized the evidence from 116 AmeriCorps-conducted or -funded studies published from 2017 to 2022 and organized around the State of the Evidence framework (Figure I.1) developed for this report. The framework includes the four domains on which the agency seeks to build evidence.

Most of the 116 studies (95 percent) were conducted by evaluators external to AmeriCorps, providing confidence in the research's objectivity and demonstrating the agency's commitment to investing in evidence building. Among these 116 studies, impact studies using QED or RCT designs were the most common (43 percent), which enables the agency to better understand which programs and interventions affect AmeriCorps participants, partners, and communities. The diversity of other study approaches—including outcomes, descriptive, and implementation studies—and research approaches—including traditional methods and participatory research approaches—highlights the agency's willingness to support grantees in building initial evidence for their interventions and to foster innovative approaches to studying new topics that can advance the field's understanding of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement. The majority of studies (71 percent) focused on the AmeriCorps State and National program members, partners, and interventions provided to communities, which aligns with the size of the program and evaluation requirements for grantees. However, the pattern also highlights the need for more evidence building for AmeriCorps NCCC and VISTA and the three AmeriCorps Seniors programs (the Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, and RSVP).

In this chapter, we summarize the key findings from our synthesis across the participant (Section A), partner (Section B), community (Section C), and society domains (Section D) and discuss the implications of these findings for AmeriCorps and its evidence-building ecosystem, which includes AmeriCorps ORE, AmeriCorps program offices, and State Service Commissions.

A. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps participants

We reviewed 16 studies (14 percent of 116 studies) that examined AmeriCorps participants' characteristics and the benefits participants experience through serving or volunteering with AmeriCorps. Studies that examined AmeriCorps participants focused on members serving through the AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, or AmeriCorps VISTA programs. Three studies showed how these members possess the cultural competency to work and interact with communities of people who are different from themselves and showed that they enter their service with unique backgrounds and motivations to serve. The 14 studies that examined benefits to participants paint a mixed picture on how AmeriCorps members and volunteers benefit from their service or volunteer experience. Only five studies used QED or RCT designs, and of these, only three found positive impacts on AmeriCorps members' employment, education, and civic engagement (Anderson et al. 2019; Frazier et al. 2018; Hudson-Flege 2018). Two of the 14 studies, a QED and a meta-synthesis of extant literature on the program, focused on AmeriCorps

Seniors. They provided evidence on how AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers experienced improved physical and psychology well-being due to their service experience (Frazier et al. 2019; Georges et al. 2018).

These findings have several implications for how AmeriCorps can strengthen its efforts to build evidence on AmeriCorps members and volunteers:

- **Consider expanding efforts to analyze data on the characteristics of AmeriCorps members and volunteers who apply for and serve with AmeriCorps.** These analyses can provide additional insights on who AmeriCorps members and volunteers are and identify any trends that may evolve over time. Obtaining a deeper understanding of AmeriCorps members and volunteers can inform whether the agency is meeting its engagement and enrollment objectives and allow for data-driven decision making to address any areas in need of improvement.
- **Explore avenues for collecting data from AmeriCorps members and volunteers when entering and exiting the program to help generate new evidence in this domain.** Although the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES) provides a wealth of information on outgoing members' service experiences and attitudes upon their exit, similar data does not exist at program entry. Having a parallel entrance survey would allow AmeriCorps to know if AmeriCorps members exhibit outcome changes the agency is striving to achieve for its members. Such information can also help inform the agency's efforts to consistently provide a meaningful service experience.
- **Provide additional supports to grantee evaluators to support developing new evidence on AmeriCorps members.** Ideally, as evaluators seek to build evidence on the effectiveness of interventions, they would also collect data from or on AmeriCorps members. These data can further the agency's knowledge about its members' experiences and provide grantees with useful information on how to better train and support AmeriCorps members to maximize the potential benefits that they can have on communities.

B. The state of the evidence on AmeriCorps partners

We reviewed 10 studies (9 percent of 116 studies) that examined whether AmeriCorps helped build the capacity of partners—grantees and sponsor organizations—to achieve their missions and better serve their communities. Emerging themes from two grantees' QED evaluations suggested that AmeriCorps partnerships can help grantees meet their project goals (McCreary et al. 2020; Viola et al. 2018). Other outcomes studies highlighted how AmeriCorps partners experienced increases in their capacity to better serve their communities. However, these studies did not include a comparison group in the study design, so it is difficult to attribute these promising outcomes to partners' AmeriCorps involvement. Still, these findings highlight ways AmeriCorps partners improved over time, which provides an opportunity for additional exploration and evidence building in this area.

These findings have several implications for how AmeriCorps can gather additional evidence on its partners.

- **Explore avenues for collecting data from AmeriCorps partners at the beginning and end of their grant period.** Partnering with AmeriCorps in itself can be viewed as a capacity-building support worthy of an evaluation, and collecting data at the beginning and end of a grant period can create new evidence for building organizational capacity. For example, having pre-test, post-test information on partner capacities and facilitators and the barriers they experience can provide new evidence on whether partners are benefiting from their AmeriCorps partnerships. Such data can also help the agency know how best to meet their partners' needs with additional trainings and other supports.
- **Consider linking partner survey data with other data sources.** The information gathered directly from AmeriCorps partners could potentially be enriched if merged with data from other sources, such as AmeriCorps MES data, the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database, or other administrative information that partners provide to the agency. For example, connecting AmeriCorps NCCC members' responses on the AmeriCorps MES with host sites' responses to the AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor survey can help the agency know the extent to which the partner and member experiences are intertwined. In turn, this can inform how the agency can support its partners and increase their capacity.
- **Consider avenues for facilitating impact studies on AmeriCorps partners.** Grantee evaluators may benefit from additional technical assistance on identifying, recruiting, and collecting data from comparison group organizations that can serve as a basis for conducting an impact study on partner-related outcomes. One AmeriCorps ORE research grantee (Messamore et al. 2021) provided a promising example of how secondary data can also be leveraged to examine potential partner impacts. This can provide another pathway for future evaluations to consider when seeking to add to the body of evidence in this domain.

C. The state of the evidence of AmeriCorps on communities

We reviewed 71 studies (61 percent of 116 studies) that examined how communities and the individuals within them benefit from AmeriCorps-funded interventions, the value generated from investing in AmeriCorps-funded interventions, or how to scale interventions to increase the scope of their impact. Most of the 51 studies that explored impacts or outcomes associated with AmeriCorps-funded interventions were in the education focus area (31 studies); the other five focus areas had eight or fewer studies.

- **The evidence within the education focus area highlighted how AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact literacy outcomes, particularly for young students or when assessing specific aspects of literacy development.** Studies showed that interventions also impacted school attendance for samples of students in grades five to nine and secondary students' college enrollment. The causal evidence was relatively less clear with regards to whether AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact math, social-emotional, behavioral, and school readiness outcomes, as there were few QED or RCT studies that showed positive impacts.
- **Among the eight studies in the economic opportunity area, we identified one QED that showed how an AmeriCorps-funded intervention can positively impact individuals' housing outcomes.** Two other outcomes studies in this area reported significant increases in housing-related outcomes. We saw a similar pattern on the topic of adults' employability skills (one QED study reported positive impacts, and two outcomes studies showed significant increases in skill development). However,

additional evidence based on QED or RCT study designs are needed to provide further insights on AmeriCorps' impact on these outcomes. The other studies in this area focused on crime reduction and the provision of free legal services to individuals with low or moderate incomes.

- **The evidence within the healthy futures focus area highlighted how AmeriCorps-funded interventions can impact health outcomes (one QED study) and child well-being outcomes (one QED study), but these findings were only supported by an additional outcomes study on each topic.** Another healthy futures study was a meta-synthesis that highlighted the limited amount of extant literature that found positive impacts of AmeriCorps Seniors programs on clients, caretakers, and children. The other study conducted a secondary analysis of administrative and social media data to identify how the presence of AmeriCorps programs in a community can help to improve levels of community well-being. Additional evidence based on QED or RCT study designs is needed to draw additional insights on the findings presented in these reviewed studies.
- **Within the environmental stewardship area, five QED studies showed how AmeriCorps-funded approaches are helping to protect at-risk ecosystems by improving plant life and reducing wildfire risks.**
- **The disaster services and veteran and military families focus areas had the fewest number of studies.** These studies provided insightful information on the types of services provided, but none offered evidence of AmeriCorps impact in these areas.

Our review of 15 ROI and benefit-cost studies highlighted how AmeriCorps-funded interventions across the six focus areas can generate additional value that exceeds the initial investments necessary for implementing the interventions. An additional seven studies discussed important prerequisites to successfully scale an intervention—having strong evidence of effectiveness, along with intervention and organization readiness to scale—but there are various facilitators and challenges that organizations can experience once they undertake scaling.

These findings have several implications for how AmeriCorps can continue to build evidence on AmeriCorps' impact on communities.

- **Consider what additional supports and trainings would help build evidence in focus areas that had fewer studies.** Building the pool of evidence-based interventions across all AmeriCorps focus areas will allow the agency to meet communities' needs across a range of outcomes. The agency could explore the research needs of program grantees in the disaster services, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families focus areas. Discussions with grantees in these areas could build an understanding of the challenges they face in conducting rigorous evaluations and identifying research methods to build evidence in their field.
- **Utilize meta-analytic approaches to further identify how AmeriCorps-funded interventions impact communities.** This study highlighted arising themes associated with the studies conducted within the education focus area. Meta-analyses can help further clarify the magnitude and significance of the effects for the interventions overall (for example, within the education focus area) and for subgroups of interest (for example, on college enrollment or literacy outcomes). This approach can also apply to other focus areas as the agency continues to build the body of evidence in those areas.

- **Continue efforts in developing additional ROI studies and build grantee evaluator capacity to include these or other cost-related analyses in the evidence they produce.** Producing more ROI analyses can help the agency expand the knowledge base on particular interventions that generate value. Having additional ROI studies conducted on interventions that focus on a particular topic (for example, interventions focusing on enhancing school readiness or employment skills) could help the agency make broader generalizations on how AmeriCorps-funded interventions generate value when addressing specific community challenges. Encouraging grantees to provide cost-related information in their evaluations can potentially facilitate conducting new ROI studies, and it may also help facilitate scaling their interventions. Increasing awareness of the resources needed to implement a new intervention can provide organizations with critical information as they assess whether to replicate the intervention in their own community and increase the prospects of successful implementation.

D. The state of the evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society

We reviewed 25 studies (22 percent of 116 studies) that furthered the evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in the United States. One descriptive study helped generate new insights on the civic health of society with regards to the levels of formal volunteering in the United States and the variations that exist across individuals' characteristics (AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation 2021). Another study also identified the importance of exploring the multifaceted nature of civic engagement (for example, formal volunteer and informal associational connections between neighbors in the community) and how trends can differ based on how civic engagement is measured (Weiss et al. 2019). Nine studies also explored factors that may affect civic engagement among individuals. This includes fostering individuals' critical consciousness about societal inequities and taking the time to understand individuals' lived experiences can help promote greater civic engagement. Additionally, participating in democratic activities in the workplace and professional networks also relates to individuals' civic engagement. Eight studies highlighted how participatory research can be successful in engaging individuals in the strategy design and research processes to help address their own or local community needs. Finally, five studies highlighted how organizational practices, such as volunteer management approaches and how they use language and physical space, can influence how organizations can successfully engage and maintain volunteers to support their goals.

These findings have several implications for how AmeriCorps can grow and apply the evidence on building national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in society.

- **Continue designing future rounds of AmeriCorps ORE research grant funding that prioritize specific topics of interest to programs, agency, and the field to build more evidence in those areas.** For example, increasing the knowledge base on factors that relate to individuals' civic engagement can provide the agency and its partners with valuable information that can inform how to recruit individuals into national service and volunteerism. Additional studies on volunteer-related organizational practices can provide AmeriCorps partners with new insights on how they can maximize the value of national service members and volunteers.

- **Explore ways to help partner organizations incorporate new evidence on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement into their own practices and identify opportunities for service and volunteering that do not currently exist.** As new innovations occur, seek to identify opportunities to test new approaches with impact studies. With arising evidence on how to engage volunteers and factors that can influence individuals' civic engagement, AmeriCorps can encourage partner organizations to incorporate this knowledge into their practices. This can also create an opportunity for testing different organizational practices and build new evidence on ways to build organizational capacity.

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Appendix A.
Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

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Appendix Table A.1 presents information on the 116 studies we reviewed as part of this AmeriCorps State of the Evidence synthesis. We organize the studies by the State of the Evidence domain under which they were classified (participants, partners, communities, and society). Studies could be classified across more than one domain and therefore can appear in more than one section in the table.

Table A.1. Studies reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
State of the Evidence framework domain: Participants				
Dermanjian, S., and R. Johnson. "Bridging Differences Through AmeriCorps Service: AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey Analysis 2016-2020." AmeriCorps, 2022.	Member characteristics	ASN; VISTA; NCCC	ORE report	Descriptive
Georges, A., S.J. Smith, and W. Fung. "Profile of AmeriCorps NCCC Members at the Start of Service." JBS International, Inc., 2021.	Member characteristics	NCCC	ORE commissioned report	QED
Hudson-Flege, M.D. "Getting Things Done for Life: Long-Term Impact of AmeriCorps Service for Diverse Groups of Members." Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University, 2018.	Member characteristics; Member experience	ASN; NCCC	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	QED
Anderson, L.M., J. Meredith, and J. Hildreth. "Reading Partners AmeriCorps Alumni Study." Policy Studies Associates, 2019.	Member experience	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Crittenden, J.A. "Juggling Multiple Roles: An Examination of Role Conflict and Its Relationship to Older Adult Volunteer Satisfaction and Retention." Doctoral dissertation, University of Maine, 2019.	Member experience	RSVP	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Dietz, N., D. Jones, and B. McKeeve. "A Pathway to Economic Opportunity for Communities and AmeriCorps Members." Urban Institute, January 2019.	Member experience	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Edmonds, B. "Energy Express Evaluation 2019." Indiana University, October 2019.	Member experience; Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Frazier, R., D. Pratt, G. Cardazone, M. Hartig, J. Liang, and A. Georges. "Final Report for AmeriCorps Opportunity Youth Evaluation Bundling." JBS International, Inc., 2018.	Member experience	ASN	ORE commissioned report	QED
Frazier, R., C. Birmingham, V. Wheat, and A. Georges. "A Systematic Review of Senior Corps' Impact on Volunteers and Program Beneficiaries." JBS International, Inc., 2019.	Member experience; Healthy futures	FGP; SCP; RSVP	ORE commissioned report	Other (meta-synthesis)

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Georges, A., W., Fung, J. Smith, J. Liang, C. Sum, and S. Gabbard. "Longitudinal Study of Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs: Service Delivery Implications and Health Benefits to the Volunteers." JBS International, Inc., 2018.	Member experience	FGP; SCP	ORE commissioned report	QED
Kowalski, M., S. Ponisciak, and G. Svarovsky. "The University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education Teaching Fellows Program: Evaluation of Outcomes and Impact, 2015-2017." University of Notre Dame, January 2018.	Member experience; Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Levine, P., K. Kawashima -Ginsberg, J. Benenson, and N. Hayat. "The Impact of National Service on Employment Outcomes." AmeriCorps Research and Evidence Webinar Series, March 2018.	Member experience	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	RCT
Sum, C., R. Shannon, C. Birmingham, T. Phan, W. Fung, A. Georges, and D. Pratt. "Analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database: How NCCC Service Projects Strengthen Communities and Impact Members." JBS International, Inc., September 2020.	Member experience; Nonprofit organizational capacity; Disaster services; Environmental stewardship	NCCC	ORE commissioned report	Descriptive
The Center for Youth and Communities. "Integrating Service into YouthBuild AmeriCorps HSE and Diploma Granting Programs." Brandeis University, January 2019.	Member experience	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Viola, J., D. Cooper, and B. Olson. "Evaluation of Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps Program 2016-2019." National Louis University, December 2018.	Member experience; Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Whitsett, A., D. Schlinkert, and S. Mastikhina. "The AmeriCorps Experience: Transformation through Service." Arizona State University, May 2018.	Member experience	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Outcomes
State of the Evidence framework domain: Partners				
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation. "A Promising Response to the Opioid Crisis: CNCS-Supported Recovery Coach Programs." (by Lily Zandniapour, Roshni Menon, Tia Renier, and Shane Dermanjian). 2020.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN; VISTA	ORE Report	Descriptive

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation. "Evaluation and Measurements: VISTA's Impact on Poverty, A 50-Year Review of Evaluation and Evidence." 2018.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	VISTA	ORE report	Other (meta-synthesis)
Hamdan, H., and A. Robles. "AmeriCorps NCCC Sponsor Organization Survey: Analysis of Traditional Corps Sponsor Feedback by NCCC Regions Before the COVID Pandemic (2016–2019)." AmeriCorps, November 2022.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	NCCC	ORE report	Descriptive
JBS International. "Assessing the Volunteer Infrastructure Program Using the Volunteer Capacity Assessment." JBS International, November 2018.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Marc Bolan Consulting. "Washington Service Corps Performance Measurement Training & Technical Assistance (PMT&TA) Program Evaluation." August 2020.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	RCT
McCreary, A., M. Edwards, M. McKenna, E. Seekamp, and S. Lockwood. "2019 Public Lands Service Coalition Partnership Impact Evaluation Interim Report." North Carolina State University, October 2020.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Messamore, A., P. Paxton, and K. Velasco. "Can Government Intervention Increase Volunteers and Donations? Analyzing the Influence of VISTA with a Matched Design." <i>Administration & Society</i> , vol. 53, no. 10, 2021, pp. 1547–1579.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	VISTA	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	QED
Pritchard, K., D. Teles, and B. Doctor. "Public Allies External Impact Evaluation." Data You Can Use and the Urban Institute, December 2020.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Sum, C., R. Shannon, C. Birmingham, T. Phan, W. Fung, A. Georges, and D. Pratt. "Analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database: How NCCC Service Projects Strengthen Communities and Impact Members." JBS International, Inc., September 2020.	Member experience; Nonprofit organizational capacity; Disaster services; Environmental stewardship	NCCC	ORE commissioned report	Descriptive

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Viola, J., D. Cooper, and B. Olson. "Evaluation of Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps Program 2016-2019." National Louis University, December 2018.	Member experience; Nonprofit organizational capacity	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
State of the Evidence framework domain: Community				
AmeriCorps. "COVID-19 Containment Response Corps Implementation Report." 2021b.	Disaster services	ASN; RSVP; NCCC; VISTA	Other: AmeriCorps NCCC	Other (implementation)
Sum, C., R. Shannon, C. Birmingham, T. Phan, W. Fung, A. Georges, and D. Pratt. "Analysis of the AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database: How NCCC Service Projects Strengthen Communities and Impact Members." JBS International, Inc., September 2020.	Member experience; Nonprofit organizational capacity; Disaster services; Environmental stewardship	NCCC	ORE commissioned report	Descriptive
Backman, D. "2018 Evaluation Report: Impact of the Northstar Assessment & Related Computer Skills Programming on Employment in CTEP Programs." Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, 2018.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Keep Austin Housed. "Evaluation Report: 2017-2019 Front Steps: Keep Austin Housed AmeriCorps Program." 2019.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Mandiloff, C., and M.F Scott. "Justice for Montanans AmeriCorps Evaluation Report." Mandiloff Law Office, 2019.	Economic opportunity; Veterans and military families	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Meehan, M. "VOCAL AmeriCorps 2017-2019, Evaluation Report." Program Planning & Evaluation Consulting, Inc., 2019.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Moss, B.G. "Impact Evaluation of the AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program." Wayne State University, February 2018.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Nelson, P., and P. Kaiser. "An Evaluation of the Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps Program." Center for Advancing Research to Practice at ServeMinnesota, October 2020.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
The Sunset Park Health Council. "Sunset Park AmeriCorps Evaluation Report." 2019.	Economic opportunity; Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Walter, K., T. Rao, E. Gall, and I. Harris. "Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors." IMPAQ International, LLC, March 2019.	Economic opportunity	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Abraham, W. T., and E. Polush. "AmeriCorps Literacy Tutoring to K-5 th Grade Students Program at DMPS Elementary Schools: Short-Term Impact Study Evaluation Report." September 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
ACET Inc. "AmeriCorps LEAP Initiative: Year 1 Evaluation Report." 2018.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Other (implementation)
Agile Analytics. "CIS of Central Texas: Austin ISD AmeriCorps Outcome Evaluation." October 2020.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Bettinger, E.P., A.L. Antonio, and J. Foster- Hedrick. "Missouri College Advising Corps Final AmeriCorps Evaluation Report." Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education, LLC, 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Caverly, S., G. Stoker, D. Hoon Lee, and G. Fleming. "Literacy First K-1 Report The 2017-18 Impact Evaluation." American Institutes for Research, April 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	RCT
CCR Analytics. "An Evaluation of the Jumpstart California Program 2017-2018." January 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Chapin Hall. "Implementation and Impact of City Year Within the Chicago Context." University of Chicago, September 2017.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Coddling, R.S., P.M. Nelson, D.C. Parker, R. Edmunds, and J. Klaft. "Evaluation of a Math Tutoring Program Implemented with Community Support: A Systematic Replication & Extension." Northeastern University, 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	RCT
Edmonds, B. "Energy Express Evaluation 2019." Indiana University, October 2019.	Member experience; Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Fairchild, S. "AmeriCorps at Communities in Schools of Central Texas Impact Analysis, 2016-2017." Creekside Research Solutions, September 2017.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED

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Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Gerdeman, R.D., Y. Wan, A. Molefe, J.M. Bos, B. Zhu, and S. Dhillon. "Impact of TNTP's Teaching Fellows in Urban School Districts." American Institutes for Research, May 2017.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
JBS International, Inc. "Napa County Office of Education CalSERVES AmeriCorps Impact Evaluation 2020." October 2020.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
JBS International, Inc. "Napa County Office of Education CalSERVES Expanded Learning Impact Evaluation." October 2017.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Kowalski, M., S. Ponisciak, and G. Svarovsky. "The University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education Teaching Fellows Program: Evaluation of Outcomes and Impact, 2015-2017." University of Notre Dame, January 2018.	Member experience; Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Lambert, L. "Evaluation Report Impact Evaluation PYs 2017-18 and 2018-19." Minneapolis Public Schools Research Evaluation Assessment and Accountability Department, 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Lin, S., and T. Reece. "REACH Corps FY19 End of Grant Evaluation (2019-21)." Jefferson County Public Schools, July 2021.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Magnolia Consulting. "An Evaluation of Jumpstart for National Direct." January 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Markovitz, C.E., M.W. Hernandez, E.C. Hedberg, H.H. Whitmore, and J.L. Satorius. "Impact Evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps K-3 Program (2017-2018)." Report submitted to Reading & Math, Inc. NORC at the University of Chicago, October 2018.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	RCT
Nathenson, R., M. Pardo, S. Subedi, C. Henry, M. Joshi, M. Lachowicz, K. Neering, et al. "Teach for America National AmeriCorps Evaluation: Evaluation 2017-18 and 2018-19 School Years." American Institutes for Research, December 2021.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Pepper, S., E. Fissel, and K. Knestis. "Literacy Lab Early Literacy Intervention: Treatment and Comparison Group FAST Bridge Assessment Differences 2017 - 2018." Inciter, 2018.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Providence Children's Museum. "Evaluation of Play-Based Learning Training on AmeriCorps Members' Learning Club Implementation: AmeriCorps 2018-2019 Evaluation Report." 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Richardson, J., D. Marlin, J. Vadas, E. Colo, and S. Goldrick-Rab. "Evaluation of College Possible Milwaukee." Hope Lab, June 2018.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Rolfhus, E., E. Diaz, L. Decker-Woodrow, E. Adachi, S. Sohrabie, D. Barfield, and G. Lamey. "Evaluation of College Possible's College-Fit Initiative 2018-2020." Westat Inc., October 2021.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Sim, G., and A. Good. "Partners For Afterschool Success (PASS) AmeriCorps: 2017-2019 Evaluation Report." Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative, November 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Spinney, S., K. Uekawa, and J. Campbell. "2015 College Possible: Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-Income Students i3 National Development Study." ICF, November 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Tetta, P., J. Baker, and A. Medhanie. "Washington Reading Corps Impact Evaluation Final Report and Recommendations." Mission360 Consulting, LLC, July 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
The Improve Group. "AmeriCorps Promise Fellow Program Minnesota Alliance with Youth Impact Evaluation Report, 2019." 2019.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Van Norman, E.R. "Evaluation Report of the Impact of Post-Exit Progress Monitoring on Literacy Outcomes in the Reading Corps Program." Lehigh University, December 2020.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	RCT
Wolfrom Consulting. "Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps Evaluation Report." September 2020.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Wright, F., S. Hembree, and J. Braun. "First 5 Service Corps Project Evaluation." Davis Consultant Network, January 2017.	Education	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Christiansen, E. "Great Basin Institute - Nevada Conservation Corps - Evaluation Report 2019-2020." University of Nevada, January 2019.	Environmental stewardship	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Naiman-Sessions, J., and S. Shteir. "The Efficacy of AmeriCorps Weed Treatments in Montana State Parks." Montana State Parks, October 2019.	Environmental stewardship	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
The Watershed Company. "Impact Evaluation Report EarthCorps Restoration Methods." October 2019.	Environmental stewardship	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
The Watershed Company. "Impact Evaluation Report Washington Conservation Corps Restoration Methods." October 2018.	Environmental stewardship	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
The Watershed Company. "Impact Evaluation Report Washington Conservation Corps Restoration Methods." October 2021.	Environmental stewardship	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Applied Survey Research. "AmeriCorps Quasi-Experimental Program Evaluation 2018-2021." November 2021.	Healthy futures	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
Frazier, R., C. Birmingham, V. Wheat, and A. Georges. "A Systematic Review of Senior Corps' Impact on Volunteers and Program Beneficiaries." JBS International, Inc., 2019.	Member experience; Healthy futures	FGP; SCP; RSVP	ORE commissioned report	Other (meta-synthesis)
Jarjoura, G.R., and J. Meckes. "National Evaluation of Up2Us Coach Program Year 2016-17." American Institutes for Research, February 2018.	Healthy futures	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	QED
LPC Consulting Associates. "Child Welfare System Improvement (CWSI) AmeriCorps Program Evaluation Report (2014-2016)." January 2017.	Healthy futures	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Mwangi, J.N. "Live Healthy Kids Program, Years 2016-2017; 2017-2018." Ohio University College of Health and Sciences, 2018.	Healthy futures	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	Outcomes
Velasco, K., P. Paxton, R.W. Ressler, I. Weiss, and L. Pivnick. "Do National Service Programs Improve Subjective Well-Being in Communities?" <i>The American Review of Public Administration</i> , vol. 49, no. 3, 2019, pp. 275-291.	Healthy futures	ASN; VISTA	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Outcomes
Borgida, J., D. Clark, L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, J. Pershing, P. Thompson, M. Sarwana, and G. Voigt. "Return on Investment Study: SBP." ICF, September 2022.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Brooks B., M. Escueta, A. Muroga, V. Rodriguez, and H.M. Levin. "Report for Minnesota Reading Corps Pre-K Program Cost Analysis." Teachers College, Columbia University, January 2018.	Investing in interventions	ASN	AmeriCorps grantee evaluator	ROI/Cost-related
Clark, D., J. Borgida, L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, J. Pershing, P. Thompson, M. Sarwana, and G. Voigt. "Return on Investment Study: Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Corps." ICF, September 2022b.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Clark, D., J. Borgida, L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, J. Pershing, P. Thompson, M. Sarwana, and G. Voigt. "Return on Investment Study: Breakthrough Austin." ICF, September 2022a.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Modicamore, D., A. Naugler, B. Casey, B. Miller, C. Munaretto, and J. Pershing. "Return on Investment Study: Community Technology Empowerment Project." ICF, December 2020b.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Modicamore, D., A. Naugler, B. Casey, B. Miller, C. Munaretto, and J. Pershing. "Return on Investment Study: AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Program." ICF, December 2020a.	Investing in interventions	FGP; SCP	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Munaretto, C., B. Casey, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, A. Naugler, and J. Pershing. "Return on Investment Study: College Possible College Access Program." ICF, December 2020a.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Munaretto, C., B. Casey, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, A. Naugler, and J. Pershing. "Return on Investment Study: Minnesota Reading Corps—Kindergarten." ICF, December 2020b.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Naugler, A., L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, C. Munaretto, J. Pershing, and M. Sarwana. "Return on Investment Study: Birth & Beyond Home Visitation Program." ICF, September 2021a.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Naugler, A., L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, C. Munaretto, J. Pershing, and M. Sarwana. "Return on Investment Study: Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps." ICF, September 2021b.	Investing in interventions	ASN; VISTA	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Naugler, A., L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, C. Munaretto, J. Pershing, and M. Sarwana. "Return on Investment Study: YouthBuild." ICF, August 2021c.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Voigt, G., J. Borgida, D. Clark, L. Kulka, B. Miller, D. Modicamore, J. Pershing, P. Thompson, and M. Sarwana. "Return on Investment Study: Nevada Conservation Corps." ICF, September 2022.	Investing in interventions	ASN	ORE commissioned report	ROI/Cost-related
Anderson, M.A., K. Eddins, K. Needels, and S. Richman. "Scaling the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) Intervention: Insights from the Experiences of Parent Possible." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. Mathematica, June 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Case study
Eddins, K., MA. Anderson, K. Needels, and S. Richman. "Scaling the Birth and Beyond (B&B) Intervention: Insights from the Experiences of the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. Mathematica, June 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Case study
Jones, C., D. Friend, M.A. Anderson, K. Needels, and S. Richman. "Scaling the Reading Corps Intervention: Insights from the Experiences of United Ways of Iowa." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. Mathematica, June 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Case study

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Maxwell, N.L., and S. Richman. "Scaling Programs with Research Evidence and Effectiveness (SPREE)." <i>Foundation Review</i> , vol. 11, no. 3, November 2019, pp. 55–67.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Case study
Needels, K., D. Friend, S. Richman, K. Eddins, and C. Jones. "Scaling Evidence-Based Interventions: Insights from the Experiences of Three Grantees." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. <i>Mathematica</i> , June 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Case study
Richman, S., and A. Streke. "Evidence of Effectiveness in AmeriCorps-Funded Interventions." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. <i>Mathematica</i> , September 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Other (meta-synthesis)
Selekman, R., K. Needels, N. Reid., and S. Richman. "Planned Scaling Activities of AmeriCorps-Funded Organizations." Report submitted to AmeriCorps. <i>Mathematica</i> , September 2020.	Scaling	ASN	ORE commissioned report	Other (meta-synthesis)
State of the Evidence framework domain: Society				
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation. "Key Findings from the 2019 Current Population Survey: Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement" (by Laura Hanson Schlachter). 2021.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	ORE report	Descriptive
Best, A., J. Dale, K. Kerstetter, and S. Retrosi. "Linking Civic Engagement and Immigrant Professional Success: Opportunities, Barriers and Contexts." AmeriCorps Research and Evidence Webinar Series. June 2017.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Clark-Ibáñez, M., A. Alvarez, A. Gonzales, M. Ramos Pellicia, A. Ardon, N. Jara, and V. Martinez-Rodriguez. "Cultivando Sabiduría (Cultivating Wisdom): Latinx Immigrant Elders and Civic Engagement." <i>Humboldt Journal of Social Relations</i> , vol. 1, no. 43, 2021.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Outcomes
Cutler White, C. "Participatory Action Research Addressing Social Mobility." <i>Open Journal of Social Sciences</i> , vol. 10, no. 6, 2020, pp. 269–283.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Dutt, A., F. Jacquez, N. Chaudhary, B. Wright, R. Adhikari, T. Adhikari, A. Al Shehabi, et al. "Creating Collective Solidarity: Insights from the Development and Process Evaluation of Civic Action for Refugee Empowerment in Cincinnati." <i>Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology</i> , vol. 28, no. 3, 2021, pp. 349–360.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Case study

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Erangey, J., C. Marvin, D.M. Littman, M. Mollica, K. Bender, T. Lucas, and T. Milligan. "How Peer Support Specialists Uniquely Initiate and Build Connection with Young People Experiencing Homelessness." <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , vol. 119, 2020, article 105668.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Case study
Jacquez, F., A. Dutt, E. Manirambona, and B. Wright. "Uniting Liberatory and Participatory Approaches in Public Psychology with Refugees." <i>American Psychologist</i> , vol. 76, no. 8, 2021 pp. 1280–1292.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Littman, D.M., K. Bender, M. Mollica, J. Erangey, T. Lucas, and C. Marvin. "Making Power Explicit: Using Values and Power Mapping to Guide Power-Diverse Participatory Action Research Processes." <i>Journal of Community Psychology</i> , vol. 49, 2021, pp. 266–282.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Loh, P. "Grounded and Interconnected in the Pandemic: Community engagement and organizing adaptations from COVID response efforts in Metro Boston." Tufts University, October 2022.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Marchand, A.D. "Black Parents' Critical Consciousness: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Links to Parent School Engagement." Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2019.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Marchand, A.D., R.R. Vassar, M.A. Diemer, and S.J. Rowley. "Integrating Race, Racism, and Critical Consciousness in Black Parents' Engagement with Schools." <i>Journal of Family Theory & Review</i> , vol. 11, 2019, pp. 367–384.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Other (theory/measurement)
Nicotera, N., and S. Pritzker. "Promoting Latinx Youth Civic Engagement: Issues for School Settings." University of Houston, 2020.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Pritzker, S., D. Moreno, N. Nicotera, R. Saenz, S. Campos, K. Avila, and A. Ruiz. "Promoting Good Trouble: Latinx Youth-Driven Change Strategies for Civic Engagement and Activism." University of Denver, 2020.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Schlachter, L.H., and K. Már. "Spillover, Selection, or Substitution? Workplace and Civic Participation in Democratic Firms." May 2020.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Schlachter, L.H., and O. Prushinskaya. "How Economic Democracy Impacts Workers, Firms, and Communities. Democracy at Work Institute." Democracy at Work Institute, 2021.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Vazquez-Rivera, C., and J. Rojas-Livia. "Refortalecimiento: Beyond Prevention, Empowerment and Intervention in an Impoverish Community in Puerto Rico." <i>Revista Colombiana de Psicología</i> , vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 109–124.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology

Appendix A. Studies Reviewed for the 2023 State of the Evidence Report

Study citation	Focus area/topic of interest	AmeriCorps program	Study source type	Study design
Weiss, I., P. Paxton, K. Velasco, and R.W. Ressler. "Revisiting Declines in Social Capital: Evidence from a New Measure." <i>Social Indicators Research</i> , vol. 142, 2019, pp. 1015–1029.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Willett, J., A. Tamayo, and A. Rayo. "Making the Invisible Visible: Documenting Slow Violence Through Photovoice with Youth in Nevada." <i>Journal of Community Practice</i> , vol. 29, no. 2, 2021, pp. 112–132.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Participatory research methodology
Wray-Lake, L., and L.S. Abrams. "Pathways to Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth of Color." <i>Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development</i> , vol. 85, no. 2, serial no. 337, 2020.	Civic engagement and volunteerism	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Backman, D. "2018 Evaluation Report: Impact of the Northstar Assessment & Related Computer Skills Programming on Employment in CTEP Programs." Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, 2018.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
Hager, M.A., and J.L. Brudney. "Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities: Benchmarking a Pre-Pandemic Field and Assessing Future Directions." Arizona State University, 2021.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive
ICF International. "Engaging Volunteers: A Comprehensive Literature Review." 2021.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	ORE commissioned report	Other (meta-synthesis)
Paxton, P., K. Velasco, and R.W. Ressler. "Does Use of Emotion Increase Donations and Volunteers for Nonprofits?" <i>American Sociological Review</i> , vol. 85, no. 6, 2020, pp. 1051–1083.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	RCT
Ressler, R.W., P. Paxton, K. Velasco, L. Pivnick, I. Weiss, and J.C. Eichstaedt. "Nonprofits: A Public Policy Tool for the Promotion of Community Subjective Well-Being." <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i> , vol. 31, no. 4, 2021, pp. 822–838.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Outcomes
Velasco, K., and P. Paxton. "Deconstructed and Constructive Logics: Explaining Inclusive Language Change in Queer Nonprofits, 1998 – 2016." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , vol. 127, no. 4, 2022, pp. 1267–1310.	Nonprofit organizational capacity	Not applicable	AmeriCorps ORE research grantee	Descriptive

ASN = AmeriCorps State and National; FGP = AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program; NCCC = AmeriCorps NCCC; ORE = AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation; QED = quasi-experimental design; RCT = randomized controlled trial; RSVP = AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program; SCP = AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program; ROI = return on investment; VISTA = AmeriCorps VISTA.

Appendix B. Study Review Rubric

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In Appendix Table B.1, we present the review rubric Mathematica used to extract information on the characteristics of key findings from the 116 studies we reviewed. We developed these review items to align with the overarching goal of the project: to synthesize key findings from AmeriCorps-funded or -produced research on AmeriCorps programs and national service, volunteering, and civic engagement from June 2017 to December 2022 within the State of the Evidence domains (see Figure I.1 in the main report).

Table B.1. Study review rubric for the 2023 State of Evidence report

Questions	Responses
About the study	
Date of the study	<i>[Eligible range is 2017 to 2022]</i>
What is the organization/grantee name?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
What is the source of the study?	<i>Select one</i> <input type="radio"/> AmeriCorps grantee evaluator <input type="radio"/> AmeriCorps ORE research grantee <input type="radio"/> AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation commissioned report <input type="radio"/> AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation report
Study focus	
What is the AmeriCorps program of focus to the study?	<i>Select all that apply</i> <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps State and National <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps NCCC <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps VISTA <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Generation Fund <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
What is the State of the Evidence domain?	<i>Select all that apply</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Participants <input type="checkbox"/> Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Community <input type="checkbox"/> Society
What is the focus area?	<i>Select all that apply</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster services <input type="checkbox"/> Economic opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental stewardship <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy futures <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and military families <input type="checkbox"/> Member characteristics <input type="checkbox"/> Member experience <input type="checkbox"/> Civic engagement and volunteerism <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit organizational capacity <input type="checkbox"/> Investing in interventions <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling

Questions	Responses
What is the AmeriCorps focus area subtopic?	<p><i>Select all that apply</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster services: Assistance provided <input type="checkbox"/> Economic opportunity: Employment; financial literacy; housing <input type="checkbox"/> Education: School readiness; kindergarten to 12th grade success; post-secondary education support <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental stewardship: Energy efficiency; green jobs; at-risk ecosystems; awareness of environmental issues <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy futures: Aging in place; obesity and food; access to care <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and military families: Connections to educational opportunities, jobs, and benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify
About the program/intervention	
What is the name of the program/intervention?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
What are the core elements of the intervention?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
In what venue(s) is intervention implemented?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
What is the focal population?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
Study design and findings	
[Note: Complete this section for each State of the Evidence domain to which the study was categorized]	
What is the primary study design?	<p><i>Select one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Randomized controlled trial <input type="radio"/> Quasi-experimental design <input type="radio"/> Outcomes study <input type="radio"/> Descriptive study <input type="radio"/> Case study <input type="radio"/> Return on investment/cost-related study <input type="radio"/> Meta-synthesis <input type="radio"/> Implementation study <input type="radio"/> Participatory research methodology (can use one or more study designs to carry out the approach) <input type="radio"/> Other: Specify
If RCT or QED, describe the comparison group used as the contrast.	<i>[open-ended]</i>
How did the study collect its data?	<p><i>Select all that apply</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative data <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews/focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Observations <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify
What was the sample size for the study (if applicable, record the comparison group sample size, as well)?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
What are the main outcomes of interest?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
Describe the main findings.	<i>[open-ended]</i>

Appendix B. Study Review Rubric

Questions	Responses
Does the study conduct subgroup analyses?	<i>Select one</i> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
If applicable, who/what is the focus of subgroup analysis was conducted?	<i>[open-ended]</i>
If applicable, describe the main findings for the subgroup analysis.	<i>[open-ended]</i>

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